

THE WILEY BLACKWELL COMPANION TO

ZOROASTRIANISM



EDITED BY
**Michael Stausberg and
Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina**
with Anna Tessmann

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**The Wiley Blackwell
Companion to
Zoroastrianism**

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Acknowledgments

The editors first met in Vienna in 2007 at the 6th European Conference of Iranian Studies organized by the *Societas Iranologica Europaea*, where we were introduced to each other by Prods Oktor Skjærvø. In the following year, Yuhán S.-D. Vevaina spent six weeks as a research fellow at Michael Stausberg's department at the University of Bergen (Norway), sponsored by the university, for which we both are very grateful. It was during this stay that the idea of putting together a companion volume first took shape and we subsequently met with Rebecca Harkin from Wiley Blackwell in November 2008 in Chicago at the American Academy of Religion Conference. After our proposal was favorably reviewed we started to invite contributors in May 2009. Some colleagues dutifully submitted their first drafts in 2010 as requested. Unfortunately, others kept us waiting until February of 2014 for their final versions. These delays reflect the fragility of our scholarly community, which for specific areas and themes depends almost exclusively on the singular competence of individual scholars, who cannot be replaced easily by others. Hence, the project was delayed considerably. We therefore thank all our colleagues for their patience and collaboration, which indeed is a very positive development in a field that in prior decades suffered heavily from often unpleasant rivalries between individual scholars and their "schools." Now, in the early 21st century, even though most of us continue to disagree on fundamental questions, a new spirit of collegiality and collaboration has appeared that finds its expression in the present volume. In this spirit, we hope the *Companion* will lead to further collaborative projects in the future.

During the final stages of the gestation of this volume, we were assisted by Dr Anna Tessmann (a private scholar based in Heidelberg), who in spite of her other duties tirelessly helped us with the copyediting of all the manuscripts with an untiring eye for details and a commitment to consistency which we hope will be much appreciated by our readers. She also prepared the two indexes. The editors and contributors owe her a great debt of gratitude. We are also grateful to the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion at the University of Bergen for providing the funds that allowed Anna to assist us in our project.

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The severe delays and other shortcomings of the work notwithstanding, for both of us this project has been a great learning experience and we hope that both general readers and specialists will find reading the volume an equally rewarding experience. Ultimately, we hope that readers will appreciate our basic motivation for producing this work, namely, our passion for the study of Zoroastrianism and our desire for this specialist knowledge to be shared in academia and with the public.

Bergen and Stanford, June 2014
Michael Stausberg and Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina

Aims and Scope

Even though Zoroastrianism was relatively well studied in the early days of the comparative and historical study of religions (Stausberg 2008a: 562–564), scholarly interest has precipitously declined since, and the study of Zoroastrianism now largely operates in a disintegrated academic landscape (see Stausberg and Vevaina, “Introduction: Scholarship on Zoroastrianism,” this volume). In this volume, thirty-three scholars from ten countries seek to redress this situation by offering a comprehensive view of the state of the art in the study of Zoroastrianism in the early 21st century. While there are various companions to other religions (published in this series or by other publishers), this book is the first of its kind for Zoroastrianism. The scholarly books on Zoroastrianism in general (i.e., not covering specialized studies on particular texts, themes, or periods) published during the past thirty-five years can be divided into the following categories: shorter introductory volumes (Boyce 1979; Nigosian 1993; Clark 1998; Mazdāpūr 2003 [1382 in Persian]; Stausberg 2008b; Rose 2011a; Rose 2011b), selections of textual primary sources (Malandra 1983; Boyce 1984b; Skjærvø 2011a), a multivolume survey of Zoroastrian history and rituals (Stausberg 2002b; 2002c; 2004b), an as yet unfinished massive history of Zoroastrianism (Boyce 1975a; Boyce 1982; Boyce and Grenet with Roger Beck 1991; Boyce and de Jong, forthcoming), a lavishly illustrated volume with introductory essays (Godrej and Mistree 2002), an exhibition catalogue (Stewart 2013), and an ongoing and now largely online encyclopedic project on Iranian civilization that comprises numerous useful entries on Zoroastrian matters (the *Encyclopædia Iranica*, open access under www.iranicaonline.org). In sum, nothing comparable in scope to the present *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism* has ever been published.

This multi-authored volume is not dominated by one single overarching view of Zoroastrianism. In fact, by putting this volume together we as editors have endeavored to respect the diverse voices of the contributors as we seek to collectively grapple with and perhaps move beyond normative takes on the “essential” identity of Zoroastrianism that can often be found in the older literature. We, the editors, do not believe in such a thing as an essence of Zoroastrianism that would provide the one authentic, real, or normative version of this historically and geographically diverse religion. As scholars

we do not judge our sources in this light (even when the sources themselves make such claims), but our interests are of an analytic, critical, and historical nature, where we situate our sources in different historical contexts, attempt to understand them as driven by specific interests, and thus represent this historical diversity to a diverse readership. From our academic perspectives, we do not see Zoroastrianism as something given for one and all times or as simply the outcome of the words of the founder or prophet, but rather as a complex network of dynamic ongoing re-creations that its makers – believers and practitioners – are situated within, continually engage with, and often contest, or that we as scholars identify, in the light of our interpretative frameworks, as related to this trans-historical and transnational entity commonly referred to as “Zoroastrianism.” The latter, for example, is the case with material and visual remains in Central Asia, which make sense when interpreted as evidence for regional variations of Zoroastrianism which are, in certain striking cases, rather divergent from the more familiar cultural productions we find in textual and material sources from pre-modern Persian and the contemporary Iranian and Indian communities (see Grenet, “Zoroastrianism in Central Asia,” this volume). As scholars we are not in a position to arbitrate on the truth-value of any of the various attempts by Zoroastrians to represent the genuine and true vision of their religion as more authentic than that of their rivals, even though we can analyze to what extent these claims are consonant with earlier equally contested interpretations of Zoroastrianism. We therefore see it as our professional responsibility to analyze points of contrast or divergence between different understandings of this faith. What we describe as innovations may be dismissed by some Zoroastrians as aberrations or hailed by others as progress – both normative categories that are equally problematic for historical-critical research. The five main parts of this volume therefore present different facets of this scholarly agenda.

It could seem intuitively plausible for a discussion of Zoroastrianism to start with Zarathustra (Zoroaster), who is traditionally held to be the founder or prophet of the religion that in the modern age came to be called after him. Such a narrative strategy would build on the emphasis placed on Zarathustra in Zoroastrian sources. The inherent risk is simply conceptualizing the history of Zoroastrianism as a mere footnote to Zarathustra and thus placing the development of the religion under the intellectual spell of this remote point of reference. Since the exact time and homeland of Zarathustra continue to remain a matter of dispute, the first two chapters in Part I discuss this problem from both geographical and linguistic perspectives (Frantz Grenet and Almut Hintze respectively). Believers and many scholars alike hold Zarathustra to be the “author” of five enigmatic songs, the *Gāthās*, which are then often used to reconstruct the original message of the “prophet” and, by extension, “his” religion. The *Gāthās*, however, have yielded widely contrasting interpretations and translations in the 20th century and therefore, in order to not privilege one reading, we have invited four eminent scholars (Helmut Humbach, Jean Kellens, Martin Schwartz, and Prods Oktor Skjærvø), who have over the past decades made groundbreaking contributions to the understanding of these complex texts, to provide a synthesis of their current thinking on the *Gāthās*. We hope such a plurality of interpretations will prove stimulating to both specialist and general readers. The final chapter of this first part by Michael Stausberg looks at the trajectories of the figure of Zarathustra in the periods after the *Gāthās*, when

he was cast in the role of the foundational individual by Zoroastrian sources and came to signify whatever ideal the religion was and is supposed to mean in the context in question. The chapter also addresses non-Zoroastrian engagements with the figure of Zarathustra and examines various modern visual representations and discursive appropriations of the “prophet.”

Part II presents a survey of Zoroastrian history and Zoroastrian communities from antiquity to the present and thereby situates the Zoroastrian tradition(s) in different historical and geographical contexts. Three chapters deal with Zoroastrianism and Zoroastrian communities in the course of Iranian history, from the time of the pre-Islamic empires (Albert de Jong) through the pre-modern Islamic periods (Touraj Daryaee) to the modern and contemporary Iranian Zoroastrian communities (Michael Stausberg). Chapters on the Caucasus (Albert de Jong) and Central Asia (Frantz Grenet) in pre- and early Islamic times survey regional versions of Zoroastrianism beyond the Persian orbit; these regions show some rather distinctive characteristics when compared to Persian Zoroastrianism that is often taken as the normative model for the religion. Nowadays, the majority of Zoroastrians live in India, where the Parsis, as they are known and self-identify, can look back to a long history, which is here reviewed by John R. Hinnells. Since colonial times, Parsis and later also Iranian Zoroastrians have settled in large parts of the world; these Zoroastrian diasporas, which have created novel organizational and material infrastructures, comprise multisited networks, where the negotiation of Zoroastrian identities occur with great intensity (John R. Hinnells). During the past twenty years new information technologies have allowed Zoroastrians across the globe to engage in translocal and transnational networks of communication with their fellow practitioners in an unprecedented manner. Via the Silk Road there were mercantile and religious connections to East Asia already in precolonial times, yet the East Asian part of the Zoroastrian world often tends to be overlooked in scholarship. In this volume, Takeshi Aoki reviews the history of Zoroastrianism in East Asian countries from the pre-Islamic period to the contemporary age. In addition, this chapter also provides a survey of East Asian scholarship on Zoroastrianism, which is often ignored in the West regrettably because of language barriers.

Part III of our *Companion* is called Structures, Discourses, and Dimensions. Instead of merely providing lists of deities and their attributes and narrated actions, Yuhan S.-D. Vevaina discusses theologies and hermeneutics, i.e., reflections as found in Zoroastrian Middle Persian (Pahlavi) sources on the status and functioning of the divine actors and their relationships to humans, the ways these statements are generated in the form of scriptural interpretation, and the teaching and transmission of religious knowledge. Antonio Panaino analyzes the structure of the cosmos and the place of astrology in ancient Zoroastrian sources and points to the importance of Iran in the transmission of astrological lore between East and West. Carlo G. Cereti recounts the mythological narratives relating to the beginning of the world, the figure of Zarathustra, and the events predicted to unfold at the end of time. Jenny Rose discusses the gendered nature of the divine world, the division of labor in religious and ritual practice along gender lines, the relationships between sexuality and ideas of purity and pollution, the different social, legal, and ritual status of women and men, and their respective expected roles and access to power. Maria Macuch provides an overview of the general principles of

Zoroastrian law, the main spheres of legal regulation and legal procedure in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic sources, followed by Mitra Sharafi's discussion of the modern reinventions and constructions of Zoroastrian (Parsi) law and the ways in which Zoroastrians have engaged with colonial and civil law to serve their identitarian needs as minority communities through various forms of boundary maintenance.

Part IV covers religious practices and religious sites. The first chapter reviews the question of ethics in Zoroastrianism, a religion which has been interpreted as being primarily ethical in nature by certain influential scholars of the past. Alberto Cantera distinguishes between rituals as an arena for moral intervention of humans in the cosmic events and morality in a broader sense, where ethics have become a dominant theme in Zoroastrian religious thought (including the understanding of law). Prayer is a central religious practice in Zoroastrianism, as in several other religions, but Firoze M. Kotwal and Philip G. Kreyenbroek point to differences between typical Western and Zoroastrian understandings of the nature and function of prayer before turning to the history of prayer in Zoroastrianism from the earliest sources to contemporary practices. The human body is the key site of ritual practice and conceptions of notions of purity and pollution, which are structuring elements of Zoroastrian theologies, their views on the cosmos, the ecosystem, space and the human being, social relationships, and the systems of ritual actions and obligations. Alan V. Williams analyzes Zoroastrian claims regarding the origin and removal of impurity and examines the ways in which these embodied practices construct order at the level of the individual, society, and the cosmos. Michael Stausberg and Ramiyar P. Karanjia address different forms and types of rituals and some of their structural principles and modes of organization, whereas Jenny Rose looks at collective celebrations timed according to the religious calendar and their historical developments from the earliest sources to contemporary practices in the Iranian and Indian communities. This part ends with Jamsheed K. Choksy's review of the history of Zoroastrian religious sites and structures, mainly temples and funerary structures (such as the so-called "Towers of Silence"), from the Achaemenid period to the present communities in India, Pakistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Iran.

Part V contextualizes the "Good Religion," as pre-modern Zoroastrian sources referred to it, in its historical intersections with other religions and cultures. The organization of this section follows a historical timeline based on when Zoroastrianism came into contact with the other religions and cultures. Prods Oktor Skjærvø begins with the Indo-European and Indo-Iranian heritage of the Avestan texts, inherited similarities and cultural differences between Avestan and Old Indic texts and poetry, myths and mythological geography, names and functions of deities and demons and shared ritual features. (See Stausberg 2012b for a longer historical survey that also covers later Hinduism; a commissioned chapter on this topic for this *Companion* unfortunately did not materialize nor were we able to include a chapter on Buddhism.) Judaism continues to share a long history with Zoroastrianism from the 6th century BCE to the present; in their chapter, Yaakov Elman and Shai Secunda mainly focus on the rather intensive Jewish–Zoroastrian interactions in late antique Mesopotamia as found in rabbinic and Pahlavi sources. A survey of the intellectual fascination with Zoroastrianism and the Persians by writers from different periods of the Classical world (Martin L. West) is followed by a review of the question of the Zoroastrian background of Mithraism, or the

“romanization” of the Iranian deity Mithra (Richard L. Gordon). Marco Frenschkowski reviews intersections between Christianity and Zoroastrianism from early Christianity to the early Islamic period; he also pays attention to persecution of Christians in Sasanian Iran and Zoroastrian critiques of Christian doctrines. Manichaeism, which originated in the 3rd century CE, actively accommodated Zoroastrian themes in its self-fashioning and proselytization in the Iranian world. Manfred Hutter analyzes Zoroastrian topics in Manichaean writings and the mutual polemics between Manichaean and Zoroastrian authors. Islam emerged at the periphery of Iranian culture but its spread has fundamentally altered the societal role and shape of Zoroastrianism during the past millennium or so. Shaul Shaked addresses the attitude towards Zoroastrianism in early Islamic sources and their views of Zoroastrianism, Iranian and Zoroastrian influences on early Islam, Middle Persian writings translated into Arabic, and Zoroastrian polemics against Islam. Philip G. Kreyenbroek looks at minority communities whose religious centers lie in Kurdish-speaking regions, the Yezidis and Yarsan (also known as Ahl-e Haqq or Kaka’is), and their shared traits with Zoroastrianism. He points to the lasting and pervasive influence of an earlier Iranian religious tradition centering on the figure of Mithra in these regions. Finally, the Bahā’ī Faith, which originated in the second half of the 19th century in Iran, has since its beginnings had interactions with Zoroastrians and relatively numerous Zoroastrians converted to this new religion. Moojan Momen analyzes factors facilitating these conversions, later separation, integration and intermarriages between both religious communities, and more recent conversions by Zoroastrians who in many ways contributed to the development of the Bahā’ī Faith.

The final part (VI) of this *Companion* functions as an appendix that readers can draw on when reading the essays and that, we hope, will prove valuable for further engagement with Zoroastrian studies. It recapitulates the four main groups of primary textual sources. Miguel Ángel Andrés-Toledo gives a brief synopsis of the Avestan texts, the Avestan manuscripts with Middle Persian (Pahlavi) translations, and the Middle Persian writings arranged according to periods of origin from the third to the nineteenth centuries. The chapter lists editions, translations, and studies of the sources. Since these sources are relatively well studied, this chapter is meant to provide a useful recapitulation of existing scholarship. The two chapters by Daniel J. Sheffield on Zoroastrian writings in New Persian and Gujarati, on the other hand, deal with texts which are poorly studied, have not been studied at all, or were until recently altogether unknown, even to scholars of Zoroastrianism. These chapters therefore do not merely summarize extant studies but present original research. In particular, the texts in Gujarati remain a virtually untapped source for the study of Zoroastrianism; its neglect in research results from the disintegrated research landscape that will be discussed in the Introduction to Scholarship on Zoroastrianism by the editors.

The bibliographical references to the individual chapters have been compiled into a shared bibliography at the end of the volume, which thereby can serve as a comprehensive and up-to-date early 21st-century bibliography of Zoroastrian studies. Most chapters are provided with suggestions for further reading.

A Note on Transcriptions

Avestan

The transcription of Avestan in this volume is largely based on the now standard system established by Karl Hoffmann (Hoffmann 1987; Hoffmann and Narten 1989). The Avestan alphabet is a phonetic rather than a phonemic alphabet with every sound being represented by a single letter. It consists of 14 (or 16) letters for vowels and 37 letters for consonants (see the table in Hoffmann 1987; online: www.iranicaonline.org; see also Skjærvø 2003a: 1–3 for suggestions on how these letters might have sounded; online: www.fas.harvard.edu/~iranian/).

Vowels									
<i>a</i>	<i>ā</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>ī</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>ū</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>ē</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>ō</i>
<i>ə</i>	<i>ē</i>	<i>q</i>	<i>ā/ā̇</i>						
Consonants									
<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>m̥</i>				
<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>δ</i>	<i>δ₂</i>	<i>θ</i>	<i>t̥</i>	<i>t₂</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>ŋ</i>	
<i>k</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>ǰ</i>	<i>γ</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>ŋ</i>				
<i>c</i>	<i>j</i>	<i>ń</i>							
<i>y</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>ii</i>	<i>č</i>	<i>ŋ</i>					
<i>v</i>	<i>uu</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>ŋ^v</i>						
<i>r</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>š</i>	<i>ṧ</i>	<i>š̈</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>ž</i>	<i>h</i>		

Pahlavi (Zoroastrian Middle Persian)

The transcription of Pahlavi in this volume is based on the now almost universally standard system put forth by David N. MacKenzie in a seminal article from the 1960s and his *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary* respectively (MacKenzie 1967, 1971).

The sound system (phonology) of Pahlavi is similar to that of New (Modern) Persian.

Vowels

<i>a</i>	(<i>e</i>)	<i>i</i>	(<i>o</i>)	<i>u</i>
<i>ā</i>	<i>ē</i>	<i>ī</i>	<i>ō</i>	<i>ū</i>

Consonants

<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>č</i>	<i>k</i>	
<i>b</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>ǰ</i>	<i>g</i>	
<i>f</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>š</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>h</i>
<i>z</i>	<i>ž</i>	<i>γ</i>		
<i>m</i>	<i>n</i>			
<i>w</i>	<i>r / l</i>	<i>y</i>		

ž and *γ* are typically found in Avestan loanwords

č and *ǰ* are the sounds in English like ‘child’ and ‘jug’

š is like English ‘shirt’

ž is the voiced sound of English ‘measure’

x is the ch-sound in German ‘Bach’

γ (Greek gamma) is the sound of the Spanish *g* between vowels, as in *haga*

New Persian (Farsi)

The spelling of New Persian words in this volume (except for some geographic terms and names which are common in English) is based on the transliteration of the Arabic script with a particular attention to the sound system of contemporary New Persian. Throughout this volume we use a single Latin letter for a single Persian consonant, as recommended by the *Encyclopædia Iranica* (*EIr*) (<http://www.iranicaonline.org/pages/guidelines>). However, for common legibility of words we follow the conventional *kh* for *ḵ* (Arab. *khā'*) and *gh* for *ġ* (Arab. *ghayn*). In contrast to the *EIr*, the letters *ḏ* (Arab. *dhāl*) and *ṣ* (Arab. *thā'*) are transliterated as *z* and *s* (and not as *ḏ* and *ṣ*) respectively. In our New Persian spelling for the volume the ending *ā* (Arab. *hā'*) in most words is *-e* (i.e. *khāne* ‘house’). In the case of the Zoroastrian manuscripts we use multiple forms like *nāma/nāme*. The *ežāfe*-constructions are connected with an *-e*. *Ey/ay* and *ow* are diphthongs. The New Persian spellings of Arabic words differ from the Arabic spellings; for instance, the coordinating conjugation *wa* (meaning ‘and’) is different: *wa* in Arabic but *va* in New Persian.

Arabic

The Arabic terms in this volume are adapted from the system used in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam Online*.

Gujarati

The transliteration of Gujarati in this volume is a modified version of that used by the Library of Congress, as follows:

Vowels

a *ā* *i* *u* *ṛ* *e* *ai* *o* *au*

The short vowel /a/, which is implicit after every consonant, is only transliterated when it is pronounced. The *anusvār* has been transliterated as /ṃ/ when it represents a nasal consonant and /̃/ when it represents a nasalized vowel. The use of *visarg* in Gujarati is very rare, but is transliterated /ḥ/ when it occurs. Since there is no phonemic distinction in Gujarati between *ī/ī* or *ū/ū*, length has not been indicated on these vowels. It should be noted that the Modern Standard Gujarati vowels *ī* and *ū*, which are now applied on the basis of etymological length, occur only very haphazardly prior to the standardization of Gujarati in the late 19th century. Alternate forms of the vowels /e/ and /o/ are very common in early publications.

Consonants

<i>k</i>	<i>kh</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>gh</i>	<i>ṅ</i>
<i>c</i>	<i>ch</i>	<i>j / z</i>	<i>jh</i>	<i>ñ</i>
<i>ṭ</i>	<i>th</i>	<i>ḍ</i>	<i>ḍh</i>	<i>ṇ</i>
<i>t</i>	<i>th</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>dh</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>p</i>	<i>ph / f</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>bh</i>	<i>m</i>
<i>y</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>ś</i>
<i>ṣ</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>!</i>	

No phonemic distinction is made between *ś*, *ṣ*, and *s* and, in 18th- and 19th-century materials, *ś* and *s* were used interchangeably. We have therefore transliterated /ś/ only when it is etymological and have otherwise substituted /s/. The semi-vowels /y/ and /v/ in pre-standardized Gujarati are often represented by the juxtaposition of two vowels, thus /iaśt/ for /yaśt/. The consonant /h/ written after a vowel sometimes indicates a breathy vowel (murmured vowel) as in the distinction between /bār/ ‘twelve’ and /bār/ ‘outside’. Since this feature of pre-standardized Gujarati orthography, which is omitted in modern spelling, has not been investigated, it has simply been transliterated as /h/ here. Since Gujarati names are transliterated into English-language publications very irregularly, we have tried to provide their transliterations followed by their common forms in parentheses in the bibliography, e.g. Jamśetji Jijibhāi (Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy).

Readers will notice variant spellings of the same name in the various chapters, e.g. Šābuhr vs. Šāpūr or *kustī* vs. *kostī*. We have tried to regularize these variants across the chapters, though in some instances it did not seem useful to standardize all variants across different contexts, especially where specific forms are more appropriate. For

example, in the chapter on Manichaeism the reader will find Šābuhr, since Mani's text is commonly referred to as the *Šābuhragān*. Common names and titles like Zarathustra (Zaraθuštra), Mani (Mānī), Mithra (Miθra), the *Gāthās* (*Gāthās*) are not typically provided with their technical transcriptions.

We would like to acknowledge Daniel J. Sheffield for his assistance with the Gujarati transcription system.

Abbreviations

<i>A</i>	<i>Āfrīn(a)gān</i>
<i>AAASH</i>	Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae
<i>AB</i>	Analecta Bollandiana
acc.	accusative case
<i>ActOr</i>	Acta Orientalia
adj.	adjective
<i>AG</i>	<i>Āfrīnagān ī Gāhānbār</i>
<i>AION</i>	Annali del'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli
<i>AJ</i>	<i>Ayādgār ī Jāmāspīg</i>
<i>AMI</i>	Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran
<i>AMIT</i>	Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran und Turan
<i>ANRW</i>	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt
<i>ANy</i>	<i>Ātaš Niyāyišn</i>
<i>AOASH</i>	Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae
<i>AoF</i>	Altorientalische Forschungen
<i>Aog</i>	<i>Aogamadaēčā</i>
Arab.	Arabic
<i>ArOr</i>	Archiv Orientální
<i>AUU</i>	Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis
Av.	Avestan
<i>AV</i>	<i>Atharvaveda</i>
<i>AW</i>	<i>Ayādgār ī Wuzurgmīhr</i>
<i>AWN</i>	<i>Ardā Wirāz-Nāmag</i>
<i>Az</i>	<i>Āfrīn ī Zardušt</i>
<i>AZ</i>	<i>Ayādgār ī Zarērān</i>
<i>A₂S</i>	Artaxerxes II Susa
b.	born
Bactr.	Bactrian
<i>BAI</i>	Bulletin of the Asia Institute
BCE	Before the Common/Current Era

<i>Bd</i>	<i>Bundahišn</i>
BDNA	Bactrian Documents from Northern Afghanistan
BE	Bahā'ī Era, starting with the Bāb's declaration on Nowrūz 1844
<i>BEI</i>	Bulletin d'Études Indiennes
BPP	Bombay Parsi Punchayet
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
<i>c.</i>	circa
Canton.	Cantonese
CE	Common/Current Era
CHI	Cambridge History of Iran
Chin.	Chinese
Chor.	Chorasmian
col.	column
CRAIBL	Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres
ČAP	Čidaġ Andarz ī Pōryōtkēšān (see also <i>PZ</i>)
ČK	Čim ī Kustīg
d.	died
DB	Darius I Bīsotūn
<i>DD</i>	<i>Dādestān ī Dēnīg</i>
<i>Dk</i>	<i>Dēnkard</i>
<i>DkB</i>	<i>Dēnkard</i> 'B' manuscript (Dresden 1966)
<i>DkM</i>	<i>Dēnkard</i> Madan edition
<i>Dn</i>	Book of Daniel (Old Testament)
DS	Darius I Susa
<i>EI</i>	Encyclopaedia of Islam
<i>Elr</i>	Encyclopædia Iranica
<i>EW</i>	East and West
f.	feminine
fn.	footnote
<i>Fīō</i>	<i>Frahang ī ōim(-ēk)</i>
<i>FrA</i>	Anklesaria's fragments in the <i>RAF</i> and in the <i>RFW</i>
<i>FrB</i>	Fragment Bartholomae
<i>FrBy</i>	Barthélemy's fragments
<i>FrD</i>	Fragment Darmesteter
<i>FrG</i>	Geldner's fragments
<i>FrGr</i>	Gray's fragment
<i>FrW</i>	Fragment Westergaard
G	<i>Gāh</i>
GA	<i>Mādayān ī Gizistag Abāliš</i>
<i>GBd</i>	<i>Great(er) (Iranian) Bundahišn</i>
Gk.	Greek
Gš	Fragments in the <i>Ganješāyagān</i>
Hebr.	Hebrew
<i>Hēr</i>	<i>Hērbdestān</i>
<i>HN</i>	<i>Hāδōxt Nask</i>

HR	History of Religions
IA	Iranica Antiqua
IBd	<i>Indian Bundahišn</i>
IE	Indo-European
IF	Indogermanische Forschungen
IJ	Indo-Iranian Journal
IIr.	Indo-Iranian
IR	<i>Iṭhoter Revāyat (Revāyat-e Haftād va Hašt)</i>
IS	Iranian Studies
JA	Journal asiatique
JAAR	Journal of the American Academy of Religion
JAAS	Journal of Asian and African Studies
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JKRCOI	Journal of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute
JN	<i>Jāmāsp-Nāmag</i>
Jpn.	Japanese
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
JSAI	Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam
KAP	<i>Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pābagān</i>
Khot.	Khotanese
KKZ	Kerdīr Ka'ba-ye Zartošt
KNRb	Kerdīr Naqš-e Rajab
KNRm	Kerdīr Naqš-e Rostam
KSM	Kerdīr Sar Mašhad
Lat.	Latin
l.c.	<i>loco citato</i> (in the place cited)
m.	masculine
M	Manichaean Texts from Turfan, China (now in Berlin)
Man.	Manichaean
MHD	<i>Mādayān ī Hazār Dādestān</i>
MP	Middle Persian
ms.	manuscript
MSS	Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft
Mt	Gospel of Matthew (New Testament)
MX	<i>(Dādestān ī) Mēnōg ī Xrad</i>
N	<i>Nērangestān</i>
n.	neuter
n.	note
NChin.	Northern Chinese
n.d.	no date
n.ed.	no editor(s)
Nig	Fragment of the <i>Nigādom</i>
NM	<i>Nāmāgihā ī Manuščihr</i> (also 'The Epistles of Manuščihr')
nom.	nominative case

n.p.	no publisher
<i>Ny</i>	<i>Niyāyišn</i>
NP	New Persian
OAv.	Old Avesta(n)
OInd.	Old Indian
OIr.	Old Iranian
OP	Old Persian
OS	Orientalia Suecana
<i>P</i>	<i>Pursišnīhā</i>
Pahl.	Pahlavi
Parth.	Parthian
PF	Elamite Persepolis Fortification Tablets
PGuj.	Parsi Gujarati
pl.	plural
<i>PRDD</i>	<i>Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg</i>
PT	Pahlavi translation
<i>PVd</i>	<i>Pahlavi Vīdēvdād</i>
<i>PY</i>	<i>Pahlavi Yasna</i>
<i>PYt</i>	<i>Pahlavi Yašt</i>
<i>PZ</i>	<i>Pandnāmag ī Zardu(x)št</i> (see also ČAP)
<i>Pz</i>	<i>Pāzand</i>
<i>QS</i>	<i>Qešše-ye Sanjān</i>
r.	ruled
<i>RAF</i>	<i>Rivāyat of Ādurfarnbag ī Farroxxādān</i>
<i>REA</i>	<i>Rivāyat of Ēmēd ī Ašawahištān</i>
repr.	reprinted
<i>RFW</i>	<i>Rivāyat of Farrōbag-Srōš ī Wahmānān</i>
<i>RHR</i>	<i>Revue de l'Histoire des Religions</i>
<i>RSO</i>	<i>Rivista degli Studi Orientalni</i>
<i>RV</i>	<i>Rigveda, Ṛg-Veda</i>
s./ss.	section(s)
<i>S</i>	<i>Sīrōze, Sīh-rōzag</i>
sg.	singular
<i>SBE</i>	Sacred Books of the East
SChin.	Standard Chinese
<i>SdBd</i>	<i>Šaddar(-e) Bondaheš</i>
<i>SdN</i>	<i>Šaddar(-e) Našr</i>
Skr.	Sanskrit
<i>Sn</i>	<i>Seyāsatnāma</i>
Sogd.	Sogdian
<i>SPAW</i>	Sitzungsberichte der preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften der Philosophisch-Historischen Klasse
st.	stanza(s)
<i>StII</i>	Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik
<i>StIr</i>	Studia Iranica

<i>Supp.Šnš</i>	<i>The Supplementary Texts to the Šāyest-nē-šāyest</i>
s.v.	<i>sub verbo</i> (under the specified word)
Syr.	Syriac
ŠĒ	<i>Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr</i>
ŠGW	<i>Škand-gumānīg Wizār</i>
Šnš	<i>Šāyest-nē-šāyest</i>
TPS	Transactions of the Philological Society
trans.	translated
v./vv.	verse(s)
Vd	<i>Vīdēvdād</i>
Ved.	Vedic
VN	<i>Vaēθā Nask</i>
Vr	<i>Vīsp(e)rad</i>
Vyt	<i>Vištāsp Yašt</i>
WZ	<i>Wizīdagīhā ī Zādspram</i>
WZKM	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes
XP	Xerxes I Persepolis
Y	<i>Yasna</i>
YH	<i>Yasna Haptaŋhāiti</i>
YAv.	Younger Avesta(n)
Yt	<i>Yašt</i>
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft
ZFJ	<i>Zand ī Fragard ī Juddēwdād</i>
ZfR	Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft
ZfvS	Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung
Zn	<i>Zarātošnāma</i>
ZRGG	Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte
ZWY	<i>Zand ī Wahman Yasn (Yašt)</i>

Certain contributors use specialized abbreviations that are found at the end of their chapters.

Introduction

Scholarship on Zoroastrianism

Michael Stausberg and Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina

Zoroastrianism currently has some 125,000 adherents worldwide with the majority living in India, mostly in Mumbai and Gujarat (estimated at 60,000 for the as yet unreleased census of 2011). In South Asia the Zoroastrians are known as the “Parsis” (see Hinnells, “The Parsis,” this volume). Since World War II their numbers have been in rapid decline (there were just under 115,000 Parsis in pre-Partition India in 1941) and the Indian media report dire predictions according to which this trend will continue in the upcoming decades. The second largest group of Zoroastrians is to be found in Iran, from where the Parsis relocated in the aftermath of the Arab invasions in the mid-7th century CE and the Islamization of the country in the following centuries (see Daryae, “Zoroastrianism under Islamic Rule,” this volume). Fewer than 20,000 Zoroastrians currently reside in Iran, where they are recognized as a religious minority by the constitution (see Stausberg, “Zoroastrians in Modern Iran,” this volume).

Political changes in India (Independence and Partition in 1947 and its aftermath) and Iran (the Islamic Revolution in 1979 and its aftermath) as well as socioeconomic factors have stimulated many Zoroastrians to migrate. By now, there are substantial (by Zoroastrian standards) communities in Britain, Canada, the United States, Dubai, and Australia as well as minor groups in other countries, including Pakistan, Sri Lanka, China, and New Zealand (see Hinnells, “The Zoroastrian Diaspora,” this volume).

Zoroastrianism is thus an interesting case of a globalizing, highly urbanized, and literate (over 90 percent in India) ethnic religion while being one of the oldest religious traditions in the world. Prior to the spread of Islam, which led to the concomitant marginalization of Zoroastrianism in its homelands (Afghanistan, Central Asia, Iran, and adjacent areas), Zoroastrianism was one of the major religious forces of the ancient world. Zoroastrians lived in neighborhoods with Jewish, Christian, Manichaeian, and Islamic communities for centuries. Its presumed influence on these religions has historically been the major factor warranting scholarly attention. In fact, Zoroastrianism was

a fashionable subject in the early history of the study of religions. Remarkably, some of the early protagonists of the history of religions as an academic discipline had Zoroastrianism as one of their main areas of specialization. Consider such seminal scholars as Cornelis Petrus Tiele (1830–1902), Nathan Söderblom (1866–1931), Edvard Lehmann (1862–1930), Raffaele Pettazzoni (1883–1959), and, moving closer to the present, Geo Widengren (1907–1996) and Carsten Colpe (1929–2009). As historians of religions, their impact on subsequent Zoroastrian studies (and even more so on Iranian studies) has been fairly limited and as newer generations of historians of religions did not share the enthusiasm of their predecessors for this subject, relatively few articles on Zoroastrianism have been published in major history of religions journals since the 1960s (Stausberg 2008a).

A Disintegrated Academic Landscape

The study of Zoroastrianism faces the same challenges as those of other religious traditions operating over vast spans of time. To begin with, studying a religion in its various settings and contexts ideally requires philological expertise in a number of different languages. Taking into account only those languages in which we have substantial amounts of primary textual sources, this would basically include the fields of Old, Middle, and New Iranian studies plus Gujarati, the language spoken in the part of Western India where the Parsis first settled. Compared to the study of so-called world religions like Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism, scholars of Zoroastrianism face a rather limited selection of relevant languages with regard to primary sources. Nevertheless, what might appear as a good starting point from a comparative perspective turns out to be a severe problem in light of contemporary disciplinary and institutional boundaries. To quote from a recent survey on “Iranian Historical Linguistics in the Twentieth Century”:

Iranian studies are seldom recognized as an academic discipline *sui iuris* and very few Iranologists have been able to contribute to the fields of Old, Middle, and New Iranian alike. Since the Neogrammarian revolution [in the late 19th century], Avestan and Old Persian have been taught in Indo-European departments or programs, usually with an emphasis on linguistics. New Iranian (especially New Persian) is taught in departments of Middle Eastern studies (German: *Orientalistik*) alongside the other written languages of Islam (Arabic and Turkic), and the courses focus primarily on historical or social issues. Middle Iranian languages rarely receive more than introductory courses, either as an adjunct to New Persian or to the Indo-European curriculum. (Tremblay 2005: 2)

Even where one finds Iranian studies as a separate academic entity (chair, department, or center), Zoroastrianism is not always part of the academic specialization of the staff. As a rule of thumb one can say that Zoroastrianism is at least remotely on the scholarly agenda whenever there is a scholarly interest in pre-Islamic history and culture or in Old and Middle Iranian languages. However, whenever the balance leans towards the Islamic era and New Persian languages, Zoroastrianism is usually completely outside of the scholarly focus. The factual marginalization of Zoroastrians in Iranian history after

the Islamic conquest in the 7th century CE is thereby faithfully mirrored by the Western academic community. As implied by Tremblay, there is usually very little scholarly exchange crossing the iron curtain separating Old and Middle from New Persian studies. To pull down this rigid barrier will be one of the main challenges for the study of Zoroastrianism and maybe also for Iranian studies in general (see now, Sheffield 2012).

Apart from Iranian languages, there are significant (secondary) source materials in non-Iranian languages to be taken into account: Vedic Sanskrit for comparative purposes with the Avestan corpus, Greek and Latin for interactions with the Classical world, Akkadian, Egyptian, and Elamite for religion in the Persian Empire, Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, and Arabic for interactions with Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Sasanian studies in general, Classical Armenian and Georgian for the Caucasus, not to mention the secondary scholarly languages of French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, and Japanese. Texts, however, are obviously not the only sources for the study of Zoroastrianism. Nor is philology the only approach. Ancient history, archaeology, art history, sigillography (the study of seals), and numismatics (the study of coins), for example, are important related scholarly disciplines or endeavors, although their impact on the study of Zoroastrianism has up to now been fairly limited. Turning to the modern and contemporary periods, a number of recent anthropological, sociological, and historical studies have provided valuable insights on modern Zoroastrian social life and identities (see e.g., Luhrmann 1996; Walthert 2010; Ringer 2011 respectively).

Iranian studies or the related fields of study mentioned above are the traditional breeding-grounds of the study of Zoroastrianism, but (so far) Zoroastrian studies does not exist as an integrated field of study. While there are several loose networks of scholars regularly interacting in various contexts, there is neither a scholarly journal devoted to Zoroastrian studies nor a review bulletin; and there is no scholarly association or organization for scholars of Zoroastrianism. In all this, the study of Zoroastrianism is characterized by a considerable delay compared to the study of most other religious traditions.

In addition, there is no academic department of Zoroastrian studies, not even in Iran or India. However, just as specialist positions in a number of religions were being established during recent decades at Western universities – often with considerable financial input from adherents – there are now a handful of academic positions in Zoroastrian studies, all located in “diasporic” hot spots:

- From 1929 to 1947 the Bombay Zoroastrian community funded a position called the “Parsee Community’s Lectureship in Iranian Studies” at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS, renamed from the School of Oriental Studies in 1938) in the University of London. The position was held by the two eminent Iranists Harold W. Bailey (from 1929 to 1936) and Walter B. Henning (from 1936 to 1947). In the 1990s three Zoroastrian benefactors (Faridoon and Mehraban Zartoshty and an anonymous Iranian benefactor) helped fund a professorship in Zoroastrianism with the aid of the estate of the late Professor Mary Boyce who was Professor of Iranian Studies at SOAS from 1961 to 1982 (see Hintze 2010 and more on Boyce below).

- In the early years of the new millennium, a Zoroastrian Studies Council was formed at Claremont Graduate University's School of Religion in Claremont, California. This and similar councils at Claremont are made up of "leaders" from the religious communities; their aims are defined as follows: "These councils represent a partnership with the religious community by advising the school on the needs of the community and consulting with the school as courses and programs are developed" (Claremont Graduate University n.d.). In this case the group of "leaders" is mainly composed of Iranian Zoroastrians. The council has successfully set up some classes in the study of Zoroastrianism during the past years, but as of yet there is no funded fulltime position. As of December 2012, a lectureship in Zoroastrian studies at Claremont Graduate University was permanently endowed, as an adjunct position, offering one course per year.
- In 2006 the young "transdisciplinary" Department of Historical Studies at the University of Toronto at Mississauga established a position in the history of Zoroastrianism.
- In 2010 the Department of Religious Studies at Stanford University created an endowed (but not permanent) lectureship for Zoroastrian studies with the financial support of Zoroastrian donors and FEZANA (the Federation of the Zoroastrian Associations of North America; see Hinnells, "The Zoroastrian Diaspora," this volume).

In three of these four cases, the scholars appointed are philologists with a documented expertise on Old and Middle Iranian texts respectively, which reflects the continued prominence of philology in this field. It remains to be seen whether these positions will have an impact on the consolidation of Zoroastrian studies as a more coherent field of study. While this volume goes into press, the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* (Paris) is about to recruit a *Maître de conférences* (Assistant Professor) in Zoroastrian studies (Ancient Iran) at its Department of Religious studies. Here again the published job profile puts emphasis on proficiency in ancient Iranian languages.

Attempts at Mapping Main Approaches

It is customary in scholarly literature to review past attempts before setting out on one's own path; these sorts of academic preludes being largely rhetorical reconstructions tend to point to perceived weak points in previous work. In the last fifteen years two scholars have attempted to map the field of Zoroastrian studies at large.

The Dutch historian of ancient religions Albert de Jong has distinguished between three main views of Zoroastrian history. He refers to them as "fragmentizing," "harmonizing," and "diversifying" views respectively (de Jong 1997: 44–68).

The characteristic feature of a "fragmentizing" view according to de Jong is the idea that "Zoroastrianism ought to be defined by the *Gāthās* and by the *Gāthās* only" (de Jong 1997: 46). The *Gāthās*, a tiny part of the Avestan corpus, are five songs (hymns or poetic compositions) that most scholars and believers ascribe to Zarathustra who is generally held to be the founder or "prophet" of the religion (see the chapters on the *Gāthās* and Stausberg, "Zarathustra: Post-Gathic Trajectories," this volume). In that

sense, what de Jong describes as “fragmentizing” can also be termed normative insofar as one text becomes the norm for any reconstruction of the religion. This raises the related question of the status of the later history of Zoroastrian (indigenous or emic) interpretations of the *Gāthās*: Should an interpretation of the *Gāthās* be based on their comparative linguistic or their transmissive cognates, that is, with the largely contemporaneous *Vedas* or the later Middle Persian (Pahlavi) writings in mind, or should both approaches be combined?

In another sense, fragmentizing views assume the existence not of one main pre-Islamic indigenous religion (“Zoroastrianism” or “Mazdaism”) but, rather, several different religious communities such as a (presumed) Mithra-community or regional religious traditions such as Median and Parthian religions.

The second main view discussed by de Jong is referred to as “harmonizing.” The characteristic feature of this group of approaches is their idea that the main collections of ancient source materials, the Old and Middle Iranian texts (the Avestan and the Pahlavi writings),

basically reflect the same tradition, a tradition that deserves to be called Zoroastrianism (because it grew out of the teaching of Zarathustra). The numerous developments are due not to ruptures or dramatic breaks in the tradition (as in fragmentising views) and certainly do not reflect different religions, but are interpreted as manifestations of an organic process of growth... (de Jong 1997: 50)

As is to be expected by his rhetorical arrangement, de Jong himself clearly favors the third view, which he refers to as “diversifying.” This view is held to avoid what he terms to be the other two “excessive” approaches and is apparently devised to strike the balance between an “outright denial of a continuous tradition” on the one hand and “the insistence on an unchanging kernel of Zoroastrian doctrine” on the other (de Jong 1997: 60). According to de Jong, this view “insists on using broad and preliminary” (de Jong 1997: 60) definitions of Zoroastrianism and points to “a variegated, classic tradition rather than a strict doctrinal system” (de Jong 1997: 61). This approach – as exemplified by de Jong’s own analysis of the classical (Greek and Roman) sources on Zoroastrianism – tries to reach beyond the focus on the textual output of the priestly tradition as the normative statement of whichever version of Zoroastrianism one is working on or writing about.

As part of a volume on postmodernist approaches to the study of religion in 1999, the British scholar of religion John Hinnells tried to map the history of the study of Zoroastrianism with regard to modernist and postmodernist features respectively. Hinnells finds that “the sort of theories propounded concerning Zoroastrianism and the debates which have raged (unfortunately an appropriate word at times!) mirror the sort of wider theoretical debates in the study of religion, history, and literature” (Hinnells 2000: 23). Hinnells reviews the work of six scholars and sees modernist tendencies in three of them and postmodernist ones in the other three, including his own work and that of his teacher Mary Boyce. Whereas de Jong seems to assume the synchronicity of the different views, the account given by Hinnells follows a chronological order. The main works assigned to the modernist approach were published from 1882 to 1961, while those showing postmodernist features were from around 1975 to the present. The main dividing line between both approaches, as Hinnells presents them, is the presence

of grand meta-narratives (versus an emphasis on diversity), the dependence or emphasis on the normative–priestly–textual tradition (versus domestic, daily, and female practices), and the assumption of a neutral, purely objective and detached point of view of the scholar (versus an awareness of his or her situatedness in the field).

Some Reflections

To begin with, an obvious point of critique against such mappings is whether the categories do any justice to the scholars so classified. Every classification is subjective and open to critique. Mary Boyce (see also below), in whose work her student Hinnells highlights postmodern features, would almost certainly have refused to consider herself as a postmodernist. The Belgian scholar of the *Avesta*, Jean Kellens (Chair at the Collège de France; see his “The *Gāthās*, Said to Be of Zarathustra,” this volume) who features as something like the living arch-protagonist of the fragmentizing view for de Jong, has expressed his dissatisfaction with de Jong’s classifications and sees himself much more like a harmonizer or diversifier (Kellens 2003: 215). Furthermore, Kellens rightly points out that the subject of study and the research methodologies chosen in accordance with that focus are important factors that to some large extent determine the general point of view (Kellens 2003: 216). Writing a comprehensive history of Zoroastrianism makes one more prone to harmonize than when one studies the complexity of a specific period or a specific type of source material. In addition, what may be fragmentizing from the point of view that takes data that looks “Zoroastrian” as evidence for the internal plurality or diversity of a capacious Zoroastrianism can potentially be seen as diversifying from another point of view in which Zoroastrianism was merely one among several available socioreligious or cultural options in Iranian religious history. Put simply, is “Zoroastrianism” the big umbrella or is “pre-Islamic Iranian Religion(s)” to be understood as such in the pre-Islamic Iranian world? In other words, what might be harmonizing in Zoroastrian terms can potentially be seen as fragmentizing from the point of view of Indo-Iranian religious history.

A similar concern can be raised with regard to Hinnells’s schema. For it is hardly surprising that (quasi-) postmodernist views were primarily voiced by scholars studying postcolonial or diasporic communities. We refer to these views as quasi-postmodernist because the scholars Hinnells takes to represent postmodernist views do so only in a very vague sense and the way Hinnells himself writes is far from the way a “postmodernist” would. The postmodern challenge, we believe, has not generally been embraced in the study of Zoroastrianism, nor has the related debate on Orientalism had much of an impact on the field.

Some Main Figures in the History of Zoroastrian Studies

From these rather general reflections let us now turn to some key scholars in the history of the study of Zoroastrianism. (See Aoki, “Zoroastrianism in the Far East,” this volume for the history of the study of Zoroastrianism in China and Japan since 1923;

see Tessmann 2012: 107–138 for a mapping of the history and different approaches to Zoroastrian studies by scholars writing in Russian from the late 19th century to the present.) A recent book by Jean Kellens (2006b) may act as a companion in so far as the history of the study of the *Avesta* is concerned. The following snapshots of nine seminal figures in the study of Zoroastrianism are meant to illustrate some major turns scholarship has taken over the past three centuries.

Thomas Hyde (1636–1703)

There was a vivid interest in Zoroaster, the archetypal oriental sage and magician, throughout pre-modern European history (Stausberg 1998a; Rose 2000), and scholarly work on Zoroastrianism took root as part of the rise of Oriental studies in the 17th century. The first scholarly monograph on pre-Islamic Iranian religious history was published in 1700 by Thomas Hyde (Williams 2004), the Oxford scholar of Arabic, Semitic, and Persian who contributed to the establishment of the term “dualism” (which he held to be an aberration of “orthodox” Zoroastrianism). The massive (over 550 pages!) and richly illustrated *Historia religionis veterum Persarum, eorumque Magorum* (‘History of the Religion of the Ancient Persians and their Magi’), (second edition 1760) made use of virtually all the source materials available at his time, including ancient Mediterranean, Islamic, and Oriental Christian sources, as well as the accounts of contemporary European travelers. Not satisfied with that, Hyde also produced the first translation of an important Persian Zoroastrian text into a European language (the *Šaddar* ‘Hundred Chapters’; see Sheffield, “Primary Sources: New Persian,” this volume). Hyde had a fundamentally sympathetic attitude towards his ancient Persians and he emphatically defended their monotheism. At the same time, he placed ancient Persian religion into a Biblical framework and claimed that the oldest Persian religion derived from Abraham, before falling into decay in order to be then once more reformed into its pristine purity by Zoroaster who had been a pupil of one of the Biblical prophets. Despite its apologetic basis Hyde’s work, which also includes a number of comparative discussions, provided a wealth of information on various aspects of ancient Iranian religion, as accurately as was possible before the discovery of the earlier Zoroastrian source materials in Old and Middle Iranian languages. Hyde was well aware of the preliminary status of his work and explicitly exhorted his successors to actively search for the then still largely unknown ancient Zoroastrian scriptures (Stausberg 1998a: 680–718; Stroumsa 2010: 102–113).

Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (1731–1805)

Hyde’s call to action forcefully resounded with Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (see Duchesne-Guillemin 1987), the first European scholar who travelled to the East in order to study (with) the Zoroastrians. He was called “the first Orientalist, in the modern sense of the word” (Gardaz 2000: 354). Although the Frenchman’s encounter

with the Parsis in Surat was not without conflicts (Stausberg 1998d), it turned out to be extremely fruitful. To begin with, Anquetil brought a large number of important manuscripts home to Paris, now stored at the Bibliothèque Nationale. Moreover, in his *Le Zend-Avesta* (1771) he provided French translations of many key texts of ancient Zoroastrianism, based on what some Zoroastrian priests had taught him in India. From a philological point of view, they are now largely outdated, but they nevertheless provide invaluable insights into how the texts may have been understood by 18th-century Zoroastrian priests. Moreover, Anquetil gives important notes on the actual usage of the texts. In his introduction, he has an interesting sketch of Zoroastrian history in India and the volumes contain some important essays in which he presents the everyday life, typical biographies, and rituals of the Zoroastrians in ethnographic detail. The presentation is remarkably balanced, although his view of Zoroaster is rather negative (Stausberg 1998a: 796–808; for his biography, see Schwab 1934; for his seminal role in the development of oriental studies see Schwab 1950; App 2010: 363–439).

Martin Haug (1827–1876)

It was only with the work of the linguists Rasmus Rask (1787–1832) and Eugène Burnouf (1801–1852; see Herrenschildt 1990) and especially the latter's *Commentaire sur le Yaçna* from 1833 that the study of the *Avesta* was placed on a more solid linguistic grounding. But it was the German Martin Haug (see Hintze 2004) who put the study of Zoroastrianism on a new footing when he discovered the special importance of the *Gāthās* as the foundational document of early Zoroastrianism. He argued that these texts were “one or two centuries older than the ordinary Avestan language” (Haug 1907: 75). In his popular *Essays on the Sacred Language, Writings and Religion of the Parsis* (first published in 1862), the epochal significance of which was immediately noted by the scholar of comparative mythology and religion Friedrich Max Müller (1867: 125), Haug claimed that the *Gāthās* “really contain the sayings and teachings of the great founder of the Parsi religion, Spitama Zarathushtra himself” (Haug 1907: 146). Moreover, Haug devised a highly influential interpretative framework for the understanding of early Zoroastrianism that has been largely adopted by many Zoroastrians themselves. He credited Zoroaster with the teaching of an anti-sacrificial, ethically advanced monotheism, and held that Zoroaster finally sealed the Indo-Aryan schism that had been raging ever since the Iranians had introduced agriculture (Haug 1907: 292–295). Rejecting the belief of the contemporary Parsis who, according to Haug, thought that “their prophet” lived around 550 BCE, Haug reasoned that a later date than 1000 BCE was out of the question (Haug 1907: 299). Nevertheless, the religious reforms of the “prophet” were later on retracted by subsequent generations who returned to a ritualization of the religion (Haug 1907: 263). The pivotal role assigned to Zoroaster implied that it was the study of the *Gāthās* which would ultimately shed light on Zoroastrianism (Herrenschildt 1987; Stausberg 1997; Kellens 2006b; Ringer 2011; Skjærvø 2011b; Sheffield 2012).

Friedrich von Spiegel (1820–1905)

The prolific and versatile German scholar of Iranian culture and languages Friedrich von Spiegel (see Schmitt 2002) was of a very different opinion in that matter. Spiegel not only repeatedly emphasized the importance of the indigenous tradition for an understanding of the *Avesta* but he also proclaimed the essential continuity of (pre-Islamic) Iranian religion throughout the ages (Spiegel 1873: 2–3). On the other hand, Spiegel believed that Semitic elements had found their way into Zoroastrianism. He also argued that Zoroastrianism was a learned system, similar to Schleiermacher's theology during his days, rather than a religion of the broad masses (Spiegel 1873: 171–172).

About Spiegel's magnum opus *Erânische Alterthumskunde* ('The Study of Ancient Iran'), a trilogy (1871–1878) dealing with virtually all aspects of Iranian history, it has been said:

The Alterthumskunde may be understood also as a first attempt to overcome the originally divergent development of Iranian studies, caused by the fact that Old Iranian studies followed more the philological model of Indo-Aryan and Indo-European studies, whereas research on Islamic Iran followed in the wake of Islamic and Semitic studies. In some ways Spiegel tried to bring together those two traditions scholarship for the benefit of Iranian studies in general, by explaining the data of later periods through those of antiquity and conversely by referring to modern data for both the linguistic and the factual interpretation of data for earlier periods. (Schmitt 2002)

James Darmesteter (1849–1894)

The French Iranist James Darmesteter (see Boyce and MacKenzie 1996) produced a rich and partly contradictory oeuvre despite dying at the age of forty-five. In his book *Ohrmazd et Ahriman: leurs origines et histoire* (1877) Darmesteter rooted Zoroastrian dualism deeply in the Indo-Iranian past, claiming that the main change brought by Zoroastrianism was to draw a more precise picture of the previously "unconscious dualism" which now also obtained a clear ethical shape (Darmesteter 1971: 308) with Zoroaster being regarded as a mythical priestly hero (Darmesteter 1971: 195). Darmesteter's main scholarly legacy was a French translation of the Avestan texts published in three massive volumes in 1892–1893. The lengthy introductions to each of the volumes provided many new and still valuable insights, for instance into the ritual practices accompanying the texts. Contrary to his earlier work, Darmesteter here emphasized the importance of the later Iranian sources for an understanding of the text. From a mythical figure, Zoroaster thereby turned into a historical personality. Darmesteter embraced the pseudohistorical date of 258 before Alexander, found in some late (Pahlavi) sources, and took it as a starting point for a chronology of the *Avesta*. Because he believed he had detected Neoplatonist influences on early Zoroastrianism, he regarded the *Gāthās*, whose importance he emphasized throughout, as a product of the 1st century CE. This opinion, however, was unanimously dismissed by his contemporaries and subsequent generations of scholars.

Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900) invited Darmesteter to contribute an English translation of the *Avesta* for his series *Sacred Books of the East* (1879–1910; see Cereti 2014). Darmesteter managed to translate two of the three projected volumes (published in 1880 and 1883 respectively). The third one, containing the *Gāthās*, came to be entrusted to Lawrence Hayworth Mills (1837–1918), the professor of Persian at Oxford University.

The *Sacred Books of the East* also contained translations of major works from the Middle Persian literature, published from 1880 to 1897. This still cited but to some extent tentative work was undertaken by Edward W. West (1824–1905), a British railway engineer working in India. At the turn to the 20th century, the main body of Old and Middle Iranian Zoroastrian literature was thereby easily accessible to a larger audience. At the same time, the philological study of the Avestan corpus was put on a new basis by two events: the publication of the sixth and final critical edition of the main Avestan texts during the 19th century by the German Indo-Iranian scholar Karl Friedrich Geldner (1852–1929; see Schlerath 2001), first published from 1886 to 1895; and the appearance, in 1904, of the Avestan (and Old Persian) dictionary *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* by the German comparative philologist Christian Bartholomae (1855–1925; see Schmitt 1989). Bartholomae was also the author of a translation of the *Gāthās* (1905) largely accepted as the authoritative scholarly rendering of the voice of the prophet for at least half a century, if not longer (Kellens 2006b: 71). He also published a short study of Zoroaster's life and work (second edition 1924) in which he claimed that Zoroaster had fled from Western to Eastern Iran where he helped a king to adopt a sedentary lifestyle. The scholarly conversation about social conflicts representing the contexts of Zoroaster's career has continued throughout the 20th century (Kellens 2006b). Furthermore, Bartholomae emphasized monotheism and eschatology as key ingredients of Zoroaster's prophetic message.

Abraham Valentine Williams Jackson (1862–1937)

Abraham Valentine Williams Jackson (see Malandra 2008/2012), a pioneer of Iranian studies in America, was trained at Columbia University, where he also held appointments, from 1895 until 1935 as professor and head of the new department of Indo-Iranian Languages and Literatures. As many before and after him, he came to the study of Avestan, to which he contributed a grammar, from Sanskrit. In 1891 and 1892 he studied with Geldner in Germany. Jackson's main scholarly legacy is his book *Zoroaster: the Prophet of Ancient Iran* (1899), which provides a synthesis and discussion of all available sources on the life of Zarathustra. His aim with the book was to establish Zarathustra as "a historical character" (Jackson 1899: 3), although he acknowledges the "existence of legend, fable, and even of myth" (4) in dealing with Zoroaster's life. Despite his attempt to be cautious, contemporary readers will perhaps find his attempt at writing a biography of Zarathustra to be problematic and anachronistic. A Gujarati translation was published in Bombay in 1900. Jackson also wrote a comprehensive survey of Zoroastrian beliefs and history (originally in German, English translation in his collected essays, Jackson 1928: 1–215), where he emphasized the moral and ethical

character of the religion, the importance of eschatology, and the importance of the contemporary Zoroastrian communities as upholders of the “ancient creed” (1928: 214; see Ringer 2011: 107–109 for a critical discussion). In fact, Jackson, who travelled widely (and published travel books), visited both the Zoroastrian communities in India and Iran. In 1903, he traveled to Iran following the footsteps of Zoroaster with the plan “to traverse as much of the territory known to Zoroaster as I could” (Jackson 1906: 1), as he states in his *Persia Past and Present*, which contains a vivid and detailed description of the Zoroastrians of Yazd and their religious ceremonies (353–400).

Henrik Samuel Nyberg (1889–1974)

A very different image of Zoroaster and ancient Iranian religions emerged from the work of the Swedish scholar of Iranian and Semitic languages Henrik Samuel Nyberg (see Cereti 2004). As the title of his massive book *Irans forntida religioner* (“The Ancient Religions of Iran”) from 1937, translated into German in 1938, already suggests, Nyberg’s account reckons with the existence of several competing and conflicting religious groups in ancient Iranian history, making his approach a prototypical fragmentizing view in de Jong’s typology. According to Nyberg, it was not Zoroaster’s innovation which provoked the religious conflict he found in the *Gāthās*, but Zoroaster rather defended his community against a new orgiastic sacrificial cult (Nyberg 1966: 200). Only later did he become a founder of a new religion that fused elements of heterogeneous origins (Nyberg 1966: 267). Moreover, in Nyberg’s interpretation, Zoroaster himself was a professional ecstatic typologically akin not so much to the prophets but rather to Muslim Dervishes (Nyberg 1966: 265), messianic Mahdis or North American Indian apocalyptic figures (Nyberg 1966: 267). This interpretation has been fiercely contested by many scholars representing various backgrounds and ideological positions: including Nazis such as Walther Wüst (1901–1993) and his pupil Otto Paul, as well as the luminary of Middle Iranian studies Walter Bruno Henning (1908–1967; see Sundermann 2004a/2012), who because of his marriage to a Jew left Berlin and went to SOAS and later UC Berkeley. Other critics included the Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford University Robert Charles Zaehner (1913–1974) and the Belgian Iranist Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin (1910–2012), two prolific scholars who published specialized as well as general studies of Zoroastrianism (Zaehner 1961; Duchesne-Guillemin 1962b, English translation 1973). As is often the case in such debates, Nyberg’s views were oversimplified by his critics.

Nyberg was a teacher of the influential historian of religions Geo Widengren (1907–1996), who also published a handbook in which he surveys various epochs and regional varieties of pre-Islamic Iranian religion (Widengren 1965). Widengren repeatedly emphasized the Iranian (rather than Zoroastrian) impact on Judaism, Christianity, Manichaeism, and Islam. Both Duchesne-Guillemin and Widengren came, to different degrees, under the spell of the trifunctional theory of society (divided along the lines of priests, warriors, and herdsmen) proposed by the French scholar of comparative Indo-European mythology Georges Dumézil (1898–1986; see Lincoln 2010; see also Pirart 2007 for a critique of one crucial aspect of Dumézil’s interpretation of Iranian religious history).

Marijan Molé (1924–1963)

During the same period when Zaehner, Duchesne-Guillemin, and Widengren published their handbooks, the Slovenian scholar Marijan Molé presented a new interpretation of ancient Iranian religion in his massive thesis *Culte, mythe et cosmologie dans l'Iran ancien* of 1963 which also derived part of its inspiration from Dumézil and myth–ritual theories. Molé described ancient Iranian religion as a unitary system of myth, ritual, and ideology distinguished by different degrees of perfection, moral standards, and forms of social organization. The figure of Zoroaster plays a key role in the myth–ritual and eschatological scenario (re-)constructed by Molé and the “prophet” turns into a mythological figure rather than into a personality of history. Just as in the case of Nyberg some decades earlier, Molé’s innovative interpretation caused hostile reactions, among them once more by Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, but even more prominently by the famous French linguist Émile Benveniste (1902–1976; see Lazard 1989/2012) who refused to accept the innovative work as Molé’s doctoral thesis (see also Lincoln 2007: xiii–xv).

Mary Boyce (1920–2006)

In the footsteps of her teacher Henning, Mary Boyce (see Hinnells 2010) started her career with works on Manichaean hymns in Parthian, but her academic work took an unexpected turn as a result of a year (1963–1964) spent in Iran, mostly among Zoroastrians in Šarīfābād, a remote conservative village near Yazd. It seems that her view of Zoroastrianism right from the beginning was earmarked by her interaction with Zoroastrians. Apart from a romanticizing account of the religious life in Šarīfābād (Boyce 1977), her other monographs aim at presenting large-scale portrayals of Zoroastrian history, from its (reconstructed) prehistory down to the present. Her magnum opus, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, of which three volumes were published in 1975 (third edition 1996), 1982, and 1991 (co-authored with Frantz Grenet; see his “Zarathustra’s Time and Homeland: Geographical Perspectives” and “Zoroastrianism in Central Asia,” this volume) respectively, has sadly remained unfinished (see below).

Learned and meticulous to the extreme, her works on Zoroastrian history are based on a firmly essentialist vision of Zoroastrianism as given by the archaic priest-prophet Zoroaster, to whom she assigned an age of great antiquity (sometime between 1700 and 1200 BCE). Although she accounts for several historical changes, she emphasizes (as Spiegel had done before her) the fundamental continuity of what she terms “the tradition” from the earliest times to the present. One of her major insights was the coherence of the religion as encompassing such apparently diverse religious manifestations as archaic priestly speculations and contemporary everyday rituals in the 20th century, strongly reinforcing her notions of an “orthodox” strand of Zoroastrianism.

Boyce, whose main philological expertise lay in the realm of Middle Iranian languages, enjoys a singular position as a scholar of Zoroastrianism because she succeeded in integrating the study of Zoroastrianism into a consistent subject. She is the first Western academic who can be qualified as a Zoroastrian scholar per se. Her unfinished

work on Zoroastrian history is currently being continued by Albert de Jong, whose views of Zoroastrianism however are more diversifying (to invoke his own classification) and more up to date in methodological and theoretical terms, thus representing the next generation of scholars of Zoroastrian history. In fact, with the exception of Helmut Humbach (b. 1921), who began publishing on the *Gāthās* already in the 1950s, all the scholars writing in this *Companion* to some extent operate within or react to the Boycean legacy. Several of our contributors are her students, colleagues, or co-authors (de Jong, Grenet, Hinnells, Kotwal, Kreyenbroek, Rose, Shaked, Williams), and it is safe to say that scholars of Zoroastrianism can ill afford to not engage with her work, even if critically.

Contributions of Zoroastrian and Iranian Scholars

The reader will by now have noticed the complete absence of Zoroastrian scholars from our account. During the 18th and 19th centuries, when the academic study of Zoroastrianism developed in European Universities, Parsis were engaged in a fierce controversy on the calendar (Stausberg 2002b II: 434–440; see also Rose, “Festivals and the Calendar”; Sheffield, “Primary Sources: Gujarati,” this volume) that generated great scholarly interest in ancient Iranian texts and history.

Several Western scholars visited India during the 19th century, and Haug and Darmesteter lived or visited India and entertained professional and personal relationships with Parsis. Haug was asked by the Parsis to examine their two teaching schools for priests, which he did; he was also offered a permanent position but declined. In a letter dated October 27, 1864, published in an academic journal in 1865, Haug (1865: 305) states that he de facto held the position of a spiritual leader of the Parsi community (Stausberg 1998e: 337). On the other hand, some Parsis developed a genuine interest in a scholarly study of their own religion. Kharshedji Rustamji Cama (1831–1909; see Russell 1990), a Parsi businessman, attended some European universities, among others Erlangen, where he studied Old and Middle Iranian languages with Spiegel in 1859. He later translated some of Spiegel’s works and also the writings of some other European scholars into English. After his return to India Cama started to teach philological methods to a number of young Zoroastrian priests, several of whom would later produce valuable studies of ancient Iranian texts, for example Tehmuras Dinshaw Anklesaria (1842–1903; see JamaspAsa and Boyce 1987a), Kavasji Edulji Kanga (1839–1904), and Edulji Kersasji Antia (1842–1913; see JamaspAsa and Boyce 1987b). Cama also had some impact on the early career of the most famous Zoroastrian theologian of the 20th century, Manekji Nusservanji Dhalla (1875–1956; see JamaspAsa 1996) who went to New York in order to study with Jackson at Columbia University. Dhalla, a priest, was the first Zoroastrian to receive a doctorate from a Western university. After his dissertation on Avestan prayer texts, the *Niyāyišn*, together with their translations in Middle Persian, Sanskrit, and Gujarati (1908), Dhalla published several general works on Zoroastrianism (Dhalla 1914, 1922, 1930a, 1938; on Dhalla see also Hinnells, “The Zoroastrian Diaspora” and Sheffield, “Primary Sources: Gujarati,” this volume).

After Dhalla, a handful of other learned Parsi priests have had exposure to Western universities. An exceptionally early appointment was that of Jehangir Tavadia (1896–1955; see Kotwal and Choksy 2013), a Parsi who received his doctorate at the University of Hamburg and subsequently taught Iranian languages there from 1937 to 1954 (he returned to India in the war years). There were also a number of joint research projects. The most versatile and congenial communication partner for a number of scholars from several countries has been Dastur Feroze Kotwal (b. 1936), a student of Mary Boyce at SOAS where he earned his doctorate, formerly principal of a priestly training college, and now retired head-priest of a fire-temple in Mumbai (for his biography, see Boyce 2013; for his bibliography see Choksy and Dubeansky 2013: xvii–xix). Dastur Kotwal’s skills in Middle Persian and encyclopedic knowledge of Zoroastrian priestly history and practices are universally appreciated as an invaluable source of information (see e.g., his collaboration with Philip Kreyenbroek, “Prayer,” this volume).

The tradition of high priests in India who are knowledgeable in their own tradition as well as trained and proficient in philological approaches, however, seems to be coming to an end. Among the younger priests we cannot see anybody who is qualified and willing to continue the legacy of the scholar-priests. The younger generation is represented by Ervad Ramiyar Karanjia (b. 1965), the Principal of the Dadar Athornan Boarding Madressa in Mumbai (see his personal website www.ramiyarkaranjia.in and Stausberg and Karanjia, “Rituals,” this volume), one of two institutions for the professional training of future Zoroastrian priests.

Turning to 20th-century Iran, the study of the *Avesta* in the framework set by European scholarship started with the nationalist poet Ebrāhīm Pūrdāvūd (1886–1968) who had gone to Europe as a student. In Berlin he married a German and got increasingly interested in Orientalist scholarship. An Indian Zoroastrian organization convinced him to undertake the project of translating the *Gāthās* into modern Persian. Pūrdāvūd stayed in India for two years working on that project; his translation, for which he emphatically rejected any connection to the later Zoroastrian traditions (in order to represent the text in its pristine purity), was based on the work of the European philologists, especially Bartholomae. Pūrdāvūd held the first chair of ancient Iranian literature at the University of Tehrān (see also Stausberg, “Zoroastrianism in Modern Iran,” this volume). He also translated most other Avestan texts into Persian. These translations (which are still available in many bookshops in Iran) have served as a starting point for most subsequent Persian translations of these texts with several learned Persian non-professional scholars still regarding Pūrdāvūd as their inspiration.

The history of religions as an academic subject in the modern Western sense is not institutionally grounded in Iran, but some scholars of Iranian studies such as the historian of Persian literature Zabih’ollāh Ṣafā (1911–1999) have written general books on ancient Iranian religion. There are a number of luminaries of Persian Iranian scholarship whose work has bearings on the study of Zoroastrianism. They have not been mentioned here because they never or rarely published on Zoroastrianism directly. Several works of Western scholars, including books of Nyberg and Boyce, have in recent decades been translated into Persian.

Compared to the *Avesta*, the philological study of the Middle Iranian texts (which are linguistically much closer to modern Persian) has fared much better in Iranian

academia. Two outstanding scholars who have translated important Middle Persian texts into New Persian were Mehrdād Bahār (1930–1994) and Aḥmad Tafazzolī (1937–1997; see Gignoux 2012), whose death under unknown circumstances has given rise to suspicions about the politically sensitive nature of pre-Islamic Iranian studies in contemporary Iran. Both scholars studied with Mary Boyce in London, and Tafazzolī also with Jean Pierre de Menasce (1902–1973; see Gignoux 2014), a major scholar of Middle Persian philology, in Paris. In Iranian academia, the work of both scholars is continued by two of their former collaborators, Jāleh Amūzegār (b. 1939) and Katāyūn Mazdāpūr (b. 1943) respectively. Mazdāpūr is the first Iranian academic scholar from a Zoroastrian background. This may also have laid the ground for her substantial work on the local dialect spoken among the Zoroastrians in Yazd (Mazdāpūr 1995–). There are now also some younger Zoroastrian scholars of Zoroastrianism in Iran: Katāyūn Nemīrānīyān teaches at Šīrāz University and Bahman Morādiyān (b. 1972) at the University of Tehrān, and Farzāne Goštāsb (b. 1973) at the Tehrān Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies.

In departments of Iranian studies at Western universities one finds an increasing number of students and staff with Iranian backgrounds but with an academic socialization in Western universities. The same trend can also be seen with regard to the study of Zoroastrianism. There are now Zoroastrians who have received doctorates from the *École pratique des hautes études* (EPHE, Paris), SOAS (London), and Harvard University (including a co-editor of this volume). Jamsheed Choksy (b. 1962), a Parsi raised in Sri Lanka and a Harvard graduate (PhD 1991), is a full professor in the Department of Central Eurasian Studies at Indiana University in Bloomington (see his chapter, “Religious Sites and Physical Structures,” this volume).

The Impact of the Study of Zoroastrianism on Modern Zoroastrianism

While the specialist techniques of linguistic and historical analysis are quite remote from the concerns of believers, the outlines of the ivory tower of the academic study of Zoroastrianism always remain vaguely visible from the point of view of a fair number of Zoroastrians. The high rate of literacy and the advanced educational attainment of the communities keep the barriers between scholars and believers relatively low. We have already noted that several scholars had/have personal ties to Zoroastrians (as suppliers of materials and information, key informants, colleagues, and friends). Moreover, some Zoroastrian organizations, institutions, and individuals have regularly invited scholars to interact. In 2002, two wealthy Parsi ladies from Mumbai produced a massive illustrated volume on Zoroastrian art, religion, and culture, the most up-to-date and complete survey on Zoroastrian history currently available in English (Godrej and Mistree 2002). The sheer number and superb quality of the more than 1,000 illustrations (some conveniently assembled from previous publications, but many originals) will grant this volume a lasting place in libraries of Zoroastrian scholars.

Scholarly writings that are published in English (or in Persian with regard to the Iranian communities) are of course easier to absorb. The attempt to create meaning out

of obscure texts and coherence out of traditional practices as routinely attempted by scholars may seem attractive to a religious community devoid of a group of professional interpreters similar to Jewish rabbis or Christian theologians. This is why scholars of Zoroastrianism with the social capital of the Western academy and the legacies of colonial knowledge production and Orientalism behind them can relatively easily slip into the role of theologians (for a very explicit early case see Haug above and Lawrence H. Mills (1837–1918); see Stausberg 2002c II: 103–104).

Scholars of Zoroastrianism, on their side, in their construction of meaning do not shy away from interpretations that may sometimes seem like theological reconstructions. Kellens has recently – and to our minds rightly – pointed to the recurrent theological concern of Western scholarship (Kellens 2006b: 62). In another publication he has shown that different interpretations of the Avestan adjective *arədra-* (for which he seems to suggest a meaning of ‘competent’) seems to attest the tendency, among his fellow philologists, to be more “Zoroastrian” than Zoroastrian high priests (Kellens 2003: 220).

Apart from this general framework, through figures such as Cama and Dhalla Western scholarship has also had direct impact on modern Zoroastrianism. In these cases, the stimulus of Western interpretations went into programs of ritual and theological reform (Stausberg 2002c II: 104–111; Ringer 2011: 110–141). Especially the philological discovery of the special linguistic status of the *Gāthās* and their interpretation as the authentic words of the “prophet” proved to be a turning point in the religious self-understanding of all modern Zoroastrian groups and communities, both in India and Iran. In India, it also served as an antidote to missionary propaganda (Stausberg 1997; Sheffield 2012: 167–185; see also Palsetia 2006 for responses to conversions to Christianity). The focus on the *Gāthās* and their presumed message (see also Part I of this volume) has encouraged the devaluation of many traditional practices as secondary developments or meaningless additions to the original and authentic kernel. Based on that ideological premise, the social elite of the 20th-century Iranian Zoroastrian community has embraced quite radical religious changes of de-ritualization (see Stausberg, “Zoroastrians in Modern Iran,” this volume). But alternative scholarly approaches may also provide the intellectual backup to go against such changes. Especially the interpretation of Mary Boyce has served as a powerful stimulus to reevaluate the significance of “the tradition” (see above). In India, a former student of Boyce, Khojeste Mistree (for an interview with him, see Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001: 126–144), some thirty years ago started a traditionalist revitalization movement (called “Zoroastrian studies”) which is now globally active and has set up a wide range of religious and social activities, especially to promote a strong campaign of boundary maintenance (Stausberg 2002c II: 141–144; Luhrmann 2002). His claims of Zoroastrianism as an “ethnic” religion are largely buttressed by citing the views of his teacher, Boyce (Mistree 1982).

Nonetheless, Western scholarship has, in some cases, been rejected as an inadequate approach to truly understanding Zoroastrianism. Fortunately, there have been no campaigns of the sorts faced by some colleagues studying Hinduism, Islam, Bahāʿism, or Sikhism. Relations between scholars and the various Zoroastrian communities are, in general, amicable. In India, the most coherent rejection came from an early

20th-century esoteric movement known as *Ilm-e Khshnoom* ('Path of Enlightenment' or 'Blissful Knowledge'; see Hinnells, "The Parsis," and Sheffield, "Primary Sources: Gujarati," this volume), which suspects, among other objections, that a study of the texts based on comparative grammar is misleading (Stausberg 1998e: 341–343). For example, then Ervad Kaikhusroo N. Dastoor (b. 1927), a retired lawyer who now serves as one of the highest-ranking Zoroastrian priests in India, opined:

The western studies with their 19th century paradigms are incapable of comprehending even the lowest mystical level. Mysticism is a taboo for them. One of their paradigms is that each word of the Gatha must have only one meaning and it has only one message from the Prophet. The confounding oddity is that in spite of this belief, they have as many highly variant translations as there are translators. (Dastoor n.d.)

Dastur Dastoor is correct that Western scholarship is not based on principles of mysticism; the fact that the *Gāthās* have many possible readings is reflected in our editorial decision to showcase different hermeneutical/scholarly approaches to these songs. Like Dastur Dastoor, many believers point to the widely divergent translations of the *Gāthās* as evidence for the failure of academic scholarship to account for the "true meaning" of the "prophet's" words and, hence, for the "essence" of Zoroastrianism. In Iran, the satirist and scholar Zabīḥ Behrūz (1889–1971; see Sprachman 1990) was an antidote to the school founded by Pūrdāvūd. While the latter was derived from Western scholarship (and continues to have relationships with Western scholars), Behrūz rejected Western scholarship as imperialist and Orientalist (and that already prior to Said's anti-Orientalist manifesto). His theories have had a certain influence on Iranian academia and also on Zoroastrians. Similarly, among many Iranian Zoroastrians, the interpretations of Boyce have not evoked much sympathy.

In Russia, where new self-identified Zoroastrian groups have emerged in the post-Soviet period (Tessmann 2012; Stausberg and Tessmann 2013), we find a different line of communication between scholars and believers since some Russian scholars have openly voiced negative views about these emerging religious groups (Tessmann 2012: 124–132).

Emerging Trends in Recent Scholarship

Despite a general tendency to paint gloomy pictures of the general state of scholarship on Zoroastrianism and the personality clashes that have obfuscated constructive discussions in the past, a review of the current state of the art reveals a high degree of new research activities. To us it seems that the past forty years have been the most fruitful decades of Zoroastrian studies so far in its history. While the quality of scholarly work is always a matter of dispute, the sheer range of topics covered by recent research is unprecedented. In a survey article, Stausberg (2008a) has sketched eighteen major subjects of innovative recent research activities. Topics include textual studies, law, astrology, secondary sources, religion and politics, regional diversity in Zoroastrianism, marginalization of Zoroastrianism in Iranian history, impact on and interaction

with other religious traditions, the modern communities in India, Iran, and various “diasporic” settings as well as gender, rituals, and outside reception. Many of these are dealt with in this *Companion* (which, in general, given the fields of specialization of most of our contributors, tends to privilege the pre-modern periods).

Not all of these subjects are new. Textual and philological studies, for example, have a long history. Other subjects, however, had been all but neglected in previous research. In some cases, innovations are reinterpretations of available data based on established methodologies. In other cases, new source materials are being explored for the first time. A third type of innovation results from the application of new methodological and theoretical insights or agendas from other research fields to the study of Zoroastrianism (see e.g., Vevaina 2010b for methodological borrowings from Jewish studies). Sometimes, and predictably, the study of Zoroastrianism begins to explore topics that have achieved a higher status and greater prominence in neighboring fields and the study of religion’s in general. Consider the fields of law, minorities, gender, diasporas, identity, politics, oral literatures, and the emphasis of diversity. Some “turns” have so far hardly been followed up in Zoroastrian studies. Think of the “iconic” or the “auditory” turns and the increasing attention paid to material culture in the study of religion’s. In ancient Iranian history, archaeology remains largely disintegrated from the study of religious history. Much more prosaically, one of the main challenges for progress in the study of Zoroastrianism, however, will be to do essential groundwork in filling the lacunae of hitherto neglected – post-Islamic era – corpora of source materials in Pāzand, Sanskrit, Persian, Gujarati, and even English.

In addition to the existing contributions, we as editors would have liked to have commissioned several additional chapters that we believe would have been useful for specialists and general readers alike. For example, Orientalism and Zoroastrian studies, philology and questions of textual transmission, the visual arts and material culture, the role of religion in (Parsi) literature, questions of boundary maintenance such as conversion and intermarriage, secularization and the breakdown of religious authority structures, and Zoroastrianism and media (from ancient inscriptions and coins to manuscripts, pamphlets, community magazines, fiction, and the internet) are just some of the topics that we were unable to accommodate due to concessions of space or the inability to find scholars who could write those chapters. These topics nonetheless represent desiderata and we hope that the *Companion* will provide a stimulus for new types of questions to be raised and fresh approaches to be pursued in the study of Zoroastrianism in the years to come.

Part I

Zarathustra Revisited

CHAPTER 1

Zarathustra's Time and Homeland Geographical Perspectives

Frantz Grenet

Does the *Avesta* contain any reliable evidence concerning the place where the “real” Zarathustra (i.e., the person repeatedly mentioned in the *Gāthās*) lived? The answer is no. Was Zarathustra's legendary biography associated to specific regions? The answer is probably yes, as far as one line of the Zoroastrian tradition is concerned. Can we determine the regional and, to a certain extent, the archaeological context where his followers lived a few centuries later, before they entered recorded history? The answer is definitely yes.

Zarathustra's Time and Homeland: Approximations and Dead Ends

The only relatively reliable criterion – allowing for a certain degree of latitude – for attributing a date to the historical Zarathustra is a linguistic one based on the evident archaisms of the *Gāthās* (and other Old Avestan texts in which his name does not appear), in comparison with the *Young Avesta*. The archaeological evidence is generally assumed to be of a negative character as far as the *Old Avesta* is concerned. As we will see, the archaeological situation of the regions where Zarathustra is generally supposed to have lived (i.e., southern Central Asia) does not correspond to what can be inferred from the *Old Avesta*. The Young Avestan corpus, in the form that it has come down to us, can neither be far more ancient nor far more recent than the Old Persian of the Achaemenid inscriptions (i.e., the 6th century BCE). The late Gherardo Gnoli, quite isolated in this contention, argued for Zarathustra's date being c. 620–c. 550 BCE as

given by the Zoroastrian tradition and also reflected in Greek, Hebrew, Manichean, and Islamic sources (“258 years before Alexander,” a figure for which indeed no convincing explanation has been proposed) (Gnoli 2000; response by Kellens 2001b). Almost all the philologists today consider that the evolution between Old and Young Avestan requires a gap of several and perhaps many centuries. Estimations by authoritative specialists vary from 1700–1200 BCE (Skjærvø 1994) to 1200–1000 BCE (Kellens 1998: 512–513).

The vocabulary of the Old Avestan texts also offers some indications. The material realities are entirely pastoral: one finds a mention of “dwelled-in abodes” (*šiiēitibiiō vižibiiō*, Y 53.8) but we find no references to towns, temples, canals, or farming (except one possible mention of *yauua-* ‘barley’, ‘grain’, or ‘beer’, Y 49.1). Not one recognizable geographical name is mentioned. This picture seems to rule out southern Central Asia, where an urban civilization – the so-called Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex or BMAC – based on man-made irrigation flourished in the first half of the 2nd millennium BCE and left a certain cultural heritage in the second half. In particular, this consideration does not leave much room for Sistān, which has been proposed by some (Gnoli 1980: 129–158). Attempts to recognize manifestations of a “proto-Zoroastrianism” – a less than agreed upon concept – in the palatial sanctuaries of the Merv oasis in the early second millennium (e.g., Sarianidi 2008) are rejected by almost all other archaeologists (Francfort 2005: 277–281). On the other hand, older proposals to recognize the Gathic language as the direct ancestor of Chorasmian (Henning 1956: 42–45) have now been abandoned. All things considered, our chronological and cultural parameters tend to suggest locating Zarathustra (or, at least, the “Gathic community”) in the northern steppes in the Bronze Age period, prior to the southward migration of the Iranian tribes (Boyce 1992: 27–51), thus favoring some variant of the Andronovo pastoralist culture of present-day Kazakhstan around c. 1500–1200 BCE (but see Kuz'mina 2007: 349–450 for an original location of the Iranian tribes in the Urals and westwards). The complete absence of any material remains related to that religion in the area and period under discussion does not contradict the hypotheses formulated here, as it is generally held that Zoroastrian ritual practitioners did not feel the need for any permanent architectural structures before the late Achaemenid period.

The Location of the Legendary Zarathustra

Greek authors appear to have been acquainted with traditions according to which Zarathustra originated from Bactria (references gathered in Jackson 1899: 154–157, 186–188; Boyce 1992: 1–26). On the other hand, the traditions preserved in the Pahlavi books mention either Azerbaijan or the place “Rag,” sometimes explicitly identified as Ray in Media, as his birthplace. In order to reconcile these accounts some commentators state flatly that “Ray is in Azerbaijan” (e.g., *PVd* 1.15; *Bd* 33.28), which contradicts Sasanian administrative geography. As for Vīštāspa’s “kingdom” where Zarathustra is supposed to have moved subsequently, it is sometimes identified with Sistān (*Abdīh ud Sahīgīh ī Sagestān*), though other traditions mention Samarkand (*ŠĒ1*) or Bactria (the version echoed in the Iranian national epic of Ferdowsī).

Only the claim of “Rag” is found in texts which can safely be held as deriving from passages in the *Young Avesta*, most probably the lost *Spand Nask* which is the direct or indirect source of all the legendary biographies of Zarathustra (*Dk* 7.2.9–10, 7.2.51, 7.3.19; *WZ* 10.14–15). Modern authors have, in general, followed the tradition in identifying this place as Ray in Media. Gnoli (1980: 64–66), then Grenet (2002b; 2005: 36–38), consider it a different place located in the eastern Iranian countries, like all “Aryan countries” mentioned in the list of *Vd* 1 (see the following section). Indeed the “Rag” of the Pahlavi books stems from *rayā θrizantu* ‘Rayā of the three tribes’ mentioned as the twelfth country of this list (*Vd* 1.15). The Ahremanic plague attributed to it is *uparō.vimanah-*, generally translated as ‘extreme doubts’. In another Avestan passage (*Y* 19.18) it is stated that Rayā is the only country which has only four “masters” (*ratu*) instead of the usual five: one for the family / house, one for the clan / village, one for the tribe, and above them Zarathustra himself, but no master for the country as such. Consequently it is called *zaraθuštriš* ‘belonging to Zarathustra’ or ‘Zoroastrian’. These two sets of characteristics have provided the foundations for an imposing edifice, built step by step by successive scholars. In the last elaboration of this theory (Humbach 1991 I: 45–46), Rayā, a city in Media, would have become “a sort of Mazdayasnian Vatican whose pope called ‘Zarathustra’ is simultaneously the worldly ruler of the country and its supreme religious authority.” As for the “extreme doubts,” they would refer to theological disputes characteristic of such a major spiritual center. But these theories have recently been exposed to philological criticism: the expression understood as “extreme doubts” could rather mean something more mundane, probably “neighbourhood quarrels” (Kellens *apud* Grenet 2005: 36). In fact, the same epithet is also used for Nisāiia, that is, Juzjān (*Vd* 1.7), where nobody has ever proposed to locate a great Zoroastrian theological school. As for the country “belonging to Zarathustra” or to some holder of this title, one should not speculate on the meaning, which might represent no more than a scholastic conclusion inferred from its political fragmentation: *rayā θrizantu-* ‘of the three tribes’, was, it seems, a divided country not organized above the tribal level. Therefore, the only possible master for its whole Mazdean population might have been no other than Zarathustra himself, the archetype of every Mazdean man. This last circumstance, which probably initially had no particular bearing on Zarathustra’s biography, eventually gave rise to the idea that Rayā was his homeland.

In fact, this pseudo-biographical elaboration went further. Both *Dk* Book 7 and the *Wizīdagīhā ī Zādspram* (which also drew from the *Spand Nask*) describe how Zarathustra had the vision of Vohu Manah. These accounts are loaded with topographical details, which could provide a decisive clue to the actual location of the country of Rayā. In *WZ* 20.1–21.4 we find:

It is revealed that after the passing by of thirty years since he existed, after Nowruz, there was a festival called Wahār-būdag, in a place particularly well known where people from many directions had come to the festive place On the passing away of the five days at the festive place ..., Zarathustra went forth to the bank of the river Dāitiā in order to squeeze the *haoma* The river was in four channels and Zarathustra crossed them, the first one was up to the feet, the second up to the knees, the third up to the parting of the two thighs,

the fourth up to the neck When he came out of the water and put up his cloth, he saw the Amahraspand Wahman in human form.

If we look along the actual course of the Daryā-ye Panj, the river bordering present-day Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and to which the name of the Varjhuuī Dāitiīā was attached since at least the Achaemenid period (see below the section on the Airiianəm Vaējah), we find one ford which corresponds very well to this description. This ford, known as the Samti or Badakhšān ford, has always had a great importance, as it provided the main passage between the Kulyāb plain in the north and the high valleys of western Badakhšān in the south. It was thus described in a geographical account derived from British intelligence in the 19th century: “The river which is here divided into four channels with only a few paces of dry land between them is fordable. The current is rapid in the two middle channels, and the water waist deep” (Adamec 1972: 148). Even more interesting for our purpose is the fact that the region immediately to the southeast of the ford is still known as Rāgh, a name already attested since the 7th century CE by the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (602–644 CE), who listed it as a separate political entity (Watters 1904–1905 II: 273). In the 19th century this country is described as a confederation of separate valleys (Adamec 1972: 139–140), which calls to mind the “Raghā of the three tribes” in *Vd* 1.15. In the only fragment of Zarathustra’s legend preserved in the Avestan language (*Vd* 19.4), Rayā is not named but Zarathustra’s father’s house is said to stand ‘on the meander of the Darəjī’ (*darəjiia paiti zbarahi*). It is at least tempting to identify this river with the Dargoidos mentioned by Ptolemy (*Geography* 6.11.2), in a position corresponding to the present Kokcha, the Rud-e Badakhšān in north-eastern Afghanistan.

To conclude: Rāgh in Badakhšān has a stronger claim than Ray in Media to be the Rayā of the *Vd* 1 list. The authors of the *Spand Nask*, perhaps dating from the late Achaemenid period, were, to judge from derived Pahlavi writings, well informed of the geography of Eastern Bactria and willing to promote the claims of this country as Zarathustra’s homeland.

The Geographical Horizon of the *Young Avesta*

It has long been recognized that some of the *Yašts* have a very precise setting in some east Iranian countries, albeit different ones in each case. The *Mīhr Yašt* clearly centered on the Bāmiyān and Band-e Amīr area, upon which Mithra’s gaze surveys those “Aryan countries” stretching along the rivers which spring from the central Hindukush. On the other side, the *Zamyād Yašt* continuously celebrates the area now known as Sistān, with its rivers flowing into the Hāmūn Lake; here the ultimate saviors will eventually come on Mount Ušidarəna, the mountain “with reddish cracks,” an appropriate descriptive epithet for the Kūh-e Khvāje Island where an important Zoroastrian sanctuary stood in the Parthian and Sasanian periods.

Besides these pieces of regional patriotism, the *Young Avesta* contains what purports to be a comprehensive list of countries created by Ahura Mazdā, each affected by a specific plague sent by Ahreman. This list constitutes the first chapter of the *Vīdēvdād*.

In the following list the name of the country is given in bold, followed by its Ohrmazdian characteristics (positive or neutral), then its Ahremanic ones.

1. **Airiianəm Vaējah**: 'Aryan rapids(?) of the Good (river) Dāitiā' / red snake (or dragon), demons-created winter (gloss: which lasts ten months);
2. **Gāuuu**: inhabited by the *suγδa*- 'Sogdians' / thorns fatal to the cows;
3. **Mouru (Margiana)**: strong, supporting the religious order / [*unclear*];
4. **Bāxōi (Bactria)**: beautiful, with uplifted banners / Barvara people and [*unclear*];
5. **Nisāiia**: lying between Margiana and Bactria / evil [neighborhood] discords;
6. **Harōiuua (Herāt)**: [*unclear*] / [*unclear*];
7. **Vaēkərəta**: inhabited by the *dužaka* / the *pairikā xnaθaitī* whom Kərəsāspa seduced;
8. **Urvā**: rich in pastures / evil masters;
9. **Xnəpta**: inhabited by the Vəhrkāna(?) people / sodomy;
10. **Harax'aitī (Arachosia)**: beautiful [with uplifted banners] / neglectful abandonment of corpses (*nasuspaia*);
11. **Haētumaņt (Helmand)**: rich, possessing the *x'arənah* 'fortune, charisma' / evil sorcerers;
12. **Rayā**: of the three tribes / evil neighborhood discords;
13. **Caxra**: strong, supporting the religious order / cooking of carrion;
14. **Varəna**: with four corners (gloss: birthplace of Əraētaona who killed Aži Dahāka) / untimely menstruations, non-Aryan masters;
15. **Hapta Həndu**: [no Ohrmazdian characteristic] / untimely menstruations, excessive heat;
16. **Over (...) the Raḡhā**: [no Ohrmazdian characteristic] / demons-created winter, plunderer overlords.

The list starts with the country called Airiianəm Vaējah where winter lasts ten months, and it ends up with another country also affected by harsh winters, the Raḡhā. Of a total of sixteen countries, seven have always been identified beyond any doubt, as they kept their names until historical times or even today. Four of these countries are at the beginning of the list, directly following Airiianəm Vaējah: Gava-Sogdiana, Margiana, Bactria, Nisāiia said to be "between Margiana and Bactria" and therefore corresponding to Juzjān in northwest Afghanistan. Then comes the sixth country of the list, Harōiuua (the Herāt region). In addition, the tenth and eleventh countries are respectively Arachosia, the Qandahar region, named by its river Harax'aitī and Sistān, named by the Helmand River.

Almost all these countries are situated beyond the present borders of Iran, to the east and northeast. The only exception is Sistān, and only for its westernmost part. It is only possible to draw the Iranian plateau into the picture of early Zoroastrianism by recognizing one or several of these regions in the remaining countries in the list. This has been the tendency of Zoroastrian scholarship since the Sasanian commentators of the *Avesta*, and all modern scholars have followed this viewpoint until the postwar period. But Gnoli (1987) has brilliantly argued for a scheme that pushes the list definitively outside the boundaries of Iran and substantially into Pakistan, with the Hapta Həndu

recognized as the “seven rivers” (*Sapta Sindhava*) of the *Rigveda*, that is Punjab plus the Indus plus the Kābul River. Since then, attempts have been made to reinsert some countries of the Iranian plateau (at least Gorgān and the Median Ray, see Humbach 1991 I: 33–36; Witzel 2000).

Vogelsang (2000) then Grenet (2005) have argued for a return to Gnoli’s conclusions, keeping in mind that some progress can be made using the same principles as he did. These principles are: first, a skeptical attitude towards identifications in Pahlavi texts, most of which were clearly motivated by mythic relocalizations of the tradition to more central regions of the Sasanian Empire. Second, great attention has to be paid to the geographical characterization of the countries as they appear in the list. Sketchy as they are, they sometimes offer precious clues to anybody familiar with geographic conditions in Central Asia. To these methodological points one should add the recognition of a simple and logical order. This was in fact the weak point in Gnoli’s system: in particular, the middle part of the list as he reconstitutes it seems to proceed in huge zigzags, for example moving from Urvā in the Ghaznī region to Xneṭta, put in eastern Bactria on the basis of slim evidence from the Greek author Ctesias, then leapfrogging to Arachosia and Sistān. Moreover, the subsequent sequence, namely Rayā–Caxra–Varāna, is made to go in the opposite direction from the preceding one, because Gnoli wants to put the particularly holy place Caxra as close as possible to Sistān, which he considered the real focal point of the *Vīdēvdād* list.

Before reconsidering the list entirely, it might be worth examining the starting point, namely Airiianəm Vaējah, more precisely the “Airiianəm Vaējah of the Good River.” If this country is in central Afghanistan, as assumed by Gnoli and most modern scholars, one wonders what the “Good River” can be. This difficulty was first challenged when it was adduced by Steblin-Kamenskii (1978) that the name of the “Good River,” Varjhuuī, had survived until the early 20th century under the form Wakh, transcribed by the Greeks as the Ochos, and designating the river today known as the Daryā-ye Panj on the upper course of the Oxus. The latter name, which eventually spread to the whole river downstream, initially belonged to a right-hand side tributary still known locally as the Wakhsh. Consequently, the cold country of the *airiianəm vaējō varjhuuīā dāitiiaiiā*, best translated as ‘the Aryan rapids of the Good River’, would correspond rather well to the water system of the Pamirs and the pre-Pamirian highlands.

It is now time to reconsider the entire list of countries. If we take the Pamirian region as its starting point, it appears that the first part of the list, in which all countries can be easily identified, displays an order that is quite simple. As can be seen on Figure 1.1, there are neither to and fro movements nor important gaps, but rather several continuous sequences arranged in an anticlockwise order. The first chain of countries comprises Sogdiana, then Margiana; therefore it moves along the Good River, the Oxus. It is worth mentioning that Sogdiana, which occupies the second place in the list, has recently provided the earliest archaeological evidence compatible with Zoroastrian cult practices: from the pre-Achaemenid period, post-exarnation grave pits at Dzharkutan near Termez (Bendezu-Sarmiento and Lhuillier forthcoming); from the Achaemenid period, a deposit of exarnated bones of humans and dogs at Samarkand (unpublished excavations by Igor’ Ivanitskii 1992) and a few sanctuaries centered on a fire place, one at Sangirtepe near Shahrisabz (Rapin and Khasanov 2013: 48–51), a plausible one at

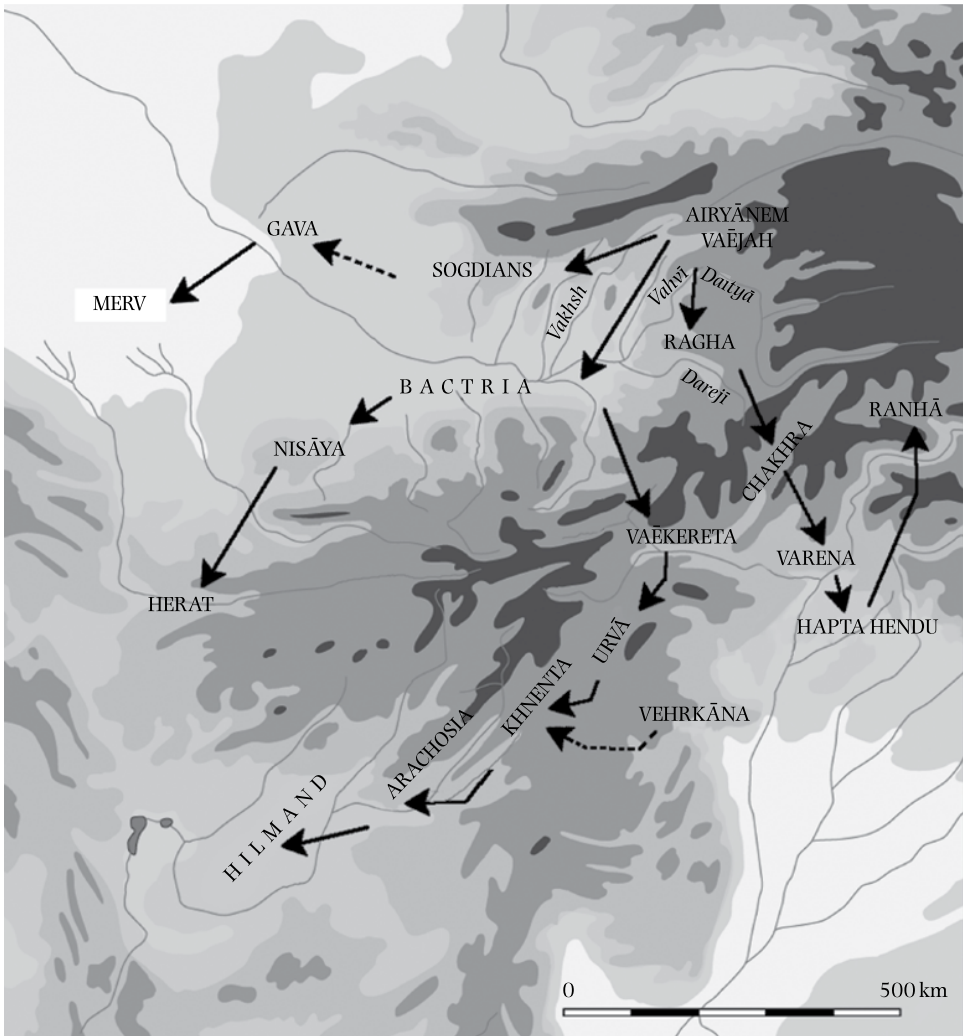


Figure 1.1 Chains of countries in the first chapter of the *Vīdēvdād*.

Koktepe near Samarkand (Rapin 2007: 36–42 with figure 4), and another one at Kindiktepe near Termez (Boroffka 2009: 138–141 with figure 11; see now Rapin forthcoming).

The second chain, starting again from near the Pamir, comprises Bactria, Juzjān, and Herāt. It proceeds along the northern foothills of the Hindukush. In Bactria the urban site Češme-ye Šafā has provided the only example of an Achaemenid stone fire altar known to date, a monumental structure set in a building (Grenet 2008 [2012]: 30 with figure 1).

After this section come the countries Vaēkərəta, Urvā, Xnənta, followed by the more familiar Arachosia and Sistān. It has long been recognized that Vaēkərəta is most likely the same country as the one inhabited by the spirit Vaikṛtika in the Buddhist text *Mahāmāyurī* (72), namely Kapisa, the Kābul region. This brings us back again to the

foot of the Pamir, while the two last names on this section invite us to look for a location on the southern foothills of the Hindukush. Consequently, Urvā should correspond to the Ghazni region. Two arguments militate in favor of this identification. First, Urvā is also mentioned in the *Zamyād Yašt* (Yt 19.67) as a river eventually feeding the Hāmūn Lake, and in popular conception the Ghazni River was considered as linked in some way with the Arghandāb. An even more cogent argument comes from its specific epithet “rich in pastures.” The 19th-century travelers all mentioned the capacity of the plain immediately to the north of Ghazni for maintaining a huge cavalry, and more to the west the Dašt-e Nāvūr is still today a major summer station for Pashtun nomads. The next country, “Xnəṭta inhabited by the Vəhrkāna,” would be grossly out of place in Gorgān, where some modern commentators of the *Vīdēvdād* list have tried to place it. Their assumption is based on the presence of a common ethnonym *vṛk* ‘wolf’ and on the proposed emendation of Xnəṭta to *Xrənda, later Hirand, today the river of Gorgān. But tribal names formed on a base “(of) wolves” are quite widespread and, for example, we know of some of them in Wazīristān: the *vṛkī* mentioned in the *Rigveda*, and possibly the place-name Urgun. The Avesta Xnəṭta is therefore to be located near this region, more precisely in the Tarnak valley, set between the Ghazni and Arghandāb rivers, and where the Wazīristān herdsmen have their winter pastures.

The last chain of countries starts with Rāgh in Badakhšān and eventually brings us to northern India, the Hapta Həṇḍu. An isolated attempt to shift this country to the upper Oxus basin (Humbach 1991 I: 34 n. 52) is implausible in view of the Ahremanic plague of Hapta Həṇḍu: the “excessive heat.” The preceding country, Varəna, which shares the same evil, has been identified with Buner on the basis of the *Mahāmāyurī* list, which has already provided the decisive clue regarding Vaēkarəta. Between Rayā and Varəna comes Caxra, which logically would correspond to Chitral. There is, however, a possible southern alternative with the Lōgar valley near Kābul, as its town is still called Chakhr. In this case Varəna could correspond not to Buner but to Bannu, which was also called Varnu in Indian literature. In any case, the list eventually ends up near its starting point with the last country: Raḡhā, Indian Rasā, where winter lasts long as in the Airiianəm Vaējah. This country is endowed with mythological features, but it also has some basis in reality, namely being an upper tributary of the Indus.

These few points of uncertainty do not break the logical construction of the list: it is a group of four sequences each starting from the same area and each arranged according to the principle of continuity. This is exactly the underlying principle of the list of countries in the inscriptions of Darius (DB), except that the general order is clockwise in the inscriptions and anticlockwise in the *Vīdēvdād*.

A second observation is the total exclusion of the Iranian plateau. Everything stops on the Merv–Herāt–Sistān line. As a cluster of countries, it seems to prefigure two historical formations which were later created by horsemen descended from the north: the Indo-Scythian kingdoms in the 1st century BCE, then the early Hephthalite Empire in the 5th century CE. The early list in the *Vīdēvdād* bears witness to a period when the main focus of the Zoroastrian priests, or maybe rulers, was still along the Indian border, with combined or alternating phases of defense and encroachment. This impression is reinforced by the mention of “non-Aryan rulers” as the specific plague of Varəna, or “plunderer lords” in Raḡhā. No wonder the *Avesta* associates these southeastern

countries with typical “frontier-heroes”: the dragon-slayer *Θraētaona*, born in *Varəna*, and *Kərəsāspa*, connected with *Vaēkərəta*, who vanquished bandits and demons near Lake *Pišinah*, still existing with this name to the South of *Qandahar*. The grazing lands of southeast Afghanistan are in fact overrepresented in the list, suggesting a horizon centered on *Arachosia* (which, on completely independent grounds, is held as being the region from where the Avestan tradition was introduced in Persia under the early Achaemenids; see Hoffmann and Narten 1989). The latter place, *Haraxvaitī*, is described as being “with uplifted banners,” an epithet it shares only with *Bactria*. Indeed in the Achaemenid and probably even pre-Achaemenid period the sites of *Qandahar* and *Bactra* match each other on both sides of the *Hindukush*. They were the largest fortified sites in this period, suitable for military and religious gatherings.

At the time of the composition of *Vd 1* the reception of the Zoroastrian faith by the *Medes*, then by the first Achaemenids, still lay ahead, or maybe it was not a primary concern from the viewpoint of those who composed the text. *Deioces* (the first Median king), *Cyrus*, and *Darius* were still very much in the wings. It is difficult to imagine that this text was composed anywhere other than in South Afghanistan and anytime later than the middle of the 6th century BCE.

Further Reading

A decisive turn in the approach to these questions was taken by *Gnoli* (1980), who presented and assessed all the previous literature on the subject. He was the first to adduce the results of archaeological research in southeast Iran and Central Asia and to locate all countries mentioned in the *Young Avesta* to the east of the Iranian plateau. Concerning *Zarathustra's* date he subsequently rallied to the late date transmitted by the Zoroastrian tradition (*Gnoli* 2000,

a position already held by *Henning* 1956). The present author does not follow him in this step. The discussion which followed *Gnoli* (1980) is summarized in *Grenet* (2005), where all relevant references can be found. The views presented here concerning the *Rayā* country were put forward by the author in previous articles and are not necessarily shared by others, though no refutation has been published hitherto.

CHAPTER 2

Zarathustra's Time and Homeland Linguistic Perspectives

Almut Hintze

Zoroastrianism, like any religion or cultural system, may be studied from either the internal or the external point of view. The internal, or emic, perspective arises from investigating the religion from within the system, as from the point of view of one of its adherents. By contrast, the external, or etic, perspective is that of the outside observer (Headland, Pike, and Harris 1990; Knott 2010).

From the internal perspective, after earlier attempts involving other individuals, including Yima (*Vd* 2.2) and Gaiiō Marətan (*Yt* 13.87; Stausberg 2012c), the god Ahura Mazdā communicated the Mazdayasnian religion most successfully to humankind through a man named Zarathustra. He conveyed it in the form of the *Avesta*, and especially the *Ahuna Vairiia* (or *Yaθā Ahū Vairiīō*) prayer (*Y* 27.13). Zarathustra was 'born' (*zātō Vd* 19.46) the son of Pourušaspa and Duyδōuuā (*FrD* 4), and his birth marks the end of the lawless and violent power of the *daēuuas*, or 'demons', and the beginning of the spreading of the Mazdayasnian religion on earth (*Yt* 19.80–81, 13.94). His followers acknowledge Ahura Mazdā as their god and Zarathustra as their role model by declaring themselves to be 'Mazdayasnian Zarathustrian(s)' (*mazdaiiasnō zaraθuštriš Y* 12.1). They perceive the birth of Zarathustra to be a turning point in world history, which is divided into the periods before and after Zarathustra. As soon as Zarathustra is born, Evil, embodied by Anra Mainiiu and his minions, the *daēuuas*, starts to withdraw from the surface of the earth and hide underground. Its eventual complete removal is the culmination and end (*frašō.kərati-*) of world history.

From the external perspective Zoroastrianism is viewed in its relationship to the history and prehistory of the oldest Iranian languages and religions. The sources, which include the sacred texts and literature produced by adherents of the religion, are examined with a view to contextualizing them in space and time and understanding their languages and conceptual worlds. Furthermore, the examination includes investigating how what we observe from an external point of view relates to the beliefs upheld by

insiders. In view of the fact that the earliest mention of the name of Zarathustra is in a Greek source dating from the mid-5th century BCE (Kingsley 1995), and that outside the *Avesta* there is no evidence for the person Zarathustra from the presumably prehistoric times of the religion's inception, the question of his time and homeland is essentially that of the date and provenance of the earliest expression of Zoroastrianism, the *Avesta*.

Linguistic analysis shows that the *Avesta* is comprised of texts dating from different periods (Skjærvø 2003–2004; Hintze 2009a). The oldest stratum is formed by the *Ahuna Vairiia* prayer (Y 27.13), the *Gāthās* (Y 28–34, 43–51, 53) the *Ā Airiiōma Išiia* or *Airiiaman* prayer (Y 54.1) and the *Yasna Haptaŋhāiti* (Y 35.2–41). In recent years arguments have been put forward for a middle layer, termed Middle Avestan (Tremblay 2006b; Kellens 2007b: 104–110, but see the caveats of Skjærvø 2009: 45), which includes the 'Formula of the Cattle Breeder' (*Fšūšō Maθrō* Y 58) and some other texts, and which would represent the ancestor of the youngest stratum, usually referred to as the *Young(er) Avesta*. As no absolute dates for any of these texts are available, any dating has to be based on a relative chronology, on the one hand, of how the various strata of Avestan texts relate to one another, and, on the other, of how such strata relate to literature in related languages, particularly Old Persian and Vedic Sanskrit. The question of the date of the *Old(er) Avesta* is connected with that of its homeland if it is assumed that it originated in Proto-Iranian times when the Iranians were still one people and before they migrated southwards into Iran, presumably in the course of the first half of the 2nd millennium BCE (Schmitt 1987). As the *Avesta* is the vehicle of the Zoroastrian religion, its presence in any given area is taken as an indication of the practice of those beliefs there.

External Evidence for the *Avesta*

The earliest absolute dates of texts in any Iranian language come from the beginning of the reign of the Achaemenid king Darius the Great (522–486 BCE), who recorded his ascension to power in Elamite, Babylonian, and Old Persian rock inscriptions at Bīsotūn in Media (Huyse 2009). The religious affiliation of the Achaemenids has been much debated, but compelling evidence suggests that they were familiar with the *Avesta* (Skjærvø 1999, 2005a; Lincoln 2012b; but doubted by de Jong 2005: 88–90). That the Mazdayasnian religion was firmly established in western Iran and Asia Minor by the beginning of the Achaemenid period also emerges from the accounts of the Persian religion and its customs by the Greek historian Herodotus (c. 480–425 BCE; de Jong 1997: 76–120) and from the invocation of the *ahurānīš*, an epithet of the waters in the *Yasna Haptaŋhāiti*, found in the Aramaic version of the trilingual inscription from Xanthos in Lycia, dating from 358 BCE and discovered in 1973 (Boyce and Grenet 1991: 476; Hintze 2007: 235).

The earliest evidence for *mazdā*- 'Wise One' as the name of a deity is widely thought to be found in the collocation ^Pas-sa-ra ^Pma-za-āš in the neo-Assyrian cuneiform tablet K252, col. 9, line 23 (Menzel 1981 II: T122). Although the document comes from the library of Assurbanipal (668–c. 630 BCE), it could be a copy of a middle-Assyrian text. If, as is widely assumed, the expression represented the two parts of the name of the principal Zoroastrian god *ahura-mazdā*- (Dandamaev and Lukonin 1989: 321–322), then the case ending would be marked only in the second half. However, since the

assumption of a compound equivalent to OP *A^huramazdā* is difficult to reconcile with both the fact that in the Assyrian form *s* has not changed to *h*, whereas it does elsewhere in Iranian, and that the determinative DINGIR marks each of the two words as a separate divine name, one might consider the possibility that two, rather than one, Iranian divinities are intended. Since in most, though not all, cases on the tablet each line presents a separate deity, the two divine names could have constituted a fixed collocation. The expression would then be a rendering of what in Old Avestan is **ahurā* 'the lords', the plural being formed, like OAv. *mašiiā* 'mortals', with the ending of the Indo-European collective, and *mazdā* 'the Wise one'. The Gathic formula *mazdāscā ahurāñhō* has been shown to result from the inversion of an earlier (unattested) invocation **ahurāhah mazdāscā* 'O lords and the Wise one' (Narten 1982: 55–58, 65–66). The Assyrian *ᵐas-sa-ra ᵐma-za-āš* 'the lords, the Wise one', then lists the two parts of the uninverted collocation asyndetically in the nominative and in their proto-Iranian phonetic shape. The assumption that the pan-Iranian sound change of Iir. **s* > Iranian *h* was still in progress at the time Iranian speaking tribes moved into western Iran agrees with the hypothesis that such a phonetic development also affected geographical names in the Indo-Iranian borderlands when the Iranians adopted them from earlier Indo-Aryan inhabitants. The hypothesis entails that immigrating tribes of Iranian tongue would have taken over names such as *sārasvatī-*, *sarāyu-* from the earlier, Proto-Indo-Aryan population which by then would have migrated further into India. The names were subsequently subject to Iranian sound laws, including the change **s* > *h*, and eventually resulted in Av. *harax^aaitī-*, OP *harauvatiš*, the name of the country Arachosia, and YAv. *harōiuua-*, OP *haraiva-* (< Iir. **saraiua-*), NP *harē*, the present day region of Herat (Hintze 1998b: 144–149).

While *ahura-*, corresponding to Vedic *ásura-*, is inherited from Indo-Iranian (Hale 1986), this is probably not so in the case of *mazdā-* because there is no Vedic deity of the name **medhā-* 'Wise one', although personified *medhā-* might be attested in a personal name (Hintze 1998a: 156, fn. 58). However, the fact that the invocation *mazdāscā ahurāñhō* is used not only in its original vocative function 'O Wise one and the lords' (Y 30.9) but also as the subject of a sentence (Y 31.4) indicates that it was already being treated as a petrified formula and no longer felt to be part of the living language at the time the *Gāthās* were composed. This suggests that the collocation, and hence also the divine name *mazdā-*, already existed in the pre-Gathic religion (Narten 1982: 62–66; 1996: 83–87). A characteristic innovation of the religion of the *Avesta* is that the worship of *Mazdā* is coupled with the rejection of the gods of the Indo-Iranians, the *daēuuas*. The mindset of a person who sacrifices to *Mazdā*, the *daēnā- māzdaiiasni-*, is opposed to that of those who sacrifice to the *daēuuas*, the *daēnā- daēuuaiiasnanqm*. The fact that the adjective *māzdaiiasni-* was formed by means of an archaic derivational mechanism no longer productive in historical times points towards the prehistoric origins of the religion of the *Avesta* (Benveniste 1970; Hintze 2013b: 24, 28 fn.18).

The language of the *Avesta*, which constitutes the earliest surviving document of any Iranian language, is so closely related to that of the earliest sources of the Hindu tradition, the Vedic texts, that it is possible to find not only words but entire phrases which may be transposed from one idiom into the other merely by observing phonological rules (Sims-Williams 1998: 126). In the absence of absolute dates for

any of these sources and on the basis of a relative chronology most scholars assume that the Vedic texts cover a time span of approximately one thousand years, from c. 1500 to 500 BCE, with the oldest texts, the hymns of the *Rigveda*, being composed between 1500 and 1200 BCE, and the three other *Samhitās* somewhat later, between 1000 and 800 BCE (Jamison 1991: 1–16). Iranian loan words in Vedic sources have been adduced to provide clues for establishing the approximate time by which specific Young(er) Avestan forms had developed, although details remain uncertain. In particular, the *Atharvaveda*, which is generally dated around 1000 BCE, mentions the name of the tribe of the *bāhlika-* (AV 5.22), a people thought to be the Bactrians located in the far north-west of the Vedic tribes. The Vedic form seems to be borrowed from the local Iranian name of Bactria (Witzel 1980: 91). In the Bactrian language sources the name βαχλο is attested in the 4th century CE on Kushano-Sasanian coins and in a letter written on leather (BDNA cd). Although there is currently no evidence for another Bactrian word containing the cluster *-xl-*, βαχλο could result by regular sound development from **bāxθrī-*, with *-xl-* < **-xθr-*, just as *-rl-* < **-rθr-* in ορλαγνο ‘Vərəθrayna’ and μορλο ‘death’ < **mṛθra-* (Sims-Williams 2007: 19, 74–75, 202, 235). Since in the *Avesta* the form expected according to Avestan sound laws would be **bāxəδrī-*, cf. the noun *baxəδra-* ‘share’, the actual Young(er) Avestan form of the name of Bactria, *bāxδī-*, could be a Bactrian dialect form, with *-δ-* either substituting non-Avestan *-l-* (Witzel 1980: 113, fn. 78a) or representing the middle step, which cannot be later than the early Achaemenid period, of the specifically Bactrian shift of post-consonantal *θr > δ > l* (de Blois 2013: 270; Tremblay 2004: 137). Vedic *bāhlika-* would then, like Av. *bāxδī-*, be based on the Bactrian dialect form, but it is difficult to imagine that the phonological developments exemplified by the form βαχλο should have taken place as early as around 1000 BCE. It is conceivable that the Bactrian dialect form *bāxδī-* entered the recitation of the *Avesta* at some point in the course of the east Iranian oral tradition, just as features of other dialects did (see below), and a similar scenario might need to be considered for the *Atharvaveda* form *bāhlika-*.

An instance of an Iranian form in Vedic texts is the verb *śavati-*, which in the Late Vedic *Nirukta* is said to mean ‘to go’ in the language of the Kambojas, a people of the Indo-Iranian borderlands. The stem of the form agrees with YAv. *šauua-* ‘sets in motion’, in which the initial IIR cluster **čī-* has become palatal *š* (< *šī* < **čī*), as compared to *šī-* in OAv. *šīiauaa-* and *čī-* in Ved. *cyáva-* (Witzel 1980: 92; Boyce 1991: 129–130). However, since the development of **čī-* to *š-* and the form *šav-* ‘to go’ are not restricted to YAv. but are attested in Bactrian, Sogdian, and other Middle Iranian languages, Ved. *śavati* is not conclusive either.

Linguistic and Literary Relationship between the *Older* and *Younger Avesta*

Significant phonetic and morphological differences between the language systems of Old and Younger Avestan and Old Persian require the assumption of considerable diachronic (temporal) and diatopic (regional) dimensions of the texts. In comparison to Old Avestan, Young(er) Avestan generally represents a more advanced stage of language

development. Most notably, the Old Avestan verb with its distinct present, aorist, and perfect stems still functions along the lines of the IE tense-aspect system. The Young(er) Avestan and Old Persian verb, by contrast, has virtually lost the aorist and developed a temporal present–preterite system based on the present stem. The relationship between Old and Young(er) Avestan is subject to an ongoing debate. The model according to which Younger Avestan is the chronological successor to Old Avestan (de Vaan 2003: 8–10) contrasts with the view that Old and Younger Avestan descend from one common Proto-Avestan ancestor. The latter model is supported with reference to dialectal differences between Old and Younger Avestan. Such differences include instances in which Younger Avestan agrees with Vedic against Old Avestan (Kellens 1989c: 35–37; Skjærvø 2003–2004: 26–35, 2007a: 854–855; Tremblay 2006b: 241–243).

While such linguistic differences have also been interpreted in diatopic terms to the exclusion of the diachronic dimension (Panaino 2007b: 24, 29–30), the Young(er) Avestan liturgical texts warrant the assumption that when they were composed the *Old(er) Avesta* not only already existed but also did so with the same internal arrangement and central importance for the *Yasna* ritual as it has in its present form (Hintze 2002). Moreover, the literary character of the liturgical *Younger Avesta* reveals that the *Older Avesta*, the *Yasna Haptaŋhāiti* in particular, served as its compositional model. That the *Younger Avesta* presupposes the older one as a fixed, petrified text is indicated by the numerous quotations and adaptations from both the *Gāthās* and the *Yasna Haptaŋhāiti*. Such citations may be either verbatim or adapted in varying degrees to different literary contexts. For example, Y 14.1, which appears in Old Avestan garb and has been included by scholars amongst the Middle Avestan texts, takes its compositional model from the *Yasna Haptaŋhāiti* passage Y 41.5, but is replaced by its Younger Avestan version when recited as Vr 5.1 in the *Vīšperad* ceremony (Hintze 2013a):

Old Avestan: Y 41.5 θβōi staotarascā maθranascā ahurā mazdā
aogəmadaēcā usmahicā vīsāmadaēcā

We are declaring ourselves, are aspiring and making ourselves available
to be your praisers and chanters, O Wise Lord.

Middle Avestan: Y 14.1 vīsāi və aməšā spəntā
staotā zaotā zbātā yaštā framarətā aibijarətā

I shall make myself available, O Life-giving Immortals,
as your praiser, priest, invoker, sacrificer, reciter, welcomer.

Young Avestan: Vr 5.1 vīse vō aməša spənta
staota zaota zbāta yašta framarəta aibijarəta

I am making myself available, O Life-giving Immortals,
as your praiser, priest, invoker, sacrificer, reciter, welcomer.

In the oral, and later written, tradition of the *Avesta*, the respective idioms of the three passages, belonging to chronologically successive linguistic strata, continued to be distinguished. Instances like this testify to the continued compositional practice of Zoroastrian priests in the same vein as that of the *Older Avesta*.

That a considerable time elapsed between the composition of the *Old(er)* and *Young(er)* *Avesta* is also suggested by the presence of doctrinal developments (Kellens 1987; Stausberg 2002b: 117–156). The Zarathustra myth as summarized above is fully developed in the *Young(er)* *Avesta*. Moreover, *Young(er)* Avestan priests, while being inspired by the *Old(er)* *Avesta* in their compositions, developed their own exegetical tradition while the *Old(er)* *Avesta*, whose language gradually became archaic and eventually obscure, required explanation. This emerges from *Young(er)* Avestan commentaries on Old Avestan texts, particularly on the three holy prayers (the *Ahuna Vairiia*, the *Aṣəm Vohū*, and the *Yefhe Hātəm*) in Y 19–21 respectively. They indicate that an exegetical tradition, documented by the Pahlavi translations and commentaries of the *Avesta*, existed not only in Middle Iranian times but already in the *Young(er)* Avestan period. This suggests that from the earliest times there was a continuous tradition during which the religious system developed and solidified.

The Provenance of the *Avesta*

It is not possible to locate the Avestan language geographically by associating it with any particular known dialect. While its geographical horizon is that of Southern Central Asia and Eastern Iran, it displays no phonological features characteristic of Eastern Iranian languages of later periods (Sims-Williams 1998: 136). As not only its composition but also the transmission of the *Avesta* was oral, by the time it was eventually committed to writing at some point in the, presumably, late Sasanian period (5th to 6th centuries CE) phonetic features from different local dialects seem to have entered its pronunciation at various stages of its transmission. Some of the peculiarities which are at variance with standard Avestan sound laws have been attributed to North-East Iranian (especially Sogdian), others to an otherwise unattested South-East Iranian ‘Arachotic’ dialect, and others again to Old Persian (Hoffmann and Narten 1989: 39–49, 77–85 with references; disputed by Tremblay 1996: 104–106). That local phonetic features entered the recitation of the *Avesta* is corroborated by the *Aṣəm Vohū* prayer in a Sogdian fragment (Gershevitch 1976; Hintze 1998a: 155–156; Skjærvø 2003–2004: 31).

While no geographical names occur in the *Gāthās*, the *Young(er)* *Avesta* mentions identifiable toponyms from Southern Central Asia and the Indo-Iranian borderlands (Gnoli 1987). Places such as the *Vourukaša* Sea, Lake *Kāsaoya* (the modern Lake Hāmūn) and the river *Haētumant* (the modern river Helmand in Sīstān) play significant parts in epic and theological imagery in the *Avesta*. Some of the beliefs, such as the birth of the “victorious” *Saošiiant*, or world savior, are especially connected with the land of Sīstān. Cultic practices involving excessive spilling of blood by killing animals, burning of the juniper plant, and bodily convulsions of the *daēuua*-worshipping *Vyamburas*, described and rejected in Yt 14.54–56, are similar to those observed in the early 19th century among the “Kafirīs” in Nuristan in northeastern Afghanistan. They are still attested among the Kalash Kafirīs and other peoples in the Hindukush (Schwartz 1990).

The insider perspective presents *Airiiana Vāējah* of the good (river) *Dāitiā* as the homeland of the Mazdayasnian religion. This was the land where Ahura Mazdā offered

sacrifices to Anāhitā and expressed the wish that he might succeed in persuading and teaching Zarathustra “to think, speak and act according to the Mazdayasnian Religion” (Yt 5.17–19). Yima, who had previously declined Ahura Mazdā’s invitation to serve the religion (Vd 2.1–4), was, like Ahura Mazdā, ‘renowned’ (*srutō*) in that land (Vd 2.20–21), as was Zarathustra, since it was there that he had recited the *Ahuna Vairiia* prayer for the first time:

Y 9.14 *srūtō airiēne vāējahe*
tūm paoiriō zaraθuštra
ahunəm vairīm frasnūuuaiō
vībərəθβantəm āxtūrīm
aparəm xraozdiēhiia frsrūiti

Being renowned in *Airiiana Vaējah*,
 you, O Zarathustra, were the first
 to recite the *Ahuna Vairiia*,
 divided into phrases, four times,
 the last time with louder recitation.

That Zarathustra brought to mankind the religion that focuses on the worship of Mazdā and rejects the *daēuuas* is a conviction that has been upheld in the Zoroastrian tradition throughout the centuries. This emerges, for example, from the colophon following the *Memoir of Zarēr* in the oldest extant Pahlavi manuscript, the codex MK dating from 1321 CE (Jamasp-Asana 1913 II: 17):

MK fol.19v1–4: *namāz zardušt ī spitāmān kē āwurd dēn ī weh mazdēsniān abēzag rawāg pad*
ayārīh ī wištāsp-šāh ud zarēr ud spandyād.

Homage to Zarathustra, the Spitamid, who brought the good religion of the Mazdā-worshippers, the pure (and) current, with the help of King Wištāsp and Zarēr and Spandyād.

Starting from the ritual site where Zarathustra spread out the sacrificial straw, the “good Mazdayasnian religion,” expressing the mindset of one who sacrifices to Mazdā, rather than the *daēuuas*, expanded over the seven regions:

Yt 13.94 *ušta nō zātō āθrauuu*
yō spitāmō zaraθuštrō
frā nō yazāite zaoθrābiō
stərətō.barəsmā zaraθuštrō
iḍa apqm vījasāiti
vaṣṣ^v hi daēna māzdaiiasniš
vīspāiš auuī karšuuqṇ yāiš haptā

Hail to us, (for) the priest
 Spitama Zarathustra has been born.
 Zarathustra will worship for us with libations,
 with sacrificial straw spread out.

From here then will spread
 the good, Mazdā-worshipping religion
 over all seven regions.

The title *aθauruuan-*, which here applies to Zarathustra, is a general term for ‘priest’, one of whose tasks was to travel far and wide and spread the religion (Y 9.24, 42.6; Yt 16.17, quoted in Hintze 2009b: 178). One of its derivatives, the noun *aθauruna-* ‘priestly service’, describes an activity which any member of the community, regardless of age or gender, is encouraged to pursue after having undergone the necessary training. Chapter 5 of the priestly treatise entitled *Hērbedestān* seems to suggest that each family was expected to send out at least one of its members for ‘priestly service’ within a certain period of time for the dual purpose of disseminating the teachings of the Mazdayasnian religion and of carrying out various religious and ritual activities. The newly formed communities would then in turn have to send out some of their own members for *aθauruna-*, thus creating a domino effect which would account for the spread of the Mazdayasnian religion throughout the lands inhabited by Iranians (Hintze 2009b).

Conclusion

Linguistic, literary and conceptual characteristics suggest that the *Old(er) Avesta* pre-dates the *Young(er) Avesta* by several centuries. Although it is currently not possible to correlate archaeological and linguistic evidence, the most likely model historically is that Iranian tribes were on the move southwards into Iran some time around the mid-2nd millennium BCE. The provenance of the *Avesta* and of the Zoroastrian religion would then coincide with that of the Avestan language and early Iranians, presumably in the area of Southern Central Asia. The prehistoric origin of the religion is also indicated by the archaic formation of the adjective *māzdaiiasni-* characterizing the worldview, or *daēnā-*, of someone who worships Mazdā rather than *daēuuas*. Traces in the *Hērbedestān* for the idea of its planned dissemination suggest that the religion had a particular prehistoric starting point. The latter also forms part of the Zarathustra myth, according to which he started the Mazdayasnian religion in *Airiiana Vaējah*.

Further Reading

The most thorough archaeological attempt to resolve the problem of the Indo-Iranian migrations is Kuz'mina (2007). A good survey of the complex issues involved is Lamberger-Karlovsky (2002), which includes not only the author's own views but also comments by other experts in different disciplines, including linguistics, anthropology, and archaeology. Hintze (2009a) and Huyse (2009) survey Avestan and Old Persian literature respectively, and Jamison (1991: 1–41) surveys Vedic literature.

Sims-Williams (1998) gives both a concise presentation of Old Iranian grammar in comparison with Vedic and Middle Iranian and an annotated bibliography. The most recent survey of Avestan grammar is Skjærvø (2009), and for Old Avestan syntax see West (2011). The most detailed discussions of the relationship between Old(er) and Young(er) Avestan are Tremblay (2006b) and, with diametrically opposed conclusions, Skjærvø (2003–2004) and Panaino (2007b).

CHAPTER 3

Interpretations of Zarathustra and the *Gāthās*

CHAPTER 3A

The *Gāthās*

Helmut Humbach

Spitāma Zaraθuštra (Zarathustra) is regarded by his followers, the Zoroastrians, as the prophet of the Mazdayasnian (Zoroastrian) religion. This view is also shared by the majority of non-Zoroastrian scholars. Non-Zoroastrians have, of course, the privilege to doubt that Zarathustra was a prophet in the strict sense of the word. As a matter of fact, it is possible that the Avestan term *mazdaiasnō zaraθuštriš* ‘Mazdayasnian [and] Zarathushtrian’ in its first occurrence, the Old Avestan Profession of Faith (Y 12.1–6), was no tautology as it is now generally assumed: It could originally have denoted the Mazdayasnian of Zarathushtrian observance, the existence of other observances of Mazdaism being implied, such as that of the Median Magi. However that may be, Zarathustra is the outstanding figure of the early political and religious history of the Iranian tribes.

Neither the geographical nor the chronological frame of the rule of Zarathustra’s host, protector, and sponsor *Kauii* ‘Prince’ Vīštāspa are known to us. Of some interest is, though, the name of Tūra Friiāna (Y 46.12), the ancestor of an undefined group partaking in a ritual arranged by Vīštāspa; the name points to inhabitants of the Turanian steppes of Central Asia (understood as “non-Iranians” in the *Younger Avesta*). Certainly more fruitful is the examination of the prophet’s own name.

Scholars agree that Av. *Zaraθuštra* is a compound with the well-attested Avestan form of the word for ‘camel’ (Av. *uštra-*) as its second member (parallel to Av. *aspa-* ‘horse’ in the name of *Haēcaṭ.aspa*, Y 46.15), desperately thinking of the prophet’s transmitted name as a variant of a hypothetical **Zaraṭ.uštra*, which would be absolutely irregular. In my opinion the problem cannot be resolved but by analyzing *Zaraθuštra* as *Zaraṭ.huštra*

with *huštra* ‘camel’ instead of *uštra*. Underlying *huštra-* must have been a variant of *uštra-* in Zarathustra’s mother tongue, a solution which is of some historical consequence: Zarathustra’s native speech was not Avestan, as is generally taken for granted by believers and scholars, but it must have been the Old Iranian pre-form of a dialect related to the language of Sogdiana (the Central Asiatic lands between the Oxus and Iaxartes) documented since the 4th century CE. In Sogdian the word for ‘camel’ is attested as *xwštr*.

Old Avestan as adopted by the prophet for ritual purposes was a priestly language of an ancient tradition going back to Indo-Iranian prehistory. The re-evaluation of all values in connection with the downfall of the old gods attributed to Zarathustra by tradition did not extend to a notable number of inherited ritual terms and expressions such as the enigmatic phrase “footprints of (personified) cream-offering” (Y 50.8), which has a clear parallel in the Old Indian *Rigveda* (RV 10.70.8).

The *Gāthā* collection comprises seventeen songs (*hāiti*). According to their respective meters, they are arranged in five *Gāthās* (Y 28–34, 43–46, 47–50, 51, 53). Extraordinary in many respects is the fifth *Gāthā*, which covers just one song (Y 53). It was composed by Zarathustra to accompany a private event, the marriage of Pourucistā, his youngest daughter, with Djāmāspa (YAv. Jāmāspa). In this song the new couple, and the other participants in the ceremony as well, are given some instructions, partly of a sexual character, for a happy and successful married life. Unfortunately the song is enigmatic in several respects. Not only are numerous details poorly transmitted in the manuscripts, but even the name of the bridegroom, which, as suggested by the Pahlavi tradition, would be expected to be given in a separate stanza, is completely lost.

Seven of the remaining sixteen songs altogether show thirteen occurrences of Zarathustra’s name (Y 28.6, 29.8, 33.14, 43.8, 16, 46.13, 14, 19, 49.12, 50.6, 51.11, 12, 15). In reply to the question “Who are you?” the prophet introduces himself most explicitly as “Zarathustra” (Y 43.7–8). Yet elsewhere he speaks of himself in the third person, which, according to several scholars, would be a strong argument against his authorship, but which is likely a figure of speech. With regard to the expected reaction it is the natural desire of any worshipper to not only be noticed by the deity but also identified correctly by him or her.

When Zarathustra suggests himself as being the author of a *Gāthā* song, this does not necessarily mean that he would be its author in the modern sense of the word. In principle it is easily possible that he himself, no less than his rivals, borrowed smaller or larger portions of text from previous poets.

Most of the sixteen songs in question mainly follow an associative way of thought, displaying a quite simple poetic technique which mainly operates with lexical and grammatical variations of single terms or of sets of nouns such as “thought, word, action/deed” and “family, community, tribe,” or of the degrees of adjectival comparison such as “good, better, best.” Particularly notable is the stylistic feature of synecdoche in “my soul” for “I” (Y 50.1), “the soul of the cow” for “the cow” (Y 29.1), “the intellects of the benefactors” for “the benefactors” (Y 46.3).

Two songs stand out, Y 29 and Y 47. The former is a product of archaic mysticism: The soul of the cow (i.e., the cow) complains about being mistreated by her owner (compare Pahl. *a-paymān kušēd* ‘slaughters incorrectly’), whereby it attracts the attention of

Ahura Mazda. After discussing the problem with his own functions as Fashioner of the Cow and as its Shaper, Ahura Mazda refers the cow to Zarathustra, be it to become the prophet's own or be it to be correctly sacrificed by him. The latter, Y 47, the shortest of all the songs, excels by its highly developed compositional form: It is a literary piece in the true sense of the word.

Except for a few rhetorical apostrophes of humans it is Ahura Mazda who is constantly, and sometimes desperately, addressed by the prophet in the sixteen songs in question. Ahura Mazda is the supreme being, creator of good things, taking note of all good and evil deeds in order to reward the good and to punish the bad, be it immediately or after the end of life or even at the final judgment (Y 44.19). Growing miraculously and, nevertheless, remaining the same forever (Y 31.7), he restores and increases his magic power by consuming 'integrity and immortality' (Av. *hauruuatāt, amərə(ta)tāt*, Y 34.11), a poetical circumscription of the oblation, which at the prophet's time consisted at least of meat, water, milk, and haoma (compare Y 8.1 in Young Avestan and Greek *nectar* and *ambrosia* 'drink and food for the gods'). It is the poet's aim to please Ahura Mazda by praising him and, at the same time, displaying his own knowledge by embellishing, through poetical elaboration and variation, the few substantial pieces of information he has to offer. Yet this is just the outward function of the recitation of a Gathic song which, in a way, is similar to the performance of a moralizing stage play. It is evident that, by complaining and even lamenting about his poverty and by persistently praying to Ahura Mazda for support and munificence, the prophet indirectly addresses his sponsors whom he expects to act as agents of the deity, partly intimidating them (Y 44.19) and partly arousing in them the hope for an excellent future in this or the other world. Unintentionally completing a kind of circle he finally conveys and entrusts his property (including the material support obtained from his patrons) to Ahura Mazda (Y 34.3).

Zarathustra's authority and the magic power attributed to him by the public depended to a large extent on the number of cattle and men available to him (Y 46.2). This is particularly obvious in the first stanzas of *Yasna* 46, which poetically describe an earlier phase of the prophet's career, typical of a priest who in his youth had left home to do missionary work, looking for sponsors to perform sacrifices for them in order to earn religious merit.

Zarathustra's religion is characterized by a strict pan-dualism. The beings of both the spiritual and the material world, the things they produce and the processes they effect, either belong to the good or to the evil side. The *Gāthās* are focused on what is, as seen from the point of view of the respective speaker, good and profitable for himself, for his family, and for his community. Profit is no sin as becomes clear from the great importance the prophet attaches to his remuneration, the sacrificial fee (Y 44.18–19).

The triad of the good and bad "thoughts, words, and actions" by which humans are judged is extended in one famous passage (Y 30.3) to the pentad "the twin spirits, dreams, thoughts, words, and actions." This reveals psychological considerations, with "spirit" the individual pre-condition and "dream" the subconscious pre-stage of the process of thinking of, speaking of and carrying out any action. Yet, at the same time the passage in question is one of the two instances of the highly condensed phrase "the twin Spirits (active/relevant) in the first (existence)" as contrasted with "at last, in

the last (existence)" (Y 30.3–4, 45.2–3), which accentuate the part played by the Beneficent and the Harmful Spirit in the prophet's view of things.

The loss of paradise and the intrusion of evil into the world were caused by the horrible rebellion against Ahura Mazda proclaimed by the otherwise highly meritorious primeval King Yima (Y 32.8). Yima's name "twin" might originally have denoted a hermaphrodite, but in the prophet's philosophy Yima was a twin in himself. In him the two spirits, twins themselves, started to fight with each other as they do on the microcosmic level in most human individuals, and on the macrocosmic level in the spiritual and material world as a whole.

Yima's sin marks the start of the period of mixture of good and evil in the world. Its end, the salvation by extermination of evil, be it individually or collectively, is envisaged in Y 45.2, where the Beneficent Spirit (or, metonymically, his adherent) is called up to separate from the Harmful Spirit.

It is difficult to make out more details of the prophet's view of the twin spirits, since, for metrical and similar reasons, he often enough replaces the attributes "beneficent" and "harmful" of the two Spirits with "good" and "evil" respectively. With these, which in the strict terminology as manifest in the *Younger Avesta* are reserved for Good and Evil Thought, he blurs the theologically relevant difference between the terms spirit (*mainiiu*) and thought (*manah*). The underlying terminology is dissolved even completely by him in the first stanzas of Y 32. Having approached with the evil purpose of getting hold of the offerings intended for Ahura Mazda (Y 32.1) the *daēuuas* are addressed by the prophet as "seeds from Bad Thought" (Y 32.3), which certainly stands for underlying "seeds from the Harmful Spirit." This poetic license is due to considerations of rhythm and, therefore, does not allow any conclusion as to what the prophet may actually have taught his adherents. Much more consistent in this respect than the Gathic is the Young Avestan scheme according to which it is not Bad Thought but the Harmful Spirit who is the chief and, in consequence, the producer of the *daēuuas*.

The function of the Beneficent Spirit in relation to that of Ahura Mazda is problematic. Substantial information is missing even in Y 47, the song which particularly deals with the Beneficent Spirit and in which Ahura Mazda is called his father (Y 47.3) as he is called that of Truth (*aša*) as well (Y 47.2). In general it seems that the prophet's concept of the Beneficent Spirit has some specific value just in explicit contrast with the Harmful Spirit. In effect, in the *Younger Avesta* the Beneficent Spirit was increasingly conceived of as being identical with Ahura Mazda, as whose factual antagonist the Harmful Spirit (Aṅra Mainiiu, Pahl. Ahreman) eventually survived his Beneficent brother as a person in his own right.

The true representative of the good side is Ahura Mazda accompanied by an undefined number of divine entities. The prophet most of the time leaves open to the hearer whether he wishes these entities to be interpreted as moral concepts, or as divine powers, or as persons, or as attitudes shown by Ahura Mazda to his adherents, or as such shown in return by the adherents to Ahura Mazda (Y 44.1), or even in materialized form as presents exchanged between him and his worshippers (Y 51.2).

Almost any auspicious term can be used, or understood, in the *Gāthās* as the name of a divine entity, resulting in their number being essentially unlimited. Persistently playing with these and interweaving them with the name of Ahura Mazda the prophet

disguises the apparently underlying one-plus-six list which doubtless consists of Ahura Mazdā, Truth (Aša), Good Thought (Vohu Manah), Power/Rule (Xšaθra), Right-mindedness (Ārmaiti), Integrity (Hauruuatāt), and Immortality (Amərətāt). This list, which in varied order is completely transmitted in Y 47.1, is likely to have had calendrical implications. A parallel is found in the Old Avestan prose text *Yasna Haptaṅhāiti* (Y 37.5) which, however, notably diverges in its second half. This fact raises some doubt about the rectilinear development of early Zoroastrianism, all the more as in the *Younger Avesta* Truth ceded its first position to Good Thought.

The opponent of Aša ‘Truth’ is *Druj* ‘Deceit/Lie’. Their respective adherents are called “truthful” and “deceitful.” Basically Truth denotes an utterance whose correctness is insured by its inherent cosmic power and which in expressions such as “judgment in accordance with Truth” can be conceived of as denoting that power itself. Truth is the magic power of a mantra (Av. *mąθra-*) which, even if signifying a bare platitude, enables the prophet to urge Ahura Mazdā to answer the question he wants to ask him (Y 44.6). Truth not only denotes religious merits but also the reward for them as it does in the deliberately ambiguous phrase ‘osseous Truth’ (OAv. *astuuat ašəm*) in Y 43.16. This expresses the hope for blissful corporality of the life to come, but at the same time it alludes to the satisfaction of the priest after having received the sacrificial fee in head of cattle promised to him by his sponsor, as it is openly and meticulously declared in Y 44.18 and in the concluding stanza of Y 46.19.

The information content of the *Gāthās* is highly limited. While the weighing of the good and evil deeds with the balance at the ordeal performed during the life of a person or at their end or at the final judgment is alluded to several times (Y 31.3, 19, 43.12, 47.6, 51.9), always in another variation, substantial information about the procedure itself was considered unnecessary by the prophet. Similarly the destiny of the soul (*uruuan-*) of a deceitful person after their death in relation to that of their religious view (*daēnā-*) is differently described in the two passages referring to the subject (Y 46.11, 51.13), both of them diverging from the classic depiction of the proceeding in the *Hādōxt Nask* of the *Younger Avesta*.

The *Gāthās* are no religious handbook. They are texts of a ritual poetry, which to a large extent was traditional and must be interpreted as such. Detailed information on Zarathustra’s religion, on the laws given by him and on the customs of his community must have been laid down in other works of a contemporary literature that are lost forever.

CHAPTER 3B

The *Gāthās*, Said to Be of Zarathustra

Jean Kellens

Translated from the French by Patrick Taylor

As a student, I drank from the two springs of Gathic philology. Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, who introduced me to the field in 1965, had added the final improvements to the line of interpretation inaugurated by Christian Bartholomae in 1905 (Duchesne-Guillemin 1948). In 1974, I became an assistant to Helmut Humbach, who had put his name to a radically innovative translation of the *Gāthās* (Humbach 1959). To read this highly debated text with the one, and then the other, was an unforgettable experience. Humbach had accomplished a Copernican revolution in the field by showing that the *Gāthās* were not sermons addressed to men, but hymns addressed to gods. That it had been possible to mistake the nature of a text in this way says much about the extent to which its language remained misunderstood. It was evident to everyone (Duchesne-Guillemin included) that Humbach's conclusions were inescapable, since they resulted from a decisive advance in the understanding of the phonology and morphology of the language. But it is only with difficulty that the adoption of progress in grammatical analysis can modify the interpretation of a text when a sort of tyrannical *communis opinio* or generally accepted view holds it up as one of the great sacral expressions of humankind. Humbach let himself be carried away in this fashion, and the interpretation of the *Gāthās* that Éric Pirart and I published between 1988 and 1991 illustrates the same encumbering pattern of thought (Kellens and Pirart 1988–1991). Although we accepted without reservation Humbach's grammatical advances and the idea that the *Gāthās* belonged to the same genre as the Vedic hymns, we nevertheless sought to find a personal system of thought and an innovative message. The sole distinguishing feature of our interpretation was to situate the system and the message within the framework of a 'speculative ritual' – that is, a philosophy of the ritual – and this was deemed disrespectful. Today I have decided to be even more radical. The *Gāthās*

are not a historical text in that they do not tell us anything either about the life of a man or about the organization of a society.

The *Gāthās* within the *Avesta*

We must begin by forming a clear picture of what the *Avesta* actually is. From Karl Friedrich Geldner and his magisterial edition (1889–1896) to Karl Hoffmann, who systematically investigated its transmission (Hoffmann and Narten 1989), the *Avesta* edited by Geldner was considered to be the randomly preserved shreds of a vast textual corpus assembled under the Sasanian kings (the Sasanian *Avesta*). Today it is apparent that this is not the case. Geldner's *Avesta* is the direct and final product of two liturgical collections made alongside the Sasanian corpus, the latter having been largely lost to us. Our *Avesta* is neither a single book, nor several books, but the juxtaposed transcription of two liturgies, one long and unitary (the *Yasna*, possibly with the *Vīdēvdād* and the *Vīsprad*), the other broken up into a variety of lesser rituals (*Yašts*, etc.). Nevertheless, the Sasanian *Avesta* and Geldner's *Avesta* share at least one point in common. The first has as its initial impetus in a text, entitled *Stōd Yašt*, from which all the other texts are thought to have developed and that is more or less identical to the *Yasna* of Geldner's *Avesta*. Now, the *Yasna* (comprised of seventy-two chapters or *hāitis*) in Geldner's edition has for its sacred core a sequence of recitational material (Y 27–59) entitled *Staotas Yesniias* 'sacrificial praises' (from which came the later name *Stōd Yašt*), and this sequence corresponds *grosso modo* or approximately to what we, for linguistic reasons, call the *Old Avesta*, which extends from opening formula, the *Ahuna Vairiia* (Y 27.13) to the closing formula, the *Airiīaman Išiia* (Y 54.1). Thus, in their very structures, the *Stōd Yašt* of the Sasanian *Avesta* and the liturgy of Geldner's *Avesta* edition confer antiquity and the highest degree of dignity to the *Gāthās* "of Zarathustra" – a state of affairs that agrees perfectly with the conclusions of modern scholarship.

The "Edition" of the *Old Avesta*

In 2002, Almut Hintze established beyond doubt that the *Old Avesta* possessed by the redactors of the *Young Avesta* was exactly the same as our own. The first two chapters of the *Vīsprad* (*Vr* 1.4–8 and *Vr* 2.6–10) present a "table of contents" in the following order: The three opening formulas of *Ahuna Vairiia* (Y 27.13), *Aṣəm Vohū* (Y 27.14), and *Yeṣhē Hātəm* (Y 27.15), the *Ahunauuaitī Gāθā* (Y 28–34), the *Yasna Haptaḡhāiti* (Y 35–41), the *Uštāuuaitī Gāθā* (Y 43–46), the *Spəntāmāiniū Gāθā* (Y 47–50), the *Vohuxšaθrā Gāθā* (Y 51), the *Vahištōišī Gāθā* (Y 53), and the closing formula *Airiīaman Išiia* (Y 54.1). Y 42 and Y 52 are Young Avestan interpolations. The *Aṣəm Vohū* and the *Yeṣhē Hātəm* are also not in Old Avestan, but are considered as making up part of the corpus. Moreover, the *Ahuna Vairiia* is the first stanza of the first *gāθā* serving as an epigraph and the *Airiīaman Išiia*, the last stanza of the last *gāθā*, as a kind of a pedal point. The same arrangement of texts is adopted by *Vīdēvdād* 10.4–12, which specifies those strophes that must be recited two, three, or four times and presents the same order of

succession as the “table of contents” of the *Vīsprad*. From this, Hintze concludes that this “edition” of the text is the work of Zarathustra himself, anxious to bequeath to his disciples a new ritual for his new religion. This hypothesis is nothing but an assertion based on the *communis opinio*, but it does contain one fact that is beyond dispute: the antiquity of the fixation and arrangement of the Old Avestan corpus in the form in which we know it. It follows that the elaboration of the whole long liturgy reflected by the recitation of the *Yasna* is itself old – that is, it dates back to a time when the language of redaction was still Avestan. Indeed, *Yasna* 57 (the hymn to Sraoša) and *Yašt* 10 (the hymn to Miθra) describe four sacrifices (of which three are offered by gods to gods) that follow a ritual sequence identical to the ritual sequence of the *Yasna*, from the deployment of the *barəsmān* (Y 2) all the way to the recitation of the ancient group of texts concluded by the *Fšūšō Mqθra* ‘Formula of the Cattle-raider’ (Y 58). We must therefore ask whether this “edition” of the *Old Avesta* is not concomitant with that of the whole *Yasna* itself and whether this “edition” is not the work of the presumed author of its constituent parts, but rather of the theologians who, at a given time (c. 500 BCE?), laid the foundations of a great solemn rite in a standardized form (whatever variants of it may have existed). This hypothesis is strengthened by the fact that in the oldest Young Avestan texts (Y 12, 56 and 58), those defined by Xavier Tremblay as “Middle Avestan” (Tremblay 2006b: 221–269), Old Avestan texts now lost to us are cited with the same reverence as the *Gāthās* and the *Yasna Haptaŋhāiti*. If the “edition” of the *Old Avesta* is an event internal to the period of literary composition in Young Avestan, it is necessarily the product of a conscious reflection which must be called by its name: an exegesis, or, if we like, a *zand*.

The Young Avestan Exegesis of the *Old Avesta*

Four exegetical passages show that the Young Avestan theologians had formed a precise and creative conception of the *Old Avesta*.

1. Y 19–21 recounts that at the beginning of cosmic history, Ahura Mazdā, by reciting the *Ahuna Vairiia* and *Ašəm Vohū*, ‘set in motion’ Good Thought (*Vohu Manah*). This faculty that he exercises as his own allows him to become aware of Order (*aša*) and to exercise Power (*xšaθra*), but also to detect the existence of another thought that is subordinated to Order, but deprived of power. Named *Zarathuštra*, this thought will, in reciting the *Yejhē Hātəm*, declare its willingness to establish the sacrifice for the benefit of Ahura Mazdā and his non-material creations. For the assembler of the *Yasna*, the three opening formulas correspond to the cosmogonic spark, the organization of the world in mental form, and the establishment of the sacrifice.
2. After the exhortation addressed to the god Sraoša to be ritually present at the moment when the recitation of *Old Avesta* is to begin (Y 27.6–7), there follows the citation of the last four strophes of Y 33 (Y 27.8–11). This in turn makes it evident that the injunction to hear (*sraotā mōi*) addressed to Ahura Mazdā, Ārmaiti, Aša, Vohu Manah, and Xšaθra in Y 33.11 has the effect of coordinating

səraōšəm xšaθrəmcā as the last words of Y 33.14. The end of Y 33 is the moment in which the god who incarnates the sonic aspects of the rite, the first sacrificer of the material world according to Y 57.2, joins Ahura Mazdā in the exercise of power.

3. The chapter of the *Vīspṛad* (*Vr* 20.2) interpolated between Y 51 and Y 53 situates the *vəṛəθraγna* ‘smashing of the obstacle’, during the repetition of the *Yasna Haptaḥāiti*. This essential event, which corresponds to the success of the sacrifice, is in one way or another the effect of Power (*xšaθra*), whose presence the Young Avestan commentator has not failed to remark at both the beginning and the end of this crucial phase in the rite, with the first words of Y 51 (*voḥū xšaθrəm*) and the last verse of Y 53 (*xšaθrəm ... vahiiō*).
4. The sounds of the rite (Y 33.11) allow access to Power (Y 33.14), and Power allows the obstacle to be broken between Y 51 and Y 53. The commentary on the closing formula, the *Airiīaman Išīia*, preserved in *FrW* 4.3 explains that the recitation of the *Old Avesta*, when it was completed, broke the equilibrium of Power in favor of Ahura Mazdā and permitted the resurrection of the dead.

The arranger of the *Yasna* put the *Old Avesta* at the heart of his compilation because he believed that it told the history of the world from the cosmogony to the final resurrection and that he, by introducing this sequence into the sacrifice, magnified the cosmogony and hastened the resurrection. It thus appears that the elaboration of this great solemn liturgy cannot be dissociated from the grandiose philosophy of history known as millenarianism, the shibboleth – that is the distinguishing characteristic – of the religion of the *Young Avesta*. This doctrine dictated the renovation of rites as well as the reclassification of the functions of the gods. That which differentiates the *Young Avesta* from the *Old Avesta* is not the resurgence of the past, but a powerful innovation that forms the foundational schema of Mazdaism or Zoroastrianism as an Iranian religion irremediably distinct from Indian religion. And Zarathustra has nothing to do with this.

Zarathustra

The doctrine of millenarianism and the elaboration of the *Yasna* have fallen between us and the *Old Avesta* like an iron curtain, and the uncertainty surrounding the name Zarathustra is an immediate consequence of this. Nothing of what the *Young Avesta* tells us about him belongs to the category of “history,” any more than to the category of “legend” (notwithstanding a few secondary anecdotes such as the meeting with Anra Mainīiu). Clearly, the arranger of the *Yasna* has bequeathed to us neither a living memory of the past nor a myth transmitting the memory of an origin in an altered form. His sole concern is the speculative schema of a man who is present from the cosmogony up to the resurrection and who reproduces in his person the successive forms taken by the world – a pure theological statement, at times deified (as in Y 16.2).

Recent theologians have nevertheless found his name and person in the *Gāthās*, and we must ask: Who was Zarathustra? How can we know this, since recent exegesis does not draw upon any historical tradition whatsoever and relies arbitrarily on the romantic

fable of a proselytizing prophet elaborated in the 19th century by scholars imbued with Judeo-Christian culture? The sole approach remaining is the hazardous path of internal textual analysis.

Zarathustra is mentioned sixteen times in the *Gāthās* and, remarkably, one time in each *gāthā* at the head of a group of human beings. All grammatical persons are represented, but instances of “he, Zarathustra” form the vast majority of attestations. Instances of “I, Zarathustra” are uncertain or found in reported speech, and those of “you, Zarathustra” are exceptional. Such facts probably do not mean a great deal. The function of the personage is defined explicitly by Y 50.6 as *māθrān*, a derived adjective that indicates, rather loosely, a relationship with a certain type of text, the *māθra*. The function as *zaoatar* or ‘libator’, often ascribed to him on the basis of Y 33.6, is elusive, since the strophe does not mention Zarathustra’s name and cannot be securely interpreted as containing a verb in the 1st person. Whether his name is real or a product of invention, Zarathustra is almost surely either the author of the text, or its reciter. It is doubtful that he can be both, since the poets who name themselves in Vedic hymns do not present themselves as sacrificial officiants (Jamison 2007). Pace Prods Oktor Skjærvø (2003b), it is more prudent to choose between ‘poet’ and ‘sacrificer’, and the *Yasna Haptaṅhāiti*, in which the reciters present themselves using the terms *staotar* ‘praiser’ and *māθrān* (Y 41.6), testifies in favor of ‘sacrificer’.

Unity and Homogeneity of the *Gāthās*

The Gathic corpus presents itself as a set of five *gāthās* (‘songs’) composed of *hāitis* (‘sections’), numbering seventeen in total. Traditional doctrine considers the *hāiti* to be the basic textual unit – seventeen independent poems collected in five groups solely on the basis of metrical similarity. In 1963, Marijan Molé offered a vigorous defense of the organic unity of the *Gāthās*, and twenty-five years later, I concurred by maintaining that the separation of the text into *hāitis* was a late and artificial introduction of chapter divisions. Almut Hintze (2002) and Stephanie Jamison (2007: 32–33) have convinced me that this is not the case, and I now think that the *gāthā* is the unit and the *hāiti* the sub-unit (Kellens 2007a: 415–418). In other words, the *hāitis* are unitary, but not autonomous, texts, and their order of succession is not arbitrary, but original or the result of organization. In the same vein, the author of the *Vīsprad* inserted his text between each *gāthā*, thus situating each *hāiti* of the *Vīsprad* within the existing frame of the respective *gāthā*.

Hence, the *Gāthās* constitute an “edited” text that has possibly been manipulated by its editor in order to bend it to a desired exegesis. Doubtless the meter offers no evidence of this. The editor has either adopted a given text in its entirety, or else he has, by suppression and interpolation, fashioned collages that maintain isometry (although it is certain that if he did indeed proceed in this way, he drew upon a very homogeneous literature). We do not understand the *Gāthās* well enough to decide. Two pieces of evidence, taken in themselves, indicate manipulation of the text: 1. the particular status that the author of the *Vīsprad* accords to the “first three” – that is, the first three *hāitis* of the first *gāthā*; and 2. the complete absence of *Yasnas* 31, 32, and 46 in later exegesis.

In conclusion, no serious arguments can be raised against the idea that the *Gāthās* constitute a homogeneous body of text introduced in the *Yasna*, although we cannot consider this to be a truth etched in stone. The lingering question remains the function of the *Gāthās* in the literature of their time.

The Doctrine of the *Gāthās*

The definition of the *Gāthās* as hymns has met with very widespread acceptance, but this definition has been emptied of significance – to a certain extent by Helmut Humbach himself – by the supposition that the message offered by the *Gāthās* does not differ from that of a sermon. But what is this message? An ethic? I cite here the rather eloquent Y 53.8: “Let the greatest torment lead them by the bond of death, and let it be soon!” The condemnation of the sacred intoxicant *haoma*? This idea has been extracted from two stanzas that are in fact incomprehensible. The condemnation of blood sacrifice? We now know that it was a regular feature of Mazdean ritual (Boyce 1970a). The condemnation of the traditional gods, the *dāēuuas*? To this question, we can only respond with another: Were these gods really traditional when they were condemned?

The idea of a Gathic monotheism is a more difficult matter to evaluate. It is founded on the observation that within Ahura Mazdā’s entourage we can find no deity with a Vedic equivalent, only entities that are apparently subordinate to him. Yet, this means nothing: Mary Boyce (1969b: 10–34) has reminded us that the *Gāthās* are hymns to Ahura Mazdā and that a hymn addressed to a particular god will not necessarily mention the other gods. My impression is that the focus upon a unique god is real, but it goes hand in hand with a theogenesis (Aša, Vohu Manah, Xšaθra, Ārmaiti, but also Sraoša and Aši). This process continues in the *Young Avesta* (the Frauuašis, Vərəθrayna) while at the same time certain Indo-Iranian gods (Miθra, Vaiiu) are reorganized in the framework of the millenarian doctrine. The situation is ambiguous – the focus on Ahura Mazdā points to monotheism, the theogenesis to polytheism, and the system of the *Young Avesta* does not emerge as a reaction to a previous situation, but rather as the continuation of a single process. There cannot be – and perhaps there never has been – any clear dividing line between polytheism and monotheism. The opposite idea, which has seriously hindered progress in the field, results from cultural conditioning that presents the overthrow of polytheism by monotheism as a transcendent event in human spiritual awareness. But neither polytheism nor monotheism is transcendent, for both are products of human thought, which is not transcendent.

The *Gāthās* are hymns, and as such, liturgical texts to be recited, but their situation is analogous to the hymns of the *Rigveda*. Just as the Brahmanic ritual reorganization, by reutilizing the Vedic hymns, relegated their original use to the unknowable past, so too did the insertion of the *Gāthās* into the *Yasna*, and their interpretation in a light of a millenarian doctrine of history, irreparably sever these hymns from the use for which they were originally composed. Our task is to discover this use through the analysis of the numerous rhetorico-ritual modules that the *Gāthās* align and interlace (*yasna* ‘sacrifice’, *vahma* ‘song of adoration’, *staota* ‘praise’, *yāna* ‘request’, etc.). We must also ask ourselves the essential question about the complicity between the Young Avestan

exegete and the Old Avestan text such that he made it say what the original text did not say by itself. It is true that the doctrine of millenarianism founded Zoroastrianism, but it did so by interpreting the *Gāthās*. Even if these hymns are not the preaching of a founder, they are nevertheless a kind of beginning.

The Sole Source of Zoroastrianism?

The arranger of the *Yasna* interrupted the Gathic corpus by inserting into it the *Yasna Haptaṅhāiti* (Y 35–41), defined by its title as a ‘sacrifice’ composed of ‘seven sections’. Since the conclusive study by Johanna Narten (1986), we know that no evidence indicates that the language of the *Yasna Haptaṅhāiti* is either older or younger than the language of the *Gāthās*, and this text is to be considered a part of the *Old Avesta*. The religious doctrine of the *Yasna Haptaṅhāiti* appears to be the same too, although it attests some notions that have increased in importance in the *Young Avesta* and that are absent from the *Gāthās*, such as *frauuaši* ‘sacrificial act of choosing’, and the divine title *amaša spənta* ‘beneficent immortal’, while the god Sraoša and the qualification *saošiiant-* (whose sense in the *Gāthās* is, moreover, uncertain) are not found in the *Yasna Haptaṅhāiti*. All these divergences and lacunae may be the result of chance.

It is, however, necessary for us to inquire about the relationship of the *Yasna Haptaṅhāiti* to the *Gāthās*, for it is clearly based upon a system of oppositions: prose vs. verse; a rhetoric uniformly of the type “praise” vs. a rhetoric of “praise and blame”; a discourse exclusively “we” vs. a discourse alternating between “I” and “we” with a predominance of “I”; anonymity vs. a catalogue of proper names; absence of Zarathustra vs. foregrounding of Zarathustra. The last three factors are probably correlated. Not only is it possible that the sole attested non-Zoroastrian form of Mazdaism reigns at the omphalos or “navel” of the *Yasna*, but the authors of the oldest Young Avestan texts (Y 12, 56, 58) – those that we can define as Middle Avestan – also clearly strive to cite the *Gāthās* and the *Yasna Haptaṅhāiti* with meticulous impartiality, as if they sought to unite the two quite distinct sources of their inspiration into a single theological apotheosis.

Concluding Remark

It has never before been noted, I believe, that from Christian Bartholomae (1905) to Helmut Humbach (2010), all treatments of the *Gāthās* have taken the same form: edition, translation, and commentary beginning with Y 28.1 and ending with Y 53.9 (the inclusion of prayer formulas and of the *Yasna Haptaṅhāiti* is a recent practice). This uniformity is a sort of admission: The *Gāthās* have not ceased to be treated as a text to be deciphered. Still, although the decipherment remains uncompleted, the method itself has exhausted its possibilities. In the future, one can only hope to offer a few minor adjustments here and there and some ad hoc etymologies – that is, stagnation and arbitrariness. The time has come to imagine new ways of approach.

CHAPTER 3C

Dimensions of the *Gāthās* as Poetry

Martin Schwartz

This chapter shall adduce and address striking poetic aspects of the seventeen Old Avestan religious hymns comprising the five poems called the *Gāthās*, whose authorship is here accepted as that of the historical Zarathustra (for his historicity, see Schwartz 2007: 54–56). Hitherto the poetic nature of the *Gāthās* has been generally regarded in terms of doctrine cast into prosodic forms. The following paragraph will serve as an account close to a rough consensus as to the contents of this doctrine:

The godhead is *Mazdā Ahura* ‘Wisdom/Wise Lord’, whose main accompanying aspects are *Vohu Manah* ‘Good Mind’ and *Aša (Vahišta)* ‘(Best) Rightness’. There are two primordial spirits, one holy (and productive), the other wicked (and destructive). These irreconcilably opposed spirits choose respectively *Aša* ‘Rightness’ and *Druj* ‘Wrongness’. Between these two principles humans also choose, with a resulting afterlife respectively of paradise or hell, following a judgment at an alternatively expansive or contractive ‘Bridge of the Selector’ (*Av. činuuatō pārətu-*). Finally, evil will be eliminated through a universal trial by fire and molten metal, and the world will be restored to its pristine splendor. Zarathustra is represented as *Mazdā*’s spokesman in revealing these matters to humankind.

As if only a “container” of this doctrine, the poetry has sometimes been thought to impart merely a decorative, rhetorical, or vatic quality. However, as I shall try to show, Gathic poetic style and structure is nonetheless inextricably connected with the texts’ message, to whose meaning it lends a variety of important extra dimensions. This is clearest where the poetry is the vehicle of various strategies of stylistic crypticism, but also holds for some fundamentals of Gathic composition.

Complex ring-composition, a systematic pairing (concatenation) of words and themes across concentrically related stanzas, is found, in various schemes of intricacy, in every Gathic poem. Complex ring-compositions also occur *within* completed semantically and/or formally concatenative poems, revealing a first stage of composition (Schwartz

2006a). For present purposes, the thematic (rather than lexical) aspect of ring-composition will be illustrated for Y 30, a poem which provides a good introduction and point of departure for examining the Gathic world:

Y 30.1: “I shall now speak, you (all) who seek, the things to be understood – indeed for the knower – with praise for the Very Intelligent Lord and for Rightness, and with Good Mind’s worship – the things in bliss visible amidst the lights.”

Y 30.2: “Hear the Best Things with (your) ears; look with a lucid mind at the two options of decision, understanding them for (your) declaration before the big race.”

Y 30.3: “The two twinned Spirits – a better one and a bad one, opposite in mind, word, and deed – were heard in a dream. Of these two, the beneficent one chose (decided) rightly, not the maleficent one.”

Stanzas 4–8 state (apart from details on Mazdā to be discussed below) that the opposing choices made primordially by the two Spirits determined the rewards and punishments, life and death, for future choice between Right and Wrong, the Wicked Spirit misleads the *daēuuas* (demons, the term Zarathustra uses for false gods) to choose wrongly, and the *daēuuas*, in turn, make mortals go wrong and ruin existence. Against this, there stand the world-restorers, through whom the final disposition will come about:

Y 30.9: “But we will be those who render existence splendid ...”

Y 30.10: “For then the breakage of Wrongness’ chariot-pole-attachment will occur, but they, who are swiftest, will remain yoked at the House of Good Mind, Wisdom, and Rightness, and will win in good fame.”

Y 30.11: “When you, O mortals, have learned the ordinances which Mazdā gives mortals as to impasse and easy passage, wherein there is long ruin for the wrongsomeness and boons for the righteous, and all will be as wished.”

In accord with the ring-compositional structure, there are correspondences in Y 30 between the first stanzas (the paired st. 1–2), the middle stanza (st. 6), and the last stanzas (the paired st. 11–12). Stanzas 1–2 address the very basic theme of the choice between Right and Wrong. This theme is illustrated poetically via an extended metaphor, that of a race between two chariots, a figure whose origin, as is seen from Vedic Sanskrit and from Greek poetry, is Indo-European, including the metaphor of a chariot of Rightness. Only the righteous team survives the race, as that chariot, remaining firmly yoked at the finish, enters the divine paradisiac abode in abiding fame, while the pole of the chariot of Wrongness (under what must be assumed as the pressure it undergoes at the last turn in the course, as preceded by recorded real situations) snaps with fatal results. The race motif is distributed ring-compositionally in the first and last stanza-pairs, while in the middle stanza it is hinted at by reference to the helter-skelter running of the demonic entities.

In the reported dream, the Spirits are heard, rather than seen, because the Spirits are invisible. It is out of this immateriality that (Y 30.6b), “The Holiest Spirit ... clothed Himself in the hardest stones,” i.e., became manifest in materiality. (This image may go back to the pre-Zarathustrian concept of heaven made of stone, *as(m)an-*). Mazdā thus becomes tangibly worshippable by mortals (Y 30.5) “who gratify (Him) the Lord – with

real actions – Mazdā.” This idea continues at Y 30.7, “Through (His) ruling power He came to this (existence), with Good Mind and Rightness,” whereby He received “body and breath, so that through the retributions via the metal for those (violations), (this existence) will be for Thee (as the) first.” The ensuing motif of a trial by (molten) metal reasserts the material realm through which Mazdā is manifested to bring eschatological justice. This justice is elaborated at Y 30.8: “So when there is punishment for those violations, dominion (ruling power) will be allotted to Thee, O Mazdā, as proclamation to those who will hand Wrongness over to Rightness (i.e., the redeemers).” Thus, ‘metal’ concludes the theme of Mazdā’s action within materiality.

The consequence of these last verses (st. 7–8) is that Mazdā, as an emanation of the Holy Spirit, and thus unconnected with Wicked Spirit, is not at all responsible for the origin of evil, unlike the god of “Abrahamic” monotheism, who is the ultimate creator of everything.

Linguistic encryption is set within the poem’s opening and closing stanzas: In Y 30.1–2, both meditative visualization and hearing of the revelatory message revealed are called for. These are recommended ‘to the knower’, which signals to the attuned audience the presence of esotericism. What the knower-initiate should hear is not only the message of the good tidings, that is, ‘the best things’, specifically the rewards of the afterlife (whence NP *behešt* ‘best’), but the *sounds* of /WAHIŠTĀ/ ‘best things’, scrambled compactly in any order within other nearby words and phrases, via an ancient and durable technique of Indo-European cryptic stylistics. The phenomenon occurs in the poem’s opening words, /at TĀ WaxŠyĀ IŠAnTAH/ ‘Now, O you who seek, I shall proclaim’, and in ring-composition to the first two stanzas, Y 30.10 /ĀsIŠTĀ ... WAHĀu sraWAHI/ ‘the swiftest ... into good fame’ (where the last two words concatenate with their cognates in the phrase at Y 30.2 /srauta wahištā/ ‘hear the best things’, and the targeted word is also repetitively embedded in the finale of Y 30.11, on obedience to Mazdā’s ordinances, /saWĀca artaWAbyaAH at ApI TĀIŠ AHati uŠTĀ/ ‘boons for the righteous, and, thereby, all will be as wished’. (Throughout this chapter, the *textus receptus*, i.e., the received text is put in italics, while the phonetic reconstructions are in /roman/. Upper case indicates the sounds of the encrypted word.)

The same kind of encryption is found at Y 31.1, which resumes the latter stanza: “Keeping account of those Your ordinances, we proclaim words unheard /AguŠTĀ WAcāh sanhamAHI/ by those who with words of Wrongness harm Rightness’ realms, but are the ‘Best Things’ for those who will be faithful to Mazdā.” (Further on this mode of encryption in the *Gāthās* and other Indo-European literature, see Schwartz 2003a: 379–384).

The themes of Zarathustra’s revelatory experience, the protological (i.e., original) establishments of eschatological (final) reciprocities, and chariot-race imagery are collocated in Y 43.5:

“Holy did I think Thee, O Lord Mazdā, when I saw Thee first at the birth of existence, when Thou didst establish words and deeds as having payments, evil for evil, good reward for good, through Thy skill at the final (race-course) turn of existence.”

After Zarathustra requests of Mazdā that He impart correct discernment/choice (Y 49.6), two actual patrons, brothers, are addressed in terms of Right and Wrong as choices with their reciprocities, including bliss.

Y 49.7c–d: “Which tribe, which family would be with the laws, and will bring the community good reputation?”

Y 49.8: “For Frašaoštra establish the most blissful co-union with Rightness in Thy good Dominion; for that I entreat Thee, O Lord Mazdā, and for me, too. Forever let us be Thy envoys!”

Y 49.9b–d: “He whose speech is true does not make a connection/union with a wrongsome person, since the ones yoked up for the best prize are those yoked (conjoined) to Rightness in the race, O Djāmāspa!”

The latter name, having *-aspa-* ‘horse’ occurs in a word-play with ‘race,’ as again at Y 46.14a–c, where Zarathustra’s chief patron is named, again in a context of eschatological reward (and, as in Y 30.11, abiding fame): “Zarathustra, who is thy righteous ally with regard to great patronage? Or who wants to be famed? That’s Vīštāspa in the race!” Here we also have a simple example of the institution of reciprocity, which characterizes the Old Iranian relationship between poet-priest and patron.

The next example illustrates a more complex word-play, set within a most intricate example of encoded linguistic crypticism. The passage shows its compositional relationship to Y 49.7 by containing a form of the key root */wrāz-/* ‘be blissful’, which figured at Y 30; the terms ‘family, community, and tribe’, the word ‘to entreat’; and the word indicating ‘connection/union’.

Y 32.1: “And of Him the family, of Him community with tribe, demons upon my urging entreat for the bliss of Him, the Lord Mazdā: ‘Let us be thy messengers, holding those who are Your enemies.’”

Y 32.2: “Mazdā the Lord answers them from His dominion, He Who is connected/united with Good Mind, and is the close partner of sunny Rightness: ‘We choose your Harmonious Thought; it/She will be Ours.’”

The first enigmatic issue of Y 32.1 is how the word for ‘demons’ (*daēuuas*) functions grammatically. Rather than the *daēuuas* being an object of address, their syntactic occurrence after ‘of Him’ indicates that, like the nouns ‘family’ and ‘community (with tribe)’ which follow ‘of Him’, ‘demons’ are said to entreat Mazdā for his bliss, and likewise declare that they will be messengers (*dūta-*) against the enemies. This solution entails a second enigma: How can the *daēuuas* (and their supporters) make such a declaration, when they are themselves Mazdā’s enemies? This clue is found at Y 32.3a: The *daēuuas*-party is ‘duplicitous’, i.e., their speech consists of doubleness. When they say they will be *dūta-* for Mazdā, they use the word in its sense of ‘smoke’, rather than ‘messenger’; furthermore, the word for ‘hold’ (root *dar-*) in its meaning ‘hold onto, embrace’ rather than ‘hold back’. Thus, as against triad of the righteous family, community, and tribe, the demonic entourage, using the same words, intend to co-opt Mazdā’s bliss through both social and linguistic obfuscation, whereby they would make indiscriminating persons to do their bidding.

These conclusions are borne out by the rest of the poem, which also shows that Zarathustra’s rivals were trying to coopt his poetry as though it was in line with their traditional polytheistic cult. This would have come about at a time when Zarathustra was gaining success with his Mazdaism, whereas earlier (Y 46.1–2) family, community, and tribe had excluded him. (For the analysis of the entirety of Y 32, see Schwartz 2006a: 460–471, 475–483, 2006b, 2006c.)

Another enigmatic aspect of Y 32.1 is found in the simultaneous address to the divinity as a singularity ('Thy') and a plurality ('Your'). See also Y 32.6b–c: "With Best Mind, O Mazda, proclamation is made to You and (= including) Rightness in Thy Dominion." In both instances we have a reflection of the doctrine that Mazda is the foremost Being in a divine triad, in which Good/Best Mind and (Best) Rightness share Mazda's divine nature.

In fact, Y 32.1 ("And) resumes Y 28.8: "Thee, the Best (One), O Lord, Who are of the same disposition (= nature, inclination) as Best Rightness, do I entreat for the Best Things ... for an eternity of Good Mind." It should be noted that every stanza of Y 28 mentions the three entities of the divine triad.

This divine triadic coequality is encrypted in the last four words of Y 32.1a ("of Him community with tribe") and the last four words of Y 32.1b ("urging, the Lord's bliss, Mazda's"), which echoically overlap as to initial and internal sounds:

/ ahyā wrzanam mat aryamnā
mnai ahurahya wrāzma mazda'ah/

Here the initials, respectively, /a w m a/ and /m a w m/, may be grouped interconnectedly (overlappingly) as a double representation of the initials of *Mazdā Ahura* 'Mazdā the Lord', *Arta [Aša] Wahišta (Vahišta)* 'Best Rightness', and *Wahu Manah (Vohu Manah)* 'Good Mind':

/(a w), (w m), (m a)/, and
/(m a), (a w), (w m)/.

The interconnection between the three divine entities in the Dominion is then stated explicitly in Y 32.2 (*Mazdā Ahura*, who is connected with Good Mind and is the companion/associate of Rightness).

Taken with the compositionally closely related Y 49.7–8 (above), it is clear that Y 32.1–2 encrypts a doctrine of ties in paradise between the divine entities, ties that are joined by the souls of the righteous, in a state of bliss. The heavenly bonds of the righteous contrast with the ties to hell incurred by the wicked, as per Y 32.13. At Y 32.12 Mazda is said to reject those who deceptively make an 'oath for bliss', which alludes back to the *daēuua*-party's duplicitously ambiguous statement at Y 32.1. The encrypted initials /m- w-/ or /w- m-/ for /Manah Wahu/ (Manah Vohu) or /Vahu Manah/ (*Vohu Manah*) 'Good Mind' and /a- w-/ for /Arta Wahišta/ (*Aša Wahišta*) 'Best Rightness' are made clear in other Gathic verses. (For various phrases in which the phrasal initials /w- m-/ and /m- w-/ symbolize /Wahu Manah/ or /Manah Wahu/ (respectively = *Vohu Manah*, *Manah Vohu*) 'Good Mind', see Schwartz 2003a: 385–386.) An especially interesting example for /m- w-/ is found in Y 45.3. First, the larger context: Y 45.1–2 is a variant of the text from which we proceeded, Y 30.1–2:

Y 45.1a–c: "I shall speak out, now listen and here you who seek from near and far. Now understand this for it is thoroughly clear."

Y 45.2: "Now I shall speak out about the Two Spirits of existence at the beginning, when the Holier One was to inform the Wicked One: 'Neither our minds nor

proclamations, nor our intellects, nor our desires nor words nor deeds nor envisionments nor souls are in accord.”

The ‘this’ (*im*; *m.*) of Y 45.1 is the *mąθra*, the mnemonic poetic formulation found in Y 43.3: “I shall speak out about the first things of this existence, this (*mąθra*) which Mazdā, the Knower, told me: Whoever do not enact this *mąθra* just as I think it and say it, ‘woe’ will be the last thing of their existence.” The four phrases with symbolic /*m- w-*/ are seen in the original text:

- Y 45.3: a: /at fra waxšyā ahauš ahya parwiyam
 b: yam **mai** widwāh **mazdā** waucat ahura
 c: yai im WAH nait iθā MANθram waršanti
 d: yaθā imam **manāi**-ca **waucā**-ca
 e: aibyah ahauš awai ahat apamam/

Enclosed iconically between the line which ends with ‘first thing’ and its thematically echoic and alliterative closure, which ends with ‘last thing’, we have four phrases with initials *m- w-*, and, in the central line 45.3c, /WAH ... MANθram/, making clearer the symbolism /*m- w-*/ (= /*w- m-*/) = /manah wahu/ = /wahu manah/. The symbolism is decrypted in the next stanza:

(it is) Wisdom, I know, who created this,
 (He), the Father of efficacious *Good Mind*.

For the initials of /*Arta Wahišta*/ ‘Best Rightness’, note Y 33.3, where again the three societal groupings figure formulaically:

Y 33.3: /yah **artāunai** **wahištah** hwaitū **wā at wā** wrzanyah
aryamnā wā ahurā **widans wā** θwaxšahā gawai
at hau **artahya ahat** **wahaušca wā**strai manahah/

“Whoever is best to the righteous person through family or as community member, or Lord, through tribe, or diligently providing for the cow, he will be on the pasture of Rightness and Good Mind.”

This stanza continues Y 33.2, which, with regard to the persons who oppose the evil-doer and act hospitably, states the reward:

Y 33.3c: /tai **warāi** **rādanti** ahurahya **zaušai** **mazda**’ah/

“They will achieve the Lord Mazdā’s desire and be in His favor/(good) disposition/inclination.” Here we have an oral acrostic of the word /*wrāzma*/ ‘bliss’, which is the overt focus of Y 32.1. Further, the word /*zauša-*/ ‘favor, disposition, inclination’ recalls Y 28.8 /*hazauša-*/ ‘having the same disposition/nature’, referring to the shared quality of

the three chief divine entities; Y 33.3c accordingly implies that the righteous person in the afterlife will share in the blissful divine nature.

It is hoped that from the few examples treated here it will be seen how the poetic aspects of the *Gāthās* enhance and make dramatic and poignant the ethical, theological, and eschatological content of the text, and use enigmatic style to set forth the mysteries which Zarathustra claimed have been revealed to him. Through this intellectual intricacy of poetic style Zarathustra provides an exemplar for this process of discernment which unfolds throughout the seventeen hymns of the *Gāthās*, and thus betokens the quality of Intelligence which is the essence of Mazdā. These remarkable poetic traits, I submit, were what, in the competition with routine traditionalist poet-priests, attracted a decisively prestigious patronage to Zarathustra.

What is distinct about the *Gāthās*, compared, e.g., to the *Vedas* and the post-Gathic *Avesta*, is the exclusion of mythological material, as well as similes, and, complementarily, a focus on the mind's necessity to understand, discriminate, and choose between Right and Wrong, with concomitant consequences for the fate of the individual soul and for the perfection of the world.

As part of this focus on intellect is the theological centrality of Mazdā Ahura, the Lord Wisdom or the Comprehending Lord, who is further characterized by divinized abstractions which represent aspects of Mazdā, chief among them Good Mind and Best Rightness, and all of them also *Ahuras*, i.e., 'Lords'. In accord with the emphasis on intellect, this theology (and eschatology) is revealed not only overtly but cryptically though a variety of intellectually challenging stylistic intricacies, which also have the purpose of showing Zarathustra as a divinely inspired revealer of mysteries.

The theology thus set forth shows the godhead as both singular (*Mazdā Ahura*) and simultaneously plural (*Mazdā* and the other *Ahuras*), indexed, among other ways, by verses with simultaneous address to Thou and You. Given the concomitant fact that, unlike Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the *Gāthās* contain no proclamation of the oneness of the divinity, the question of whether Gathic religion is monotheistic (a question itself conditioned by the assumptions of the declaredly monotheistic background of scholars) is invalid. In addition, as we have seen, Gathic theology absolves the ultimate divinity from the origin of evil.

In conclusion, both the contents and the style of the poems which constitute the Gathic corpus render them a thoroughly unique document in the literature of religions.

Further Reading

For Gathic prosody, see Schwartz (2006a: 459–460), and for other Old Avestan poetry, Schwartz (2006a: *passim*). For Gathic ring-composition and more remarkable aspects of Gathic composition, see Schwartz (2006c), and further Schwartz (2000 [2003], 2003b [2007], 2009, 2010), and compare Schwartz (2007). For the racing terminology of Y 30, see Schwartz (2003a: 365–368). For Zarathustra's *revelatory experience* as the basis of his theology, eschatology, and iconic simulations via poetic form, see Schwartz (2000 [2003]: 13–15). For

Zarathustra's relationship to the older cult, as personified by the god Haoma, and Zarathustra's parodic treatment of the reconstructable old hymn to Haoma, see Schwartz (2006b, 2006c), and for his integration of such

old divinities as *Aramati as abstractions or hypostases, see Schwartz (2000 [2003]: 13–15). For the origin of the doctrine of the Two Spirits, see Schwartz (2000 [2003]: 15–16).

CHAPTER 3D

The *Gāthās* as Myth and Ritual

Prods Oktor Skjærvø

Summary

The alleged realism of the Gathic Zarathustra is based on some controversial passages in the *Gāthās* and on the assumption (not fact) that the entire Gathic corpus contains Zarathustra's teachings, and so cannot be used as an argument for his historicity. As there is also no external evidence for a historical Zarathustra, sound method requires us to approach the *Gāthās* without such preconceptions.

As shown by post-World War II Avestan scholars, the *Gāthās* are ritual texts. Their purpose, like the later *Yasna* and *Vīdēvdād Sade* rituals, is the regeneration of the ordered cosmos after periods of chaos.

Each *gāthā* has a fairly clear structure, reflecting the progressive struggle between the forces of good and evil, with several recognizable themes repeated in each of them. To highlight this aspect of the texts, the five *Gāthās* are cited here by their numbers 1–5 plus the standard numbering by *hāitis* (Y 28–53) and strophes, e.g., the theme of the Poet's Complaint is found in 1.32, 2.46.1–2, 3.49.1–2, and 4.51.12.

Background

When I first approached the *Gāthās* through Reichelt (1909) in the late 1970s, with a solid grounding in Iranian languages from all periods (mostly self-taught), as well as Classical, Old Indic, and Indo-European studies, I was disappointed to find Bartholomae's analysis and translation of the texts chaotic and Humbach's German translation (1959) incomprehensible, so I lost interest. While assisting Humbach years later with the English(!) of his *Gāthā* translation (Humbach 1991), I was still bothered by their (apparent) lack of structure and intangible substance.

Once at Harvard (from 1991), teaching Avestan prompted me to develop an introductory course in Young Avestan, though I resisted teaching the *Gāthās*. I also began teaching Zoroastrianism, which required more intimate acquaintance with the field. I was also (re)acquainted with Indo-European poetics through the work of Calvert Watkins (1995), and with the theories of oral literature in the work of Gregory Nagy (1990). As requests for the *Gāthās* persisted, I began studying them, focusing on themes and structures (as I had recently done for the *Yāsts* in Skjærvø 1994), and prepared a textbook, grammar, and translation (Skjærvø 2009). I reasoned that, if Zarathustra was a real person, this was bound to emerge from the text when approached by philological methods. No realistic Zarathustra emerged from the text, however. Instead, I became convinced that the *Gāthās* contained basically the same Zarathustra as the *Young Avesta*: first human poet and sacrificer (poet-sacrificer, for short) in the world of living beings (see Skjærvø 1996, 2003b), and I therefore rejected as useless, as far as understanding these texts went (Skjærvø 1997b: 104–108), the 19th- to 21st-century assumption that Zarathustra was a historical person who reformed the religion of the ancient Iranians, replacing their polytheistic paganism with a revealed monotheistic religion with lofty ethics (Skjærvø 2011b, 2011c).

The Historical Zarathustra in Western Scholarship

The only arguments for a historical Zarathustra not based on the presumption that he was historical were those formulated around 1900 and repeated throughout the 20th century, based on the late 19th-century interpretation of the *Gāthās* as enshrined in Bartholomae's (1904, 1924) and his successors' translations that their image of Zarathustra was so vivid and realistic that he had to be a real person (Haug 1862: 218–219; Geldner 1896–1904: 29; Jackson 1899: 3–4; Bartholomae 1904, col. 1675; 1924: 6, repr. Schlerath 1970: 4; Lommel 1930: 4; Christensen 1931 [1932]: 27; Duchesne-Guillemin 1962b: 142; Boyce 1975a: 188–189; Gnoli 1994b: 474). Closely related to this argument was that of the “pillar passages,” invented to prove the historicity of Jesus by Paul Schmiedel and wielded by Moulton (1913: 348, n. 4), Boyce (1975a: 186, n. 28); and, without using the term, by Duchesne-Guillemin (1962b: 141) and Gershevitch (1968: 11); as well as that of the “axial age,” which would be “lacking” without Zarathustra (Gnoli 2000: 3–4). The alleged realism of the Zarathustra image in the *Gāthās* is not obvious, however, since there is great disagreement about the meaning and function of the specific texts adduced for the reconstruction (on most of them, see Skjærvø 2001, 2002b).

Similarly, when Martin Schwartz published his first study on the composition of the *Gāthās* (1986), Ilya Gershevitch was led to conclude that Schwartz had shown that “the Gathas right through bear the unmistakable stamp of a single, unique personality pervaded by missionary zeal” (1995: 2), who, apparently, could be none other than (the Western) Zarathustra. Throughout much of the 20th century, however, scholars did not even argue the case, but simply accepted it or, at most, referred to the common opinion (Henning 1942b: 13; Boyce 1975a: 182, n. 4 [against Molé 1963]; Boyce 1996: 27; Gnoli 1994a: 62; against this argument, see Kellens 2002: 14).

It was also recognized early on that the formulaic language of the *Gāthās* was so close to that of the *Rigveda* that it must reflect a common heritage. To reconcile this fact with the assumption of a historical reformer who rejected paganism, scholars interpreted this as a conscious choice on the part of Zarathustra to present his reform in traditional garb (Lommel 1931: 107, repr. in Schlerath 1970: 46; Lommel 1955b: 187–195; repr. in Schlerath 1970: 199–207; Benveniste 1968: 79; Boyce 1975a: 183).

Seeing that the political and social history of the assumed time (c. mid-2nd millennium BCE, 1000 BCE, or mid-1st millennium BCE) and place of Zarathustra (Central Asia, Bactria, Persia) cannot be determined, let alone reconstructed to any specific degree, the idea that it might be possible to grasp a single man's thoughts and emotions within his unknown society seems far-fetched (e.g., Boyce 1975a: 187: "discouraged by the obduracy of his fellow-countrymen, the prophet resolved, it seems"), especially when they are expressed in a form that is quite unclear (compare Gershevitch 1968: 17: "the lexical and syntactic haze which bedims them"; Boyce 1978: 603: "magnificently obscure hymns"; see also Skjærvø 2005–2006 [2007]: 22–24 on the problems inherent in assuming a single historical author of the *Gāthās*).

The reasons why I am convinced we must abandon this Western construct of the historical Zarathustra and his reform can be summarized briefly: There is nothing known about him that can be construed as strictly historical evidence by any modern standard of historiography; wherever Zarathustra is placed in time and space, even as late as in 7th–6th centuries BCE, the historical and archaeological evidence from that time and place contains no traces of him. The mythical Zarathustra has a well-defined place in the Avestan cosmogony, confirmed by the *Gāthās*, while the historicization of Zarathustra is part of a trend in Middle Eastern and Western historiography from before the 10th century to historicize legends and myths. Once we postulate a historical person with a program, the texts themselves permit many possible interpretations depending on what each of us thinks the program is, for which there is no outside control.

My objection to basing Zoroastrian studies on the assumption of an historical Zarathustra, in fact, targets mainly the arbitrary use of Zarathustra once he has been postulated.

My Approach

My approach to the *Old Avesta* has been to try reading it on its own linguistic and contextual premises, as far as they can be ascertained. My work over the last decade on the *Avesta* in general and the *Gāthās* in particular, as well as in related fields, has convinced me that they ought to be interpreted as oral literature and as ritual–mythical texts (see, e.g., Brereton 1985: 242, 259, on the *Rigveda*). Thus, I have come to realize that the relationship between myth and ritual in the *Old Avesta* is one known from numerous societies (compare Kellens 1994b, trans. in Kellens 2000). Therefore, few of the details I propose are completely new, and many crucial aspects of the poems I endorse were pointed out by previous scholars, among them Marijan Molé (1963), on whose *magnum opus* I had given up as a student, but to which I returned in the late 1990s at the instigation of Clarisse Herrens Schmidt, who also introduced me to the work of Henri Hubert and Marcel

Mauss (1968), while Stanley Insler brought to my attention Sylvain Lévi (1966). These and other works convinced me that the basic mechanism of the ritual reflected in the *Gāthās* was the guest-friendship and gift exchange, well-known components of Indo-European society (e.g., Benveniste 1969) and described, in particular, by Helmut Humbach in the 1950s for the *Old Avesta* (e.g., Humbach 1952; see Skjærvø 2008c).

My study of the *Old Avesta* resulted in a large collection of Vedic and Iranian material, much of which has been published in several articles. Then, in a paper on “cosmic huts,” read at the American Oriental Society’s meeting in 2000 and based on an article by Jean Kellens (1989d, in turn inspired by Christol 1987), I suggested that the Old Avestan ritual myth was both a construction and a weaving myth. The “weaving” idea was based on the straightforward interpretation of the word *vōiiaθra*, said to be in Ahura Mazda’s house (1.34.10), as **vaya-θra*, some kind of weaving gear or product, from Indo-Iranian *vaya-* ‘weave’, well known from Rigvedic cosmogonic and ritual contexts (Skjærvø 2005c).

On this basis, my approach to the *Old Avesta* became governed by a number of principles, among them:

- The *Gāthās* and the *Yasna Haptaṅhāiti* are archaic, anonymous, oral poetry, most closely related to the hymns of the *Rigveda*. Both the *Rigveda* and the *Old Avesta* presumably originated somewhere in Central Asia in the late 2nd millennium BCE (Skjærvø 2003–2004).
- The Old Avestan texts express the same worldview as the *Young Avesta*, making allowance for differences in time and place, and the ritual they accompanied may have been an early version of the later *yasna* ritual.
- Semantic references are to the world of humans, the world of the poet, the sacrifice, and the world of gods. For instance, the ‘turn’ (*uruuaēsa*) may refer to the movement of the sun and other heavenly bodies, the turns in the ritual chariot race, the shuttle in the mythico-ritual loom, and the poetic “turns” (compare Gk. *strophē*, Lat. *versus*; Skjærvø 2005c). Often a single term may evoke the whole ritual myth, e.g., the verb *ham-yam-/yasa-* ‘to rein’ alludes to the chariot race (1.33.1, 4.51.3).

When interpreting the text, one should assume that known words have their common meanings (e.g., *rānā* ‘thighs, legs’, not ‘religious parties’; Skjærvø 2005a: 76–77), and the simplest or most obvious etymology must be preferred rather than emending the words or assigning new meanings to well-known words (e.g., *vōiiaθra* < **vaya-θra*). Departures from these two principles must be clearly justified by the contexts.

The main exceptions are objects in the world of thought referred to by terms suggesting mental or abstract entities, which also refer to “material” objects, e.g., Wholeness and Undyingness also refer to water and plants and Life-giving *Ārmaiti* to the earth; less well known, Best Order probably also refers to the sun-lit heavenly spaces (1.32.2: “Order that contains the sun,” compare “the mountains (reaching into) the good breathing space of Order” Y 2.14 etc.); Good Thought also refers to the sun-lit sky (Skjærvø 2002b) and Wrath (*aēšma*) to the night sky (Skjærvø 2004b: 274–277).

During my study of the Old Avestan texts, my conception has been constantly modified in details, but the above elements have remained. Interpretations given below that may appear forced have all been arrived at on the basis of such a holistic conception, not in order to fit arbitrary ideas.

The *Old Avesta* is, in my opinion, a unified composition with a discernible structure (compare Molé 1963: 149–162). Each *gāthā* has its own specific function within the whole. For instance, the first *gāthā* sets the stage for everything, Zarathustra’s origin, the origin of the world, functioning of the world, etc. (similarly, in the *Yasna*, the first *hāitis* list all the *ratus* needed for the rebuilding of the ordered cosmos). The text also reflects the evolution of Ahura Mazda’s ordered world, from the birth of the first ordered existence, when Ahura Mazda recited the *Ahuna Vairiia* (Y 27.13) and dispelled chaos the first time (Y 19.15), via Zarathustra’s first battles with the forces of darkness and evil (Skjærvø 1996 [1997], 2003b), to the final healing of the world, when the *Airiiman Isiia* (Y 54.1) will be set in motion by the successful poet-sacrificers, the *saošiians*, upon which Ahura Mazda will have absolute command, the Dark Spirit and his ilk will be deprived of any command and will hide forever, and Ahura Mazda’s creation will have life and bones forever (compare Y 8.5–6; *FrW* 4.1–3, compare 3.48.5, 5.53.8, *YH* 41.3, *Vd* 19–21; see Skjærvø 2007c: 130–133).

The *Gāthās* as the Story of Zarathustra

Once one keeps the orality of the *Gāthās* in mind, it becomes fairly clear that they contain a narrative and have a narrator and an introduction and conclusion (by the reciter-singer whose version of the poems is preserved). As already suggested by Molé (1963), the narrative is that of Zarathustra: his installation as first sacrificer, his subsequent career, and his final success in aiding Ahura Mazda to regenerate the ordered cosmos.

Framing the Zarathustra narrative are three central themes (see Skjærvø 2008a):

- Support for the poor: *Ahuna Vairiia* “a pastor for the poor,” 5.53.9 “the better (thing/reward) for the poor living a straight life” (compare 1.29.5, 2.46.2, 3.47.4, 4.51.14).
- Support for those who follow the model of Zarathustra: 1.28.6–7 “support with strength to Zarathustra and to us, too,” 5.54.1 “support for Zarathustra’s men and women.”
- Supremacy of Zarathustra’s sacrifice, first questioned in 1.29.8, then confirmed in 5.53.

The narrator introduces himself and his topic in 1.28, where he begins by requesting the ‘divine inspiration’ (*maniiu*) in order to be accepted as Ahura Mazda’s poet-sacrificer and asks for the *xratu* ‘guiding thought’, of Good Thought to ensure the success of his performance (on the *xratu*s, compare 2.46.3, below), as well as support and rewards for his followers with promise of mutual benefits for the gods and the cosmos and for the poet-sacrificer and his community (1.28.2, 4; Skjærvø 2011a: 122–123). He promises Ahura Mazda woven (*ufiia*- ‘to weave’) hymns of praise (*vahma*), the *Gāthās* themselves (1.28.3; see Skjærvø 2005c).

Later, he identifies himself as the *maqθrān-*, the “holder of Ahura Mazda’s sacred thought” (1.32.13, 3.50.5–6, 4.51.8, compare *YH* 41.5), and as the sacrificer (*zaotar* ‘libator’, *Y* 33.6), who also composes and recites. He communicates with the gods through their mutual “readiness to listen,” Sraoša, who opens a ‘route’ (*gātu-*) between the two worlds for this to take place (1.28.5), as well as for the sacrifice to travel through.

His qualifications are stressed repeatedly, especially the knowledge (1.28.4, 1.31.17, 2.45.8, 3.48.3, 4.51.8) needed for presenting a ritual capable of assisting Ahura Mazda in revitalizing the cosmos (1.28.11: words “by which the first *ahu* will be here”). To obtain the knowledge, he questions Ahura Mazda about the cosmos, how it began and how it will be in the end, but also about how to perform the hymns and sacrifice correctly, in order that he may qualify as the “life-giving man” (1.28.11, 1.31, 2.44, 3.48.2, 8, 4.51.5) or (another) Zarathustra (2.43.8, 16).

Having obtained the necessary knowledge (which he already possessed), he announces it to gods and men (1.30, 2.45, 4.51.8; Skjærvø 2011a: 45–46, 48–49). He is not overly confident, often qualifying his claims by “to the best of his ability” (1.28.4, 2.43.9, 3.50.11), but, if he is successful, he expects to be remunerated (e.g., 1.34.13, 3.49.9, 4.51.15, 5.54.1, *YH* 41.5), preferably in the form of livestock (2.44.18, 46.19; Skjærvø 2011a: 128).

The successful poet-sacrificers become *saošiiañts*, literally, ‘who will (re)make the world *spəñta*’ (compare *Y* 14.1, 61.5, 70.4).

Zarathustra is introduced by the narrator in 1.28.6, where he asks Ahura Mazda for the kind of support that was accorded to Zarathustra, which he follows up by narrating in 1.29 Zarathustra’s installation as first poet-sacrificer in this world by the council of deities (Skjærvø 2003b, 2011a: 124 [# 43]). He refers to his qualifications throughout the text, notably in 3.50.6–7, where the narrator, as the *maqθrān* Zarathustra, whose voice the soul of the cow complained did not have the life-giving strength needed (1.29.9), now raises his voice and sends the guiding thought (*xratu*) on its way in a victorious race.

The narrator first introduces himself in the first person as Zarathustra in 2.43.7–8, where he is asked who he is, whose (i.e., on whose side) he is, and what he has to show for himself (Skjærvø 2005a: 59–62, 2011a: 125). The same kind of identification of the poet-sacrificer with Zarathustra is found in *Y* 8.7: “I too, (another) Zarathustra” (Skjærvø 2011a: 217).

Not being the only poet-sacrificer, his performance has to compete with those of his rivals (1.32.12, 14–15, 2.44.20, 46.11, 3.48.10), and he often complains about his difficult position, matching that of Zarathustra (1.32, 2.46.1–2, 3.49.1–2, 4.51.12; Skjærvø 2001, 2011a: 125–126). In the end, however, Zarathustra’s ritual proves to be the best (5.53).

The Gathic Ritual Myth

Each *gāθā* begins with the presentation of its main idea in a strophe that indicates the progress of the ritual:

- The *Ahuna Vairiia* presents the program of the entire collection, which is the regeneration of the world according to the model of the first *ahu* as the

well-deserved (*vairiia*) reward for the sacrifice and support for the poor (Skjærvø 2011a: 219).

- 2.43.1 presents the desired (*ušta*) result of the sacrifice, the regeneration of the ordered cosmos, and rewards for the poet-sacrificer.
- 3.47.1 presents the life-giving spirit (*spənta maniiu*) needed for the regeneration of the ordered cosmos and the life-giving inspiration needed for the poet to perform his role (Skjærvø 2011a: 49 [# 10]).
- 4.51.1 presents the good command (*vohu xšaθra*) generated for Ahura Mazdā by the sacrifice, which brings the poet-sacrificer his well-deserved share.
- 5.53.1 presents the success of the best ritual (*vahištā išti*), one in the manner of that of Zarathustra.

Gāthās 1–3 all close with the request for Ahura Mazdā to (re)make the *ahu* truly *fraša* as a fitting counter-gift for the poet-sacrificer’s gift of the sacrifice and himself and reward him accordingly (1.34.15, 2.46.19, 3.50.11; Skjærvø 2011a: 128).

By the fourth *gāthā*, the outcome is given, and this request is no longer needed. Instead, this *gāthā* ends with a request for reward for the ‘winner’ (*vañtar-*) and his now definitely successful sacrifice in return for praise of all gods and goddesses mentioned individually by names (4.51.22).

The fifth *gāthā* concludes with Airiīaman, god of healing and peaceful unions, being invited to come to the aid of the faithful, while the performer requests his fee (5.54.1; Skjærvø 2011a: 49 [# 11]).

Differently from the Book of Genesis, at the outset of the *Gāthās* the cosmos has already been made and consists of two worlds (*ahu*), the one of thought and the one of living beings or “the one with bones.” The creation process involved thinking, “siring” or giving birth to, fashioning (like a carpenter), and setting in place (compare Kellens 1989a), resulting in an ‘artistic creation’ (*hauuapaṅṅha*; *YH* 37.2), the work of a *hu-apah*, a ‘master artisan’ (2.44.5, *Yt* 5.85 etc.; Skjærvø 2011a: 47). Thus, at his primordial sacrifice, Ahura Mazdā “thought” the luminous spaces of Order (1.31.7, 19; Skjærvø 2011a: 46–47); produced the components of the ritual (1.29.7); and sired the elements of his primordial sacrifice, the six Life-giving Immortals (2.45.4: Good Thought, *Ārmaiti*, also his spouse; 3.47.2: Order); fashioned the *xratus* and *daēnās*, etc. (1.31.11); and set in place the first ordered existence (*ahu*; 1.33.1, perhaps even giving birth to it: 2.43.5, 3.48.6) and heaven and ‘earth’ (*Ārmaiti*), etc. (2.44.4–5, 7, *YH* 37.1; Skjærvø 2011a: 44–49).

The ordered cosmos is governed by *aša*, the cosmic Order (Skjærvø 2003a), and is characterized by being *spənta*, containing *spən* ‘swelling power’ (2.45.9, 4.51.21), that is, being endowed with life-giving strength, fertility and fecundity, light and life. Chaos is caused by the *druj*, the cosmic deception, which distorts the truth about Order (compare 2.43.15; Skjærvø 2003a: 397–398), and is characterized by lack of *spən* (1.34.7, 2.45.9).

The universe is the battleground between the forces of Order and Chaos, which alternate being in command. In this world, the battle is fought between the supporters of Ahura Mazdā’s Order and their rivals, those who increase Wrath (darkness) and those who fight them (1.29.2, 30.6, 2.44.20, 3.48.7, 12, 49.4; Skjærvø 2011a: 46,

47–48, 124, 128–129); those who bring out the sun and those who try to prevent it from rising (1.32.10, 2.43.16, 4.6.3–4; Skjærvø 2011a: 126; 3.50.2, 10).

The ritual helps secure the victory of good over evil by reinvesting Ahura Mazdā with the command for him to regenerate the ordered cosmos (compare Y 8; see also Skjærvø 2007b: 74–75). The rebuilding of the cosmic Order after periods of chaos is according to the ‘divine models’ (*ratu*) or “blueprint” of the first ordered cosmic fabric (*Ahuna Vairiia*, 1.29.2, 6, 31.2, 2.44.16, 4.51.5; Skjærvø 2007b: 72), which are “announced” by *Ārmaiti*, the Earth (2.43.6; Skjærvø 2011a: 125; compare RV 2.38.4: “Arāmāti has distributed (and) holds firmly the ‘models’”).

The reinvestment of Ahura Mazdā is achieved by the combined efforts of the gods supporting the cosmic order over the *daēuuas*, old gods who chose the wrong side in the in the cosmic battle (1.30.6, 2.44.20; Skjærvø 2011a: 46, 47–48); the poet’s scorn of the rulers of chaos, which deprives them of fame, hence also power (Skjærvø 2002b); and the ritual competition (compare Hoffmann 1968).

With the help of the human sacrificers, Ahura Mazdā heals the world (1.31.19) of the illnesses brought upon it by darkness and evil, embodied in Wrath (1.30.6; Skjærvø 2011a: 46), who is overcome by Sraoša, ‘the one who overcomes the obstacles’ (*vərəθrajan*; 2.44.16; Skjærvø 2004b). Wrath, the night sky, is cut off (the cosmic loom), and the ‘covering’ (*viīā*) of Good Thought, the pure sun-lit sky, is spread out (3.48.7), for the sun to travel across. The visible sign of Order, the sun, reappears (1.32.2, 2.43.16, 4.6.3), achieved by the sacrifice and songs of the *saošiiant*s (opponents of Wrath, 3.48.12), whose ‘guiding thoughts’ (*xratu*) are the oxen that pull the wagons of the new days (2.46.3; compare Yt 17.2, 19.94;), while the supporters of chaos try to prevent the sun from rising (1.32.13, 2.46.4; Skjærvø 2011a: 126) and, with their bad *xratu*, merely increase Wrath (3.49.4) and with it make the world sick (1.30.6; Skjærvø 2011a: 128–129).

With the help of Zarathustra and his successors’ sacrifices, Order is revitalized and made strong, and *Ārmaiti*, the Earth, again sees the sun (2.43.16) and becomes capable of producing and supporting life. Nature is revitalized, the waters flow, the plants grow, everything becomes *fraša*, that is, is filled with the life-giving juices of fecundity and fertility (see Skjærvø 2002a), while those possessed by the *druj* are deprived of their right to existence (2.46.4; Skjærvø 2011a: 126; 5.53.9).

The crucial players in the ritual chariot race are the *daēnās* (‘vision souls’; Skjærvø 2011a: 30–33) of the sacrificers, which can *see* in the other world. The *daēnā* guides the chariots on which the sacrificial gifts, actions and words/hymns, are sent up to the other world, conveyed by the fire and the poet’s ‘breath-soul’ (*uruuan*) in a chariot race against other poets (1.28.10, 30.10, 33.1, 3.47.6, 49.9, 50.7, 4.51.3), notably the *daēnās* of the *saošiiant*s, who walk along the road heavenward (1.34.13; Skjærvø 2011a: 214–215). The “setting ‘apart’ (*vi-dā*-) of the ‘legs’ (*rāna*)” (firmly on the chariot) is part of this scenario (1.31.19, 3.47.6, compare 1.31.3, 4.51.9), as are the ‘turns, rounds’ (*uruuaēsa*) around the race course and, in particular, the final turn (2.43.5, 4.51.6), which will decide the outcome (see also Humbach 1959 II: 49; Hoffmann *apud* Humbach 1957: 40; Hoffmann 1968 = 1975: 223; Skjærvø 2011a: 125).

The *daēnās* victoriously overcome (*vana*-) the ‘forces of darkness’ (YH 39.2, compare Yt 13.155) and the ritual performance is then presented to Ahura Mazdā and his

companions in the House of Songs, his ‘critics’ (*arədra*; compare *Lat. arbiter?*) at an ‘audition’ (*ya’ah*; 1.30.2, 2.46.14, 3.49.9) and is judged by them (1.34.7, 2.43.3, 2.46.9, 16, 3.48.8, 50.4, 8; compare Skjærvø 2005b: 203–204, 2011a: 45, 127–128, 129). The characters mentioned, Vīštāspa, the ‘Zarathustra-son’ (*zaraθuštri*), etc. (1.28.6–8, 2.46.16–17, 3.49.8–9, 4.51.15–19, 5.53.1–2; Skjærvø 2011a: 123, 128, 129), are presumably the poet-heroes of the past (they all sacrificed in the *Yašts*).

Ahura Mazda himself, approaching “first” (in line in the procession of judges: 4.51.15), will present the reward, promised by Zarathustra, to the ‘winner’ (*vaṇtar*, 4.51.22), who is endowed with the life-giving strength needed and pronounces himself ready to assist Ahura Mazda, which he does by sending up to the other world his ritual: hymns and ritual actions, reinvesting Ahura Mazda with his royal command. The successful “art works” are deposited in his house (2.45.8, compare 3.48.7, 49.10; Skjærvø 2011a: 129).

Thus, the process underlying the ritual is the exchange of ‘gifts’ (*maga*) between ‘guest friends’ (*asti*; Skjærvø 2008c). The apogee of the sacrifice occurs when the sacrificer, like Zarathustra, offers to Ahura Mazda the most valuable commodity he has, his ‘life force’ (*uštāna*) and bones, which will make the new world about to be born a living entity (1.33.14, 34.14, 2.43.16, 46.18, compare *YH* 37.3; Skjærvø 2011a: 128, 214, 215). He then expects Ahura Mazda to regenerate the cosmos as a counter-gift of ‘appropriate exchange value’ (*vasnā*) and reward the sacrificer (1.30.9, 2.46.19, 3.50.11; Skjærvø 2011a: 46, 128).

In the fifth *gāthā*, Zarathustra’s daughter assists her ‘father’ and ‘husband’ (*fəδrōi ... paiθiiaēcā*; 5.53.4) in remaking the first existence, presumably in an act of *x^vaētuuadaθa*, reenacting the union between Ahura Mazda and his daughter-wife Ārmaiti (compare 5.53.4–5 *x^vaētauuē ... vadəmnō*; Skjærvø 2013b). The competitors and other evil forces are ridiculed and cursed back to hell (5.53.8–9), just as they are in *Y* 72.1–5.

This, of course, is not the whole story, and much work remains to be done. Among the most important is the exploitation of Schwartz’s analysis of the composition of the *Gāthās* (e.g., Schwartz 1986) and of the stellar mythology known from the *Young Avesta* (compare Windfuhr 2010).

CHAPTER 4

Zarathustra Post-Gathic Trajectories

Michael Stausberg

The historical study of religion's historicizes religious phenomena, which are often treated as facts by social groups. Historicizing such religious facts minimally entails two maneuvers. First, facts are placed in their respective contexts. This changes their interpretation. For example, situating the *Gāthās* in the context of Indo-European religious poetry yields one specific reading of them. Second, historicization is a narrative operation that tells its readers how things have come to be regarded in the manner they are now commonly perceived. Zarathustra, for example, is a subject of historical change; he was not the same kind of persona for people living in different ages and circumstances. This chapter will illustrate some historical developments Zarathustra, or Zoroaster, came to be subjected to both within and beyond Zoroastrian discourses. This apparently straightforward procedure is, however, inherently destabilizing. Not only does it become clear that social facts are contingent, but once we realize that all interpretation is subject to history, scholars have to critically subject scholarly interpretations to historical analysis.

Zarathustra as Author and Source

It remains a matter of faith or speculation whether there ever lived a person by the name of Zarathustra. Even if not a positive proof, the *Gāthās* are the closest trace of his existence, be it that he was their poet-composer or that he is portrayed as some kind of heroic or sacrificial figure closely associated with the group that crafted and chanted or recited and kept on transmitting them. While virtually all contemporary Zoroastrians endorse the idea that Zarathustra was the 'author' of the *Gāthās* this notion is a modern and originally Western one. Y 43.7–8, "I realize that you are beneficent, O Wise Lord, when one serves me with good thought and asks me: 'Who are you? To whom do you

belong? ...' Yet I say to him: 'Firstly, (I am) Zarathustra' ..." (trans. Humbach and Faiss 2010: 116–117), can be interpreted as implying a poetical authorship (see Humbach, "The *Gāthās*," this volume), but no known pre-modern Zoroastrian text makes such a claim. Its main inventor, it seems, was Martin Haug (1827–1876), a German scholar of oriental languages who spent several years in India where he collaborated among others with Zoroastrian priests (Hintze 2004). Haug made the seminal discovery that there are two linguistic layers in the Avestan corpus, an older and a more recent one. In his popular *Essays on the Sacred Language, Writings and Religion of the Parsis*, published originally in 1862 (several subsequent editions), he defended this claim on two grounds: internal evidence from the *Gāthās*, where Zarathustra, contrary to later texts, speaks of himself in the first person, and one paragraph from the Younger Avestan greater hymn to Sraoša. In the mode of "first-praise" ("we worship Sraoša ... who was the first to ..."), characteristic of one genre of Avestan literature, Sraoša is here credited with foundational acts of ritual worship; these include the statement that this deity was the first who recited the *Gāthās* in the appropriate manner; the *Gāthās* are here qualified as "the five of Spitāma Zaraθuštra, the Aša-following" (Y 57.8). It is indeed tempting to project a modern notion of authorship on this statement, but the verse seems to allude to Zarathustra's role as the ritual protagonist of the *Gāthās*.

A contextual reading makes it difficult to fit the idea of Zarathustra as the author or composer into the Avestan view of divine communication (Panaino 2004d: 60–61). From the Avestan perspective, the *Gāthās* and other Avestan speech-acts are the products of divine creation; the body of texts known as the *Staota Yesniia* (which comprises the *Gāthās*) was given forth/created by Ahura Mazdā (Y 55.3). According to the *Gāthās*, Ahura Mazdā fashioned the *maθra*- in unison with Aša for the Cow (Y 29.7); in his capacity of *maθrān* Zarathustra is in performative charge of this divine utterance. In other words, according to Avestan sources, if there was a composer of the *Gāthās*, then it was Ahura Mazdā; after all, these texts were considered to be a divine revelation, not a human invention. The divine origin of the *Gāthās* is also defended by a Middle Persian text, the *Dēnkard* (Book 3), even though some verses are, on the surface, not spoken by Ahura Mazdā:

The divine words (*mānsr* [Avestan *maθra*-]) of Ohrmazd to Zarathustra were in many voices, but it is all something that can be relied on and in no way contradictory. For the *Gāthās*, which you too regard as in their entirety spoken by Ohrmazd to Zarathustra, were some of them spoken in the voice of Zarathustra, some in that of the Amahrspands, some in that of Gōšurūn [Protector of Animals], some in that of the other gods (*yazdān*), yet in no way contradict the fact that they were all spoken by Ohrmazd to Zarathustra. (*Dk* 3.7.5; trans. Skjærvø 2011a: 241)

This scheme was eventually extended to cover the whole *Avesta*. In a catechism published in 1869, some years after Haug's *Essays*, Dastur Erachji Sohrabji Meherjirana (1826–1900), a Zoroastrian priest from India, summarizes this view of divine revelation and Zoroaster's place in it: The *Avesta* was created by god, who taught it to Zarathustra, who in turn agreed to "bring" the *Avesta* (Kotwal and Boyd 1982

[1869]: 22). It was only subsequently, since the early 20th century, that Zoroastrians began to endorse the idea that Zarathustra had composed the *Gāthās*.

The Avestan texts originated in an oral culture, and Middle Persian Zoroastrian texts express a suspicion towards writing. In myth, writing ultimately harbors back to the Foul Spirit, from whom the cultural explorer Taxmōrub managed to extract seven kinds of writing (*MX* 27.21–23; *Aog* 91–92; Hutter 2000b: 195). Also, once the *Avesta* was written down, the sage Ādurfarrobay defended the legitimacy of the oral transmission (*DkM* 459–460 = *Dk* 5.24.13). Even in the handful of reports on the writing down of the *Avesta*, this act is never ascribed to Zarathustra himself, but some sources mention that it was done on initiative of his supporter Wištāsp (*DkM* 405 = *Dk* 3.4.20; *ŠĒ* 4–5).

Even though Zarathustra is not regarded as an author or writer in pre-modern Zoroastrian sources, in the Eastern Mediterranean a series of works were circulating under his Greek name *Zoroaster* in the first centuries CE (Bidez and Cumont 1938; Beck 1991; Stausberg 2007a; Vasunia 2007). There are different kinds of works Zoroaster was supposed to have authored. The Greek writer Nicolas of Damascus (b. c. 64 BCE) mentions “sayings,” or “oracles,” of Zoroaster (Vasunia 2007: 204 §371). In his *Natural History*, one of the most widely read works in pre-modern European history, Pliny the Elder (d. 79 CE) mentions a prescription of Zoroaster against epilepsy (37.157), his advice on the right time for sowing (18.120), and he provides some further indirect quotation from Zoroaster mostly concerning precious stones (37.150; 37.159; Vasunia 2007: 81–82 §88a–d). Apparently, a lapidary (book on stones) carrying the authority of Zoroaster was available to Pliny who refers to “Zoroaster in his treatises on magic” wherein he “in an extravagant fashion” sang the praises of a stone, namely the *astriotes* (Vasunia 2007: 82 §88b). Earlier in his work, Pliny states that a certain Hermippus, possibly Hermippus of Smyrna (late 3rd century BCE), “has recorded that Zoroaster composed two million lines of verse” (30.4; Vasunia 2007: 70 §60.4). A medical work ascribed to Dioscorides (c. 40–90 CE) quotes from Zoroaster. Zoroaster also appeared as an author in Platonic circles. An anonymous scholiast (commentator) on the Platonic dialogue *Alcibiades I* 122a refers to unidentified sources that claim that Zoroaster had “left behind him various literary works” (Vasunia 2007: 76 §75). Referring to a story in Plato’s *Republic*, the Christian theologian and Church Father Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 215 CE) records: “Zoroaster, the son of Armenius, a native of Pamphylia ... wrote his account of what he learned from the gods when he was in Hades” (Vasunia 2007: 81 §86). It remains a matter of speculation whether Zoroaster’s trip to the other world had any Iranian background, but this is unlikely. In his commentary on the same story from the *Republic* the 5th-century Platonic philosopher Proclus states that “some” have “actually produced the book which purports to bear his [= Zoroaster’s] name.” Proclus goes on to quote a writing of Zoroaster: “And I have myself read Zoroaster’s four books *On Nature*” (Vasunia 2007: 78 §80). He even quotes the preface, which is very similar to the sentence quoted by Clement of Alexandria. Zoroaster’s *On Nature* was “filled with astrological observations” (Vasunia 2007: 78 §80). Apparently, this work was rather well known among some circles in Athens and Alexandria. Proclus also quotes some astrological principles from Zoroaster, but it is unclear whether these are from *On Nature* (Vasunia 2007: 77 §79).

Some two centuries earlier, another Platonic philosopher, Porphyry (c. 234–305/310 CE) had mentioned a different kind of writing by Zoroaster, namely “apocalypses,” which “deceived many persons.” Porphyry goes on to report that he wrote a refutation of “Zoroaster’s work and tried to show that it was spurious, of recent origin, and invented by the founders of the sect so as to make it appear that the doctrines which they chose to revere were those of the ancient Zoroaster” (Vasunia 2007: 81 §87). The information provided by Porphyry resounds with two texts from Nag Hammadi, Egypt: The colophon (a note placed at the end of a text) identifies the *Zoastrianos* (an apocalypse by that name was also mentioned by Porphyry) as “words of Zoroaster” (132.6–9), and the *Apocalypse of John* refers in an interpolation to “the book of Zoroaster” (2.18.20). Astrology, as already mentioned by Proclus, is a core area of reference to Zoroaster. Probably, the popular etymology of the Greek name Zoroaster, which is reminiscent of the Greek *astron* or *aster* (‘star’), has contributed to the perpetuation of the Zoroaster–astrology connection. The late Byzantine compilation of agricultural topic, the *Geoponica*, lists Zoroaster as one of its sources and contains fourteen quotes from Zoroaster such as “[t]hat one ought to know when the moon is above the earth and when below” and “Zoroaster says that the seed of lettuce moistened with wine heals those who have been bitten by scorpions” (Vasunia 2007: 83 §91b, 91 m). In the entry on Zoroaster, a “wise man,” the 10th-century Byzantine encyclopedia, the *Suda*, summarily states: “Tradition attributed to him four books *On Nature*, one *On Precious Stones*, a work on *Observations of the Stars*, five books on *Eschatology*” (Vasunia 2007: 73 §65).

Most of the various texts ascribed to Zoroaster, who was especially famous as one of the originators of astrology and magic, have at best spurious traces of Iranian or Zoroastrian traditions, while many features link them to Egyptian culture (Quack 2006). One of the most apparent examples for this Egyptian background is a quotation from the *Phoenician History* by Philo of Byblos (c. 64–141 CE) preserved in Eusebius of Caesarea’s (c. 260/265–339/340 CE) *Preparation for the Gospel* (1.10.52):

Zoroaster the Magus in the *Sacred Collection of the Persians* writes thus: “God has the head of a hawk. He is the first, imperishable, everlasting, unbegotten, indivisible, inimitable, controller of all that is beautiful, not subject to bribes, supreme among the good, most prudent of the prudent; moreover he is the father of righteousness and justice, self-instructed, uncreated, perfect, wise, and the sole discoverer of divine nature.” (Vasunia 2007: 80 §84)

While this description seems to recall attributes of Ahura Mazdā, there “is nothing in this passage that decisively points to Iran” (de Jong 1997: 268), but the hawk clearly points to Egypt. Either the name Zoroaster had become somewhat like a literary authority in Egypt or the texts quoting Zoroaster emerged among Persians settled in Egypt (Quack 2006). Zoroaster, however, is not the only pen name current since Hellenistic times, but one of many reputed sources of “alien” or exotic wisdom (Momigliano 1975). His name is part of the genealogy of alternative knowledge. In Europe, this story continued until the present. There have been various texts for which Zoroaster was claimed to be the author in European history (Stausberg 1998a). The most well-known case is Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Also sprach Zarathustra* (“Thus Spoke Zarathustra”), published in four parts between 1883 and 1885, where the philosopher

used Zarathustra as a mask or mouthpiece to pronounce his teachings of the death of god, the superman, the eternal recurrence, and the will to power. Even though Nietzsche had read some relevant scholarly works and used some literary motifs from ancient sources (Rose 2000; Aiken 2003), if at all that work can be read as a reminiscence of the historical Zarathustra Nietzsche uses a rhetorical strategy of inversion, since he was quite aware that his own message was in stark contrast to anything the Iranian Zarathustra might have propagated. In the 20th century, the success of Nietzsche's work resulted in various adaptations, further spreading the name "Zarathustra" and contributing to its fame.

The attribution of spurious works to Zoroaster, however, was not restricted to the West. Some of the Greek astrological writings also spread to the East, where they were apparently translated into Middle Persian. In early Abbasid times, in the context of a movement to translate intellectual works into Arabic (Gutas 1998), some of these writings were translated into Arabic. As a result, there are several Arabic astrological books and fragments ascribed to Zoroaster (Sezgin 1979: 81–86; Pingree 1997: 44–46; Gutas 1998: 37–41). In a crisscross between East and West, the past and the present, these can then be presented as the recovery of old knowledge. In turn, some of these writings spread to Europe (Stausberg 2007a: 193).

Zarathustra as Hero, Recipient of Revelation, and Prophet

Moving back to the Avestan corpus, in the Younger Avestan texts the figure of Zarathustra has changed remarkably in comparison with the *Gāthās* (Skjærvø 1996; Stausberg 2002b). The names of his father (Y 9.13, Yt 5.18), his mother (*FrD* 4), his three sons (Y 23.2, 26.5) and three daughters (Yt 13.139), and his cousin and first follower (Yt 13.95) appear in different places. Main characteristics of the Younger Avestan portrayal of Zarathustra include his fight against the Evil Spirit and the demons and his revelatory conversations with Ahura Mazda and other deities. He smashes the Evil Spirit with stones as big as houses and the prayer-formulae, in particular the *Ahuna Vairiia* (Y 27.13, see also Kreyenbroek and Kotwal, "Prayer," this volume), are his main weapons (*Vd* 19.4–5, Yt 17.20, 19.80). Some Avestan texts present Zarathustra as a kind of culture hero, as the first who did important things and the first who embodied the social order (Yt 13.88–92). The so-called "Confession of Faith" in *Yasna* 12 refers to "all the conversations and all the meetings" (*vīspaēšū fərašnaēšū vīspaēšū hanjamanaēšū*) between Zarathustra and Ahura Mazda as a result of which Zarathustra renounced the demons; the reciter commits to do likewise (Y 12.7). Around a third of the Avestan *Yašts* (hymns to different deities) portray Zarathustra in conversation with Ahura Mazda and several of the deities, and the *Vīdēvdād* is consistently framed as the result of such a dialogue of revelation. These dialogues are presented in a rather businesslike and sober manner. This strategy is continued in the Middle Persian literature, where we find a technical term, *ham-pursaqīh-* 'consultation', for this kind of revelatory interaction, especially in apocalyptic texts.

The Avestan texts invoke Zarathustra by his name only and consistently qualify him as Truth-following (*ašauuan;* MP *ahlaw* 'righteous'). He is also referred to as Zarathustra whose *frawahr* (Av. *frawuaši*) is to be worshiped (*yašt frawahr*, e.g., *Dk* 7.1.3). In some

Middle Persian writings, however, Zarathustra is treated as the perfect example of a category of divine–human intermediaries, which are called *aštaq* (‘messenger’), *frēštaq* (‘courier’), *āwurdār* (‘bringer’), *dēn-paḍīriftār* (‘tradition-receiver’), *paygāmbār* (‘apostle’), or *waxšwar* (‘prophet,’ lit. ‘bearer of the word’). This is how the seventh book of the *Dēnkard* introduces its content: “About the wonders (*abdīh*) of the greatest messenger (*mahist aštaq*) of the Mazda-worshipping tradition (*dēn*)” (*Dk* 7.1.2). Zarathustra is in the following referred to as the messenger (*aštaqīh*) of Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazdā). In this capacity Zarathustra is on par with the beneficent immortal Vohu Manah (Wahman), the messenger of Ohrmazd (*Dk* 7.3.51); being his messenger is the same as being his speaker (*gōwāg*) (*Dk* 7.3.60); Zarathustra thinks: “Good is he, the giver, who is better than his messenger” (*Dk* 7.3.61). Another divine figure is Nēryōsang, who is introduced as Ohrmazd’s own messenger (*aštaq*) in *Dk* 5.4.6. *Dēnkard* Book 7 speaks about the prophets (*waxšwarān*), couriers (*frēštaqān*), and bringers (*āwurdārān*) of the religious tradition up to the time of Zarathustra (*Dk* 7.1.3). The first chapter enumerates a series of such persons starting from Gayōmard, the prototypical human being. The history from Gayōmard to Zarathustra is one of continuous revelation by way of prophets (*waxšwarān*) that are enumerated (*Dk* 7.1.8). There are even prophets to be remembered whose names are not transmitted (*Dk* 7.1.43). The fifth book of the *Dēnkard* tells about “how the apostles (*paygāmbārān*) before Zarathustra have received the religious tradition” (*Dk* 5.1.7) and the following sentence speaks about the apostles, couriers, and tradition-receivers (*Dk* 5.1.8). The text reports that Wištāsp only overcame his fears and accepted the religious traditions once he had seen Zarathustra’s glorious actions, his victories in the debate with his rivals at court, and because he had shown all the necessary signs characteristic of apostles and prophets (*har ēwēnaq paygāmbārān ud waxšwarān daxšaq paydāgīh*, *Dk* 5.2.11). According to the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* the cord or girdle (*kustīg*) was one of the things that were put in order before the coming of Zarathustra, ‘the prophet of the divine’ (*yazdān waxšwar*) (*DD* 38.22). The same text calls Zarathustra ‘the greatest of the apostles’ (*mahist ī paygāmbārān*) (*DD* 36.30). These sources indicate that there were various terms for mediators of the divine tradition. Zarathustra was the greatest of these, but not the only one; he was perceived to have been the culmination of a chain of continued transmission, who received the revelation in its totality, but not as the recipient of an entirely new kind of revelation; rather, his appearance confirmed well-established patterns of intermediacy.

The Middle Persian term *paygāmbār* (here translated as ‘apostle’) has survived in Classical and New Persian. For example, this is the term used by Zarathustra (Zardošt), when he presents himself to King Guštāsp in Abo’l-Qāsem Ferdowsī’s *Šāhnāme* (completed c. 1010 CE): “I am a prophet/apostle, I will bring you wisdom as a guide” (ed. Khāleqī-Moṭṭāq, vol. V: 80; trans. Dahlén 2011: 128). Up to the present, the New Persian word *peygāmbār* is used in the sense of ‘apostle’ or ‘prophet’, also among Zoroastrians. The spread of Islam has promoted a new term, *rasūl*, which in turn was applied to Zarathustra, for example in a hugely popular New Persian narrative originally entitled *Mawlūd-e Zartošt* (‘Birth of Zarathustra’) but more widely known as *Zarātoštnāma* (‘Book of Zarathustra’), composed in the 13th century by an Iranian Zoroastrian named Kaykāvus ibn Kaykhosrow. This *Book of Zarathustra* reworks more ancient materials on the wonders of Zarathustra’s life into a coherent and entertaining narrative in some

1,530 verses; the miracles are here apparently seen as an important confirmation of the divine mission of the protagonist. This is quite in tune with Islamic prophetology and may indicate the Zoroastrians' participation in Islamic discursive spaces (Sheffield 2012). While the *Book of Zarathustra* consistently uses the term *peyḡāmbār* for 'apostle/prophet' or *peyḡāmbārī* for 'apostleship or prophethood', at one key moment in the narrative, when Zarathustra presents himself to Goštāsp, the term *rasūl* comes into effect: "I am the prophet sent to you from god" (chapter 40.4). While this may well allude to Islamic prophetology, in other parts of the *Book of Zarathustra* the term *rasūl* is used for deities or eschatological heroes. In a devotional poem (*monāḡāt*) by the Indian Zoroastrian priest Mollā Fīrūz (1757–1830) an additional Islamic term for prophet is used: He praises Zarathustra as "prophet (*nabī*) sent with the book, whose religion shines brighter than the sun, the prophet (*rasūl*) of god ..., the highest king of all prophets (*anbīyā*)" (Schmerbeck 2008: 218–219). The idea of prophethood is here linked to that of the book of revelation.

Starting with the translation of their texts into Sanskrit Indian Zoroastrians (Parsis) also made use of Indian vocabularies. Daniel J. Sheffield (2012) has drawn attention to the fact that Ervad Rustam Peśotan Hamizyar in his Gujarati version of the *Book of Zarathustra*, the *Zartuštñāmū*, from 1674 CE, speaks of Zarathustra as the *guru* or the 'guru of gurus' (*guram gurān*). The poem even speaks of the ritual act of seeing the guru, the *gurdarśan*, with reference to Zarathustra. The Zoroastrian priest also equates the Zoroastrian *Zend-Avesta* with the *Vedas*.

Zoroastrians have kept on reconfiguring Zarathustra to fit different cultural parameters. In the modern age, there are different tendencies. The representation of the prophet as miracle-worker remains attractive on the popular level, but has received embarrassed reactions among intellectuals. In 1986, the screening of an educational film with the title *On Wings of Fire*, starring the Parsi conductor Zubin Mehta (b. 1936), stirred some controversy among Indian Zoroastrians because of the prominence it assigned to the miracles in Zarathustra's career (Luhmann 1996: 73–76).

In colonial contexts the model of the prophet has shifted towards Biblical patterns, as a preacher and critic of traditional religion and as the champion of an ethical message. In the 20th century Zarathustra has been portrayed as an enlightened human being, striving for self-perfection through work, as a philosopher, a protagonist of human rights and ecological thinking, the founder of a rational and ethical religion, while others have considered him to be a high soul or a divine being, like an angel, an *avatar*, or a quasi-divine being (see e.g., Ringer 2011; Stausberg 2002c). The predilection of modern Zoroastrians to attribute all sorts of desirable achievements to their prophet had already been commented upon critically by a Parsi author in 1930:

Parsis are not only quick to adopt foreign customs and generously to impart to others what they have found good, but their adoration for their Prophet and their admiration for the extent and profundity of his wisdom and knowledge are so great as sometimes to lead some of them to attribute to that great Reformer of the distant past the knowledge and practice, if not the very origin of many a good movement of the later time. (Sanjana 1930: 106–107)

Each school of religious thought or tendency of theological reflection in contemporary Zoroastrianism has generated its specific image of Zarathustra; the continuous recreation of Zoroastrianism is an ongoing recasting of the figure of Zarathustra first found in the *Gāthās*.

Narratives and Identifications

The Avestan texts allude to some narrative events in the life of Zarathustra such as his temptation by the Evil Spirit to renounce the Good Mazdā-worshipping tradition (*Vd* 19.6–9). Some Middle Persian texts provide biographical narratives (Molé 1967), which are then rearranged in the New Persian and Gujarati poetic narratives mentioned above. The narratives revolve around three series of events: Zarathustra's conception, birth, and childhood, his encounters with the Divine Beings (*Av. Aməša Spənta*) and eventually Ahura Mazdā, and the events unfolding at the court of King Vīštāspa (Goštāsp). The materials that are found in these narratives (for a summary see Cereti, "Myths, Legends, Eschatologies," this volume) are apparently derived from a variety of sources including poetry, priestly speculation on rituals, folktales, doctrinal concerns, and millennial speculation (Darrow 1987: 132). Some of these narratives continue to be transmitted in contemporary religious education such as in books written for children (Luhmann 1996: 67).

In addition to the texts that narrate Zarathustra's biography, some others report further incidents. The *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* from the late 9th or early 10th century CE, for example, contains a dialogue between Ahura Mazdā and Zarathustra, who requests immortality, which the god denies him; instead Zarathustra is granted omniscience, which allowed him a vision of the world in its totality. The incident underscores the message that it is essential for men to marry and have children (*PRDD* 36; *DD* 36.30).

Just as Zoroaster was supposed to have authored books beyond the realms of Iran, reports about Zarathustra's life were also circulating outside of Zoroastrian contexts. The information that Zarathustra was supposed to have laughed at his birth, which is a theme in Zoroastrian narratives, has also been transmitted in Western literary history from Pliny (*Natural History* 7.72) in the 1st century CE onwards. Fragments of a biography of Zarathustra are also found in Manichaean sources (Sundermann 1986; Skjærvø 1996). Biographical narratives are transmitted in later Islamic and Eastern Christian sources and were then further elaborated in Western literature from the 18th century onwards. While some sources such as Ferdowsī's poetical narrative, which he copied from the senior poet Abū Maṣṣūr Aḥmad Daqīqī (d. c. 976 CE) (see Dahlén 2011 for an analysis) do not contain explicit value judgments, several Islamic reports, mainly written by historians and heresiographers (i.e., authors who compiled information on heresies and cults), are framed in a rather derogatory manner (Stausberg 1998c) – and so are the later reports by Christian authors (e.g., Schilling 2011).

The Islamic historiographers drew on information from Jewish and Christian sources which relate that Zoroaster originated from a Jewish priestly family and that he had been the disciple of a Biblical prophet, be it Elijah or his followers or Jeremiah or one of

his disciples (Bidez and Cumont 1938 I: 49–50; Schilling 2011). After being struck by leprosy, these reports say, Zarathustra moved to Azerbaijan where he founded his religion (Schilling 2011). The leprosy claim is particularly polemical since this illness is considered extremely impure in Zoroastrian sources (*Vd* 2.29, 37; *Yt* 5.92).

A related strategy of domestication is the identification with a figure from Biblical history. Zarathustra's reputed discipleship of Jeremiah could be interpreted as him being Baruch, Jeremiah's disciple and scribe (Bidez and Cumont 1938 I: 49). Probably the oldest of the Biblical identifications is that with Nimrod, the great-grandson of Noah. His insertion in the genealogy of the mythic age immediately following the flood also finds expression in identifications with Noah's son Ham or the latter's sons Cush or Mizraim (Bidez and Cumont 1938 I: 42–43). In addition, a link to Abraham came to be established. The medieval French theologian Petrus Comestor (d. c. 1178) states that Abraham was the teacher of Zoroaster, and this is also reflected in Jewish-Rabbinic-exegetical tradition (Bidez and Cumont 1938 I: 41; II: 48). In European history Zoroaster was identified with all of these figures as well as some others such as Adam, Moses, and Ninus (Stausberg 1998a). In Islamic contexts, it seems, there developed an outright identification of Zarathustra with Ibrahim, as Abraham is known among Muslims, but it is unclear whether this was an interpretation first suggested by Muslim authors or rather by Zoroastrians who were eager to solidify their fragile status as a recognized religion by asserting a legitimate place in the Islamic genealogy of religion. Sheffield (2012) has drawn attention to a treatise on Islamic sects by an Islamic theologian from Balkh (an ancient stronghold of Zoroastrianism), Abū Muṭī' Makhūl b. Faḍl al-Nasafī (d. 930 CE), who reports that the spokesman of Zoroastrian priests (*harābidhā*) at Balkh had told him in a disputation that they would not recognize any prophet (*rasūl*) except Ibrahim (Bernard 1980: 92). In the period from the 13th to the 19th century some Zoroastrian texts in New Persian identified Zoroaster with Ibrahim (Sheffield 2012: 56–57 with reference to the 13th-century *Qessa-ye 'Umar-e Khaṭṭāb Šāhzāde-e Īrān* and the 19th-century *Golšan-e Farhang*; Russell 2004: 223). Since the colonial period, when the recognition as a legitimate religion in Islamic terms lost its urgency in modernizing societies, Zoroastrians have abandoned this strategy of nominal insertion into the Islamic genealogy of legitimate religions.

Visual Representations

So far, no visual representations of Zarathustra from pre-Islamic times have been found. In Europe, a first illustration of Zoroaster possibly appears in an 11th-century illustrated manuscript of the encyclopedia *De universis* by Hrabanus Maurus (d. 856 CE) who provides the information that Zoroaster had been killed by the Assyrian king Ninus and that he had composed two million lines (Bidez and Cumont 1938 II: 139). In the context of Humanist and Renaissance learning, several visual representations of Zoroaster started to appear since the late 15th century. Zoroaster is here shown either as a king, a magician, a learned person, or a philosopher (see Stausberg 1998f: pictures 42, 43, 47, 48; Stewart 2013: 109–110 [catalogue ## 54–55], 258). The most famous (but slightly doubtful) example is Raphael's fresco *The School of Athens* (1508–1511, in the Vatican), where two figures were by different scholars interpreted as Zoroaster

(Stausberg 1998f: pictures 44–46; Stewart 2013: 107 [catalogue ## 50–51]). In the middle of the 19th century, Zoroaster appeared in a cycle of five famous ancient law-givers in the castle of Dresden (Germany). Underneath each portrait a motto was given; in the case of Zoroaster this reads: “Seid rein wie das Licht” (“Be pure as the light”). The painter Eduard Bendemann (1811–1889) portrays Zoroaster with a cowl and a long white beard, carrying a fire-bowl in his right hand (Stausberg 1998f: picture 49). This picture has also spread among the Zoroastrian communities in India where its provenience from Dresden/Germany is sometimes erroneously believed to provide evidence for the presence of Zoroastrian communities in Germany from ancient times.

Visual representations of Zarathustra also reached Zoroastrian communities via other channels. One was the art of book illustration. Sheffield (2012) has drawn attention to an illustrated manuscript (HP 149, at the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, Mumbai) of the New Persian *Book of Zarathustra* (*Zarātoštnāma*), which was copied in Iran in 1634 CE. Illustrated scenes include Zarathustra’s laughter at birth, several of the attacks he was exposed to as a child, Zarathustra conducting men and women across a river, his visitation by the bounteous immortal Bahman (who is depicted as flying down, with wings), and various scenes at the court of Goštāsp such as discussions and his healing of the king’s favorite horse. This manuscript shows that Zoroastrians occasionally made use of the Persianate art of book paintings, though at least for the *Zarātoštnāma* this manuscript appears to be an isolated example.

Illustrations of Ferdowsī’s *Šāhnāme* were a similar source of visual inspiration. The Cambridge “Shahnama Project” (2014) lists six illustrations of the scene when Zarathustra approaches Goštāsp and exhorts him to accept his religion; the episode was depicted relatively seldom, maybe because the theme was deemed unfitting in Islamic contexts. The relevant manuscripts are from 1330, 1450, 1616, 1621, 1650, and 1851 CE respectively, but only the image from the oldest manuscript (H 1479, in the Topkapı Saray Palace Library, Istanbul) is currently made available: It shows the prophet with a long white beard and covered in a cowl, handing over a casket (probably containing the fire) with his left arm to the king seated on his throne. The introduction of printing, in particular lithography (which offered a greater degree of continuity with manuscript culture), gave new impetus to the spread of the epos and also to book illustrations. Contrary to the intricate paintings contained in the manuscripts, the lithographical art was much less ambitious and simpler (Marzolph n.d.), introducing a new genre of popular art. While the exact number of lithograph editions of the *Šāhnāme* is unclear, some thirty versions are known starting from 1846, when the first specimen was published in Bombay, a center of Persian editorial activity (Marzolph 2002). The scene of Zarathustra’s encounter with Goštāsp was part of the standard iconographical inventory of these editions (Marzolph n.d.). The 1849 edition shows Zarathustra approaching Goštāsp, with hands stretched out to receive the fire glowing in a bowl carried by the prophet in the left hand. In the *Šāhnāme*, after his self-introduction as prophet quoted above, Zarathustra hands over a censer with fire to the king saying that he has brought it from paradise. Zarathustra has a long beard and wears a robe and a turban; in his right hand, he carries a slim walking stick, while Goštāsp and Prince Esfandīyār are dressed in Qajar-style (Marzolph n.d.: 17). While the names of all the artists remain unknown, those known by name all have Muslim names, so that it is unlikely that

Zoroastrian artists were involved. Nevertheless, the same kind of visual language was occasionally appropriated for the illustration of Zoroastrian publications: A Persian-language Zoroastrian prayer book, the *Farzīyāt-e dīnī* ('Precepts of the Religion') published in Bombay in 1895 carries a picture which appears to be built upon the *Šāhnāme* lithograph from 1849 with the addition of such details as a radiating halo and the appearance of Goštāsp's associate or minister Jāmāsp (Sheffield 2012: 193 figure 17).

A further, but as it turned out deceptive source of visualization of Zarathustra was archaeology. In the early 19th century, the artist, diplomat and travel writer Robert Ker Porter, who in 1821–1822 published his *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, ancient Babylonia, &c. &c.*, and John Malcolm, a Scottish soldier and historian who from 1827–1830 served as governor of Bombay, in the second edition of his *History of Persia* (1829), concurred in their interpretation of a relief at Tāq-e Bostān, where they identify one of four depicted persons, namely the one standing to the left, as Zarathustra. This identification spread quickly within the Parsi community and was popularized by lithographs (Dhalla 1930b). In reproducing the image, there emerged some varieties (Sheffield 2012: figures 21–23), but they all agreed on depicting the prophet gripping a long rod, wearing trousers and a robe, standing on a lotus-shaped ground, with a sun-rayed nimbus behind and above his head, with long ribbons emerging from behind his turban. Most images show him bearded, occasionally a fire is glowing at the top of the rod and sometimes he carries a book pressed between his right arm and his body. The picture is used on a variety of media (see Stewart 2013: 183 [catalogue # 152] for a carving on a late 19th-century wooden cupboard). Sometimes, motifs from the Tāq-e Bostān reliefs are combined with others such as those from the *Šāhnāme* lithographs. In fact, as Sheffield (2012: figure 20) has shown, the illustration contained in the first *Šāhnāme* lithograph (1846) has adopted the nimbus, ribbons, and clothes from the Tāq-e Bostān image. Since the early 20th century, Parsi scholars such as Modi, Coyajee, Dhalla (1930b), and Sanjana (1930) have contested the interpretation of the figure depicted on the relief as Zarathustra, but the iconographic details have persisted despite the demise of the former interpretation of the relief. Among modern Western scholars, the figure is typically interpreted as a representation of the deity Mithra, while Parsi scholars have suggested different interpretations.

A further medium for the development of visual representations of Zarathustra was the introduction of the art of portraiture in oil paintings, which became popular in western India from the 18th century onwards. For those who could afford it, having one's portrait painted was one way of confirming one's reputation. Portraits were used in private homes or in public buildings, including fire-temples, where portraits of benefactors still adorn the walls. In addition to portraits of living Parsis (Mistree and Godrej 2013), portraits of Zarathustra came to be painted. Contrary to the illustrations of the *Book of Zarathustra* and the *Šāhnāme* lithographs the portrayals of the prophets on oil canvas are detached from biographical events; the portraits show him alone and in a timeless frame. The most famous portraits were painted by Manchershaw Fakirji Pithawala (1872–1937) and his son Sohrab Pithawala (1911–1959). Apparently, Manchershaw painted his first Zarathustra on instruction of a Zoroastrian theosophist (Nusserwanji Framji Billimoria) who had obtained a vision of Zarathustra, which the portrait attempted to convey (Stausberg 2002b: 61). The portraits painted by the

Pithawalas were copied repeatedly and reproduced en masse and thereby became part of religious popular culture. The most well-known type shows Zarathustra with a light-halo, wearing a turban with ribbons, a long brown beard, his right hand raised and the index finger pointing upward, the left arm carrying a stick (similar to the ones used in the *barašnūm* ritual of purification) pointing upward, dressed in white with trousers and a robe similar to the Tāq-e Bostān type, plus a fluttering gown and a strongly emphasized girdle or cummerbund. There are also varieties of this portrait as busts; characteristically, the prophet raises his eyes upwards on the bust-portraits. Already in the 19th century, the new Zarathustra portraits reached Iran, where they have become as widespread as in India. These images have become an indispensable requisite of contemporary Zoroastrianism by marking spaces such as temples or homes where they are displayed and objects such books in which they are printed as Zoroastrian spaces or objects, thereby being a prime tactic of religious identification.

Not only did the images discussed here make Zarathustra visible, and visibly present the figure of the prophet (in addition to textual and mental representations), but by functioning as devotional objects they also allowed Zoroastrians to interact in new ways with their prophet (Stausberg 2002b: 61). Already in the Young Avestan texts there are several formulae or ritual veneration of Zarathustra (Stausberg 2002b: 36–39) and in the *Yasna* liturgy, the key priestly ceremony, a dedicatory formula, which is otherwise used for divine beings, is recited for Zarathustra by the main priest (Kotwal and Boyd 1991: 79–80). Even a modernizing theologian like Manekji Nusservanji Dhalla (1875–1956), who in some works praises Zoroaster as an enlightened philosopher, still considered him as a divine figure (Ringer 2011: 126–133).

In ritual practice, the space underneath the huge oil canvas portraits in fire-temples is a favorite spot for prayers, oil lights are lit there and the frames of the portraits are touched in a devotional manner. M. F. Pithawala's oil painting *Tying the Kusti* (1890) shows a mother helping her child to tie the ritual cord (*kustī*) in a private home. The scene is set in front of a Pithawala-type painting of Zarathustra hanging on the wall, while a man, probably the father/husband, is praying with the help of a book in front of a fire vase in the adjoining room (Stewart 2013: 207 [catalogue # 185]). In the privacy of homes, reproductions make part of prayer niches that tend to be filled with a small fire vase and different sorts of objects and images. Sheffield (2012: figure 26) reproduces a picture from a prayer book published in 1916 that shows a Parsi woman who kneels in front of a portrait of Zarathustra of the Pithawala-type, her hands stretched upwards. Underneath the image, the following text in Gujarati is printed: "Homage to Lord Asho Zarathustra! O Spitaman Zarathustra, author of the Pure Khordeh Avesta" (trans. Sheffield 2012: 210). In modern devotional practice, the image of Zarathustra thereby fuses with the idea of Zarathustra as the author of the *Avesta*.

Conclusion

By the communities now bearing his name, Zarathustra is remembered in public festivals (see Rose, "Festivals and the Calendar," this volume), priestly ritual, and devotional practice, but it remains unknown whether there was any historical individual by the

name of Zarathustra at the origin of the religious tradition named after him. There were some later carriers of this name, of course; one of them, a certain Zarādušt ibn Khurakān of Fasā, is in Christian and Islamic sources even reported to be the founder of a dissenting sect, the “Zarāduštaqān.” Zarathustra may or may not have been the historical founder of the religion, but in retrospect he was made into its foundational individual at the core of the process of revelation, the first who executed fundamental tasks and the one who embodied societal totality, the connection between god(s) and human(s), between the beginnings and the end of time; at the same time, he was part of a chain of transmission. In addition to this theological persona, post-Avestan texts narrate his revelatory career. His fame crossed the boundaries of Zoroastrian communities, and in the eastern Mediterranean, in particular in Egypt, the name Zoroaster was appropriated as the supposed author of a variety of books in a genealogy of “alien wisdom.” This process continued in European intellectual history, but also spread eastward. In the modern age, Zoroastrians began to entertain the idea that Zarathustra was the author of the *Avesta*. Christian and Islamic sources inserted Zarathustra in a genealogy of religious transmission, and some Zoroastrians also affirmed the identification of Zarathustra with Ibrahim/Abraham. Throughout the ages, Zarathustra signified whatever ideal the religion was supposed to strive for; all Zoroastrian discourses embed discursive configurations of their key figure. Modern visual representations of Zarathustra have created a new devotional space and show the primacy of “the prophet” as the marker of religious identities, also expressed in the modern names for the religion: Zoroastrianism, Zarathushtrianism, and the like, which are all modern creations.

Further Reading

See the entry on “Zoroaster” in the *Encyclopædia Iranica* (www.iranicaonline.org), which comprises six sub-entries: i. The Name (Rüdiger Schmitt); ii. General Survey (William Malandra); iii. Zoroaster in the *Avesta* (Manfred Hutter); iv. In the Pahlavi Books (Alan Williams); v. As Perceived by the Greeks (Roger Beck); vi. As Perceived in Western Europe (Michael Stausberg); vii. As Perceived by Later Zoroastrians (Jenny Rose). For a personal reflection on the history of scholarly interpretations by a leading scholar of the Avestan texts see Kellens (2006b). Further suggestions are in the text.

Part II

Periods, Regions, and Contexts

CHAPTER 5

Religion and Politics in Pre-Islamic Iran

Albert de Jong

The dominant political system of pre-Islamic Iran was that of the monarchy. Iranian history before the Arab conquests in the 7th century CE is a history of four empires, of different geographical extent and of different duration: the Achaemenid (550–330 BCE), the Seleucid (323–129 BCE), the Parthian (247 BCE–224 CE), and the Sasanian (224–651 CE). Three of these were “Iranian” empires, in the sense that their kings were drawn from Iranian families; the Seleucids were the only exception to this rule, for they were of Macedonian stock (although the mother of Antiochus I, the second Seleucid, was a Bactrian). In addition to being “Iranian,” there is ample evidence to show that these three empires were also “Zoroastrian” empires, but this interpretation is far from generally accepted. The main difficulty is the fact that, in discussing it, scholars have often been guided by the conviction that Zoroastrianism as we know it, i.e., the late Sasanian system (which survives to the present), can reasonably be taken as a normative system, more or less as a version of Zoroastrianism as it was intended. This system, in other words, is used as a yardstick to measure the behavior of Iranian kings in terms of meeting or failing the norms. While this is problematic in itself, its most dramatic consequence is the fact that it has blinded most scholars to the possibility of royal agency in religious affairs. The present contribution will attempt to show how misguided that approach is by focusing as much as possible on the active role kings played (or, in one case, did not play) in the development of Zoroastrianism.

It is perhaps best to begin with some examples. In the *Avesta* and the Pahlavi books – the two main blocks of textual sources – strict rules are given for human behavior in a large number of different contexts. These rules frequently confirm each other – the Pahlavi books tell us the same as the *Avesta*. This is usually explained by invoking notions of conservatism, loyalty to Zarathustra’s message, or to the Zoroastrian tradition (an entity that is treated as pre-given; Boyce 1992). This is a labor-saving strategy, for the “tradition” thus recovered gives us both an instrument to distinguish “real”

Zoroastrianism from deviations that failed to maintain themselves *and* an explanation for this failure. This strategy, however, comes at a huge cost: It excises human agency from the history of Zoroastrianism, or at least limits it to two options. The first option would be acceptance: adapting one's behavior to the requirements of the tradition. The other option would be a failure to meet these requirements and this is usually rationalized by the invention of a number of non-Zoroastrian Iranian religions, designed by scholars specifically to preserve the notion of a trans-historical Zoroastrian tradition. Examples of such invented religions (according to the present writer) are "the (non-Zoroastrian) religion of the Achaemenids" (sometimes known, confusingly, as Mazdaism; Lincoln 2012b); "Zurvanism" (Zaehner 1955), and "Iranian Mithraism" (Pourshariati 2008). None of these "religions" is documented anywhere in the sources: They owe their existence wholly to the fact that the scanty primary sources available for the entire pre-Islamic history of Iran occasionally yield data that cannot be harmonized with the (combined) evidence from the *Avesta* and the Pahlavi books. The most prominent examples are the names of deities that are worshipped (and the fact that these beings are sometimes "non-Iranian"), alternative cosmogonies, unknown rituals, and unknown types of sanctuaries. The fact that these all seem to disappear in late Sasanian times is often left unexplained or, at best, seen as a natural development of the religion.

One of the most fiercely debated subjects in this respect is the topic of Zoroastrian funerary traditions. The prescriptions for the treatment of corpses are strikingly similar in the *Avesta* and the Pahlavi books: Corpses are to be brought to a barren place, to be consumed by vultures and/or dogs. Against this unanimity in the sources (supported, moreover, to a certain extent by non-Zoroastrian sources of the pre-Islamic period) is the much more varied dossier of archaeology, which shows that many Iranians buried their dead, either directly in the ground (in various ways, but most prominently in coffins made of clay, a porous substance that would not, in the logic of the religious texts, prevent the earth from being contaminated), or in above-ground mausoleums. Most strikingly, it seems, members of *all* pre-Islamic dynasties used these types of funerary arrangements rather than "following" the prescriptions of the religious sources. In the case of the Achaemenids, whose tombs are known, either as freestanding mausoleums or cut in the living rock, this fact has been used more than once as decisive *evidence* that the Achaemenid kings were not Zoroastrians (e.g., Widengren 1965: 154–155). Scholars who claim that the Achaemenids were Zoroastrians have chiefly come up with the notion of "royal exception" (the idea that ordinary rules do not apply to extraordinary persons). In many other cases, the evidence for primary burial has been ignored, buried in footnotes, or assigned (without any evidence) to non-Zoroastrian communities in Iranian lands (Jews, Greeks, etc.). Very few scholars have entertained the possibility that a range of options in funerary traditions (and, by extension, a range of options in many other aspects of the religion) may have been the normal state of affairs in the Iranian world, without any religious implications being felt by communities or individuals in various parts of the Iranian world or in different periods in Zoroastrian history. By resisting this perspective, several key subjects for the history of Zoroastrianism have often been glossed over, especially regional and social variation, historical developments, and experimental new forms of Zoroastrianism that failed to maintain themselves.

Zoroastrianism before the Iranian Empires

In a field riddled with uncertainties, there are two very solid facts on which our entire reconstruction of earliest Zoroastrianism must be based. The first of these is the existence of the *Avesta*, in its own language (Avestan), preserved and transmitted over a very long period by Iranians who did not speak that language. The second is the fact that the corpus of Avestan texts mirrors a world (literally) far removed from those of the Iranian empires: centered in eastern Iran and Central Asia and borne by a society based on kin groups, tribal associations, and (probably) transient unions of villages and regions (Skjærvø 1995a). The enemies spoken of in the narrative portions of the Avestan texts are referred to under two different headings: The first are the *daēuuaiiasnas*, those who worship the (rejected/evil) *daēuuas* and who are contrasted to the “we-group” of the texts, the *mazdaiiasnas*, the people who worship Ahura Mazdā. The second heading appears to be an ethnic one: It is Tūiriia (together with a few other ethnic names), the name of the enemies of the “we-group” of the *Avesta*, the people who refer to themselves as “Arya.” There is a great elasticity in the application of these terms (in later times, for example, the Tūiriia were identified with the Turks) and together they are responsible for the situation that the identity of the Zoroastrians could be expressed both in “religious” and in “ethnic” terms – the source of much confusion for historians of Zoroastrianism.

It has generally been recognized, moreover, that the Avestan texts that have been preserved are diachronically layered: There is a small portion in a much more archaic dialect (known as Old Avestan), traditionally attributed to Zarathustra himself, and a much larger group of texts that is seen as younger. This diachronic hierarchy is augmented, moreover, by the fact that the younger texts all presuppose the older ones: In some cases, they literally rework them or reflect on them (this is the case, for example, with the *Frauarānē* (Y 12), which contains quotations from the Old Avestan texts; and with the commentary on the Old Avestan prayers in Y 19–21), in other cases they show the presence of the Old Avestan texts in the use of names (Zarathustra, Ahura Mazdā) and technical terms (Aməša Spənta; Saošiiant) specific to that corpus. Most scholars agree that these Old Avestan passages were not always interpreted correctly – a first sign of the development of Zoroastrian theology – but what these passages do establish is the “foundational” character of the Old Avestan texts.

In the corpus of younger Avestan texts, the narrative of the foundation of the religion through the activities of Zarathustra and the support he gained from Vīštāspa is firmly in place. The important point of this is that from these early texts onward, a notion existed of the “historicity” of the religion: It had originated in a historical past and had not always been around. As a consequence, it had the natural option of presenting itself as a choice that could be made by all: As the religion had already begun to spread, so it could (and would, according to the texts) continue to spread around the world. These younger texts operate, as indicated, with an established notion of a “community” whose identity is expressed primarily – but not exclusively – in religious terms: Belonging to the community is not conditioned by birth, but depends on the choice of the believers to worship certain deities and not to worship others (as is clear especially from the *Frauarānē*, Y 12).

It must be assumed that at a certain moment in history there were people in the Iranian world who chose to adopt this religion, who did not speak Avestan, but were convinced that it was important for their belonging to the community of Mazda-worshippers to use the Avestan texts in their prayers and rituals. This has been evoked, somewhat romantically, as a result of the work of Zoroastrian missionaries (Boyce 1975a: 249–276), whose activities are to some extent recorded. Alongside this perspective, however, we find the story of the conversion of Vīštāspa to Zoroastrianism – with its important lesson (much emulated in later times, by Christians and Manichaeans) that the conversion of a ruler equals (or brings about) the conversion of the people in his domain (de Jong 2014).

There are, of course, no reliable sources on the details of this whole process, but the preservation of the *Avesta*, in its own language, is a very solid fact that can only be explained from such a background. At the same time, this necessary assumption produces a number of significant questions that cannot be answered and that make any history of the development of early Zoroastrianism impossible to sketch. This is one of the reasons why a history of (early) Zoroastrianism is most often a history of Avestan texts; the situation is roughly comparable to that of the history of Vedic religion, which is almost always written as a history of Vedic literature. For the purpose of the present chapter, there are three particularly important questions: a question of content, a question of understanding or translation, and a question of use. We do not know (exactly) which texts were present at any given moment in Zoroastrian history before the Sasanian period, nor how (or when) they were collected and rearranged (and brought into the service, for example, of the *Yasna* liturgy, the history of which is equally unknown). Nor do we know how these texts were understood or used by priests and lay people, apart from their (obvious) use in ritual. It has often been noted, for example, that for a native speaker of Avestan, all divine names would have an understandable meaning (since they all reproduce or encapsulate common nouns or adjectives). For them, “hearing” Avestan texts would be comparable to a 17th-century speaker of English listening to a recital of the exploits of Christian and Mr Worldly Wiseman in the town of Carnal Policy from Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Much of this would be lost when the texts began to be recited and heard by people who did not speak that language itself: The goddess “Reward” would easily transform into a goddess with the *name* Arti, and the Wise Lord himself ended up as a deity with the *name* Ahura Mazdā (and appears thus, with both elements of his name joined as one, in the inscriptions of the Achaemenids as A^huramazdā-).

Finally, we do not know how the Avestan texts were used, apart from their (generally acknowledged) use in ritual contexts. It is customary to believe that the *content* of the texts (however well or poorly they were comprehended) mattered to the Zoroastrians, but there is no solid evidence for this assumption (de Jong 2009). Much of this has been circumvented on the assumption – reasonable in itself – that the texts were accompanied by translations, but if we do not know which texts were present, we obviously do not know anything about their translations either. Any scenario of the growth of Zoroastrianism must take account of all these variables and it is likely that serious reflection on these will help explain, to a certain degree, the considerable local and historical variety of expressions of Zoroastrianism. The question for this chapter is how we can account for the (eventual) uniformity of the religion.

The Achaemenid Empire

Little to nothing is known about the religion of the first two Achaemenid kings, Cyrus (r. 559–530 BCE) and Cambyses (r. 530–522 BCE), for the sources for their rule are scattered and refractory. There was a time of conquest and expansion, with the acquisition of Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and Egypt alongside large parts of the Iranian plateau. In the Akkadian and Egyptian sources they (and their successors) naturally follow the conventions pertaining to Mesopotamian and Egyptian kings – in genres, moreover, that do not generally allow of expressions of personal conviction. In the (much later) Greek sources, the stories of their lives had already become legends, to exalt the one and vilify the other, so that no safe conclusions can be reached. There is one relevant fact that needs to be stressed here, however, and this is the cultural complexity of their native region (Pārsa) in south-western Iran. For alongside Persians and alongside the strong cultural impact of Mesopotamia, there was a region that had been dominated by another great civilization: that of the Elamites, whose traditions they seem to have continued to a large extent (Alvárez-Mon and Garrison 2011). This emerges clearly with the accession of Darius I (r. 522–486 BCE) – from another branch of the Achaemenid family – who is the first Achaemenid monarch whose own statements in his own native language have been preserved. For the period of his reign, we also possess a huge amount of documentary texts in Elamite and it has been difficult to square the explicit proclamations of the greatness of A^huramazdā (and A^huramazdā alone, with “the other gods” mentioned only as a group) in Darius’ inscriptions, with the evidence for the worship of a multitude of gods, of various ethnic backgrounds, in the Elamite tablets (Henkelman 2008).

The problems appear to have been caused by the ineradicable wish of many scholars to retrieve the personal conviction of the king, but this will emerge neither from his official inscriptions, nor from the archives of his clerks. It is, in fact, lost to us forever and its relevance for the history of the religion is contestable. This is equally true for the inscriptions of the later Achaemenid kings. Two changes in the otherwise very formulaic inscriptions have caused much debate. The first, and most striking, one is in the so-called “Daiva Inscription” of Xerxes in Persepolis (XPh), where the king mentions the fact that he had destroyed a ritual place where the *daivas* were worshipped and that he had issued a proclamation that the *daivas* are not to be worshipped. The inscription ends, moreover, with an appeal to all those addressed in the text to follow the law of A^huramazdā, because doing so will make them happy in this life and righteous in the next. It is impossible to relate this inscription, with its unique content, to any specific event. The suggestion was made, therefore, that it did not refer to such an event, but was to be seen as a general (timeless) declaration (Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1980: 1–36). If that is the case, all attempts to dissociate this inscription from “Zoroastrianism” are vacuous, for the inscription finds its most natural interpretation from the background of Zoroastrian thought. This is true also of the addition, from the inscriptions of Artaxerxes II (r. 404–358 BCE) onward, of two further named deities: Mithra and Anāhitā. We cannot build a history of the religion on these scattered data.

Since the discussion of the religion of the Achaemenids has, for the largest part, been based on such matters of detail in the Old Persian inscriptions (based on the idea that

these would somehow reveal the religiosity of the kings), whole areas of evidence that should have been at the center of the discussion have needlessly been sidelined. The Achaemenid period, I shall argue, was the period in which Zoroastrianism as we know it took shape. This can be shown from three different cases, which reinforce each other mutually. The first is the development of the Zoroastrian calendar, which regulates and dominates Zoroastrian ritual life (and incorporates Egyptian and Mesopotamian elements, which can only have been included in the Achaemenid period). The second is the transformation of the representation of the afterlife, in particular the judging of the soul of the deceased, which has an Elamite background. The third is the structuring of the Zoroastrian story of creation and the end of time. Before we discuss these three, however, it will be necessary to pay some attention to the mechanism that produced these transformations. This can be shown in the example of the development of court ceremony.

The Origin of Achaemenid Court Rituals

It has long been observed that the Achaemenids did not invent the inner workings of their empire from scratch (Briant 2002). In many details they followed the example of the kingdoms their empire replaced. These were the Neo-Assyrian Empire, the Neo-Babylonian kingdom, the Median conglomerate, and the Neo-Elamite kingdom, within which the Achaemenid family had begun its rise to power. The best evidence comes from administrative matters, for wherever they found a functioning bureaucracy, the Achaemenids maintained it for its traditional local purposes. Where one was absent, they built one. The type of administration that was most obviously absent was one that would be capable of uniting the various provinces of the whole empire and for this they chose Aramaic as the most suitable language. In this, they followed the example of the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian kingdoms, where Aramaic had long begun to coexist with the traditional cuneiform administrations (Folmer 1995:1–41). Achaemenid documents in (so-called) Imperial Aramaic are known from Bactria (Naveh and Shaked 2012) to Egypt (e.g., Driver 1957) and the spread of this administration is responsible for the development of almost all writing systems east of the Euphrates.

For other formal aspects of their empire, they equally looked at the examples of the kingdoms their empire replaced. This has been observed for royal titles and inscriptions, and for many aspects of court ceremony: royal sacrifices, processions, and similar key moments of imperial self-representation (de Jong 2010). When it comes to the religion, however, there was a crucial difference between the Persian religion and especially the royal precedents in Mesopotamia. This is the absence, as far as is known, of temples. Two cases may illustrate this. The Old Persian inscriptions generally begin with what has been called “the prayer”: a declaration that the world has been created by A^huramazdā and that A^huramazdā has given sovereignty to the (present) king. These declarations are then followed by the customary Near Eastern “I am” declarations, in which the king pronounces what he has achieved. Such inscriptions are also known from Mesopotamia, but there the religious declaration mainly appears when the inscription is *about* the religion, for example, when the king dedicates a divine statue or a temple. In the Achaemenid case, most of the rituals for which Mesopotamian kings

would go to the temple were brought into the palace or the royal cities: These were, in the Persian case, open-air festivals and gatherings, the main marker of which are the large platforms that have been found all over the empire. The Persian kings adopted, it seems, the Mesopotamian New Year festival, for the structure even of the modern Nowrūz celebration continues traditions from Mesopotamia: The bowls of greens that are sown to shoot up quickly undoubtedly continue the custom known in the West as “gardens of Adonis,” and the conclusion of the Nowrūz celebration by going outside on the thirteenth day also follows Mesopotamian precedent (Boyce 1982: 33–34). It is customary to highlight Nowrūz as a “secular” festival – chiefly because the Zoroastrian texts hardly ever mention the festival by its name. These priestly documents, however, do refer to the festival often, but replace it with a term that was meaningful for the priests: Rapiθwin (one of the festivals of obligation). It is here that we can find decisive proof for the Achaemenid transformation of Zoroastrian rituals. There is nothing in the Avestan passages that mention Rapiθwin (one of the five gods who represent the five watches of the day [MP *gāh*]; the name itself means “cooking time” and he is associated with the watch of the day that begins at noon, when the sun is at its highest) to suggest that he resided under the earth periodically, but this is how he is celebrated nowadays (Boyce 1968d). Rapiθwin, who is associated with heat, retreats under the earth in winter, to protect the roots of the crops from cold, and reappears above the earth at Nowrūz. This is especially important for priests, for it changes the number of the rituals associated with the watches. Rapiθwin is solemnly welcomed back upon his return for the New Year. These two facts, Rapiθwin’s departure under the earth for winter and his return with the New Year – wholly unattested in any Avestan text – can only be explained as a result of culture contact with Iran’s western neighbours, where variations on this ritual drama had persisted for millennia. The Achaemenid period is the *only* suitable timeframe for such a development. The idea that the Achaemenid period in that sense transformed Zoroastrianism even in its ritual expression is strongly supported by the three further transformations to be discussed.

The Zoroastrian Calendar

It has always been assumed that the Zoroastrian calendar was introduced in the Achaemenid period, but for a long time there was no real evidence of its presence in documents that could be dated to this period. Scholars remained divided, moreover, in their appreciation of the use of the calendar. Many of them wanted to find evidence for its use as a system of dating and of time-keeping and lost track of its primary importance in the structuring and organization of priestly and lay rituals (Boyce 2005). Like most ancient societies, the Achaemenid Empire knew a plurality of calendars: There is evidence for the standard Mesopotamian one (used in all Aramaic documents), and a local Old Persian one (known from the inscriptions), but it is likely that there were others as well. The development of the Zoroastrian calendar (modeled on the Egyptian solar year; de Blois 1996) does not have to be interpreted as a development intended to replace the “civic” calendars; its most likely background is the wish to establish a uniform ritual year. This is precisely what now emerges from the Aramaic documents from ancient

Bactria, which use the Mesopotamian calendar for all “civil” purposes, but contain the first datable use of the Zoroastrian calendar in a context that is specifically concerned with the religion (Naveh and Shaked 2012: 35–36). The calendar, in its modified form, survived, moreover, to reappear in various individual transformations, from all former parts of the Achaemenid Empire: Armenia, Georgia, Cappadocia, Parthia, etc. In this, it is wholly parallel to the reappearance (in these same areas) of Imperial Aramaic – on its way to being transformed to a system of writing Iranian languages. This latter process has always been understood as the result of the strength of the Achaemenid administrative reforms, and, if one views the evidence of the Zoroastrian calendar from this perspective, it offers solid evidence for a similar restructuring of religious observance. This makes it easier to argue for developments that are not themselves safely attested, but have been widely attributed to the Achaemenid period: the development of priestly titles (with the rise of the ⁺*magupati* > *mowbed*) and the development of a temple cult of fire, as well as temples dedicated to named deities other than Ahura Mazda (Boyce 1982: 221–231).

The Judgment of the Soul

It is only natural that the development of structural aspects of the religion, such as the New Year festival, the calendar, and fire-temples, can better be traced than the development of ideas, especially in a civilization that consciously rejected the use of writing for its religious (and literary) texts. It is striking, therefore, that evidence can be produced for two crucial Achaemenid developments in Zoroastrian theology. The first of these was the development of the idea of the judgment of the soul after death. There is no doubt that the ancient Iranians believed that the soul of a deceased person would be judged after death, but there is a wide gap between the representation of this judgment in the Avestan texts and in the later Zoroastrian tradition. In the *Avesta*, the judgment is either implicit and its results are communicated to the soul (as is the case in *Hāddōxt Nask* 2; Piras 2000), or the judgment is carried out by the “Bridge (of the Separator)” itself, but there is no mention at all of a triad of divine judges who weigh the thoughts, words, and deeds of the soul. They appear only in much later texts, and one can easily see why the divine judge (Mithra), the god of righteousness (Rašnu), and the god of obedience (Sraoša), who are mentioned as a triad in *Yt* 10 and who follow each other in the day dedications of the calendar, would have been chosen for this function. But the triad of judges itself appears to have an Elamite background (Henkelman 2008: 61–62; Tavernier 2013): Although the Elamite evidence is much older than the Achaemenid period (the middle of the 2nd millennium BCE in Susa; Bottéro 1982: 393–402), the divine triad of Inshushinak “the Weigher,” Ishnikarab, and Lagamar offers such a crucial structural parallel to the (otherwise wholly unexplained) appearance of the triad of judges in later Zoroastrianism (and is unknown, as such, from Mesopotamia) that it is difficult not to accept them as the most likely example for the Zoroastrian development, where the Bridge continued its judicial function, but came to be preceded by a formal judging by three gods (who are not known to carry out this judgment in any Avestan source).

The Zoroastrian Story of Creation and the End of Time

Something similar must be said about the basic framework of all (later) Zoroastrian thought. There are numerous references in the *Avesta* to Ahura Mazdā's act of creation and to Anra Mainiiu's activities to counteract it, but one will look in vain for the full story of the creation of the world (and the pact sealed between the two spirits, specifying time and place of their mutual struggle). In this case, however, we have evidence for the presence of this story, systematically presented, that can be dated to the late Achaemenid period. The evidence comes from Greek literature, especially from chapters 46–47 of Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* (de Jong 1997: 157–204). This text itself is from the early 2nd century CE, but there is no doubt that its contents are based wholly on the works of other authors, one of whom (Theopompus) he names. These authors, whose works are chiefly known from being thus cited by Plutarch and Diogenes Laertius, can all be dated to the 4th and the 3rd centuries BCE. This makes it certain that this crucial Zoroastrian narrative (with speculations, for example, on the division of time in nine or twelve millennia, and with a clearly defined list of seven Aməša Spəntas and their role in creation) had been developed by then and had been spread widely enough in the Persian world to count as a summary of what “the Persians” believed. This fact derives its greatest significance if it is viewed in the context of the other evidence for an Achaemenid restructuring (or even shaping) of Zoroastrianism. It is unimaginable that all of this would have occurred spontaneously: Some of the developments clearly point to Persia as the locus of its origins (the judgment of the soul), whereas others (the calendar) can be shown to have spread all over the empire. Taken together, they build a very strong case for the fact that we should not interpret the Achaemenid evidence on the basis of what we “know” of Zoroastrianism, but that we should recognize the fact that the Zoroastrianism we know (best), was given shape – purposely, in an act of imperial unification – by the Achaemenids. This will also give us instruments to judge developments in later periods. It is to these that we must turn now.

Alexander and the Seleucids

Religion played no role in the conquests of Alexander, just as it had served no agenda in the conquests of the Achaemenids themselves. This fact creates some problems for the interpretation of the hostile image of Alexander that has been preserved in Zoroastrian writings (*AWN* 1.3; *ŠĒ* 4–5, etc.). There is nothing to suggest that Alexander or his successors were obtuse in dealing with their newly conquered territories, and the recent find of administrative documents from Bactria, which includes a document dated to the seventh year of “Alexander, the King” (Naveh and Shaked 2012: 199–206) attests the continuity of administrative practices. This continuity was known, at any rate, from the survival of the use of Imperial Aramaic in various provinces of the former Achaemenid Empire. The document in which the first use of the Zoroastrian calendar is attested is likewise dated (by its first editors) to the reign of Alexander, which shows that in the sphere of religion, too, life continued as usual with the change of rulers.

The negative image of Alexander (known in Middle Persian as *gizistag* ‘the accursed’), a title he shares with the Evil Spirit himself) is often attributed to the loss of knowledge, the destruction of holy sites, and the murder of priests, and all these are likely to have occurred with the heavy fighting that accompanied some of Alexander’s campaigns (Boyce and Grenet 1991: 12–17). The evidence, however, is largely anecdotal and there is obvious evidence for the preservation and continuity of the religion of the Iranians in this period. It is likely, therefore, that the hatred shown for Alexander in Zoroastrian texts is not due to specific crimes against the religion, but is rooted in the fact that by the time of Alexander’s conquests – and as a result of the Achaemenid transformation of the religion – Zoroastrianism had come to be seen as the *national* and *imperial* religion of the Iranians. The crushing of the Achaemenids, from such a perspective, would equal the (attempted) destruction of the religion. As was to be the case with the (much more damaging) Arab conquests of Iran in the 7th century CE, the group that would be most immediately afflicted were the court priests, for they no longer had useful services to offer. It seems, therefore, that with the downfall of the Achaemenid Empire, Zoroastrianism reverted to what has throughout its history been the mainstay of the religion: a religion grouped around family traditions, served by priests whose primary duties were defined by the families and communities that employed them. It is possible to see in this a “fragmentation” of the religion, for there is no evidence for a central religious authority that would be accepted by all Iranians. Such an authority was not developed, moreover, by the next, and most successful, dynasty to rule the Iranian world: the Parthians.

The Parthian (Arsacid) Empire

The Parthians are the step-children of ancient history and, strangely, also of Iranian history. In spite of the fact that they held the affection of the Iranians longer than the Achaemenids and the Sasanians, the historical memory of the Iranians has no place for them. They are seen as an intrusion in the great narrative of Iranian history, which took shape in Sasanian times. Western scholars, too, have treated them only casually, especially when it comes to their importance for the history of Zoroastrianism. Many of them have made much use of the notion that they were “originally” Sakas, nomadic invaders from the Central Asian steppes (e.g., Wolski 2003). While this is based on the flimsiest of evidence (Boyce 1994), it has been stretched to great length, more or less as a permanent instrument by which to explain and interpret the inner workings of their empire (Hauser 2005). Since they are thus seen by many as lacking a culture of their own, they are regularly presented as the “beneficiaries” of cultural contacts with more cultured peoples: the Persians and especially the Greeks (Rawlinson 1887). The impact of Greek culture on some expressions of Parthian culture, moreover, has produced an image of the Parthians as somehow non-genuine Iranians, and – by extension – as failed Zoroastrians (de Jong 2008 [2012]).

None of this can seriously be maintained at present. The large collection of ostraca with Parthian texts excavated from the Arsacids’ first capital, Nisa, has removed any doubts about the fact that the Arsacids were Zoroastrians: The use of the Zoroastrian

calendar in these documents and incidental references to priests offer strong supportive evidence for this claim (Bader 1996). This fact is corroborated in all other Parthian documents that have come to light in the 20th century. Two further facts, whose importance has not been sufficiently realized, have become clear, moreover: the first is that the Parthians did not use their religion as an instrument of governance. The second, closely related, fact is their reliance on spreading Parthian culture (including religion as practiced in a family context) by setting an example to be emulated all the way down through the (extensive) network of families and officials that built the core of the empire (Boyce and de Jong forthcoming).

This was already hinted at above: Parthian Zoroastrianism, as far as we can grasp it, lived in the context of family life, with the royal family maintaining it in an appropriately lavish way. That this is a likely model emerges mostly from the fact that we can see it being copied in the western parts of the Parthian Empire, especially in Armenia (Russell 1987), which was ruled by a junior branch of the Arsacid family. There, as elsewhere, wealthy families employed priests and minstrels (*gōsāns*) to take care of their religious needs and of the task of remembering and eulogizing past successes and current endeavors. Much effort was thus spent in promoting the interest of the families themselves, and this included the construction (and maintenance) of funerary structures as well as the sponsoring of temples. These temples were not (only) the fire-temples one would generally expect, but they included temples dedicated to gods and goddesses other than Ahura Mazdā. It seems that princes and kings acted as wardens, or even priests, in some of these temples, while patronizing others by sending gifts to them. Such activities used to be seen as indicators of the fact that the Parthians were no real Zoroastrians, but this can only be maintained if one works with a strictly defined notion of what Zoroastrianism is. This reconstructed Zoroastrianism, it will be shown, is a Sasanian invention – and therefore of little use for the interpretation of pre-Sasanian varieties of the religion. The time has come to liberate the Parthians from this yoke, and restore to them a place in the long and checkered history of the Zoroastrian religion.

One crucial contribution to Zoroastrian culture has generally been ascribed to the Parthians, and with reason. This is their role in the preservation, development, and spread of the epic traditions of the Iranians. These can be seen, of course, as belonging to the history of Iranian literature, but this would force modern Western distinctions on a non-modern non-Western context. It is clear that narrative traditions were the domain of the *gōsāns* and not of priests, but in developing them, it can be shown that the *gōsāns* made use of traditions and names from the *Avesta*. This gives us virtually the only evidence for the use of the *Avesta* in a non-ritual context and this evidence is considerable: Wherever the Parthians settled, as administrators or in estates, evidence for Iranian epic conventions pops up. This has generally been recognized for Armenia and Georgia, but it is equally true of the Syro-Mesopotamian world, where pieces of literature filled with Parthian conventions have been found in the works of Josephus, the *Babyloniaca* of Iamblichus, the *Acts of Thomas* (and the *Hymn of the Pearl* contained in it), Manichaean and Mandaean texts, and, further afield, in the development of meaningful stories for several experimental forms of Christianity (e.g., the *Paraphrase of Sēm* found in the Nag Hammadi codices). While this evidence does not allow us to trace the history of Zoroastrianism, it strongly supports the notion that Parthian culture spread

through the network of Parthian families in their estates and cities, in a process of cultural radiance (de Jong 2013a). There is a whole world to discover here, but since this chapter is devoted to religion and politics, we have to move on to the dynasty that destroyed the Parthian Empire and, as we shall see, immediately set out to reconnect the link between Zoroastrianism and imperial politics.

The Rise of the Sasanians

In 224 CE, the first Sasanian, Ardašīr I (r. 224–242 CE), was crowned king in the royal capital of Ctesiphon in Babylonia. The years before his coronation are difficult to reconstruct in detail, because the Sasanians immediately launched a campaign of numismatic, narrative, and pictorial propaganda that was designed to present the change in dynasty as a victory, not just for the new ruling family, but for the Iranian world as a whole. Religion played an important part in this campaign: Ardašīr's coins were wholly new (and of staggering quality compared to late Parthian coinage) and presented the king as “the Mazdā-worshipping lord” on the obverse, while representing his regnal fire (identified as such: “Fire of Ardašīr”) on the reverse (Alram and Gyselen 2003). In the famous investiture relief from Naqš-e Rostam, Ardašīr meets Ohrmazd face to face and receives from him the ring of sovereignty, while the horses on which they are mounted trample under foot defeated enemies: Ahreman in the case of Ohrmazd, and the last Parthian king (Artabanus V; r. c. 213–c. 224 CE) in the case of Ardašīr (Hinz 1969: 115–143; Canepa 2009: 59–60). Stories were told, moreover, on a precise theme that is only found for the first two Sasanian kings: how they destroyed sanctuaries in which monstrous kings and queens were worshipped as living deities, receiving horrid offerings from terrorized subjects, and hoarding great treasure. These stories have been recognized as epic embellishments of very real activities by the first Sasanian kings: the demolition (and re-foundation as “normal” fire-temples) of dynastic fires lit by various lesser kings under Parthian suzerainty (a group to which the Sasanian family itself appears to have belonged; de Jong 2006).

The dominant theme of early Sasanian history is that of the unity of all Iranians under one king, who rules with the approval of the supreme god. This was translated into a restructuring of Sasanian administration, with the appointment of members of the Sasanian family in the former semi-independent principalities, but it was accompanied by an intense restructuring, or veritable recreation, of Zoroastrianism. This programme is known (apart from the fact that it gave rise to Zoroastrianism as it is still known) especially from the inscriptions of the high priest Kerdīr, who was allowed – uniquely, as a non-royal (and for unknown reasons) – to have these texts, together with his effigy, carved in the rock on symbolically highly significant sites of Sasanian Pārs (Naqš-e Rostam itself and nearby Naqš-e Rajab; Gignoux 1991). Kerdīr's inscriptions have usually been divided into two different subjects: a report on his career and a report on a visionary journey he made to the hereafter. This latter part, which has been much discussed (Grenet 2002a), derives most of its significance from a comparison with similar visionary journeys (of Zoroaster's patron Wištāsp, *Dk* 7.4.83–86), and of the legendary holy man Wīrāz, as told in the *Ardā Wīrāz-Nāmag*, for they all have the same

function: to establish (or re-establish) the truth of the religion (or, as in the case of Kerdīr, of a particular formulation of the religion), after a period of difficulty and looming threats. For our purpose, the first part is much more interesting, even though it appears to be a simple list of honors bestowed on the priest by various Sasanian kings. Kerdīr lists the accumulation of titles and dignities (including, for example, the wardenship of a temple in Staxr, which may have belonged to the traditional privileges of the Sasanian family) and illustrates some of the reasons why he received them. These reasons amount to a complete take-over of the system of the religion: Kerdīr (personally) vets all priests and brings them “back” to the tradition, closes various types of sanctuary, and orders the build-up of a network of temples, a structured priesthood, and a uniform cycle of rituals. He also claims to have persecuted all non-Zoroastrian religions in the world of the Iranians, and since this does not seem to have actually happened (for it is nowhere confirmed), there may be some doubts as to the reality of his earlier activities too. What cannot be doubted, however, are the intentions Kerdīr had with his programme of reforms: to tighten a centralized grip on the network of priests and fire-temples and to reinstate Zoroastrianism as an instrument of statehood.

This was necessary, it can be surmised because, by the 3rd century CE, the religious situation of the ancient world was changing rapidly, with the rise of actively missionary religions to the West and East of the Iranian world: Christianity, Manichaeism, and Buddhism. For the first time, Iranians were leaving the religion of their ancestors to join other religions. This unleashed periodic episodes of religious persecution (the evidence we have only concerns Christians and Manichaeans) as well as recurring attempts, by priests, to strengthen certain aspects of Zoroastrianism and thus make it less vulnerable to apostasy. It can be shown that almost all persecutions, which have mainly been recorded by Christian authors, were caused by the conversion of Zoroastrians to Christianity (Walker 2006). The best-known episode in this connection is the war undertaken by the Sasanians in the 5th century to “reconvert” Armenia to Zoroastrianism (Thomson 1982). The Armenian king Tirdat IV had converted to Christianity in the 4th century and by the time of the Sasanian king Yazdgird II (r. 438–457 CE), the Armenian church was firmly established. The Sasanian king, on the advice of his ministers, urged the Armenians to return to their ancestral religion, Zoroastrianism, but the version of Zoroastrianism he intended to promote among them was utterly alien to the Armenians, who did not even recognize it as the religion from which their ancestors had converted to Christianity. Although the Persians defeated the Armenians at the culminating battle of Avarayr (451 CE), eventually they had to forsake all hope of reinstating Zoroastrianism as the official religion of Armenia.

What makes this episode important for the history of Zoroastrianism is that it shows that, by that time, the version of Zoroastrianism espoused by the court made use of a variety of the Zoroastrian cosmogony that has come to be known as “Zurvanism,” which is the version of the religion urged upon the Armenians in texts that describe the events leading up to the battle of Avarayr. According to the Zurvanite version, Ohrmazd and Ahreman were the twin offspring of the god Zurwān, a god of time (Rezania 2010). Zurvanism has been the subject of bitter debates, because some scholars considered it a betrayal of “true” Zoroastrianism (Boyce 1996: 15–17). There was a tendency, moreover, to use the concept as a convenient receptacle of a wide variety of Zoroastrian beliefs that

somehow did not conform to (later) Zoroastrianism (Zaehner 1955; see de Jong 1995: 15–18). Most of these, unhistorical, strategies were countered by the observation that the Zurvanite myth was only one of a fairly wide variety of significant stories that circulated among Zoroastrians in Sasanian and early Islamic Iran (Shaked 1992a). While this is true, that interpretation itself tends to gloss over the fact that, at least in the 5th century, it was not “just any” version of the cosmogony: It was the version of the court.

To understand why, in the end, even this courtly backing did not guarantee the survival of the Zurvanite myth as the main version of Zoroastrian thought, we need to pay attention to the two most crucial developments in the relation between Zoroastrianism and the state that took place more or less at the same time, in late Sasanian times. With these two transformations, one negative and one positive in outlook, we reach the version of the religion as it has survived. The first of these is the challenge of Mazdak; the second the writing down of the *Avesta* (accompanied, it will be argued, by a certain closing of the Zoroastrian mind).

It is impossible to trace in detail the history of the Mazdakite movement, since no sources from Mazdakites themselves have survived, and all reports on the movement are intensely hostile to it. What is clear, however, is that it was remembered as a huge religious, social, and political trauma. It is likely that there was a movement of social reform, based on novel interpretations of Zoroastrianism, long before Mazdak entered the stage. This movement advocated the abolition of envy, strife, and war (in accordance, it seems, with the Zoroastrian notion that “negative” emotions quicken the Evil Spirit; note, however, that pre-Islamic Zoroastrianism, in spite of this general idea, has never developed the notion that the taking of human lives is a sin). It located the chief trigger of these adversities in “greed” and “envy” (again, two well-known Zoroastrian demons thought to be extremely active in the world), and the main reason for greed and envy in the unequal distribution among men of access to farming grounds, water, and women. The movement gained momentum, it seems, when it received surprising royal backing from Kawād I (first reign 488–496 CE), who paid for this with his throne: He was deposed and sent to Central Asia. Two years later, he was able to reclaim the throne (second reign 498–531 CE), but nothing more is heard of his sympathies for the movement, which appears to have grown in number and importance under its new leader Mazdak, leading to widespread revolt (Crone 1991; Gariboldi 2009: 85–142). The movement, and Mazdak with it, was quelled by Kawād’s son Khosrow I (r. 531–579 CE), although the ideas associated with it remained very active, locally, until early Islamic times (Crone 2012).

While much remains uncertain about the Mazdakite movement, it is clear that the trauma caused by it induced the king and his priests to initiate a pervasive programme of reforms, including reforms in the structure of the religion. In order to understand these reforms, it is necessary to discuss the final – and most important – transformation of Zoroastrianism in late Sasanian times: the codification of the *Avesta*.

It is not clear whether this transformation itself was prompted by the Mazdakite movement, but it is likely, especially in light of the drastic measures taken to prevent access to the newly standardized texts, and to accompany the writing down of the holy texts with the rise of the notion of the necessity of each and every Zoroastrian to have a living priest in a position of authority, to validate the performance of rituals.

The most important source on this process is the “history of the *Avesta*” in the fourth book of the *Dēnkard*, a text that can be attributed to the reign of Khosrow I (Shaked 1994a: 99–104; Skjærvø 2011a: 40–43). The text itself follows an internal logic that is based on the outcome: the fixation and codification of the *Avesta*. In order to grant this process due authority, royal attempts to gather and fix the Avestan texts were charted through the most significant episodes of Iranian history: the conversion of Wištāsp (who first collected the texts in writing), through Darius III (and the destruction wrought by Alexander), to an Arsacid Walaxš and then to Ardašīr I, Šāpūr (Šāhbuhr) I, Šāpūr II, and, finally, Khosrow I, “his (present) Majesty” (MP *im bay*). The text obviously does not mention the details of the process, since it is concerned much more with proving the unadulterated preservation of the divine words, and the accompanying version of these words in languages humans actually speak, that is the *Avesta* and its *Zand*. In later Zoroastrianism, these two were seen as two halves of a single divine revelation, of equal authority, but with different purposes. The Avestan texts were perfect and without falsehood and meant for praising and blessing, that is, for use in the ritual; the *Zand* was equally perfect, its perfection being guaranteed by impeccable lines of priests, but it had a different purpose: to be accessed for the actual practice of the religion in everyday life (de Jong 2009). There was evidently some concern over the matter of access to the scriptures, and it is here that one can surmise the influence of popular movements such as the Mazdakites (and earlier the Manichaeans). Before the writing down of the texts, access to the texts was necessarily a priestly accomplishment (since they alone memorized them), although lay Zoroastrians could go to an institution called *hērbedestān* to listen to priests explaining the religion (Kotwal and Kreyenbroek 1992: 15–18; Azarnouche 2012). Although that institution continued, at some unknown moment it came to be hedged in by further restrictions: Access to the *Zand* became restricted to priests only, while lay Zoroastrians retained the right to memorize Avestan texts. The application of knowledge from the *Zand* became one of the duties of priests and every lay Zoroastrian needed to submit to a priestly authority (*dastwar*): For every problem and decision, he/she had to consult a priest, whose ruling was binding. This was coupled with the notion that one’s ritual acts were only counted as valid when one possessed a *dastwar* (Kreyenbroek 1994b).

This development can be traced especially from its survival in early Islamic times (when, for example, the teaching of Pahlavi script was forbidden to non-priestly Zoroastrians), and this is true also for the other, perhaps more momentous, transformation of Zoroastrianism, which was produced by the codification of the religious texts. For the writing down of the *Avesta*, a special script was developed that was capable of rendering all phonetic nuances of the Avestan language as it was pronounced at the time. Texts, it is well known, needed to be recited, correctly, in order to mobilize their ritual efficacy. These texts, in their own ritual language, were not used for any other purpose than ritual ones, but it seems that the process of writing them down gave momentum to a different, possibly unintended, further development: that they began to be studied and interpreted in ways that had not been possible or necessary before. The first development that can be traced is that of a selection: A decision had to be made which texts to include in “the” *Avesta* and which texts, if any, to discard. Uncertainty as to the development of Zoroastrian rituals makes it difficult to reconstruct this

process, but it seems to be clear that the “high liturgy” of the *Yasna* with its elaborations in the *Vīsprad* and the *Vīdēvdād* rituals yielded the core of the written *Avesta*, with the remaining texts surviving in what would later be called the “Little *Avesta*”: a collection of smaller rituals texts and a (now dislocated?) collection of hymns to individual deities (Kellens 1998). Of the former collection, the *Zand* has been preserved very nearly intact, but this is not the case with the latter, the *Zand* of which is very incomplete. In addition, huge amounts of *Zand* seem to have survived for which there was no “*Avesta*.” It cannot be known whether the surviving *Zand* was already in existence before the codification of the texts, although tiny linguistic peculiarities of the texts seem to support that idea. It is likely, moreover, that with the “collection” of the *Avesta*, texts emerged that were included in the new collection, but had no existing Middle Persian *Zand*. The point of these speculations is that it is becoming clearer that once the written *Avesta* came into being it began to be studied as a text, something that had not really happened before. This can explain some remarkable facts that have often puzzled historians of Zoroastrianism. One of these is the disappearance of “non-Avestan” deities from the Zoroastrian pantheon of those parts of the Iranian world that were governed by the Sasanians: the god *Sāsān* and the goddess *Nanaia*, for example, but also the god *Zurwān* as the progenitor of the two spirits. Another is a huge elaboration of the rules of purity and, it seems, a gradual spread of the rites of exposure of dead bodies, in line with the Avestan prescriptions. This is why this chapter more or less began with the statement that there is a reason why the *Avesta* and the Pahlavi books so often confirm each other – and that this is not because they both represent a “deeply conservative” Zoroastrianism as the prophet had intended it to be: The Pahlavi books are rooted in a variety of Zoroastrianism that was convinced that one could find the truth by reading the words of the revelation. This is far removed from the approach we have surmised for the Parthians, who practiced the religion rather than preach it, and it can only be understood in the light of the enduring political interest of the Sasanians in the potential their ancestral religion had to mobilize and consolidate the Iranian people.

When the Arabs destroyed the Sasanian Empire, this fairly recently shaped structure of Zoroastrianism survived, as it still survives to the present. This fact is an object of marvel and admiration, for, unlike the Christians of the Middle East, Zoroastrians could not look to parts of the world where their religion retained some of its secular power. All was lost, but the religion survived, probably due to the fact that those who were responsible for it, priests *and* rulers, had given it a shape that made it possible to be maintained under new conditions: by the production of a narrative that united the story of the religion with the history of the Iranians; by the restatement of Zoroastrianism as a religion with a (known) history, grouped around a divine text revealed to a founder figure; by interpreting the religion as based in this text, fully living up to its message, a message, moreover, that was free of contradictions; by having removed from the religion those aspects – a chaotic pantheon, the cult of images – that would have made it vulnerable to Muslim derision. None of this happened spontaneously, and little can be attributed to priestly initiative only. Much of it was the result of royal initiative and can be explained only if we attempt to locate the development of Zoroastrianism in the context of the three successive Zoroastrian empires and their monarchs.

Further Reading

Resources for the subjects dealt with in this chapter come in two basic types: studies of the various periods of pre-Islamic history, and historical overviews of Zoroastrianism. Many of these are of excellent quality, although it is noticeable that the historical works are often weak on the subject of religion, and the religious histories weak in more general history. The basic work of reference for the Achaemenid Empire is Briant (2002); a most valuable collection of sources, with critical discussion, is Kuhrt (2007); a bibliography of studies of the empire is given by Weber and Wiesehöfer (1996), with supplementary information in Briant (2001). The field of Achaemenid studies is well organized and served by an important website: www.achemenet.com. The crucial Elamite evidence on Persian religion is the subject of Henkelman (2008). In the absence of a similar historical reference work for the Parthians, scholars had to rely for a long time on Schippmann (1980) and Wolski (1993). The situation is much improved with the publication of the source collections of Hackl, Jacobs, and Weber (2010). Important projects on Parthian coins – one of the main sources for

Parthian history – are currently underway (Sinisi 2012, the first installment of a *Sylloge Nummorum Parthicorum*), and coins are the main subject of the website www.parthia.com (with extensive bibliographies).

For the Sasanian Empire, the scholarly world has likewise long relied on earlier studies, especially Christensen (1944), but in recent years again source collections (Dodgeon and Lieu 1991; Greatrex and Lieu 2002; Dignas and Winter 2007) and first attempts at a new synthesis by Daryaee (2009) are signs of hope for the future. Here, too, there is an important website by Daryaee: www.sasanika.org.

For the specific subject of the history of Zoroastrianism, the first three volumes of Mary Boyce's *History of Zoroastrianism* remain indispensable: Boyce (1975a, 1982) and Boyce and Grenet (1991) – and so, hopefully, will the fourth volume of that history be: Boyce and de Jong (forthcoming). For Sasanian Zoroastrianism, Shaked (1994a) is crucial; the most up-to-date general overviews of the history of Zoroastrianism are Stausberg (2002b) and Rose (2011b). What we lack are in-depth studies of “religion” in *any* of these periods.

CHAPTER 6

Zoroastrianism under Islamic Rule

Touraj Daryaee

Our information on the history of Zoroastrians under Muslim rule is generally uneven and at best laconic. While there are periods where a plethora of information exists for Zoroastrian–Muslim interactions (e.g., the Arab Muslim conquests), there are long periods when our sources are silent or simply non-existent. That is, the Zoroastrians disappear from the Perso-Arabic historical narratives and one can only make general assumptions based on the treatment of other religious minorities. While there are very good studies on the early interaction and relations between the Zoroastrians and Muslims (Choksy 1997; Morony 1984, 1986), for the period from the 11th century onward the historiographical focus in the study of Zoroastrianism has, in the past, shifted to the newly immigrant community in India where there are more sources on the “Parsis,” people from Pars/Persia. Then, from the 16th century, another set of sources begins to shed light on the Zoroastrian communities in Iran, which makes their study possible alongside the Parsis in India.

There are three general sets of sources at our disposal for the study of Zoroastrians under Muslim rule. First are the Perso-Arabic geographical and historical narratives that shed light on the interactions between the conquerors and the conquered in the first four centuries of the Islamic era (i.e., 7th to 11th centuries CE). Information on the interactions between Muslims and Zoroastrians, on cities where Zoroastrians were numerous, on fire-temples and Zoroastrian structures, and other topics can be gathered from early Muslim geographers such as Ibn Khordādbe (*Masālek va Mamālek*, Khākrand 1371/1992) and Eṣṭakhrī (*Masālek va Mamālek*, Afšār 1347/1968). There are numerous local histories that provide valuable information for regional attestations of Zoroastrian life in those areas and their interaction with Muslims. Prominent among these local histories are the *Tārīkh-e Sīstān* (Bahār 1314/1935), *Tārīkh-e Bokhārā* by Naršakhī (Qabāvī 1351/1972; Frye 1954), and Ibn Balkhī’s *Fārsnāme* (Le Strange and

Nicholson 1921). Finally, Futūḥ texts (early Arabic narratives providing a history of the conquest of the Near East and North Africa by the Muslims) such as *Futūḥ al-Buldān* by al-Balazurī (Āzarnūš 1364/1986) provide detailed information on the earliest interactions between the Zoroastrians and the Muslim conquerors, while general histories by al-Ṭabarī (Yar-Shater [Yarshater] 1985–2007), al-Bal’amī (Rowšan 1380/2001) and many more provide information on the Zoroastrians. It is noteworthy that the number of references to Zoroastrians is reduced significantly from the 11th century onward in the Islamic texts, both in Arabic and Persian.

The second set of sources comprises reports by European travelers to Persia in the 17th and 18th centuries, when the Safavid Empire (1501–1722) had become one of the major world powers. The Europeans attempted to gain access to the Safavid court and, by making political and economic alliances with the Persians, attempted to counter Ottoman influence. Among the best-known and most used sources for observations on the Zoroastrians at this time are Pietro della Valle’s *Fameux voyages* (Carneau and Le Comte 1661–1663), Jean Baptiste Tavernier’s *Les six voyages en Turquie, en Perse et aux Indes* (1684) and Jean Chardin’s *Voyages en Perse et autres lieux de l’Orient* (1735), which shed light on local Zoroastrian life and religious practices (for full references to these works, see Firby 1988). In these accounts we come to understand the limitations and lives of this religious minority but, more importantly, figures and numbers are now provided for Zoroastrian families in the age of the Gunpowder empires – the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals.

Third, there are the Middle Persian and Classical Persian Zoroastrian texts that shed light on the predicament of the Zoroastrians from the early Islamic conquests as well as provide discussions of rituals, laws, and interactions with outsiders. The Middle Persian texts provide information all the way to the 11th century, when Classical Persian appears to have fully replaced it as the vernacular (see Sheffield, “Primary Sources: New Persian,” this volume). Such texts as the *Persian Revāyat of Hormazyar Framarz* and others (Dhabhar 1932) follow the Middle Persian (Pahlavi) ones such as the *Rivāyat of Adurfarnbag* (Anklesaria 1969), but there nevertheless remains a gap of several centuries between the two sets of sources. The Persian *Revāyats* end just before the time of the Qajar period (1785–1925), providing us a glimpse into the Zoroastrian communities of that era.

Historical Periodization

The next issue is how to view the history of Zoroastrians and the Zoroastrianism of Iran under Muslim rule from the 7th to the 18th century. The history of Zoroastrianism from the Arab Muslim conquest to the fall of the Safavids (1722 CE) at the hands of Maḥmūd Āfghān can be subdivided into the following periods.

1. The period of the conquest (7th CE) covers the invasions of the Iranian Plateau and the destruction of the Sasanian Empire (Pahl. *Ērānšahr*) by the Muslims.
2. The age of conversion, either to Islam or “heterodox” traditions between the 8th and 10th centuries CE.

3. The 11th to the 16th centuries is perhaps the most difficult to understand, but it is a period where we have information on Zoroastrian immigrations to India and afterwards. With the exception of a few localities such as Fārs, Kermān, and Khorāsān, we have little information on the Zoroastrian population.
4. For the period from the establishment of the Safavid state (1501 CE) as a gunpowder empire to its demise in the early 18th century there is an abundance of Zoroastrian, Muslim, and European sources, which again shed light on the Zoroastrians of Iran.

Conquest and Settlement of the Arab Muslim Conquerors (7th CE)

The encounter between Zoroastrians and Muslims took place at an important juncture in the history of late antiquity. The two superpowers, the Byzantines and the Sasanians, were engaged in what has been termed the last great war of antiquity (Howard-Johnston 2008). Zoroastrian Iran was pitted against Christian Byzantium and, at least according to the latter sources, a proto-holy war was taking place (Stoyanov 2011: 44). In 626 CE Emperor Heraclius had successfully counterattacked against the Sasanian invasion of Byzantium and the holy city of Jerusalem and on his way into Azarbāijān he destroyed the sacred fire-altar of Ādur-Gošnasp. This fire-temple was one of the most sacred pilgrimage sites for the Sasanian king and, it seems, ordinary Zoroastrians (Huff 2008: 5).

During the early period of the last Byzantine–Sasanian war the non-Muslim Meccans taunted Muḥammad that the “People of the Book from Byzantium” (Arab. *ahl al-kitāb min ar-Rūm*) had been defeated by the Persians and as such they would then defeat the Muslims. The Muslim historian al-Ṭabarī also states that Muḥammad was not in favor of the Zoroastrians (Arab. *al-majūs*, lit. ‘magi’) winning this battle against what he considered the “People of the Book” (Arab. *ahl al-kitāb*) and at that moment a revelation had been sent which came to be known as the *Sūra ar-Rūm* (*Qur’ān*, *Sūra XXX*) which predicted the defeat of Khosrow II (r. 590–628 CE) and the victory of Heraclius (r. 610–641 CE) (*The History of al-Ṭabarī*, Bosworth 1999: 324). Thus, the *Qur’ān* is an important source for gauging early Muslim views of world politics (Bowersock 2012: 62–63).

There were Zoroastrians in the pre-Islamic period in Arabia, possibly among the tribes of Tamim in Yemen, and we do know that Zoroastrians were also living in Bahrain and Oman as well (Friedmann 2003: 69). There appears to have been a fire-temple in Bahrain that was later taken over by the Muslims in Hira (Morony 1986: 1110–1111). There were Arab tribes in the Hejaz who had gravitated to Mazdakite Zoroastrianism (following the teachings of the late 5th–early 6th-century priest Mazdak from Fasā, in the province of Fārs) during the time of Kobād (Kawād) I (r. 488–496 and 498–531 CE) in the early 6th century (Kister 1968: 143–144). Thus, Arabs not only had extensive contacts with Zoroastrianism, but certain tribes of them were perhaps also Zoroastrians (typically thought to be clients of the Persians), and so the Muslims on the Arabian Peninsula were well aware of their beliefs and practices.

Soon enough, the Arab Muslims were the victors over both the Christian Byzantines and the Sasanian Zoroastrians in the 7th century. In 634 CE, during the reign of Yazdgird

III (632–651 CE), the last Sasanian king of kings, the first Muslim raids into Sasanian Iraq began, and by 651 CE, when Yazdgird was killed in Marv (Merv), *Ērānšahr* ('The Realm of the Iranians', the official name given to the empire of the Sasanians), was conquered from its western to its eastern boundaries (Morony 2012). The Muslims did not stop at Khorāsān and went further into Central Asia, defeated the Turks, and met the Chinese in battle. The Zoroastrians were facing a formidable Muslim force on the plateau and each city and province had a different encounter and response to the conquerors (Morony 1982: 77–78). Many of these regions and cities were headed by a Zoroastrian priest (Pahl. *hērbed* / Arab. *hirbadh*) who negotiated on behalf of the population. Many made agreements to pay a poll tax (Arab. *djizya*, NP *jeziye* < Pahl. *gazīdag*) and in return their freedom of worship and safety were guaranteed (Daryaee 2012: 24–25). Some converted to keep their status and moved on with the Muslim forces eastward. For example, after the battle of Qadisiya in 637 CE, some 4,000 troops known as *jond-e šāhānšāh* (army of the king of kings) joined the Muslim forces (Frye 1993: 61). The best-known group was the elite Sasanian cavalry known as the (Arabic) *al-aswāriya* (Pahl. *asbārān*) (Morony 1984: 431; Frye 1993: 61; Zakeri 1995: 67–68). No doubt keeping one's position and economic incentives pacified some, such as the *dehghān* ('landed gentry') who during the time of Caliph 'Umar (second caliph, r. 634–644 CE) were enrolled in the new *dīwān* (the registry where the names of those receiving money from the government are mentioned) and given a pension as converts and were then considered as *mawālī* (non-Arab Muslims who were able to live alongside the Arabs) (Frye 1993: 63).

Others decided to fight, and were killed or captured and their women and children taken into captivity, ending up in the slave markets of Arabia and in the households of the Muslim elite. An example was the Sasanian general Hormōzān who fought the Arabs in Mesopotamia and Khūzistān, but eventually surrendered and converted to Islam and married into the house of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālīb (r. 656–661 CE) and became an advisor to Caliph 'Umar (Shahbazi 2004). Others became slaves or part of the family of other Arabs in Mecca, Medina, and other places in the caliphate.

In this early stage contacts between the conquerors and the conquered were far less than would occur a century or two later. Arab Muslim garrisons were established, first in Mesopotamia (Iraq) in such cities as Basra and Kufa to provide a base for further conquests. The Zoroastrian population mainly lived in their own cities and villages and were not involved with the newly established Muslim cities (Lapidus 1969: 57). The Zoroastrians either paid money for safety, or sometimes resisted paying the required payment, which caused violence on either side. The initial encounters and subsequent ones had different outcomes based on the type of encounter, nature of the amir (Arab general), the region and its people, and their beliefs.

Jamsheed Choksy has gathered most of the information on the 7th-century settlement patterns on the Iranian Plateau, where it is clear that there was not a uniform policy. At Šād-Šābuhr (Qazvīn), Arabs were given plots of land to settle (Choksy 1997: 35), although this may have been an exceptional early example of such settlement and closeness with the native Zoroastrians. By the 9th century, it was those of Arab descent and perhaps of mixed marriages, i.e., the new Muslim community that owned most of the landholding around Šād-Šābuhr. In Ray (Māh region), Jibāl, and in

Sūrenābād (Qom), there seems to have been less ownership of land and the Zoroastrians were reduced to sharecroppers (Choksy 1997: 36–37). In Eṣfahān, Zoroastrians dominated the area for some time and it was first in the 8th century and onward that landholding was dominated by Muslims (Choksy 1997: 37). In Iraq things were different in that all the royal lands were confiscated by Muslim armies, along with those of the nobility who had fled the province (Morony 1976: 50–51), while in Fārs the Arabs imposed *jezīye* but were unable to control the region in the 7th century (Daryae 1383/2004: 98–99).

The Age of Conversion and “Heterodox” Movements

At the exact moment that we hear of the changing nature of power and landholding, with Zoroastrians being reduced to sharecroppers and even being landless, there was also the beginning of movements to the oasis towns. This coincides with important political shifts in the history of what Marshall Hodgson would call the “Perso-Islamicate” world, from the Oxus to the Euphrates region (Hodgson 1977). This is the period of the Abbasid Revolution (750 CE) which brought many Iranians into the new Islamic polity and resulted in many others joining anti-Umayyad movements. In Iranian historiography this event has been usually seen as nationalist uprisings against the Arab overlords (Ṣadīghī 1375/1996). Thus, the events in the middle of the 8th century and the Abbasid *da’wa* (invitation to the Abbasid cause and the family of the Prophet Muḥammad) had important implications for the Zoroastrian communities in many ways.

The Abbasids who supported the Shī’ī cause also made overtures to the *mawālīs* as a move to be more inclusive and create a new Islamic polity which borrowed many elements from the Iranian and Zoroastrian traditions. For example, the moving of the capital to Baghdād (Pahl. *Baydād* ‘God Created’) with its round structure (Lassner 1970) which is characteristic of Sasanian cities; the employment of Persian bureaucrats in the *dīwāns* and the Abbasid government, culminating in the dominance of Abbasid affairs by the Barmakid family (Iranians from Balkh); and the employment of Zoroastrian Persians as directors and leaders of the translation movement from Middle Persian to Arabic (Gutas 1998). All in all these actions and events resulted in a new atmosphere which made it much more enticing for the Zoroastrian community who by then had become a minority.

Jāḥeẓ’s *Kitāb al-Tāj* (‘Book of the Crown’, 255/887 CE) indicates the Abbasid caliphs’ interest in the Sasanian and Iranian past, where they began to mimic many pre-Islamic traditions, including the celebration of Nowrūz (see Rose, “Festivals and the Calendar,” this volume). For example, in Baghdad water was poured on each other and people gave each other apples to honor the day and colored eggs for the feast. In Eṣfahān there were celebrations for seven days and the bazaar was decorated, while singers, both male and female, sang (Shahbazi 2009). Some of the caliphs were directly linked to the Iranian world. For example, the greatest of the Abbasid rulers, Hārūn ar-Rašīd (r. 786–809 CE), was born in Ray and his son and eventual successor, Ma’mūn (r. 813–833 CE), had an Iranian mother, whose base of support was on the Iranian Plateau. It is no wonder then that Jāḥeẓ called the Abbasid Caliphate a Persian kingship.

It is significant that it is exactly at this time that the rate of conversion reached its peak. According to the *dīwān* registries of the Abbasid period, it is clear that it is in the 9th century that the rate of conversion peaks and the Iranian Plateau becomes dominantly Muslim (Bulliet 1979: 23), although this may have not been the trend in all the provinces. For example, information on the province of *Azarbāijān* is unclear, and *Fārs* did not follow such a trend. Thus, one may assume that with the creation of the Abbasid Caliphate there was a rapid rate of conversion from Zoroastrianism to Islam in many regions of the Iranian Plateau.

We know that the bulk of Arab settlements on the Iranian Plateau was in the east, mainly in *Khorāsān* where fierce social conflict of an overtly religious nature occurred. Most probably some Zoroastrians joined what may be termed “heterodox” religious movements, which were either inspired by Zoroastrianism, Gnosticism, mystical or Islamic doctrines. Many of these movements were instigated as a result of the murder in 755 CE of Abu Moslem *Khorāsānī* who had helped topple the Umayyad Caliphate (651–750 CE), and whose origin was Iranian from the east (Daryaee 1998: 194–195). Most of the uprisings began in *Khorāsān*, not only the birthplace of Abu Moslem, but also far from the center, i.e., *Baghdād*. In 755 CE, *Sonbādh*, who was apparently a magi, led a revolt in *Khorāsān*; this was followed by ‘Amr b. *Mohammad al-‘Amrakī* who was an Iranian dualist (Arab. *zindīq*) in *Gorgān* in 796 CE (Crone 2012: 80). *Išāq* who followed Abu Moslem claimed that he or Abu Moslem had been chosen by Zoroaster as a prophet (Crone 2012: 103), while *al-Muqanna’* in *Balkh* led an uprising against the local amir between 773 and 779 CE. He appears to have been a literate Persian whose ideas were tinged with Zoroastrian doctrines (Crone 2012: 108). In south-eastern Iran, *Bihāfarīd ī Mahfarvardīn*, who lived close to *Neyšābūr* where there were Zoroastrians and also fire-temples, continued the late antique Zoroastrian tradition of a journey to heaven to bring back the truth of the spiritual world (see e.g., *Skjærvø* 1983 [1985]). Through his journey, he propagated that, indeed, Zoroaster was a prophet, but now there needed to be reforms in the ancient rituals and laws that were closer to the Islamic tradition (Crone 2012: 147).

Finally, in *Bādghīs* Province, *Ustādhsīs* led several thousand Zoroastrians who held control and worked on a silver mine to revolt in the second half of the 8th century CE, including others in *Sīstān* (Crone 2012: 151–153). The most important and well known of such movements came from *Azarbāijān* with *Bābāk Khorramdīn*, whose *Mazdakite* views and militancy brought fear to the caliphate at *Baghdad*. It was only with the aid of the Iranian general, *Afšin*, who may have had a Buddhist lineage, that he was finally captured in 838 CE, but his followers subsequently joined the Byzantines and fought against the Muslims (Daryaee 2012: 83–85). Within the Iranian Plateau, however, we do not find any great uprising against the caliphate from then on and the presence of Zoroastrians in sources becomes meager (*Khanbaghi* 2009: 211).

Some of this violence may be the result of the perception of the changing patterns of life and tradition on the Iranian Plateau. Not only had Arabs settled in large numbers in the east, but they had taken land and property as well. It is at this time that we find evidence for the destruction of Zoroastrian structures and the building of mosques in their place. For example, in *Sīstān*, the Arab governor, *al-Rabī*, pushed for conversion (*Morony* 1986: 1111), while, in *Bukhara*, *Qutayba b. Muslim*, the governor of *Khorāsān*, built a

mosque over a fire-temple, after the population of Transoxiana had converted in large numbers in return for freedom from taxation (Crone 2012: 101). Other fire-temples were destroyed in Bahrain, Sīstān, Qom, Eṣfahān, and, most importantly, the Kārīyan fire-temple where many priests were killed or dispersed (Morony 1986: 1111).

Lastly, a sacred tree known as the Cypress of Kašmar in Khorāsān, believed to have been planted by Zarathustra, was cut down by Caliph Mutawakkil (r. 847–861 CE) in 861 CE (Morony 1986: 1111). The cutting of the tree may be based on precedence in the early Islamic tradition: When Mecca had been conquered by the Muslims, the Prophet Muḥammad ordered a certain Khalid, son of Walīd, to go cut three trees and kill their caretaker who belonged to the pagan Arabs at Batn Nakhalh (*Kitāb al-Asnām*, Nāʾinī 1385/2006: 120–121). This Ḥadīth could have been intended to pacify the Zoroastrians in the east by the more zealous Muslim rulers.

During the Abbasid Caliphate a large number of important Zoroastrian Middle Persian or Pahlavi texts were redacted (de Menasce 1975: 543–565; see also Andrés-Toledo, “Primary Sources: Avestan and Pahlavi,” this volume). Such texts as the *Dēnkard* (de Menasce 1958) and the *Bundahišn*, and a number of Pahlavi *Rivāyats*, among others, were put to final form or written by the leaders of the *wehdēnān* (‘followers of the Good Religion’) Ādur Farnbag ī Farroxzadān, followed by Ādurbād ī Ēmēdān, who for some time resided in Baghdad. Ādur Farnbag is also mentioned in another Middle Persian text entitled *Gīzīstaḡ Abāliš* (‘The Accursed Abāliš’) which is about a debate between Ādur Farnbag, a Jew, a Christian, and an apostate (Pahl. *zandīg*) at the court of the caliph Maʾmūn (Chacha 1936; Nāḡer 1375/1996). The most interesting text which shows strong contact with Muslim thought is the *Škand-gumānīg Wīzār* (‘Doubt-Dispelling Disquisition’) (de Menasce 1945). This text, which was written in the 10th century CE, is dedicated to the refutation of the doctrines of Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Manichaean theologies, using a mode of argumentation strongly reminiscent of ‘Ilm al-Kalām (see also Vevaina, “Theologies and Hermeneutics,” this volume). For the social issues that the Zoroastrians faced in cities and in legal matters, the *Rivāyats* are important, particularly the *Rivāyat ī Ēmēd ī Ašawahištān*, dealing with Muslims (de Menasce 1975: 224–230). Specifically cases dealing with conversion of family members, lack of priests for performing rituals in villages, contact and mixing with non-Zoroastrians, and whether it is permissible to visit Muslim bathhouses (Safa-Isfahani 1980: xvii–xix), are all discussed. The raising of these questions suggests the anxiety of Zoroastrian society at a time when conversion was taking place, which matches the statistical evidence pointing to the second half of the 8th and 9th centuries CE.

One should ask why it is that such a vibrant intellectual milieu existed for the Zoroastrians in the late 8th–early 9th century CE? This was two centuries after the Muslim conquest of *Ērānšahr* and it may be that after the initial shock of the conquest there was an attempt to gather all that remained in the Zoroastrian tradition to be preserved for the dwindling community. Second, the dominant religious tradition, namely Islam, was now fostered under the Abbasid Dynasty, which was much more in tune with Iranian and Persianate traditions than the Umayyad period. This more favorable attitude towards non-Arabs made Islam more attractive and less hostile and alien to the Iranians. If we are to accept the idea that the peak of conversion took place in the 9th century CE, then there was a real need to defend Zoroastrianism from losing its

numbers to the new religion. Hence, a campaign to write down received knowledge and cultural production to help the leaders of the Zoroastrian community, but also to direct the community regarding their belief systems, lore, and traditions became a must. Priests in Baghdād (Ādur Farnbag), Kermān (Manuščīhr), or Khorāsān (Ādurbād Ēmēdān) all provided guidance for the dwindling Zoroastrian community. Their success is hard to gauge, but this resulted in the survival of Zoroastrian knowledge and tradition throughout history, even though the number of the followers of the Good Religion dwindled to a small minority.

At this important juncture in Zoroastrian history, not only were texts written, but there were also restorations of some of the fire-temples. The fire-temple of Karīyān, which had been destroyed and its fire taken to Fasā, was brought back to Karīyān. Caliph Mu'taṣim (r. 833–844 CE) allowed fire-temples at Estakhr and in Farghāna in the mid-9th century CE to be (re-)established (Morony 1986: 1112). Muslim historians and (mainly) geographers do report that there was still a thriving Zoroastrian community in some places till the beginning of the 10th century CE. These included such regions as Azarbāijān with Šīz as their center as late as 943 CE. There were still Zoroastrians in Iraq with their fire-temple on the west bank of the Tigris, close to Ctesiphon. In Khūzestān with its central fire-temple at Hudjān, as well as the fire-temple (Tape Mill) in Ray on the northern Iranian Plateau, and also in Qom, Eṣfahān, Kermān, Zarang, and Sīstān, the Caspian region, and more in the province of Fārs and Khorāsān (Morony 1986: 1112).

In the province of Fārs the Zoroastrian community was strong and vibrant with many fire-temples. Not only European explorers in later times, but also Muslim geographers and historians attest to this fact. The strength of the Zoroastrian community is seen in their reaction to the conversion of Sheykh Abū Eshāq Kāzerūnī in Šīrāz in 979 CE. Riots broke out in the city and the Zoroastrians held their own (Morony 1986: 1112). This meant the power of the Zoroastrians was still strong and they were not about to allow the conversion of their co-religionists without a fight. The archaeological evidence and the remains of *Čāhār-Tāqīs* (fire-temples with four walls around them and a dome), mainly in Fārs, confirm the stronghold of Zoroastrianism in this region. In the 11th-century Persian *Masālek va Mamālek* ('Of Countries and Kingdoms') it is stated that there are no cities in Fārs without a fire-temple (Afšār 1347/1968: 97).

In the Caspian region there arose also pseudo-Zoroastrian or pro-Zoroastrian movements as late as the 11th century. The continuation of the ancient Iranian traditions and of Zoroastrianism is apparent not only from the numismatic evidence from the region, but also from textual evidence. The coinage of the local rulers bore the image of Khosrow II on the obverse and the typical Sasanian fire-temple on the reverse. In time, only the script was changed, from Middle Persian to Arabic, but this tradition continued a century after the coinage reform of 'Abd al-Malik (696–697 CE). In terms of onomastics we also see a preponderance of Iranian names, such as Khoršēd and others, which tend to suggest that behind the Alborz mountains there was still a refuge for Zoroastrians and Zoroastrianism (Malek 2004: 47–48).

These anti-Arab or anti-Muslim movements were quite significant in that they were from the political centers and of higher ranks and not simply from marginal groups. In the late 8th century Spāhbed (General) Khoršēd led the Zoroastrians in revolt against the caliph in the Caspian region, and killed those who had converted and destroyed

mosques. The founder of the Zīyārīd Dynasty (930–1931 CE), Mardāvīj, came to power in 931 CE in the Caspian region and expanded his power all the way to the south of the Iranian Plateau and in the east to Gorgān. He celebrated the Zoroastrian *Sade* fire festival (see Rose, “Festivals and the Calendar,” this volume) and even planned on taking over Baghdād and re-establishing the Sasanian Empire. Some sources suggest that he was bent on the destruction of the Ka’ba in Arabia. In Tabarestān Mardāvīj supported Zoroastrians and Zoroastrianism over the Muslims; mosques, pulpits, and minarets were destroyed in the hope of eradicating Islam from the region (*Tārīkh-e Rūyān*, Setūde 1348/1969: 74). It is important to note that some of the early Persian works, such as the *Qābusnāme*, named after the third Zīyārīd ruler, Qābus (OIr. *Kāvūs*), provide important information on pre-Islamic history as well as passages strongly reminiscent of Zoroastrian Middle Persian wisdom literature (Pahl. *andarz*).

The survival of Iranian and Zoroastrian traditions in the Caspian region at the time of transition into a new Islamicate tradition is apparent from such monuments as the Borj-e Lājīm from the 11th century. There is a bilingual Middle Persian and Arabic inscription dated to 389 Yazdgirdi / 11th century CE (Godard 1936: 109–121):

This dome was ordered built by the powerful king, Šahryār, the son of Abbās, the son of Šahryār, lord of the Commander of the Faithful, the daughter of chief Sīspuhr Čīhrzād (Šahrzād), his mother, in the year three hundred eighty nine, in the month of Ādur, day of Spandarmad.

It is noteworthy that the Middle Persian inscription is on top and the Arabic on the bottom, perhaps suggesting the preference of the local ruler. The dating is also according to the Zoroastrian calendar, suggesting the continued presence of the Zoroastrian tradition and Sasanian periodization (Režā Ī-Baghbīdī 1382/2003: 18).

The Shīrī Buyid Dynasty (934–1055 CE) who ruled most of the Iranian Plateau and Iraq also had an interest in Zoroastrianism and its past. Their coinage was similar to other Caspian region types with the fire-altar on the reverse and the bust of the king (Khosrow II type), the only difference being that the Arabic alphabet is used (Malek 2004: 38–39). On some coins, which have also been called medallions, the title of *Šāhānšāh* by ‘Azod ad-Dowle (Arab. ‘Aḏud ad-Daula) is present in the late 10th century CE (Bosworth 1978: 19).

Buyid interest in ancient Iranian history, royalty, and probably Zoroastrianism is also evident by their minting of a medallion during the reign of ‘Azod ad-Dowle which on its obverse has the Middle Persian *Xwarrah abzūd* ‘Increase in Glory’ and the title *Šāhānšāh* ‘King of Kings’, showing him with the crown type of Khosrow II in a highly ornate manner (Madelung 1969: 84–108).

During the Buyid civil war between ‘Azod ad-Dowle and Ibn Mākān which resulted in the former’s victory and the capture of Ešfahān, Azod ad-Dowle visited Persepolis and left two inscriptions there. The content of the inscription which is in Arabic is less significant, except that the name of a Zoroastrian priest is mentioned, which now can be read as *Māresfand al-Mowbed al-Kāzerūnī* (Mokhlesī 1384/2005: 53), pointing to the fact that he was from Kāzerūn, a location that had a sizable Zoroastrian population. Tradition has it that ‘Azod ad-Dowle had asked Māresfand (Pahl. *Mahrspand*) to read the

inscriptions left by the Sasanian king of kings, Šāpūr II, next to where he left his inscriptions (Frye 1975: 251; Bosworth 1978: 19).

It should be noted that by this time most of the Persianate kingdoms (where Persian culture and language was pervasive) on the Iranian Plateau had adopted ancient Iranian ancestry, real or reimagined, in the face of a large Persian Muslim populace. In the 9th century the Tahrīds from Khorāsān claimed to be from the line of the Iranian hero, Rostam (Bosworth 1978: 16); the Sāmānids in Transoxiana and Khorāsān in the 10th century took their lineage from Sāmān-Xodā, a *dehghān* ('landed gentry') from Balkh (Bosworth 1978: 21). It was they who commissioned the translation and Persian commentary on the *Qur'ān* and the compilation of the Persian epic, the *Šāhnāme*, hence facilitating the transfer of Zoroastrian lore into a new medium and cultural setting for the Muslim Persian-speaking community. Under the Sāmānids, on the behest of the governor of Ṭūs, 'Abd ol-Razzāgh, the prose *Šāhnāme* of Abū Mansūrī was put together with the help mainly of Zoroastrians. These included Šāj Khorāsānī from Harēy, Yazdāndād, son of Šāpūr from Sīstān, Māhūy Khoršēd, son of Bahrām from Neyšābūr, and Šādān, son of Borzēn from Ṭūs (Qazvīnī 1332/1953: 35). Thus, although the Sāmānids were Sunnī, it seems that they may have been more tolerant towards Zoroastrians and Zoroastrianism. This fact flies in the face of the commonly cited notion that Zoroastrianism was on better grounds with Shī'ism than with Sunnism.

By then, it was clear that Zoroastrianism would and could survive in an Iranian world that was less hostile than three centuries before, but the new Iranian Muslims would be the dominant group, who both held many of their ancestors' beliefs under the guise of Perso-Islamicate tradition, and helped spread Islam beyond the Iranian world, into the greater Persianate world (i.e., Central Asia and India). However, in 999 CE, the Iranian *intermezzo* (the rule of Iranian local dynasties between the Arab conquest and the coming of the Turks) came to an end with the coming of the Turkic Ghaznavīds and a stricter interpretation of Islam.

The Zoroastrian Dark Ages (11th–16th Centuries CE)

The four centuries between the coming of the Seljuk Turks in the 11th century to the downfall of the Il-Khānids and Holaghū's invasion of the Near East in the 14th century was a turbulent time in Iranian history with the Iranian population subjected to war, famine, and massacres. Unfortunately, our sources shed very little light on the Zoroastrians. It is only from the late 15th century that we begin to have some information on the Zoroastrians in the form of Persian *Revāyats* and European observations on the Safavid state (Stausberg 2002b: 351–352). The loss of numbers and marginalization may answer the question as to why there is little mention of the Zoroastrians in our sources from this period. Of course, another reason may be that many of them had decided to migrate to where they had commercial contacts (Williams 2009) since Late Antiquity. The *Qeşse-ye Sanjān*, as Alan Williams (2009) has shown, should not be taken literally as a strictly historical document, but rather a reflection on the past by a priest (see Sheffield, "Primary Sources: New Persian," this volume).

However, the *Qeṣṣe-ye Sanjān* shows that at some time the Zoroastrians of Iran had decided to leave their towns and villages. One may surmise that the important changes following the Arab Muslim conquest, i.e., the conversion of many of their co-religionists to the new faith, and more immediately the joining in heterodox movements, both for creating a larger Muslim–Zoroastrian Persian solidarity and possibly for avenging the Arab conquests, provided an age of anxiety, which was also reflected in their apocalyptic literature (Daryaei 2002).

The number of the Zoroastrians leaving must have been large (de Jong 2013c: 47), and so probably it was a decision that was taken by leaders of the community. The effect of this decision was that, besides the province of Fārs, many of the Zoroastrians became increasingly less involved in the social and intellectual life of the Iranian world. In a sense an inward-looking religious minority developed that took to the oasis towns and tried to be as inconspicuous as possible. This is in contrast to the Jewish population, who continued their vibrant life on the Iranian Plateau and even continued to be employed as physicians, historians, and star-gazers for the shahs and sultans. In a sense, the Zoroastrians withdrew into the margins (de Jong 2013c: 47). A year before the commencement of the 11th century, Sulṭān Maḥmūd Ghaznavī (r. 1002–1030 CE) dethroned the Sāmānids and by 1029 CE the Buyids succumbed to the Ghaznavīd sulṭān (Bosworth 1978: 12). The Ghaznavīds appear to have been zealot Sunnī Muslims and that would result in hardship for the religious minorities or simply those of other religions, including Shī'ites and the Zoroastrians on the Iranian Plateau. The *Persian Revāyats of Dārāb-Hormozyār* provide short narratives of this period, where Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznī makes an important appearance. While Maḥmūd was a zealous Sunnī ruler and dealt with the Hindus harshly, the Zoroastrians were saved from forced conversion (Unvala 1922: 195).

Sulṭān Maḥmūd, who may have been of mixed Turco-Iranian stock, was accepting of Iranian traditions, with Persian epics and other poetry being composed to remind the sultan of the personages and history of the land that he was ruling over. The Seljuk Turks who defeated the Ghaznavīds at the battle of Dandanaqān (near Merv) in 1041 CE, brought major changes to the lifestyle of the region. Their pastoralist lifestyle probably destroyed cultivatable land and changed the diet of the region in some ways. From 1025 CE, when the Seljuks invaded Khorāsān all the way to Sīstān, the towns were terrorized and mass starvation and chaos became the norm for several decades (Bosworth 1978: 19). The Zoroastrian population of these regions experienced the violence and faced a similar fate to the greater population of the Iranian Plateau. Yet we have references to the Zoroastrian neighborhood in Kermān where they were living in peace (Bāstānī-Pārīzī 1362/1983: 80). Again it is in the Caspian region that we hear of rulers with Iranian- and Zoroastrian-sounding names who traced their lineages back to the Sasanian rulers and their generals. Thus, one might assume that the fate of the Zoroastrians living in the Caspian region was less distressing, especially in a region that was not Sunnī (as under the Ghaznavīds and the Seljuks).

The Bāvandīds (700s–1349 CE), whose most famous ruler, Qārin (Karen), had the title of Ispahbed / Spāhbed, claimed relation to Kāvūs, the brother of the Sasanian king of kings, Khosrow I (r. 531–579 CE) (Bosworth 1978: 28). To the west of the Bāvandīds were the Bādūspānīds (late 5th to 16th century CE) who also took the title of Spāhbed,

as well as Ostāndār (governor), and claimed to be connected with the last Sasanian governor of the region (Bosworth 1978: 29). Further west the Daylamites, who were famous for “un-Islamic” beliefs and practices which appear to have been abhorrent to the Muslims (Kasravī 1379/2001: 40), also had pro-Iranian views that probably assured that the Zoroastrians who survived there were in a better position. But, despite their pro-Iranian views, the pro-Shīī tendencies would have been easier for the Zoroastrian population to convert. These dynasties and small kingdoms lived on until the end of what we call the “Zoroastrian Dark Ages,” the Bāvandīds until 1349 CE and the Bādūspānīds until the reign of Šāh ‘Abbās Safavī in the 16th century CE. So, Zoroastrians under the Seljuks and the Il-Khānīd rule may have had a different fate than those living in the Caspian region, as the political and religious situation in the north was somewhat different from the plateau. Hence, it should be stated that, while we do not have good information on the Zoroastrians at this time, we should not think that all the Zoroastrians of Iran shared a similar fate during this period.

Azərbayān and the Caucasus region had somewhat of a different fate with many people and religions residing there, hence pockets of Zoroastrians would have survived. But, besides the heterodox movement of Bābāk Khorramdīn, who may have attracted Zoroastrians to his cause (based both on his doctrine and anti-caliphate stance), the Slavs attacked and ravaged the region at the end of the 10th and the beginning of the 11th century, killing anyone (Muslims and Christians) they came into contact with and took women and children into slavery (Kasravī 1379/2001: 71). Zoroastrians would not have been the exception.

Turning back to the Iranian Plateau, no event was as seismic as the Mongol invasion in the early 13th century, followed by that of Holaghū Khān (1256–1265 CE) afterward. The conquest that began in the 1220s laid Khorāsān and Central Asia in ruins, resulting in the extermination of most of the population. The cities of Termez, Neyšābūr, and Herat were all destroyed and their populations massacred, while Sulṭān Jalāl-ud-Dīn (d. 1259 CE) stationed himself in Kermān with depleted forces attempting to hold on to power (Boyle 1968: 323). The rest of the Iranian Plateau did not fare better and from the tax registers it appears that at least half of the population was killed or fled, villages laid vacant, and the land was in ruin. In 1258 CE when Holaghū Khān sacked Baghdād, for seven days houses and shops were pillaged and people killed, with the exception of the Christian population (Boyle 1968: 348). If there were any Zoroastrians left there, they must have suffered the fate of the rest of the population of the city. When Ghazan Khān became the new ruler in 1295 CE, according to the *Jāmi‘ al-Tawārīkh* (‘Compendium of Chronicles’), he took the title “the Great Khosro of Iran the Successor of the Realm of the Kayanids” (Lane 2012: 261), but he also made a decree that all non-Muslim places of worship, including fire-temples (NP *ātaškade*), be destroyed and the people converted to Islam (Bausani 1968: 542). While the Buddhists received the brunt of the persecution, other religious minorities faced a similar fate under the rule of the newly converted and zealous khān. In the 14th century the poll tax paid by the Zoroastrian community depended on their status. The amount levied against the rich was eight dīnārs, the middle class six dīnārs, and the poor four dīnārs (Petrushevsky 1968: 533). However, in Yazd and Kermān the tax collector had reported that the people were so poor and the conditions of the peasants so bad that even this amount could not be collected.

Still, there seems to have been an intellectual tradition alive and letters were going back and forth between the Zoroastrians of Iran, along with manuscripts to India (Unvala 1922: 149–150). From this time we hear of Zoroastrians in such villages as Torkābād and Šarīfābād, where they wrote and conversed with their co-religionists in India. In fact it is from the 14th century that the names of these two places are recorded in the Zoroastrian tradition and they became the seat of the two most important fires along with that of the *Dastūr ī Dastūrān* ('head religious leader') (Boyce 1977: 2–3). One of the fires, Ādor Kharā (in local dialect) which is the Ādur Farnbāg, is said to have been the name of the great Sasanian fire-temple in Fārs, hence the assumption is that the fire was brought from there (Boyce 1977: 2). The Parsis in India looked at Torkābād as the "ecclesiastical" seat of Zoroastrianism, where in 1478 CE it was mentioned in our sources (Boyce 1977: 4). Between the 15th and the 18th century the Parsi community sought the legal and religious guidance from the "ecclesiastical" seat in Iran.

Zoroastrians under a Shī'ī Gunpowder Empire (16th–18th Centuries CE)

The coming of Šāh Ismā'īl and the establishment of the Safavid Empire (1501–1722 CE) brought important political, economic, and religious changes to Iran. Safavid Iran became one of the three important gunpowder empires of Asia, between the Mughals in India and the Ottomans in Anatolia. The economic and religious policies of the Safavids had a direct effect on the history and fate of the Zoroastrian population and it is only in this context that we can understand the change and shifts in patterns of life and existence for this community between the 16th and the 18th centuries. Šāh Ismā'īl's quasi-mystical background (his family had been Šūfī leaders in the region) and his Shī'ī zeal brought important changes to the religious landscape of the Iranian Plateau. We are told that his devotion to 'Alī, the first Shī'a imam, was consequential for those who did not believe in him, including for the Zoroastrians.

It appears that many of the religious communities in Iran not only held apocalyptic beliefs, but as Kathryn Babayan has aptly stated: "It was an apocalyptic moment in Islamic history in which expectations of the end of time and a belief in cosmic renewal were pervasive among a heterogeneous Muslim, Christian, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, and Jewish population living under Muslim rule" (Babayan 2012: 286). The Zoroastrians also awaited the arrival of their savior intermittently, about the same time as the coming of the Safavids and several times in the 16th century (Morony 1986: 1113); for instance, the Capuchin monk Gabriel de Chinon (d. 1668 CE) reported that the Zoroastrians were awaiting the reestablishment of their religion (Firby 1988: 38). Ismā'īl and many others were anticipating the near arrival of the savior (Arab. *mahdī*), and the immediate urgency of repentance through 'Alī (Babayan 2012: 286), but Ismā'īl had pronounced from the beginning of his rule that those who did not believe in 'Alī were unbelievers (Babayan 2012: 286). This meant not only the Sunnī population, who may have been the majority, but also the Zoroastrians, Christians, Jews, and Buddhists were all placed in one group. Thus, there were campaigns to convert the population.

What was the situation for the Zoroastrians after the initial encounter with the Safavid state? During Šāh ‘Abbās’s reign (1587–1629 CE) several thousand Zoroastrians were settled downstream from the Jūlfā (a neighborhood in Eṣfahān), in a neighborhood called *Gabrestān* (‘place of gabrs’ [a pejorative term for Zoroastrians]) (Savory 1980: 175). The Italian traveler Pietro della Valle (1586–1652), who visited this Zoroastrian enclave in the early 17th century, reported that it was a very nice place with very wide streets and more handsome than many other places (Firby 1988: 26). Della Valle also reported that these Zoroastrians were industrious merchants who had contacts with the British and also with their co-religionists in Kermān, so that they had influence on the Kermān wool trade (Firby 1988: 29). Šāh ‘Abbās had an interest in the Zoroastrians which is apparent from two episodes or sources. One is from the French merchant and traveler Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605–1689) who reported in 1664 that Šāh ‘Abbās was interested in the fine wool production and that in Kermān “trade was in their (Zoroastrian) hands” (Firby 1988: 41).

Second, Šāh ‘Abbās had visited Kermān personally at the behest of the Zoroastrians who had complained that they were being persecuted (Bāstānī-Pārīzī 1362/1983: 296). Having arrived there to resolve the Zoroastrian–Muslim violence (due to the fact that the Zoroastrians had killed a Muslim who had tormented them), Šāh ‘Abbās also oversaw the trade route from Kermān to Bandar ‘Abbās, an important port by the Strait of Hormuz (Bāstānī-Pārīzī 1362/1983: 216). His attention to the Zoroastrians in Yazd and Kermān is memorialized every year with soup and sweet cake (NP *āš va halvā*) to commemorate the king saving them from a plot to massacre them (NP *mogh-košī*), and they call this alms-giving event “Šāh ‘Abbās’s Alms” (NP *Kheyrāt-e Šāh ‘Abbāsī*). This commemoration was still current in the 1980s, and still today at a Pīr (a shrine) in Kermān the alms-giving ceremony is called *Kheyrāt-e Šāh ‘Abbāsī* (Bāstānī-Pārīzī 1362/1983: 300–301).

From these reports one can make several assumptions. First, the idea that only the Zoroastrian poor and manual workers were brought to Eṣfahān (Boyce 1992: 177) is not completely accurate. It is well known that the religious minorities in Iran had been careful not to flaunt their wealth, even during the heyday of Safavid Iran, when the city of Eṣfahān was glorious and wealthy. Otherwise, their property would have been harmed by those who were jealous, or their family members kidnapped for ransom. So the idea of “poor” Zoroastrians in Eṣfahān seems to have been a common misperception, often encouraged by Zoroastrians themselves. At least one of the Zoroastrian merchants was wealthy enough to pay for the construction of a fire-temple in 1644 (Firby 1988: 42). Second, their connection with their co-religionists in Kermān who held a monopoly over wool aroused the interest of not only the Europeans but Šāh ‘Abbās himself. This would suggest the existence of a Zoroastrian trade network which was important enough for the king to visit Kermān himself and inquire about the wellbeing of the Zoroastrians. Third, might the Zoroastrian trade network have been as far-reaching as India, where their Parsi brethren were better situated? Safavid interests in trade, especially during the time of Šāh ‘Abbās, brought Zoroastrians into an orbit of importance. This access to the king at the center of power brought the Zoroastrian population in line with other religious minorities, as when we read Daulier Deslandes’ (1621–1715) statement that in the 17th century different populations and various religious groups were given similar treatment (Firby 1988: 55).

Still, Kermān and Yazd were the spiritual centers of the Zoroastrians in this era. Jean Chardin (1643–1713) reports that the “Destour Destouran” (NP *dastūr dastūrān*),

almost an ecclesiastical pontiff, lived in Kermān and did not leave the place (Firby 1988: 65). Previously ignored sources and historians for the study of Zoroastrianism, such as *Jogrāfiyā-ye Kermān-e Vazīrī*, an important geographical text, and the Persian historian, Moḥammad Ebrāhīm Bāstānī-Pārīzī (1362/1983) shed particular light on the importance, location, and internal politics of the community. As it happens, during the very same time that Šāh ‘Abbās was ruling Iran, Ganj’alī Khān was the governor of Kermān (1596–1624 CE). He was in charge of not only the security of the region, but also all the roads that connected the sea to the inland (Bāstānī-Pārīzī 1362/1983: 41). The remaining documents of Ganj’alī Khān include the *Vaqfnāmes* (deeds of endowment) and legal documents appointing land and property. In one of them accounting for property in Garmsēr (Helmand Province, Afghanistan), a Bahman Valad is called the “Leader of the Zoroastrians” (NP *Ra’īs-e Mehraqān-e Majūs*) (Bāstānī-Pārīzī 1362/1983: 216–217). We also hear of the Zoroastrian holy places in the area, which in the local dialect are called “Bābū Kamāl” (*Bābū* in the Kermānī dialect means a *Pīr*) (Bāstānī-Pārīzī 1362/1983: 299). While Ganj’alī Khān had come to blows with the Zoroastrians and one of their fire-temples was converted to a mosque, the community was strong enough to invoke the attention of Šāh ‘Abbās and obtain protection from the governor.

By the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century, the Zoroastrians went through another tumultuous period. According to the Italian traveler Gemelli Careri (1651–1725), in 1694 during the rule of Šāh Soleymān (r. 1666–1694), the Zoroastrians in Eṣfahān had been moved to one long street, a mile long, with two rows of cypress trees and two trenches of water (Firby 1988: 74). This sounds typical of any Persian suburb that existed, but soon, under Šāh Solṭān Ḥosseyṅ (r. 1694–1722 CE), things would become harsh, harkening to the early Safavid period. The last of the Safavid rulers had come under the spell of militant Shī’ī clerics such as Moḥammad Ḥosseyṅ Khātūnābādī, and, more importantly, Moḥammad Bāghīr Majlesī (d. 1699), the Shī’a Ḥadīth scholar and author of the famous compendium on customs and norms *Hilyat ul-Muttaqeen* (‘The Adornment of the Godfearing’) and the Ḥadīth encyclopedia *Bihār al-Anwār* (‘Sea of Lights’) among other works. This resulted in a decree in 1699 that forced conversion upon all to Shī’a Islam. This edict caused great tensions and resulted in many revolts, first by the Sunnī Kurds in 1704 (Savory 1980: 251). The Jews were also forced to convert, while the Christians sought the aid of the European powers, but the Zoroastrians did not have support from any foreign power at that time.

We learn that the persecution of religious minorities, especially the Zoroastrians, had begun. In Kermān the ‘*olamā*’ (Muslim jurists) had given a *fatwa* that the Zoroastrians must be moved outside the city so that they did not mix with the Muslims. They were moved to the north of the city, close to the city gates, and they built their fire-temples and lived there (*Jogrāfiyā-ye Kermān*, ‘The Geography of Kermān’, Bāstānī-Pārīzī 1362/1983: 301, 1385/2006: 28). This forced relocation made the Zoroastrians an enemy of the Safavid state, which would soon have its effect on the region. To this day the neighborhood in Kermān they once lived in is still called *Maḥalle-ye Gabrān* (‘Zoroastrian neighborhood’).

The reason for such seclusion from the Shī’a population may be the strict purity laws, which Shī’ism began to enforce and which were formulated in the Safavid period, notably by one of the most important Shī’ī theologians, Moḥammad Bāghīr Majlesī (see above). Thus, the idea of impurity in Shī’a Islam (Arab. *najēs*) was matched by the

Zoroastrian notion of impurity (Pahl. *āhīdīh*). It is interesting that, looking at Moḥammad Bāghīr Majlesī's *Helliyat ol-Mottaghīn*, chapters on the sins for Shī'ites included walking with one shoe and clipping nails during the night, so one sees that many ideas appear to have their origins in the Zoroastrian tradition (see Shaked, "Islam," this volume). No exhaustive comparative study of such notions of purity and pollution in Zoroastrianism and Shī'ism yet exists; one can state that under the Safavids the Iranians were once again exposed to the importance of the laws of purity and pollution on a large scale.

Mahmoud Afghān put an end to Safavid power, although their descendants continued to exist and claim rulership (see Choksy 2006b). In 1719 CE Kermān was invaded (Aghaie 2012: 307) and the Zoroastrian inhabitants who lived outside of the city were now victims of the invading Afghan army (Boyce 1979: 191). But in 1722, on their way to Eṣfahān, the Afghans again came with 40,000 soldiers, but this time they received the support of the Zoroastrians of Yazd and Kermān who joined their ranks (*Joghrafiyā-ye Kermān, Bāstānī-Pārizī* 1385/2006: 28), as Maḥmūd made a "secret agreement" with them (Firby 1988: 81). This time there seems to have been a Zoroastrian general among the Afghan army, named Nosratollāh Khān Gūr/Gawr (Gabr) Kermānī, and this must have impressed the community. Because of Šāh Sulṭān Ḥossey'n's maltreatment and forced conversion and massacres, it was time to take revenge for the Shah's persecutions. The Afghans rode into Eṣfahān and sacked the city. Nosratollāh Khān was killed in the siege of Šīrāz and was honored after his death, with a fire being lit at his tomb (Firby 1988: 82).

By the end of the 18th century when Karim Khān Zand (r. 1750–1779) sat as the deputy and ruler of Iran in Šīrāz the Zoroastrians in Iran were in dire straits. The Zoroastrians asked Mollā Kāvūs to intercede on behalf of the community and he was able to win the favor of Karim Khān. This is also the time when the last Persian *Iṭhoter Revāyat* ("The *Revāyat* of 78 [Questions]") was written about religious matters in Yazd (Boyce 1992: 191; see Sheffield, "Primary Sources: New Persian," this volume). During the rule of the Qājārs, when Iran confronted the West and modernity, the Zoroastrians also experienced changes. They were able to win some liberties and the easing of their problems, largely thanks to their Parsi brethren who were able to come to their aid. Now the Zoroastrians of Iran looked to the Parsis as a source of knowledge, aid, and a means of bettering their own lives. Still, some Zoroastrians from Iran continued to migrate to India through the 19th century, while others chose to stay in their ancient homeland (see Stausberg, "Zoroastrians in Modern Iran," this volume).

Further Reading

In general the reader is referred to relevant entries in the *Encyclopædia Iranica* and the *Encyclopædia of Islam*. For a general history of Zoroastrianism in the historical periods, see Rose (2011b). For the development of Islam and the history of the Near East in the 6th and the 7th centuries, see Donner (2010), and

for the Arab conquest of the Near East and Iran, see Kennedy (2007). For conversions to Islam, see Savant (2013). For the history of Zoroastrians under Muslim rule along with other religious communities, see Choksy (1997) and Khanbaghi (2006).

CHAPTER 7

Armenian and Georgian Zoroastrianism

Albert de Jong

In spite of the fact that many Zoroastrian sources suggest that the revelation was brought to the earth by Zarathustra for the benefit of all humans (*Dk* 5.24.14), the spread of Zoroastrianism has almost entirely been confined to the Iranian world. This is a world defined according to linguistic criteria: those parts of the world where languages from the Iranian language family were spoken. It is unknown to what extent this modern linguistic classification actually mirrors an experienced reality of “Iranian” identity. This has led to the well-known situation, in the Sasanian and early Islamic periods, that Zoroastrianism could be referred to as ‘Iranianness’ (MP *ērīh*) and that one of the technical terms for an apostate, someone who had left Zoroastrianism for Christianity or Islam, was a ‘non-Iranian’ (MP *an-ēr*).

There are two very important exceptions to this general pattern of the spread of Zoroastrianism: It is certain that the Armenians and the Georgians (or Iberians) were Zoroastrians before they converted to Christianity. This is not an obvious fact to everyone; on the contrary, it has been (and continues to be) bitterly opposed, especially by Armenian and Georgian scholars, who prefer to think of the pre-Christian religions of the Armenians and Georgians as chiefly “local” or “indigenous” traditions, which accommodated some Iranian elements (Ananikian 1925). They are aided in this interpretation by the fact that the (Christian) Armenian and Georgian sources rarely, if at all, identify the religion of their ancestors before their conversion to Christianity as “Zoroastrianism.” These sources either prefer seemingly neutral terms (such as “the religion of our forefathers”) or polemical ones (“heathenism”), but do not label the religion as “Iranian” or “Zoroastrian.” Where these terms occur, they refer to the religion of the Persians, chiefly of the Persians as enemies of the Christian Armenians. This fact in itself, while undeniable, is not compelling; on the contrary, it seems to be in harmony with the self-identifications of most of the Iranians; the wide spread of the term “Zoroastrian” is of post-Sasanian date and even “Mazda-worshipping” is mainly used in

limited (e.g., imperial and liturgical) contexts. Iranian Zoroastrians seem to have been identified after the Iranian land they came from (Persians, Parthians, Sogdians, etc.), with the Zoroastrian element of their identity self-understood.

Confusion has been created in this matter chiefly by historians of Zoroastrianism, who frequently interpret this religion as an “identity” overriding all others – and often work with a tightly circumscribed definition of “real” Zoroastrianism (see de Jong, “Religion and Politics in Pre-Islamic Iran,” this volume). This essentialist definition mirrors the Sasanian version of Zoroastrianism closely. A general failure to recognize this fact has led many scholars to use this version of the religion, which is historically and culturally very specific, as a norm by which to judge the evidence for non-Sasanian versions of Zoroastrianism. This approach is not just anachronistic (in that it holds, for example, Parthian Zoroastrianism to standards that only developed after the downfall of the Parthian Empire), but also “anatopistic” in ignoring the possibility of regional developments in “lived” Zoroastrianism beyond the borders of the central areas of the Sasanian Empire (de Jong 2008 [2012]). In the case of the Armenians and the Georgians, it is both. The evidence from Armenia and Georgia, though scanty and difficult to interpret, is therefore of unique value for anyone who wants to question the viability of most current approaches to the history of Zoroastrianism.

Armenia and Georgia: Geography and History

For a proper perspective on the ancient lands and peoples of Armenia and Georgia, the former must be considerably enlarged compared to its modern namesake, and the latter slightly reduced. Armenia in antiquity included not only the territory of the modern Republic of Armenia, but also the eastern half of the modern republic of Turkey. This was a land of ancient habitation, which had seen large and important kingdoms before the ancestors of the Armenians settled there. Historically, the first trace of an Armenian polity is the inclusion of the satrapy of Armina in the Achaemenid Empire. This satrapy, which in later times came to be known as Greater Armenia, was to be divided several times in Achaemenid and post-Achaemenid history, leading to the genesis of a number of Armenian kingdoms that were ruled, chiefly, by descendants of Persian satraps. The best known of these were the Orontids, who emerged as kings of Greater Armenia in the time of Alexander and the Seleucids, and whose family also produced the kings of several of the smaller Armenian kingdoms (Sophene, Commagene). The line of the Orontids of Greater Armenia came to an end in the 2nd century BCE, with the rise of the next Armenian dynasty, the Artaxiads, who were installed by the Seleucid Antiochus III, but proved themselves to be very able dynasts. Not only did the greatest of them, Tigranes II (the Great, r. 95–c. 55 BCE) expand the territory of Armenia considerably (but fleetingly) at the expense of the Parthians, but the Artaxiads are also widely seen as culturally significant in building up an Armenian territorial and cultural identity. Their line came to an end in the early years of the 1st century CE, when Armenia came to be ruled, with Roman approval, by a junior branch of the Parthian Arsacid dynasty, which held the affection

of the Armenians until the mid-Sasanian period. It was one of the Arsacid kings of Armenia, Tirdat IV, who converted to Christianity early in the 4th century (it is thought in the year 314 CE). With him, as tradition demanded, his entire realm became Christian and Armenians pride themselves in thus being the first Christian nation. The conversion to Christianity brought about the practice of writing Armenian and Armenian sources begin to flow from the 5th century onward – more than a century after the supposed conversion of Armenia to Christianity. These sources are all Christian ones, and although they have preserved important information on the religion of the Armenians before their conversion to Christianity, this information is sometimes difficult to evaluate.

From the period of Alexander to the downfall and partition of the kingdom(s) of Armenia between Sasanian Persia and the Byzantine Empire, Armenia is usually presented as a battle-zone between the two superpowers of the ancient world (Iran in the East and Greeks and Romans in the West). While this is true politically, it is not a very promising perspective culturally, for Armenia and the Armenians clearly and unequivocally participated in Iranian culture.

This is also true of the Georgians, but the history of ancient Georgia is even more difficult to reconstruct than that of the Armenians (Braund 1994). In the case of Georgia, we are confronted with two different regions of “Georgian” settlement, separated by the Likhi range, which connects the Greater Caucasus mountains with those known as the Lesser Caucasus and formed an important, though not wholly impenetrable, barrier. To the west of the Likhi range, the mountains quickly descend towards the Black Sea, forming the land that was known in antiquity as Colchis. To the east lies ancient Iberia, which was the purported home of the people who called their land Kartli. Colchis (and its southern region known as Lazica) was heavily colonized by Greeks along the Black Sea coast and is an area that has yielded extensive archaeological evidence for the presence of Greek culture (Lordkipanidze 1991). This is not the case with the eastern half of Georgia, the kingdom of Iberia, which seems to have participated much more in the Iranian world (Rapp 2003). There are not many relevant classical sources and very few Iranian ones, but from the surviving evidence it seems that the situation of ancient Iberia was roughly similar to, and interconnected with, that of Armenia: a semi-independent kingdom that participated in Iranian culture, but was also permanently under the eyes of the Seleucid and later Roman authorities. Georgian historical sources are later and more difficult to use than the Armenian ones, especially because they are bound up with the Armenian sources. Recently, intensive archaeological study of various sites in the eastern half of Georgia has strengthened the case for a very early inclusion of Iberia in the Iranian political and cultural realm (Knauss 2006), and, like the Armenian sources, Georgian historical sources present a variety of evidence for a long period of intimate interaction between Georgian and Iranian culture. In both cases, this interaction continued after the (early) conversion of the kingdoms to Christianity. The conversion of the Iberian king Mirian III (with his realm) is traditionally dated to the year 337 CE. Georgia too was ruled by families with an Iranian ancestry (Persian and Parthian), who participated in the Iranian dynastic network that dominated the eastern half of the ancient world from Alexander to the end of antiquity.

Languages and Sources

Like all other satrapies of the Achaemenid Empire, Armenia and Iberia made use of Imperial Aramaic for their administration. The sources are very limited, but show the persistence of these scribal traditions after the downfall of the Achaemenid Empire. Greek began to be used in Seleucid times, for this language appears in inscriptions and especially on Armenian coins (Bedoukian 1978). Otherwise, the indications are that they kept the Iranian tradition of using writing only for practical purposes of administration, not for literary or religious ones.

The rise of the Armenian and Georgian written languages is inextricably bound up with the conversion of the Armenians and Georgians to Christianity in the 4th century. The Armenian alphabet was invented by Mesrop Mashtots in the early 5th century (sponsoring the rise of the Georgian and Albanian scripts), initially to produce a translation of the Bible into Armenian. Armenian historical and theological sources begin to flow very soon after this momentous development, but it is important to recall the fact that they all date to more than a century after the conversion of Armenia to Christianity. This conversion is the subject of some of the early works and since these pay close attention to the religion of the king (and of Armenia) at the time of the conversion, they have preserved important information on Armenian Zoroastrianism. This information is often difficult to use. It was written by authors who considered these elements of this history and culture to be among the less desirable aspects of a past that was, for them, wholly finished.

They describe that past in derogatory terms, drawing chiefly (as far as the religion is concerned) on Biblical imagery directed against a plural spiritual world and the use of images of the gods. It is difficult, therefore, to ascertain how immediate their knowledge of the past religion really was. As mentioned above, none of them gives it a name and none of them connects it with the Zoroastrianism that represented, for them, the religion of the "Persian enemy." Nevertheless, almost all deities mentioned are Iranian ones and a careful and exhaustive study of all the evidence has made it clear that this religion can or must be seen as a local branch of Zoroastrianism (Russell 1987).

This interpretation is strengthened considerably by the evidence of the Armenian language. On the level of the lexicon, Armenian is permeated to such an extent by words of Iranian origin that the earliest Western students of Armenian thought of it as belonging to the Iranian language family. They were wrong in this, as was established by Heinrich Hübschmann in the late 19th century (Hübschmann 1875, 1897), but the penetration of Iranian lexical elements in Armenian can only be explained on the assumption of a lasting period of functional bilingualism in Parthian and Armenian (Schmitt 1983: 103). Many of these Iranian loanwords are of a religious nature: the verbs *yaz-el* and *zoh-el*, for example, for 'to sacrifice' (MP *yaštan* 'to celebrate', and *zōhr* 'libation'), the words *bagin* and *mehean* for altar and temple, reflecting Parthian *bagina* 'temple (?)', and an unattested Parthian descendant of Old Iranian **miθradāna-* 'place of Mithra', but the most striking thing about them is their sheer number (well over a thousand). The same is true for the Armenian onomasticon, which is dominated by Iranian names, including very popular ones, such as Tigran, Artashes, Artavazd.

The situation for Georgia is structurally similar. Georgian historical sources are generally of a much later date (the 7th century CE at the earliest) and the evidence they provide for the pre-Christian religion of the Georgians is thus even more difficult to evaluate. In the field of literature, however, Georgian sources are very important and show a lasting impact of Iranian literature. Not only are there Georgian versions of important Iranian works (such as the 12th-century *Visramiani*, the Georgian version of Gorgānī's *Vīs-o-Rāmīn*, and (later) Georgian adaptations of the *Šāhnāme*), the treasure of classical Georgian literature, Shota Rustaveli's *Knight in the Panther's Skin* (12th century) equally reflects Persian literary tastes. The Georgian language also has an impressive number of Middle Iranian loanwords. These used to be thought of as having entered the language through Armenian, but this interpretation has been shown to be untenable and a strong case has been built to accept them as direct loans from Parthian and Middle Persian (Gippert 1993).

The Religion of Pre-Christian Armenia

As mentioned above, most of the sources at our disposal are historical texts that describe the history of Armenia with a very particular focus. They are devout works that seek not only to give the Armenians a noble history, but also to stress the pivotal event in that history: the conversion of Armenia to Christianity and the struggle of a Christian Armenia against the Persians. Many of these works bear the same title (*History of the Armenians*), the earliest of which is that ascribed to an author who calls himself Agathangelos (Thomson 1976). This consists of two parts, of which the second part is a (conventionally hagiographic) retelling of the life of St Gregory the Illuminator, who is seen as the person who converted King Tirdat IV (and, as a consequence, all of Armenia) to Christianity and hence as the founder of the Armenian church. The first part, however, tells of Armenian history from the rise of the Sasanians in Iran up to the reign of Tirdat IV (r. 298–330 CE), and portrays the Armenian kings as pious Zoroastrians, ordering their generals to sacrifice at the seven national shrines. These same shrines (sometimes eight or ten, in seven different places) are described (though not in detail) in the second part of the narrative, since the converted king destroys them, distributes their wealth and founds churches in their place. They are devoted – in the order of the text – to the gods Tir, Anahit, Aramazd, Anahit (again), Mher, Vahagn (with Anahit again), Barshamin, and Nane, “the daughter of Aramazd.” It is clear from the text that these shrines with statues and altars were chosen by the author for their renown among the Armenians, not to give an exhaustive summary of all destroyed temples.

This is confirmed by the mention of several other imposing temples in the works of other Armenian historians, which expand the number of prominent deities somewhat by adding references to the god Tork (the Anatolian god Tarkhu), who was worshipped at Angl, and the popular goddess known as Astlik (‘little star’). The Armenian pantheon that can thus be reconstructed is dominated by Iranian gods, with the notable addition of a number of non-Iranian gods: Ba'al-Shamin, Tarkhu, and Ishtar (if this is who Astlik represents). This latter point was a major concern of earlier scholars, who could not connect the worship of non-Iranian gods with “proper” Zoroastrianism. The fact

that the texts speak consistently of temples dedicated to these deities, containing altars and statues of the gods, was likewise seen as irreconcilable with Zoroastrianism (as was the fact that there is no mention in any of the sources of a *temple* cult of fire). There was a putative solution for this latter point, in that the temples and statues could be rationalized as rooted, not in historical reality, but in Biblically inspired polemics against paganism, but all of this would be compelling only if late Sasanian Zoroastrianism could be used as a normative model. Evidence for temples to named deities has turned up in other parts of the Zoroastrian world, either in references to them (e.g., a reference to a temple of Nane in the Nisa ostraca) or in archaeological finds (the temple of the Oxus). The same is true for the popularity, within a Zoroastrian framework, of non-Iranian (or non-Avestan) deities, such as the hugely popular goddess Nanaia in Central Asia, or the god Sasan among the Parthians.

One aspect of Armenian Zoroastrianism thus seems to be the fact that it made use of a wide variety of religious establishments (“shrines” or “temples”), often set on dramatic places, high up hills and mountains or along imposing rivers. Stray indications in classical (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.24) and Armenian (Agathangelos, § 809; Thomson 1976) sources show that these temples were important economic centers, and that they received lavish royal support – with kings even assuming priestly duties in them. It is not strange that it is this type of establishment that is best known from the Armenian sources, since their disappearance, or their rededication as churches, adds drama to the story of conversion these sources wished to tell.

In the same almost casual way, evidence for the old Armenian calendar has been preserved (Schmitt 1985). This calendar seems to have been based on the model of the Zoroastrian calendar (with twelve named months, thirty named days, and five *epagomene*), but the names of the months and of the days do not correspond to the standard varieties of the Zoroastrian calendar. Although a number of correspondences exist, the Armenian month-names that are of Iranian origin appear to refer to important Zoroastrian festivals (*Navasardi* ‘New Year’, for the first month, *Mehekan* ‘Mithra-festival’, for the seventh) rather than simply giving the names of the deities. This is also true for the similar Georgian calendar that can be reconstructed (Gippert 1988). While a true copy of the Zoroastrian calendar would have been clinching evidence for the participation of the Armenians and Georgians in an international Zoroastrian world, the evidence as we have it now is equally impressive, but points in another direction: one in which the year was seen as a succession of festivals, which recalls the earliest attested structuring of the Zoroastrian year on the pattern of the *Gāhānbārs* (one of the Armenian month-names, Marear, is usually interpreted as having preserved the name of one of the *Gāhānbārs*: *Maiḏiīāiriia*).

The evidence from the chief literary sources thus suggests that the Armenians worshipped Zoroastrian gods and celebrated Zoroastrian festivals, but they all need to be seen first and foremost in their local context. The demonstration of this has enabled scholars to make sense of many surviving popular customs that are (or were, before the destruction of the Christian population of eastern Turkey in the 19th and 20th centuries) current among Armenian Christians, several of which can be shown to go back to Zoroastrian rites of piety: The picking of *horot-morot* flowers in combination with a water rite on Ascension Day (the name of these flowers goes back to the *Aməša Spəntas*

Hauruuatāt and Amərətāt) and on the festival of Vardavar, which closely resembles a similar rite observed among the Yazdi Zoroastrians on the festival of Tir-o-Tištar; and a bonfire festival on the Feast of the Presentation, which evokes the *sade* fires among the Zoroastrians.

A similar pervasive presence of Iranian themes has been traced in traditional Armenian narratives and stories. Indeed, the reconstruction of the craft of the Parthian *gōsān* (Boyce 1957) relies in no small measure on the materials found in Armenian literature and the references to Armenian *gusans*. An important modern scholar aptly summarized the interpretation that is also suggested here: “Originally the Armenians were not so much permeated by Iranian culture as examples of it” (Thomson 2004: 373). It is clear that “culture” here should not be confined to statehood, court ceremony, pastimes, and literature alone, but included, naturally, also religion as part of the cherished ancestral traditions (*awrēnk^c*, compare MP *ēwēn*, Parth. **adwēn*) of the Armenians.

The Religion of Pre-Christian Georgia

In the case of Georgia, the materials are on the one hand much more limited and difficult to interpret, but on the other hand they are supplied by a type of evidence that is almost wholly lacking for the Armenians, that of archaeology. The destruction of much of historical Armenia and the sensitivity following the Armenian genocide have prevented the development of an archaeological investigation of early Armenian culture. There is some archaeology of Armenian Christianity (Thierry 1989), and some of the royal cities have been excavated (e.g., Artaxata, see Invernizzi 1998), but very little of pre-Christian religious interest has been found there.

This is not the case with Georgia, for alongside the ongoing investigation of Achaemenid sites there have been extensive campaigns in two closely related sites, one royal and one religious, in the territory of ancient Iberia. These are the sites known as Dedoplis Gora (Bertemes and Furtwängler 2009) and Dedoplis Mindori (Gagoshidze 1992). Their chief architectural expansion belongs to the Parthian period and they can best be interpreted as a noble mansion and an associated temple complex. In view of their very large and impressive layout, it is most likely that they were a royal residence and a royal temple. Many other temple-like buildings have been uncovered in Georgia; most excavators refer to these as “fire-temples,” but no real evidence for this interpretation has been put forward and there is a lack of in-depth interpretation of the sites. There are, moreover (but this is also true of Armenia), clear examples of Sasanian fire-temples in Georgia that were introduced with the inclusion of Iberia in the Sasanian Empire and may have been built to serve Persian immigrants. They should be distinguished from possibly local examples of religious architecture, but a lot of work still needs to be done here.

Of the recorded names of the gods of pre-Christian Georgia, only a single name is directly recognizable as Zoroastrian. This is Armazi, the supreme god of the pantheon, who is sometimes accompanied by other gods with perplexing names (Gatsi and Gaim, Ainina, Danana, Zaden). These gods are depicted as “idols,” divine statues made of precious metal and the center of the cult of the Georgians and their kings. These kings

are said to have introduced them, one by one, in a dynastic succession. This evidence come to us chiefly from the two main sources for the conversion of Georgia: The complex corpus of texts called *The Life of Kartli* (which includes the life of St Nino, who brought about the conversion of the Georgian king Mirian III [r. 306–337 CE] to Christianity), and the equally difficult corpus of texts called *The Conversion of Kartli*. The oldest parts of both corpora, while possibly containing earlier materials, are generally dated to the 8th century CE at the earliest. This leaves a gap of more than 400 years between the conversion of the Georgian king to Christianity and the historical narratives on this conversion. During these centuries, as the texts themselves also bear out, the Persians (re-)introduced Zoroastrianism in Armenia, and a confusion between the ancestral religion of the Georgians and the religion of the Persians is noticeable throughout the narrative. Thus, some kings are said to have abandoned the ancestral gods in favor of the Persian religion – and to have brought magi to aid them in this project. The religion of these magi is nowhere connected with the “ancestral” worship of Armazi (even though this god was introduced through a Persian connection as well), but is generally limited to “fire-worship.” Once again, the sources (though even further removed from the developments they describe) suggest a double development: On the one hand, they show a local version of religion with an Iranian impact – and part of a heavily Iranized (aristocratic) culture, but contrast this, on the other hand, with a “Persian” religion that does not fit this local model. In the case of Georgia, this interpretation can be buttressed by the evidence of archaeology, for alongside the Parthian temples at Dedoplist Mindori, remnants of Sasanian fire-temples have been found in some numbers.

The Parthian Commonwealth

Much of the evidence is thus circumstantial, or difficult to evaluate. The Armenian materials are almost wholly literary (and Christian), and the situation for Georgia is more promising archaeologically, but more difficult in its literary reflection. There is room, therefore, for alternative explanations of Armenian and Georgian religion. This room has been taken (amply) by Armenian and Georgian scholars, who have generally insisted on the “indigeneity” of the pre-Christian religions of the area, and have traditionally preferred extremely uncertain Anatolian (Hurrian, Hittite, Urartian) explanations for Armenian and Georgian religion, to which Iranian and Greek religions also made some (minor) contributions. This was made possible by a weakness in the study of Zoroastrianism, which has traditionally found it difficult to deal with “localized” versions of that religion – preferring to re-label these as other religions (Mithra-worship, non-Zoroastrian Mazdeism, Sogdian religion, etc.).

Over the past century, however, a group of Armenologists (Nina G. Garsoïan, James R. Russell, and Robert W. Thomson) and a few specialists of Georgian history and culture (David M. Lang and Stephen H. Rapp) have built up an impressive dossier of evidence that shows the deep participation of the ancient Armenians and Georgians in the Iranian world (which must be contrasted to the “traditional” story of Iranian “occupation” of these non-Iranian lands). This began with the linguistic and onomastic

evidence, which is unequivocal, and spread from there to the areas of archaeology (architecture, ceramics, glass, jewelry) and literature (with the recognition of Iranian themes and styles in classical Armenian and Georgian literature). Similar evidence is well known from Mesopotamia in the Parthian period: large numbers of loanwords in the various dialects of Aramaic (with a long history), the prominence of Iranian names, the development of architecture, of costume, of figurative art, of weaponry, and of literature. The evidence of Georgia and Armenia on the one hand, and of Mesopotamia on the other, is very important for the reconstruction of what can be called the “Parthian Commonwealth,” the cluster of Iranian and non-Iranian lands that were ruled by Parthian families (de Jong 2013a). In most areas, this evidence is strikingly harmonious and suggestions have been made to account for this: These propose that Parthian (and Parthianizing local) rulers and noble families spread their culture by setting an example of smaller versions of the Parthian court in their estates, employing priests to take care of the religion and *gōsāns* to entertain them (the word *gōsān* has been attested as a loanword in Armenian, Georgian, and Aramaic), and spreading fashions of dress, weaponry, and jewelry among the local nobility.

Although this evidence is impressive, it is clear that, on the religious side, the Armenian and Georgian materials are wholly different from the Mesopotamian ones. The Mesopotamian evidence is very weak in showing the presence of Iranian gods or rituals, even though materials illustrating “religion” in the Parthian period in Mesopotamia are extensive. There is a certain correspondence here with the activities of the Sasanians in the domain of religion: Whereas they tried to impose Zoroastrianism on the Armenians and Georgians, they made no such efforts in Mesopotamia. They only became active there when former Zoroastrians converted to Christianity. This strongly suggests that their activities among Armenians and Georgians were sponsored by the fact that they considered these to be (former) Zoroastrian lands. Ironically, the Zoroastrianism they attempted to bring to these lands was strikingly different from the religion that had existed before their conversion to Christianity. As a result, we can see refractions of both – the Sasanian version of Zoroastrianism and local ones – in the Armenian and Georgian materials. These materials are thus of great value for any scholar of Zoroastrianism, because they force us to reconsider almost everything we thought we knew about Zoroastrian history.

Further Reading

The best place to start for a general impression of the subject is the classical work of Lang (1971), because it discusses Armenia and Georgia together. Literature on Armenia is much more extensive than literature on Georgia (at least in modern European languages). For the subject of the relations between Iranian and Armenian cultures in antiquity, the translations of Thomson (1976, 1978, 1982, 1996) are indispensable; all of

them contain important introductions and commentaries. This is also true of Garsoïan (1989), one of the crowning achievements of a scholar who dedicated much of her life’s work to recovering the Iranian heritage of the Armenians (see also Garsoïan 1995, 2010; Garsoïan and Mahé 1997). For the specific subject of Armenian Zoroastrianism, Russell (1987) is indispensable; this is also true of a stream of articles, showing deep

learning, documentation, and inventiveness (Russell 2004).

The situation for Georgia is much less straightforward. Braund (1994) does not pay much attention to Iranian elements in ancient Georgian culture. The image of the negative impact the Persians had on Georgia is continued, for example, in Vashalomidze (2007). For the literary history of Georgia, Rapp (2003) is fundamental. There are many overviews of the Iranian archaeology of Georgia, though most of these are restricted to the Achaemenid (and Parthian) periods, with the Sasanian evidence strangely left out of the discussion. See, for an overview, Knauss (2005). A group of early fire-temples (?) is discussed by K. K'imšiašvili and G. Narimanišvili (1995–1996). The whole issue 32 (2000) of the journal *AMIT* is

devoted to Georgia and its neighbors in Achaemenid and post-Achaemenid times. There are regular reports on excavations in the area in *AMIT* and in the journal *Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia*.

The study of pre-Christian Georgian religion is emotional and confusing. It is interesting to contrast Wesendonk (1924) with van Esbroeck (1990). Much of the discussion is guided by the assumption that the living “pagan” traditions among the so-called Mountain Georgians (Pshav, Khevsur, Tush) and the Svanetians are direct continuations of that pre-Christian Georgian religion, even though this assumption is incapable of direct proof. See for these religions (interesting in themselves, also for showing the persistence of Iranian vocabulary) Charachidzé (1968) and Fähnrich (1999).

CHAPTER 8

Zoroastrianism in Central Asia

Frantz Grenet

Sources

Textual sources providing information on Zoroastrianism in pre-Islamic Central Asia are scattered and few of them can be qualified as primary, i.e., contemporary and from the Central Asian people themselves. The Young Avestan texts, however, originated in Central Asia, though only a few sections explicitly refer to these regions: *Vd* 1 (a general list of “Aryan,” i.e., Zoroastrian countries, probably pre-Achaemenid), *Yt* 10 (the Bāmiyān area), *Yt* 19 (Sistān) (see Grenet, “Zarathustra’s Time and Homeland: Geographical Perspectives,” this volume). In the literature in Eastern Middle Iranian languages (Bactrian, Sogdian, and Khotanese) which have come down to us, only Sogdian literature includes a handful of texts with Zoroastrian religious content (see below), the rest being either primarily secular or belonging to other religions adopted by Sogdians who emigrated to China (Buddhism, Christianity, and Manichaeism). Except for Kushan monumental inscriptions of the 2nd century which shed some light on the royal temples, Bactrian literature consists almost entirely of the archive records from the Rōb kingdom (4th–8th centuries CE), which contain much onomastic material which in its turn provides valuable information about the gods worshiped by the population (Sims-Williams 2010; for Sogdian onomastics see Lurje 2010). Khotanese literature is entirely Buddhist, though from Chinese accounts we know there were also Zoroastrians in Khotan (e.g., “they worship the Heavenly God (i.e., Ohrmazd) and the Law of the Buddha”: *Tangshu*, trans. Chavannes 1903 [1973]: 125).

More data can be gathered from external sources. The historians of Alexander’s campaigns provide limited but precious pieces of information on religious practices in Bactria and Sogdiana. Chinese accounts of the 7th–8th centuries are very detailed and accurate on some points, especially the notices on Sogdian principalities in the *Tangshu*, and the description by the envoy Wei Jie of the customs he observed at Samarkand in

607 CE (see below; sources translated in Chavannes 1903 [1973]). Finally, the Arab conquerors, though recognizing that most people in Central Asia were Zoroastrian (*majūš* ‘Magians’), realized that they had specific forms of worship, including “idol temples” sometimes combined with “fire-temples” (*bayt al-asnām wa-l-nīrān*, see e.g., Balādhurī; de Goeje 1865: 241.16–17). In his *Chronology* (c. 1000 CE) al-Bīrūnī, a Chorasmian by birth, recorded the Chorasmian and Sogdian variants of the Zoroastrian calendar, the festivals, and some funerary practices.

Archaeology and numismatics certainly provide the most abundant and continuous information. The Central Asian territories have been more intensively explored than Iran. The Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan has worked there since the 1920s and local archaeological research was very active in the five Central Asian republics during the Soviet period. In Afghanistan, field work was interrupted in 1979 but has resumed since 2002, while in the Central Asian republics it has continued after their independence in 1991, though on a more limited scale than before. Funerary archaeology, limited in Iran except for Achaemenid royal tombs, was very developed in all regions of Soviet Central Asia (but not in the post-Soviet period because of the concern for not disturbing Muslim graves), providing direct access to the religious beliefs of non-elites. As for temples, the widespread use of mud brick in Central Asia has allowed for better preservation of mural painting and special cultic installations than the stone architecture of Sasanian Iran. Generally speaking, religious iconography, in all sorts of media and locations, including private houses, is considerably richer and more imaginative in Central Asia than in Iran.

Calendars

Until recently it was held that the earliest attestation of the use of the Zoroastrian calendar in Central Asia, and in the Iranian world in general, was in the economic records from Nisa (Turkmenistan), the first capital of the Arsacids, dating from the 1st century BCE. Since then, the archive documents in Aramaic issued by the Achaemenid satrap of Bactria at the time of Alexander’s conquest have been shown to contain Zoroastrian day-names (Naveh and Shaked 2012: 35–36). New research on the Zoroastrian calendar tends to indicate that it was invented under Xerxes I (r. 486–465 BCE) (de Blois 1996: 49) and adopted in all satrapies, at least for religious and imperial administrative use. In Chorasmia it is documented from the 4th century CE onward by the documents from the palace at Toprak-kala. In Hellenistic and Kushan Bactria it was superseded in official use by the Babylonian calendar (in its Seleucid variant). When the Zoroastrian calendar was reinstated in official records certain month-names of Babylonian origins remained, as attested by the Rōb documents: Nīsān, the name of the third month (which included the spring equinox at the time of the adoption of the Babylonian calendar), Šavat, the alternative name of the first month, and Siwān, the alternative name of the fifth month (Sims-Williams and de Blois 1996 [1998], 2005). Nīsān is found also in the Sogdian calendar. Among the other month-names in both the Bactrian and the Sogdian calendar, only the seventh and eighth (Bactr. *Mīrgān* / Sogd. *Vayānč*; Bactr. *Āb* / Sogd. *Ābānč*), referring to the worship of Mithra and the Waters

respectively, correspond with the MP Zoroastrian ones (*Mihr*, *Ābān*). Other month-names are independent creations. Particularly interesting is the name of the eleventh month: Bactr. *Dēmatrigān*, Sogd. *Žīmatīč*, ‘containing the festival of Demeter’, introduced during the Hellenistic period, possibly in reference to the Mysteries of Eleusis (see below on the image of Demeter at Panjikent). In the Bactrian calendar, *Savul* ‘jar’, astrologically ‘Aquarius’, was eventually introduced as an alternative name for *Nīsān* during the 1st century BCE, at a time when this month coincided with this Zodiac sign.

In Bactria, the renewed Sasanian influence in the 5th century CE was reflected by the temporary use of the full list of Zoroastrian month-names, as well as by the adoption of the calendar reform of Pērōz I (r. 457–484 CE), which transferred the New Year and the previous Epagomenae from the month *Frawardīn* to the month *Ādur*. This reform was ignored in Sogdiana and Chorasmia, and consequently the calendar there fell behind by five days.

On the contrary, day-names, when attested, all correspond to the Zoroastrian calendar where each day is dedicated to a particular god, but they appear to have been borrowed (rather than inherited) from Avestan as they hardly present the expected linguistic sound changes (e.g., Bactr. *Aštād* = Av. *arštātō*, instead of *Rišt*, the usual Bactrian name of this goddess).

The Kushan Pantheon

In Central Asia, Zoroastrian deities are not directly attested (except in personal names) until the 2nd century CE. It has been suggested that the image of the radiant Zeus on coins of Heliocles, the last Greek king of Bactria (after c. 145 BCE), and his successors in Kapisa and Gandhara, hints at an assimilation between Zeus and Mithra, particularly since a hooded cap eventually appears on the god’s head (Bivar 1979). At Ai Khanum, one of the royal cities of Greek Bactria, the main temple, of Irano-Babylonian type, housed in its last phase a statue of Zeus, which could also have been worshiped as Zeus-Mithra (Boyce and Grenet 1991: 165–171). But as a late Achaemenid Aramaic document from Bactria mentions libations offered by the satrap “to Bēl in the temple” (Shaked 2003b: 45–46; Naveh and Shaked 2012: 36, 261), one cannot exclude the possibility of a syncretism: Bēl = Ahura Mazdā = Zeus. On later Kushan coins the name “Ohrmazd” accompanies an image of Zeus Bēlos comparable to those on Seleucid and Parthian coins from Seleucia-on-the-Tigris (Grenet 1991: 148 and plate LIX: 3–6).

The first non-Greek deity explicitly named and shown on coins is the Babylonian Nanaia, symbolized by her lion and moon crescent on coins of a local “Saka” (Scythian) dynasty of Western Bactria probably dating from the early 1st century CE (Ghose 2006; a *nanēstāwakān* ‘place for the worship of Nanaia’ was previously mentioned in the Nisa documents). She reappears as chief goddess in the foundation inscription of the temple at Rabatak, together with other gods from whom the Kushan king Kanishka I (c. 127–153 CE) “has obtained kingship” (Sims-Williams 1995–1996, 2004 [2008]). Four of these gods belong to the Zoroastrian pantheon (Ohrmazd, Srōš, Nēryōsang, Mithra), while the two others are quite enigmatic and might belong to the ancestral nomadic stock of the Kushans (the goddess *Umma* ‘the Highest’?, and

Muždwan ‘the Gracious’, depicted on rare coins as a rider god with possible Shivaite overtones; Sims-Williams 1997a).

Nanaia appears also on the selection of five gods shown on Kanishka’s gold coins: First labeled in Greek (Nanaia, Helios, Selene, Hephaistos, Anemos [Wind]), they receive Iranian names, though keeping their Greek iconographic types, when very early in his reign Bactrian becomes the official language: *Nana* or *Nanašao* (see below), *Miuro* (Mithra), *Mao* (Māh), *Athšo* (Ādur), *Oado* (Wād) subsequently replaced in his function of atmospheric god by *Oēšo* (Wēš, i.e., Vaiiu). This selected pantheon, quite different from the list of personal protectors of the king listed at Rabatak, addresses a more common level of religiosity, i.e., deities directly linked to the natural elements (compare Herodotus I.131: “[The Persians] sacrifice to Zeus, calling the entire vault of heaven Zeus, and they sacrifice to the sun and the moon and the earth and fire and water and the winds”; also, the opening invocations in Y 1.16, and the *Niyāyišn*, i.e., everyday prayers to the sun, moon, fire, and water; Tanabe 1995). Nana, depicted as Artemis, appears to fulfil the double function of guardian of the earth and of the water, as shown by her two attributes (wand with lion protome and vase). In addition, her occasional title *šao* ‘ruler’ and the very wording of the Rabatak inscription show her as chief bestower and protector of royalty, a function which was already fulfilled by the Mesopotamian Nana-Ishtar. In her capacity as provider of water, she was probably considered by Zoroastrians as identical with the Avestan goddess Anāhitā, sometimes called “Nana” in Iran (especially in the Syriac *Acts of Martyrs*) and who never appears under her own name in Bactria (except, briefly, on coins of the Kushano-Sasanians, viceroys of the Sasanians in former Kushan territories, c. 280–380 CE). The “naturalistic” selection of Iranian gods continued to figure on the standard gold and bronze issues under Kanishka and his successor Huvishka (c. 153–191 CE), despite occasional changes which did not affect the overall structure: *Athšo* replaced by *Farro* (Farn), *Nana* replaced by *Ardoxšo* (Ašī varj^vhī, the other goddess of plenty and also a protector of the country, compare Bag Ardwxš, ‘frontier guard’ of the Kushan country mentioned in the Manichaean missionary text M 1306; Sundermann 1987: 72).

Already under Kanishka, and even more under Huvishka, other gods of the Avestan pantheon were introduced on occasional issues of gold coins: Under Kanishka, *Orlagno* (Wahrām), *Lrooaspo* (Druvāsp), *Manaobago* (Wahman, see below); under Huvishka, in addition, *Ōoromozdo* (Ohrmazd), *Šaorōoro* (Šahrewar), *Rišto* (Arštāt), *Oanindo* (Wanind), *Teiro* (Tīr) (Rosenfield 1967: 59–103; Göbl 1984: 40–46, 164–172). There was obviously an effort to show devotion to as many gods as possible, taken from the stock of the *yašts* rather than directly from the calendar (though two names, *Athšo* and *Šaorōoro*, are derived from Av. genitive forms and therefore probably represent day-names). As for the other gods, the iconographic types are generally borrowed from accepted Greek equivalents, sometimes to the detriment of theological consistency. Both Druvāsp and Tīr had their gender reassigned as a result of their depiction as Dioscurus and Artemis respectively. Two gods, however, Vaiiu and Wahman (Av. Vohu Manah), were iconographically assimilated with major gods from the Indian pantheon (Grenet 2006 [2010]: 88–89): *Oēšo* (Skr. Vāyu) assumes various types of Shivaite iconography, and still under the Kushano-Sasanians he remained the god most depicted on coins, under a new name or rather epithet *burzāwand yazd* ‘the god who possesses the heights’, obviously aimed at

pleasing worshippers of Vāyu and Śiva alike. *Manaobago* ‘Manā the god’, the only Aməša Spənta depicted except for Šahrewar, had a shorter career. His image appears as a complicated attempt at combining the concept of Wahman (enthroned in Paradise and associated with the moon) with that of Viṣṇu holding the wheel and plough, while a Beotian helmet adds an antiquated Greek symbol of power. As for *Ōromozdo* (Ohrmazd), Huvishka’s coins depicting him as Zeus-Bēlos (possibly also as Sarapis), are extremely rare, which might indicate a reluctance to give human features to the supreme god, despite the fact that he was anthropomorphized in the Sasanian reliefs.

In addition, Huvishka issued rare coins showing two Iranian gods who were not included in the Avestan pantheon. One is Waxš (*Oakhšo*), god of the river Oxus (the Amu Darya) on whom much of the worship to the waters in both Bactria and Sogdiana was obviously concentrated, as attested by his popularity in personal names as well as by his temple at Takht-e Sangīn (see below). The other is Yamš (*Iamšo*), a name derived from *Yama xšāuuā* ‘Yima the King’ or *Yama xšāēta* ‘Yima the Radiant’, shown as an armored king holding a hoak (Grenet 1984a: 253–258). This attribute calls to mind the Avestan legend (*Yt* 19.34–38) of the *xʷarənah* (MP *farn* or *farr*), the principle of royal glory, escaping from Yima in the shape of a hawk; but one should admit that capturing Yima’s image at the very moment he is doomed to downfall and death, though possibly hinting at his resulting function as king of the underworld, does not seem very proper for a god (for in the context of Kushan coins he is necessarily a god), and perhaps another explanation for the presence of the hawk should be sought.

Finally, Kanishka introduced the Buddha on some issues, and Huvishka added a narrow selection of Indian gods, all linked with war. Heracles and Sarapis also appear under Huvishka, with their own names. Such initiatives, dictated by the requirements of a multi-ethnic empire, do not affect the overwhelmingly Zoroastrian character of the official Kushan pantheon.

In the 6th–9th centuries a god called Žun appears in a prominent position in Southern Bactria and Zābolīstān (the Ghazni area), to judge from personal names (including in royal families) and Chinese and Arabic records. His name is plausibly a parallel form to MP Zurwān. This god was served by a particular category of priests bearing the non-Zoroastrian title *kēd* (MP ‘soothsayer, magician’). He might be the god depicted on a painting from Dokhtar-e Nūshīrvān north of Bāmiyān, with Mithraic and additional cosmic attributes (Sims-Williams 1997b: 19–20).

The Sogdian Pantheon

While Bactria (from the 2nd century known under the new name Tokharistān) fell into relative decline after the Hunnish invasions of the 4th and 5th centuries CE, Sogdiana appears to have easily integrated the newcomers into its ruling class. It then emerged as the major commercial power on the Silk Road and experienced an unprecedented artistic boom. In Bactria, Buddhism had by that time imposed itself as the religion of a substantial part of the population, while in Sogdiana its progress was contained due to Zoroastrian resistance backed by local rulers (Xuanzang’s testimony on Samarkand; Beal 1911: 45–46); most of the Sogdian Buddhists resided in China.

This situation resulted in the richest set of religious images ever produced in a Zoroastrian context: At present, twenty-three (or twenty-four) of the thirty gods worshiped in the Zoroastrian calendar and regular prayers (*Āfrīnagān*) have been identified in Sogdian art. This list comprises all the Zoroastrian gods known on Kushan coins, except (given the present state of documentation) Wād and Wanind. The additions are: Four Aməša Spəntas (MP Amahraspandān: Ardwhišt, Spandarmad, Hordād, Amurdād), four deities linked with the afterlife (Srōš – named on the Rabatak inscription but not shown on Kushan coins, Rašn, Dēn, and the collective body of the Frauuašis), Aṗam Napāt (on whom see below), Anāhitā (on a few occasions depicted separately from Nana), and possibly also Xwaršēd, the Sun as distinct from Mithra. This list will probably be supplemented by future discoveries. Images are to be found in a great variety of media including wall paintings, wooden statues, self-standing small terracotta figures, images stamped on ossuaries (but never coins, contrary to the situation in the Kushan Empire). The existence of whole “galleries” of Zoroastrian Sogdian gods can be inferred from two Chinese testimonies, namely a description of Dunhuang mentioning “twenty niches” painted with images of gods in the local Sogdian temple, and the Dunhuang manuscripts from c. 900 CE that record monthly allocations of thirty paper sheets “to paint the Zoroastrian (*xian*) gods” (Grenet and Zhang 1996 [1998]). Many images of deities have been found in the extensively excavated city of Panjikent, east of Samarkand, in temples but also in private houses, for each large house had in its main room an image of the god or gods who were considered personal protectors of the family. As in Kushan Bactria, some of the Sogdian images still echo distant Greek models; this is the case with Mithra, still depicted as Helios on his chariot though the structure of the chariot is no longer adequately reproduced, and Arštāt, probably identifiable on terracotta figurines where she keeps all the attributes of Athena. The Greek element was, by then, residual. Most of the images of Sogdian gods are indigenous creations directly inspired by the religious texts, while several of the most important gods are clearly modeled on their supposed counterparts in the Hindu religion (Grenet 2006 [2010]: 92–94). India, with which Sogdiana had close commercial and cultural contacts, was at that time the richest source for iconographic models, and the convention of the four-handed gods, though not very satisfactory from a strictly Zoroastrian point of view (physical abnormality being in principle considered Ahremanic), nevertheless provided a convenient solution to the necessity of loading the various gods of the Iranian pantheon with symbols of their multiple functions. In certain cases there was a conscious conceptual assimilation between Iranian and Hindu gods, as proved by a short list of gods transmitted in two Buddhist Sogdian texts (*Vessantara Jātaka* 910–935 and *P* 8; Humbach 1975). For the first three gods the Hindu and Iranian names are given together: “Brahmā-Zurwān, Indra-Āḍvay, Mahādeva-Wēšparkar,” there follows for each a short physical description taken from the Indian side: Brahmā-Zurwān has a beard, Indra-Āḍvay has a third eye, and Mahādeva-Wēšparkar has three faces.

Images of Brahmā-Zurwān have not yet been discovered in Sogdian iconography, but there are many images of Mahādeva-Wēšparkar. In fact he is the direct continuation of Vaiiū-Śiva already encountered in Bactria, the name Wēšparkar reflecting the full Avestan formula *Vaiiūš uparō.kairiīō* ‘Vaiiū who acts in the superior region’. In Sogdiana

his syncretic images assume various shapes, some closer to the Indian concept, some closer to the Iranian. A side chapel in one of the temples at Panjikent contained a clay statue of the couple Umā-Mahésvara seated on the bull Nandi, very close to Indian models, except for the cloth covering Śiva's penis with typical Sogdian modesty. Still in Panjikent, one painted image from a private house carries the explicit label *Wēšparkar* and shows deliberate adaptation to the functions of the Iranian Vaiiu: One of the three heads blows a horn, an attribute not usual with Śiva but appropriate to the Iranian Vaiiu in his capacity as god of the atmosphere. This emphasis on the natural elements is confirmed by the figure seated in front of *Wēšparkar*: He is *Apaṃ Napāt*, Indian and Iranian god of the fire which burns within water, as shown by the fire halo surrounded by fish and tritons (Marshak 1990: 307–308; and more generally Grenet 2006 [2010]) (Figure 8.1).

The third Hindu-Iranian god mentioned in the Sogdian lists is Indra-*Āδvay*. *Āδvay* means 'supreme god' in Sogdian, and we know from Sogdian Zoroastrian texts that it was used as an epithet for Ohrmazd (see below). A type of Indra-*Āδvay* has in fact been tentatively identified on a small series of terracotta figures (Marshak and Raspopova 1994 [1996]: 195–198). According to this hypothesis, in order to meet the difficult task of depicting the supreme god, the Sogdian artist combined three models of various

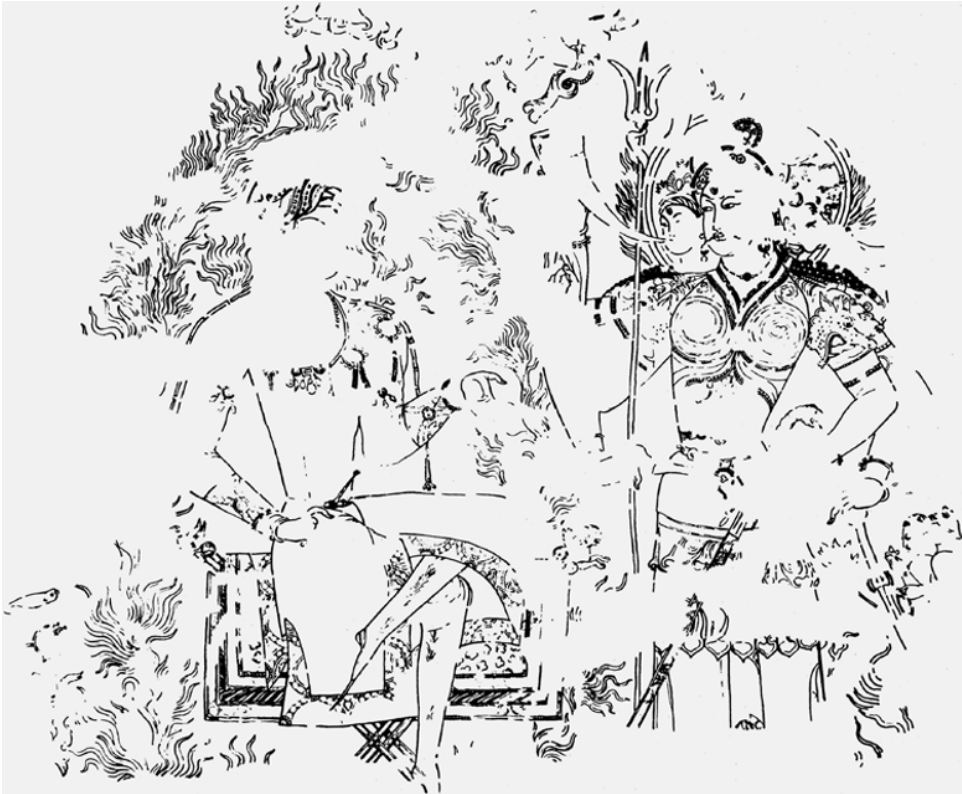


Figure 8.1 Vaiiu (*Wēšparkar*) and *Apaṃ Napāt* on a Panjikent painting, c. 740 CE. © F. Grenet.

origins: Indra (hence the elephant throne), the Iranian king (hence the royal ribbons), King David with his cithara, an allusion to Ohrmazd's function as master of Paradise which Zoroastrian literature calls "the House of Song," while David's iconography was known from local Nestorian communities and contacts with Byzantium.

Other assimilations are not mentioned in Sogdian texts, but can be supposed from the iconography: Kārttikeya with Wahrām (a hybrid image combining Kārttikeya's peacock with the eagle-topped headgear of Wahrām as shown on Kushan coins). We also find another Indian war god (possibly again Kārttikeya) passing for Tīr-Tištīriia paired with Nana as a couple of four-handed gods (Figure 8.2). Nana holds Durgā's mace, in addition to the sun and moon, which have now become her usual attributes in Sogdian and Chorasmian art. Probably they came to be associated as joint protectors of the rain and hunting (in these images Tīr-Tištīriia holds an arrow).

At the same time the Sogdian artists, besides deriving much inspiration from India, showed considerable ability in creating images directly inspired by Zoroastrian texts. One of the most impressive examples is the group portrait of the Aməša Spəntas, shown on a series of ossuaries produced in a small region between Samarkand and Bukhara in the 6th and 7th centuries (Grenet 1986) (Figure 8.3). These images owe little or nothing to Kushan coins that depict two figures of this group, Šahrevar and Wahman, nor do they show any influence from Greece or India. Each member of the group is identified by a symbol of the *Yasna* (s)he will perform at the time of the Resurrection (MP *rist-āxēz*), when each of them will be in charge of the Renewal (MP *frašgird*) of a specific sector of the material creation (compare in particular WZ 35.15–17 and 39). Among the three male Aməša Spəntas, Ardwašiš, guardian of fire, holds a fire-altar; Wahman,



Figure 8.2 Nana and Tīr-Tištīriia on an ossuary from near Shahrisabz (Shakhrisabz), Uzbekistan, c. 7th century CE. © F. Grenet.

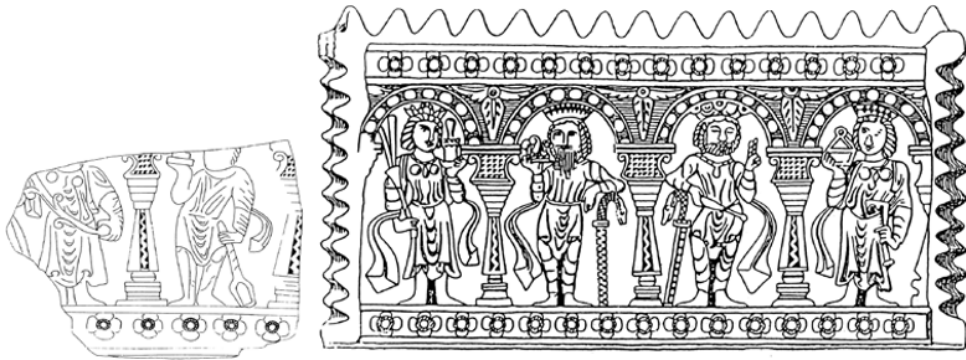


Figure 8.3 The Aməša Spəntas on an ossuary from Biya-Nayman near Samarkand, c. 7th century CE. From left to right: Amurdād, Ardwhišt, Hordād, Šahrewar, Wahman, Spandarmad. © F. Grenet.

guardian of animals, a libation spoon (containing animal fat); Šahrewar, guardian of metals and sky, is armored in most versions and holds a symbol of the metallic mountains which are going to melt at the end of time. Among the three female ones, Spandarmad, guardian of the earth, holds an ossuary as she is going to hand over the bones to Ohrmazd; Hordād, guardian of the water, shows the instruments of its purification (*haoma* twigs, mortar and pestle), while Amurdād, guardian of plants, holds the Primeval Plant. Another fine example of theological consistency is a painting from Panjikent, made in the last period (c. 740 CE, already under Arab occupation) and depicting a golden statue carried in procession. The god holds a mace and possibly an incense burner, both attributes suitable for Srōš, but he also comes out of a book. The key to the enigma is a favourite attribute of Srōš: *tanu-māθra-*, which means ‘the one who has the Sacred Word for his body’. Most probably the statue depicted here showed Srōš coming out of a codex containing the *Avesta* or part of it (Vaissière, Riboud, and Grenet 2003) (Figure 8.4). If this assumption is true this image is the earliest material evidence for the existence of written copies of the *Avesta*, two centuries after the reign of Khosrow I (531–579 CE) who is generally credited to have put an end to the exclusively oral transmission of the scriptures.

Waxš and Yima, Iranian but non-Zoroastrian gods already encountered on Kushan coins, are also attested in Sogdian onomastics. Yima possibly had an iconography of his own, though partly borrowed: Several paintings from Panjikent show a gate surrounded with various symbols, which identify it with the Zoroastrian Hell. A character clearly modeled on the Indian god Vaiśravaṇa guards the gate, with one significant deviation from the prototype: Instead of trampling over a demon, he stands in front of him. This recalls Yima whose Frauuaši is invoked in order to prevent demons residing underground from surfacing on the earth (WZ 32.2). It seems, therefore, that the Sogdians borrowed Vaiśravaṇa in order to depict Yima, or at least to fulfil a similar function (Grenet 1995–1996).

Nana presents a particular case, for her Mesopotamian heritage is documented even more clearly in early medieval Sogdiana than in Kushan Bactria, while her Iranian



Figure 8.4 Srōš “who has the Sacred Word for Body” on a Panjikent painting, c. 740 CE. © F. Grenet.

counterpart Anāhitā reappears in the 5th–6th century under her own name (in the onomastics) and her own attributes (on two paintings in the Panjikent Temple II), then vanishes, perhaps definitively absorbed into the figure of Nana. Both a Manichaean Sogdian text and a painting in the Panjikent Temple II show Nana presiding over funerary lamentations, the object of which appears on the painting as a girl (Grenet and Marshak 1998). According to the Mesopotamian myth she should be Geshtinanna, sister of Tammuz, who replaces him in Hell in winter. According to a Chinese record a “heavenly scion,” probably Tammuz himself, was mourned at Samarkand during a summer festival (Wei Jie, account transmitted in the *Tongdian*; Chavannes 1903 [1973]: 133). He may have been known in Sogdian as Taxsič, attested in theophoric names and also in Chinese records where he is mentioned as a very popular god having a pan-Sogdian character. In the Manichaean text as well as in the Panjikent painting the lamenting Nana is associated with Žimat (Demeter), whose name is found as the eleventh month in the Bactrian and Sogdian calendars. It appears that her mysteries inherited from the Greek period had fused with those of Nana.

A few more deities are attested. *Xšum* < **uxšma-kā*- ‘the growing one’, is the New Moon, female counterpart of *Māh*, the Moon god himself, who is male; she is also known in Bactria, as *Šomogo* (Sims-Williams 2010, no. 558). Other “gods” may be no more than epithets of the main deities: *Wanēpat* ‘lord of the forest’ (possibly a companion of Mithra with whom he is associated in *Vessantara Jātaka* 1205–1206), *Darsumat* ‘having a goat skin’, etc. An elderly protector of harvests, the same figure as that known in Tajik folklore as *Bābā-ye dehqān*, appears only in a Panjikent painting (Marshak and Raspopova 1990: 153–157, figure 22). At the other end of the cultural spectrum, *Avyāman* and *Šimnu* are original priestly elaborations from Av. forms **vahiia mainiiuš* ‘the better spirit (of the two)’ and **aša mainiiuš* ‘the worse spirit’, unattested in the extant Avestan corpus (Sims-Williams 2000: 9–12).

Temples

During the last years a few examples of fire-temples (or structures one can interpret as such) have come to light in Achaemenian Bactria even though only one of them, at Cheshme Shafā, contained a monumental stone fire-altar of the “canonical” type (Grenet 2008 [2012]: 30 with figure 1). Still in the Achaemenid period, series of ex-votos on golden leaves were found at two sites (Grenet 2010a): The Oxus treasure, from near the Oxus temple attested in the subsequent period (see below), and the Mir Zakah treasure, to the east of Gardez in Afghanistan, buried in *c.* 230 CE but including stocks from an Achaemenid and early Hellenistic temple whose location is unknown. In both cases an important proportion of objects show worshipers, possibly including priests, carrying ritual twigs (*barsom*) and wearing the mouth cover (*padām*) required when reciting prayers in front of a sacred fire. Though many animals are also depicted on ex-votos, it should be noted that none is classified as Ahremanic in Zoroastrian texts, which seems to indicate that their image was avoided.

In the Hellenistic period, at Ai Khanum, in addition to the main temple possibly dedicated to a syncretistic cult involving Mithra or Ohrmazd, an open stepped platform was erected on the top of the acropolis, which recalls Herodotus’ and Strabo’s descriptions of the “magi” celebrating the cult in high places. Such platforms did not necessarily support a permanent fire and they may rather have been intended for animal sacrifice (Boyce and Grenet 1991: 181–183).

Contrary to the situation observed in former Anatolian satrapies of the Achaemenid Empire, and even more in Sasanian Iran, very few buildings are known in post-Achaemenid Central Asia which can be properly called “fire-temples.” The large temple of the god Oxus (*Wakhš*) at Takht-e Sangīn, on the border of Bactria and Sogdiana, probably built at the beginning of the Seleucid period and which lasted until the 4th or 5th century CE, has been regarded as the prototype of the later Iranian fire-temple (Litvinskij and Pičikjan 2002; *contra* Bernard 1994), but the tetrastyle cella most probably housed a statue of the god; the two so-called *ātešgāh* or fire chambers set within symmetrical wings projecting sideways beyond the main structure are known to have fulfilled this function only during the last period, while for the earlier periods the mixture of animal bones with the layers of ashes is not typical of the Zoroastrian fire cult in which the fire can receive only wood,

incense, and animal fat. Taken all together, examples of fire-chambers where the fire was the sole object of the cult are very rare. At Surkh Kotal (a Kushan royal temple in Bactria), one or two such chambers were erected besides the now discarded central building during the period of direct Sasanian rule (c. 230–280 CE) or the subsequent Kushano-Sasanian period (Schlumberger, Le Berre, and Fussman 1983: 39–45, 147). At Paykend, south-west of Bukhara, a structure with two large square chambers containing central platforms, which existed in the citadel since the 3rd century CE, is interpreted, probably rightly, as a fire-temple (Semenov 1996: 35–56, figures 9–14), but Paykend was always under Sasanian influence and sometimes domination. Deeper inside Sogdiana the image temple at Erkurghan near Karshi received a square fire-platform in the last period (i.e., the 6th century CE) (Suleimanov 2000: 88–111, figures 39–52, 81–84, 87). At Panjikent one of the two city temples, Temple I, was also an image temple, but in the second phase (end 5th or early 6th century CE) the central structure was expanded by a series of rooms built alongside the main platform: a four-columned fire-chamber with a central fire-altar made of clay, flanked by a prayer room with a water container for ablutions. A staircase on the edge of the temple platform provided direct communication between the *ātesgāh* and the main building, possibly implying a ritual connection between the two forms of cult practices within this temple. The excavators assume that embers of the sacred fire were brought in front of the cult images (Shkoda 2009: 27–32, 99–108). However, these rooms functioned for a few decades at the most.

Apart from these examples, all the temples known in Central Asia housed cult images except in Parthia and Margiana, which were almost always part of the Sasanian Empire. Temples with images appear to have been known in the Achaemenid period under the name **bagina-* ‘place of the god(s)’, from which are derived MP *bašn*, Sogd. *vayn*, and the cognate Bactr. *bagolaggo* (< OIr. **baga-dānaka-*). In Iran they were gradually converted into fire-temples by the joint efforts of the Zoroastrian priesthood and the Sasanian administration, but they remained the main type of temple in Central Asia. In this category one can include:

1. In Bactria: The already mentioned Oxus temple; the two dynastic temples at Rabatak (see above) and Surkh Kotal (possibly dedicated to the goddess *Wanind* ‘the Victorious’); the great temple at Dil’berdzhin near Bactra, dating from the Hellenistic or post-Hellenistic period and seemingly dedicated to Wēš from the Kushan period onwards; Ghulbyān (a post-Kushan mountain cave shrine with paintings depicting various gods including Tīr-Tištīria) (Grenet and Marshak 1998: 13–14).
2. In Sogdiana: Kanka (near the citadel of the rulers of Chāch: A temple containing horse skeletons possibly related to the New Year sacrifice to the souls of the royal ancestors described in Chinese records) (Bogomolov and Burjakov 1995); Dzhar-tepe near Samarkand, with a painting showing Nana and Tīr-Tištīria presiding over a hunt (Grenet 2010b: 270–271, figures 9b, 10, 11); the two Panjikent temples.
3. In Chorasmia: No securely identified temple is known, except for in the royal town Toprak-kala, where two putative fire-temples one of which contained offerings of ram horns (to the god Farn?) have been found (Nerazik and Rapoport 1981: 42–56, 140–141).

Among all these temples those at Panjikent are the most extensively studied and the richest in decorative material (Shkoda 2009). Both were built at the time of the foundation of the city, in the first half of the 5th century CE, and from the beginning their combined surface corresponded to one fifth of the walled-in town. They remained continuously in service until the capture of Panjikent by the Arabs in 722 CE. Temple II never contained any specific room for a sacred fire, and its decoration shows beyond a doubt that it was dedicated to Nana: All paintings and clay statues found in the precincts of this temple depict her seated on her lion, or in rare instances we find closely associated deities (Demeter, the Frauuašis, Wēšparkar). Sometimes she presides over battle scenes of a seemingly apocalyptic character as gods take part directly in the battle. Yet, Nana is never depicted in Temple I, the one that temporarily included a fire sanctuary. The deities that can, however, be identified in its decoration belong to the Avestan pantheon: Mithra, possibly Wahrām, and Druvāsp, protectress of horses (shown as a lady holding a small horse, more in accordance with her Avestan gender than the Dioscurus type adopted on Kushan coins). Another painting shows a scene borrowed from the epic stock of the *yašts* subsequently reworked in Ferdowsī's *Book of Kings*, namely the temporary success and subsequent downfall of Zahhāk. After the abandonment of this temple, installations plausibly identified as a *barašnum-gāh* (a place for the great "nine nights" purification) were set in the ruin of the courtyard (Shkoda 2009: 230–231).

Cult implements were found in larger quantity in the temple at Džhar-tepe. They included silver furnishings for a small fire-altar or incense burner, showing personifications of the *haoma*, the Moon, the Fire, and the Sun, and a bronze mace ending with a human head comparable to the bull-headed mace (*gurz*) still used today in the Zoroastrian ritual (Grenet 2010b: 187, 195).

The Clergy and Its Literary Productions

In Bactrian and Sogdian records priests do not figure as prominently as the magi in Sasanian Iran. Two categories of priests are mentioned in Sogdian. The most frequent is *vaynpat*, literally 'master of a temple', a term unknown in Sasanian Iran (except in the Manichaean text M 219 where it means 'idol-priest'), but whose cognates are known in Armenian (*bagnapet*, borrowed from Parthian) and Middle Indian (*bakanapati* or *vakanapati*, borrowed from Bactrian), where it always applies to a priest serving a temple which contains images (Boyce 1975b: 99). The other term, *moypat*, the equivalent of MP *mowbed* 'chief magus', is mentioned only once, in a list of people belonging to the royal court (Mugh Document A-5; Livshits 2008: 213–220). The name of this priest is not mentioned, which might suggest that he is the only holder of this office at Panjikent. As Sogdiana had no higher level of political organization than the various principalities, the local *moypat* might well have constituted the main religious authority among the Sogdian Zoroastrians.

The probable depiction of an *Avesta* codex at Panjikent (see above) indicates that Sogdian priests kept and possibly copied such books. One Avestan text, the prayer *Ašəm Vohū*, has survived, rendered in a form of archaic Avestan transcribed phonetically with improper word divisions (British Library Sogdian Fragment 4). This text is followed by a fragment of another one describing the ascent of Zoroaster to Paradise and the beginning

of his dialogue with Ohrmazd (here called *Āδvaγ*). Many expressions appear to have been culled from the *Avesta*, in particular from the passage in the *Ard Yāšt* where the goddess Aši invites Zoroaster to rejoin her in her chariot, obviously in order to carry him to Paradise (*Yt* 17.21–22). The Sogdian text we have might well derive from a lost Avestan passage that narrated the continuation of this episode. Another Sogdian fragment, kept in Beijing, contains Zoroaster’s questions to Ohrmazd about the reunion of family members in Heaven; in this case the account of the Resurrection in *GBd* 34.9, 14, offers a close parallel in wording (Grenet and Azarnouche 2007 [2011]: 170–171).

Even before these texts were identified, the fact that Zoroastrian magi were credited with a literary activity of their own was known from one passage in Bīrūnī’s treatise on mineralogy where he mentions a “Book of the Zoroastrian Sogdians” (*kitāb al-majūs al-Sughd*), still in circulation in his time and called in their language the *Nawa-pōstē*, probably to be understood as “the Book of the Nine,” i.e., the nine precious stones associated with the nine planets of Indian astronomy. The first part of the long magical Sogdian text known as *P.3* represents a parallel version to this text (Azarnouche and Grenet 2010; Grenet and Azarnouche 2007 [2011]: 171–173). The main part of *P.3* is, however, concerned with rain making by using stones, a specialty of the Turkish culture of Central Asia. In the form it has come down to us the text can be considered as a collage of various elements ultimately compiled in a context of Turkish political domination, possibly the Uighur kingdom in the 8th or 9th century. The Zoroastrian background of the author appears also clearly in the prayer to *Wāδ* (the Wind), in part composed of formulas borrowed from the *Avesta* (“o perfumed South-Wind ... just Wind, perfume-bearer”; compare *HN* 2.7–8; “powerfully blowing, swift”; *Yt* 15.44–45, “red-adorned”; Vaiiu’s golden ornaments in *Yt* 15.57). So, while the Sogdian magi living in Turkish kingdoms in this late period may have appeared as eclectic and practitioners of sorcery, they had not lost contact with the sacred scriptures of Zoroastrianism.

Marriage Customs

The Zoroastrian practice of *xwēdōdah*, next-of-kin-marriage, is mentioned twice by foreign witnesses. In Curtius Rufus (*Histories* VIII.2.19) we read that at the time of Alexander’s campaign Sisimithres, satrap of Nautaca (today Shakhrisabz in Uzbekistan) had two sons by his own mother, “for among them it is lawful for parents to have intercourse with their children.” In 726 CE the Korean pilgrim Huichao mentions that the Sogdians, like the Persians, “all marry with each other and take their mother or their older or younger sister as their wife” (Fuchs 1938: 450). Despite these sources, we have no way to estimate how widespread the custom was (for *xwēdōdah*, see Skjærvø 2013b).

Funerary Practices

Funerary practices constitute the most eloquent testimony of the continuity and widespread adoption of Zoroastrian principles by the local populations of Central Asia (Grenet 1984b).

From the early Iron Age (end of the 1st millennium BCE), inhumations become very rare in all southern Central Asian countries, most examples being attributable to nomadic intruders. This appears to indicate the widespread abandonment of corpses without further gathering of the bones (an admitted variant in *Vd* 6.5.1). This practice was observed in Bactria at the time of Alexander's conquest, the bones being scattered on the inner slope of the rampart (Strabo 11.11.3). Some post-excarnation grave pits attributable to the local population have recently been brought to light at Dzharkutan in southern Sogdiana (Bendezu-Sarmiento and Lhuillier forthcoming).

Perhaps already during the Achaemenid period (although the chronology is disputed), Chorasmians began to gather bones in jars or in ceramic ossuaries, some of them anthropomorphic. From the 3rd or 4th century CE onward casket-shaped types tend to become generalized in Chorasmia, Margiana, and Sogdiana. This practice of transportable ossuaries differentiates the Central Asian funerary practice from that in Iran, where such objects are very rarely reported and most ossuaries known are rock-hewn cavities. In addition to ceramics, stone is rarely used in Chorasmia, more often plaster. The standard length of an ossuary is approximately 20–24 inches (50–60 cm), corresponding to the femur, the longest human bone. Many ossuaries have perforations, which are likely to have a ritual significance. According to *DD* 17.3–4 “in order that light may come to it a hole is made in it” (the context implied is the moment of Resurrection). The ossuaries were deposited either in pits or in small family mausoleums called *naus* by the archaeologists (according to the word used in Arab sources; the local name was Chor. *frawartīk*, Sogd. *frawart-katē* ‘Frauuašis’ house’). In most cases abandoned buildings or ramparts were reused for that purpose. Funerary pits and *naus* always lay outside the inhabited part of the city.

The preliminary excarnation of bones was sometimes carried out in a man-made structure (*daxma*), as prescribed in *Vīdēvdād* (especially 8.1–2), but only three specimens are known to date in Central Asia: At Erkurghan in Sogdiana (a tower structure from the Hellenistic period); at Chil’pyk in Chorasmia (a rock spur surrounded by a wall, very much alike the old *daxma* at Kermān, used by a whole region from the 4th century until the Islamic conquest); at Durmen-tepe in Sogdiana (a tower structure serving the needs of a single family, 7th–8th century). In addition, a Chinese witness mentions an enclosure near Samarkand where a community of untouchables, clearly the *nasā-sālār*, gave the corpses to specially trained dogs, and then gathered them individually (Wei Jie in Chavannes 1903 [1973]: 133). The Mugh contract V-8 most likely concerns the sale of a bipartite *daxma* erected in a marsh (Livshits 2008: 49–58). Nevertheless, traces of excarnation by dogs or birds are rarely reported on bones found in archaeological excavations, and it appears that the canonical practice was used only in some places, presumably those which offered practical possibilities. Most often the bodies were left to decompose naturally on brick benches inside the mausoleum, a mode of disposal which preserved the essential precaution to respect the divine Earth. Bones were subsequently gathered and put in ossuaries. Corpses were similarly disposed of in Bactria, but ossuaries were not used and there were often interferences with customs brought by nomadic invaders. A *daxma* (Bact. *laxmigo*) is, however, mentioned in one Rōb document (Sims-Williams 1997a: 20–21).

Some Sogdian ossuaries bear images showing various gods, or scenes connected with the hereafter: The weighing of the soul at the Činwad bridge (Berdimuradov,



Figure 8.5 The weighing of the soul on an ossuary from Yumalaktepa near Shahrisabz, c. 7th century CE. The seated gods on top are Ardwahišt (as master of Paradise), Rašn (holding the scales) and probably Srōš (as fighter against the demons of corruption, see the fly-swatters). © Samarkand Institute of Archaeology / MAFOUZ de Sogdiane.

Bogomolov, Daeppen, and Khushvaktov 2008 [2012]) (Figure 8.5), the dressing up of the soul by Wahman, and the Aməša Spəntas performing the final *Yasna* at the time of resurrection (see above). Others depict funerary rituals: The *Čahārom* ceremony (on the fourth day after death), but also lamentations that included self-inflicted wounds. Though prohibited in Zoroastrian literature, these lamentations were accompanied on some Chorasmian ossuaries by blessing formulas of pure Zoroastrian content (e.g., “May their souls [’rw’n] rest in eternal Paradise” [nwš ȳrδm’n]), which suggests that no incompatibility was felt. In the above-mentioned Mugh contract V-8 this practice (Sogd. *xšēwan*, MP *šēwan* ‘lament’) is alluded to in connection with the deposition of the body.

Several elements of the Sogdian funerary iconography were transposed, with a greater wealth of details, on the decoration of funerary beds of Sogdian migrants in China (Grenet, Riboud, and Yang 2004).

After the Muslim Conquest

Only in Chorasmia are there any mentions of systematic persecutions at the time of the Arab conquest. According to Bīrūnī (*Chronology*, trans. Sachau 1879: 42), when Qutayba ibn Muslim took the country in 712 CE he “exterminated their scribes and

executed their priests, and burnt their books and rolls.” In reality, archaeology shows that the mass abandonment of Zoroastrian funerary customs took place only towards the middle of the century, in Chorasmia as well as in Sogdiana, and Bīrūnī also mentions local survivals until his own time.

From Samarkand, during the reign of the caliph al-Ma'mūn (r. 813–831 CE), the Zoroastrian community addressed the acknowledged leader of the Zoroastrians in Fārs and Kermān to seek advice on the reconstruction of a *daxma* (Dhabhar 1932: 104–105). Arab geographers mention the Zoroastrian community still flourishing in the Samarkand suburb in the 10th century, when it was exempted from the *jezīye* (poll tax) in exchange for the maintenance of the water supply. At Frinkent near Samarkand, the village cemetery attests to the continuance of post-exarnation burial (no longer in ossuaries, only in jars), perhaps until the Mongol invasion (Grenet 1984b: 226, 233). Then all evidence of the Zoroastrian communities disappears from Central Asia, except in the Pamirs and Badakhshān where in the 13th century some people still claimed to follow the teachings of Zoroaster (Scott 1984).

Expatriate Sogdians at Dunhuang in China are known to have maintained Zoroastrian ceremonies until at least the beginning of the 10th century (Grenet and Zhang 1996 [1998]).

Conclusion: Central Asian Zoroastrianism in Perspective

The great diversity of Central Asian, especially Sogdian, religious practices and their significant differences with Persian Zoroastrianism did not escape the attention of foreign witnesses. The Middle Persian treatise *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr* (ŠĒ 2–7) indicates that Sogdiana was an old Zoroastrian country and even held to be the place where Zarathustra preached; yet his religion had been spoiled during Afrāsiyāb's tyranny, with fire-temples being converted to idol temples (notwithstanding the fact that Afrāsiyāb is held to have ruled far before Zarathustra!). Though in its present state the text dates from the Abbasid period, this statement probably echoes the attitude of the Sasanian clergy towards the Sogdians.

The Chinese, for their part, though recognizing the Persian origin of the religion of the Sogdians, often used a specific terminology for it: The *xian* religion (from a dialectal variant of *tian*, the Chinese word for 'heaven'), while Zoroastrianism in its proper sense was “the religion of Heaven and Fire.” Among the Sogdians themselves one Chinese record, a list of sects in Turfan (Ms. Stein 6551; Grenet and Azarnouche 2007 [2011]: 163), distinguishes between ‘Zoroastrians’ (*huo xian*) and ‘adepts of the mourned deity’ (*ku shen zhi bei*), the last category most probably designating the cult of Nana and Tammuz (Taxšīč?). Such a duality might explain the differences between the two Panjikent temples.

Notwithstanding these apparent differences, Central Asian Zoroastrianism is no less a part of the history of Zoroastrianism than its western counterpart, which was eventually codified in Iran and eventually, exported to India by the Parsis. As far as religious imagery is concerned, it was certainly the most creative.

Further Reading

The scholarly literature on Central Asian Zoroastrianism is very dispersed and there is no general synthesis as of yet, hence the many references given. In the series *A History of Zoroastrianism*, vol. III, Boyce and Grenet (1991) treat the Hellenistic period; Grenet (1987) and Bernard and Grenet (1991) are collections of essays specifically devoted to religions in Central Asia, but some of them are already outdated. See Grenet (1988) for a bibliographical overview limited to a decade; then consult the annual issues of *Abstracta Iranica*.

Concerning the study of Kushan Zoroastrianism, Rosenfield (1967) had a seminal role, as did Henning (1965) and Humbach (1975) for Sogdian Zoroastrianism. For Kushan Zoroastrianism, see now Grenet (2015). For recent literature, contributions by Boris Marshak and Valentina Raspopova (on Sogdian archaeology), and Nicholas Sims-Williams (on Bactrian and Sogdian philology), should be consulted first. On funerary practices, see Grenet (1984b).

CHAPTER 9

Zoroastrianism in the Far East

Takeshi Aoki

The History of Zoroastrian Studies in the Far East

Modern Zoroastrian studies in the Far East began when Tadasu Hayashi (1850–1913), a diplomat and son-in-law of the first Japanese prime minister Hirobumi Ito, translated Martin Haug's *Essays on the Sacred Language, Writings and Religion of the Parsi* (1862; 2nd edition 1878) into Japanese (Hayashi 1884 based on the 2nd edition). Among professional scholars, Chen Yuan (1880–1971) in China and Mikinosuke Ishida (1891–1974) in Japan happened to publish papers on the same theme – Zoroastrianism in the Tang period – in the same year, 1923 – one in Chinese (Chen 1923), the other in Japanese (Ishida 1923). Academics in the Far East thus regard 1923 as the inaugural year for Zoroastrian studies both in China and Japan.

After 1923, Japan produced a series of brilliant scholars such as Toyohachi Fujita (1869–1929), Jitsuzo Kuwabara (1871–1931), Toshisada Nawa (1890–1970), Kiichiro Kanda (1897–1984), On Ikeda (b. 1931), and Yoichi Ogawa (b. 1934) who promoted Zoroastrian studies in the Far East, mainly dependent on Chinese sources. Simultaneously Western academic principles were introduced and propagated by those who studied Zoroastrianism in Europe and America. Shigeru Araki (1884–1932), who studied with Abraham V. W. Jackson at Columbia University, and Atsuji Ashikaga (1901–1983), who studied with Émile Benveniste at the Collège de France, laid the foundations for Zoroastrian studies proper in Japan. Gikyo Ito (1909–1996), a specialist on Avestan and Pahlavi literature, published Japanese translations of the *Avesta* and the *Dēnkard* from facsimile editions (Ito 1967, 2007–2009). Yutaka Yoshida (b. 1954), a specialist on the Sogdian language, first deciphered a Sogdian Zoroastrian manuscript possessed by the Kyoto National Museum and translated it into Japanese. The change of the meaning of 薩寶 (*sābǎo* 'Sogdian caravan leaders', see below) was first traced in its

historical context by Masaharu Arakawa (b. 1955). (For a comprehensive survey on Sogdian studies written in Japanese until 2011, see Moriyasu 2011 and Yoshida 2011a.)

Owing to the political situation in China, Chinese scholars could not fully maximize their potential and resources for the study of Zoroastrianism, except for Liu Mingshu (1911–2000). The period from the 1930s to the 1980s was largely fruitless but, after that, specialists such as Rao Zongyi (b. 1917), Jiang Boqing (b. 1938), Lin Wushu (b. 1943), Lin Meicun (b. 1956), Rong Xinjiang (b. 1960), Bi Bo (b. 1976), and Zhang Xiaogui (b. 1978) appeared on the scene in China. In addition, Zoroastrian studies proper were also pushed forward by Gong Fangzhen (b. 1924) and Yan Kejia (b. 1963), who wrote the first general history of Zoroastrianism in Chinese (Gong and Yan 1998), and Yuan Wenqi (b. 1940), who translated the *Avesta* for the first time into Chinese from Jalal Dustkhah's New Persian translation published in Tehrān in 1965 (Yuan 2005). The recent spread of Zoroastrian studies in China is poetically expressed by Lin Wushu as 祆教情結 (*xiānjiào qíngjié*, 'Zoroastrian complex') (Lin 2005a: 238; Rong 2000).

Aside from the above-mentioned Zoroastrian studies on the medieval period and earlier, one also finds studies on the Parsis after the 18th century in both China and Japan. This field is promoted by Chinese scholars such as Cai Hongsheng (b. 1933) and his disciple Guo Deyan (b. 1971), who works on Cantonese documents of the Qing period (1636–1912). Besides them, Kejia Yan covered Shanghai in China and Takeshi Aoki (b. 1972) covered Kobe and Yokohama in Japan.

For Korea, we have no information on the advent of any Zoroastrians either in medieval or modern times. There are no Zoroastrian scholars there except Bae Chulhyun (b. 1962, 배철현), who trained under Prods Oktor Skjærvø at Harvard University and now specializes in Jewish and Christian traditions and the Achaemenids.

Main Periods

The history of Zoroastrianism in the Far East is divided into three periods. The first period started with the Wei and Jin, Northern and Southern Dynasties (220–589 CE) when Sogdians advanced to China with their variety of Zoroastrianism, though they seem to have had no intention of propagating Zoroastrianism within China. Apparently, the Sogdian Zoroastrians did not bring any scriptures, as suggested by the fact that there are only two currently known Zoroastrian Sogdian fragments. One is a fragment of a Sogdian translation of the *Aṣəm Vohū* (see Kotwal and Kreyenbroek, "Prayer," this volume) brought by Aurel Stein (1862–1943) from Dunhuang, which is now at the British Museum (Or. 8212/84; Sims-Williams 1976), and the other, "Zarathustra's Questions to Ahura Mazdā on the Posthumous Soul," also from Dunhuang, is now at the Kyoto National Museum (the Moriya Collection; Yoshida 2011b: 101–102). There also appear to be no Chinese books on Zoroastrianism, in sharp contrast to what we find for Manichaeism and Nestorianism. The Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE) prohibited Chinese people from professing Zoroastrianism, so it remained primarily a foreign religion for foreign people. In addition to the Sogdian Zoroastrians, after the fall of the Sasanian Dynasty in 651 CE, Iranian Zoroastrians migrated to northern China. This period ended when the Tang Dynasty collapsed in 907 CE.

The second period started from the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period (907–960 CE) and lasted until modern times. During this period, the gods of Sogdian Zoroastrianism were assimilated into the pantheon of Chinese folk beliefs. After the Yuan period (1271–1368 CE), Zoroastrian gods and exotic Sogdian customs are often found as literary symbolism in Chinese folk literature. If this religion, which was increasingly professed by Chinese people, can be regarded as one of the varieties of Zoroastrianism, it is then a “Sinicized” form of Zoroastrianism. This form of Chinese Zoroastrianism flourished until the 1940s (see below).

The third period started in the 18th century when Parsi merchants sailed from Bombay to Macao, Hong Kong, and Guangzhou. They were engaged in the opium trade in the first half of the 19th century and went to Japan for the cotton trade in the early 20th century. Parsi cemeteries and fire-temples were built at these coastal cities in the Far East. Most Parsis were exiled from China when the Chinese Communist Party seized power in 1949, but the Parsis in Japan have remained there for several generations till today (see Hinnells, “The Zoroastrian Diaspora,” this volume).

The Advance of Zoroastrianism into the Far East (the 4th–9th Centuries)

We have three kinds of sources for the study of Far Eastern Zoroastrianism in this epoch: 1) Classical Chinese texts; 2) tombstones of Sogdian and Iranian Zoroastrians unearthed after 1999; and 3) Sogdian documents. In this chapter, results from the first will be primarily summarized for Western readers. In Classical Chinese, Zoroastrianism was first referred to as 胡天 (*hútiān*), which later was applied to all northern nomads in the Wei-Jin, Northern and Southern Dynasties. But in the early period of the Tang Dynasty a new letter 祆 (*xiān*), meaning ‘heaven worship’, was invented for Zoroastrianism. It was then referred to as the ‘heaven worshipping religion’ 祆教, pronounced *xiānjiào* in Chinese and *kenkyō* in Japanese. In the Far East, Zoroastrians were regarded not as “fire worshipers” but as “heaven worshipers” (Chen 1923: 304). It is quite a rare case for the Chinese to create a new character for a foreign religion, and from this it is clear that Zoroastrians made an impact on medieval Chinese society. Although Chinese historians, at least in the 10th century, knew that this religion was established by 蘇魯支 (Chin. *sūlǔzhī* and Jpn. *soroshi*, namely ‘Zarathustra’), they preferred the name of 祆教 (*xiānjiào*) for Zoroastrianism.

In search of those key words in Classical Chinese, Chen (1923), Ishida (1923), Kanda (1928), and Kuwabara (1928) established the foundations for the study of Far Eastern Zoroastrianism.

Regarding the question of the arrival of Zoroastrianism in China, Chen Yuan and Ishida had, depending on the reports of 魏書 (*Wèishū*, the ‘Book of the Wei Dynasty’, describing events from 386 to 550 CE), inferred that it was before 519 CE (Chen 1923; Ishida 1951). Rao suggests an earlier date, insisting that Mithra worship was performed at the court of the 7th emperor of the Han Dynasty, Emperor Wu (r. 187–87 BCE) between 116 and 111 BCE (Rao 2002: 6). Lin Meicun has proposed 32–37 BCE on the authority of 西域傳 (*Xīyùyùn* ‘Treatise on the Western Regions’) in 後漢書 (*Hòu Hànhū*

‘Book of the Late Han Dynasty’) (Lin 1998: 102–112). The Sogdian *Ancient Letters* make Rong prefer 311–313 CE (Rong 2001: 277–300). So far, the early 4th century is generally regarded as the most reliable date. In an English publication, Liu (1976: 3–25) suggested 493 or 515–528 CE, and this has been taken as a Far Eastern standard theory in the West, but his methodology was strongly criticized by Fukui (1980).

The starting point for the study of Sogdian colonies in northern China is Ikeda’s influential thesis (Ikeda 1965). He pointed out that the religious activities at the Zoroastrian temple of Dunhuang, despite the name of *xiānjiào*, were no different from other forms of Chinese superstition (see also Bi 2004 for a survey of Sogdian religions).

Within the Sogdian communities, supposedly there was a strict hierarchy: the top position was named 薩寶 or 薩保 (Chin. *sàbǎo*, Sogd. *sārtpāw*, and Skr. *sārthavāha*), a name used for ‘Sogdian caravan leaders’, first elucidated by Yoshida (1989). But its meaning changed to ‘politico-social leaders of Sogdian colonies’ after being included in the Tang regime (Arakawa 2010). According to Jiang, under this *sàbǎo* are placed 祆正 (*xiānzhèng*), a ‘Zoroastrian religious leader’, and 祆祝 (*xiānzhù*), a ‘manager of a Zoroastrian temple’. Sogdian colonies were administrated by this three-grade system appointed by the Tang government (Jiang 1998).

Before the An Lushan rebellion (756–763 CE), Sogdian–Chinese intermarriages were rare (Rong 2001: 132–135). After that rebellion, however, Sogdian–Chinese marriages became more common and Sogdians gradually lost their ethnic identities and became Sinicized (Chen 2001: 195–200).

In 1955, the 長安蘇諒妻馬氏墓 (*Chángān Sūliàng Qī Mǎshì Mùzhì* ‘The Funerary Epitaph of the Wife of Sū Liàng, Lady Mǎ’) was unearthed at Chang’an (present day Xi’an). This is the first discovery of the tomb of a Zoroastrian in China. The Pahlavi–Chinese bilingual epitaph of 874 CE was first deciphered by Ito (1964). The buried woman is supposed to be from the Surens, a Parthian noble family that ruled Sīstān in the Arsacid and Sasanian periods and was defeated by the Arab Muslims in the 8th century (Zhang 2002; see Jiang 2004 for the best survey, with many pictures of the Sogdian Zoroastrian epitaphs and reliefs discovered in northern China after 1999). According to Classical Chinese sources, Zoroastrian temples in China were located in a variety of places: six in Chang’an, three in Luoyang, three in Kaifeng, one in Zhenjiang, two in Dunhuang, one in Turfan, and one in Khotan, etc.; in total, twenty-nine temples are known. Before the An Lushan rebellion, Zoroastrian temples were concentrated in two imperial capitals, Chang’an and Luoyang, and in cities along the Silk Road. Afterward, however, Sogdian Zoroastrian fire-temples spread all over northern China, and after the fall of the Tang Dynasty they spread beyond the Yangtze River toward the south (Aoki 1978; Zhang 2006: 15–26, 132–134).

Ogawa analyzed the Dunhuang documents in detail. He clarified the location of Zoroastrian temples at Dunhuang and the schedule of Sogdian Zoroastrian annual rituals (7th day of January, April, July, and October). He also examined the expenses for them provided by the Tang government, and their social backgrounds (Ogawa 1929).

Fujita dealt with magical practices of the Zoroastrians such as “swallowing swords, spitting fire and causing fog and mist,” which looked to him to be a kind of shamanism. According to him, 黎軒 (*líxuān*) means ‘Ragha’ and 草藥 (*cǎoyào*) means ‘haoma’, Zoroastrian magicians might have come from Media with medicinal herbs (Fujita 1928: 53–59).

Nawa reconstructed the structure of Zoroastrian temples in Chang'an and Luoyang and concluded that a Zoroastrian temple in Chang'an was planned so that one entered from the west to worship in the eastern direction, with twenty high altars equipped with idols. During festivals, Zoroastrians stewed beef and mutton in a broth, sang and danced with drums to celebrate memorial days, but we know nothing about what they commemorated (Nawa 1956).

Jiang added that the religious ritual called 賽神 (*sàishén*) at the Zoroastrian temple in Dunhuang was no different from traditional Chinese religious ceremonies. He also speculated that the Zoroastrian idols at the twenty high altars could have been sculptures of Zurwān assimilated with a Hindu god 梵天 (*fàntiān* 'Brahmā'), Ahura Mazdā assimilated with the Hindu god 帝釋天 (*dìshìtiān* 'Indra') and 密特拉 (*mìtèlā* 'Mithra'), etc. (Jiang 1993).

All these results only touched the surface of the Sogdian variety of Zoroastrianism. Their full doctrines still remain an enigma. Nestorians and Manichaeans translated their scriptures into Classical Chinese, but Sogdian Zoroastrians apparently did not. According to 大宋僧史略 (*Dà Sòng sēng shǐ lüè* 'Brief History of the Monastic Community in the Great Song') in the 11th century, a Zoroastrian priest 穆護 (*mùhù*, *mōg*) visited the court of the Tang without bringing any translated books, whereas the Nestorians and Manichaeans did. Apparently Sogdian Zoroastrians had no intention of propagating their religion among the Chinese, but the Chinese were interested in Zoroastrianism and introduced its external features into their folk beliefs. This is the prelude for the "Sinicized" Zoroastrianism of future ages.

In the 7th century, a new type of Zoroastrianism appeared in China. According to 波斯傳 (*Bōsī Zhuàn* 'Treatise of Persia'), in 旧唐書 (*Jiù Tángshū* 'Old Book of Tang'), chapter 198, Pērōz III, the second son of Yazdgird III (r. 632–651 CE) fled to Chang'an to seek military aid from the 3rd emperor of the Tang Dynasty, Gao Zong (r. 649–683 CE), who built a Zoroastrian temple in Chang'an for him and dispatched his army to Central Asia. For a while Pērōz III and his son Narseh successfully regained 疾陵 (*jílíng*, perhaps Sistān?), but finally they lost it again and were forced to return to Chang'an, where Pērōz III died at the Zoroastrian temple in 707 CE. Narseh, once again with the help of the Tang army, invaded Tokharistan and reigned there for twenty years until his death in 727 CE. The last member of the Sasanian royal family recorded in Classical Chinese is a Khosrow, who died at Chang'an after 728 CE.

Those Sasanian princes were accompanied by Iranian Zoroastrian priests and aristocrats. The rapid increase of Zoroastrians in China between the 7th and 8th centuries must have been caused not only by the immigration of Sogdian merchants but also these Iranian exiles (Lin 2005c: 323–327). Ishida elucidated that *mùhù* in Classical Chinese means not only simple Zoroastrian priest but an official position in the Zoroastrian priesthood (Ishida 1923; see also Rao 1978). Those Sasanian aristocrats and *mōgs* should be distinguished from Sogdian merchants who immigrated in peacetime, even though the Chinese character 祆 covers both types of Zoroastrians (Lin 2005b).

The Tang general An Lushan (703–757 CE) succeeded in obtaining almost one third of the military power of the dynasty near present-day Beijing and later rebelled against the emperor at Chang'an. This event is known as the "An Lushan rebellion." According

to Rong. An was a half-Sogdian Zoroastrian and his real Sogdian name was Rōxšan. Mainly Sogdian soldiers were appointed as his army's generals and An Lushan's declaration to be the "god of the light" was interpreted as appealing to the religious sentiments of the Sogdian Zoroastrians (Rong 2001). This rebellion was finally suppressed after seven years of war, but its damage to the Tang was fatal, causing it to lose its status as a world empire. The Chinese people, who until that time had been very tolerant of foreign religions, turned toward a narrow nationalism. Sogdians, responding to this development in Chinese society, began to assimilate to traditional and regional Chinese culture (Bi 2004: 51–52; Rong 2003). The religious oppression in the Huichang period (841–846 CE), although its main target was Buddhism, led to further attacks on Zoroastrianism and forced 3,000 Zoroastrian priests to become laymen.

Did Zoroastrianism reach Korea and Japan in medieval times? From Korean burial tombs dating between the 7th and the 9th centuries CE in Gyeongju (south-east Korea), ancient sculptures that resemble Sogdians have been unearthed. But this fact does not prove that Sogdian Zoroastrianism reached Korea (Ancient Orient Museum and Miho Museum 2009: 114–118).

In Japan, Ito claimed that some enigmatic words in Old Japanese are Pahlavi loan-words and tried to show Iranian Zoroastrian nobles had come to ancient Japanese courts seeking military aid against the Arab Muslims (Ito 1980). This theory became so popular in Japan that the famous novelist Seicho Matsumoto (1909–1992) adopted it in his historical fiction, and some folk historians still argue that curious remains in ancient Japan must have Zoroastrian roots, but Japanese scholars have unmasked this theory as a fantasy.

The Formation of "Sinicized" Zoroastrianism (the 10th–20th Centuries)

In the Song period (960–1279 CE) there were still Zoroastrian temples in Kaifeng and Zhenjiang, but most of them were built in the Tang period. Kanda demonstrated that at the gate of a Zoroastrian temple of Kaifeng there was a small sculpture of a demon, which was worshiped as a god for curing the sick (Kanda 1928: 382–389).

A Zoroastrian temple in northern Kaifeng was managed by the 史 (*shǐ*) family from Kēš of Sogdiana. They were appointed by the Song and obtained support from the government to perform daily rituals. At this temple Zoroastrianism had already been fused with the Hindu god 摩醯首羅 (*móxīshǒulúó* 'Maheśvara') (Zhang 2006).

This process of Sinicization is clear from relations with the central government. In the Tang period, Zoroastrian temples were managed under the *sābāo*, the special office for Sogdian Zoroastrians. But in the Song period, the Courts of Imperial Sacrifices, the Ministry of Rites (礼部太常寺, *lǐbùtàichángsì*) controlled Zoroastrian temples along with other religious institutions. Zoroastrianism was treated equally with other traditional Chinese religions such as Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism (Zhang 2006: 33–35). From the point of view of the government of the Song, Zoroastrianism was hardly different from other Chinese folk religions at this time (Lin 2005c: 316–320).

Sogdians of the Tang period were supposed to have practiced next-of-kin marriage in accordance with their Zoroastrian beliefs, but this is difficult to prove because their family titles are named only after their hometowns in Sogdiana (Zhang 2006: 82–86). From the Chinese point of view, however, marriage between those having the same family names would imply intermarriage, a most disgusting immorality in Chinese ethics. Furthermore, after the fall of the Sasanians, many Sogdian and Iranian exiled women worked as hostesses at bars in Chang'an, which was a favorite theme for Chinese classic poets such as Li Bai (701–762 CE). The fact that Zoroastrians performed no forms of asceticism in contrast to the Nestorians and Manichaeans spurred the impression of “lewd” and “amorous” behavior on the part of the Zoroastrians. This image contributed to the association in Chinese folk literature of Zoroastrianism with adultery.

Ishida initiated the study of this “Zoroastrian” symbolism in medieval Chinese literature in the Yuan period (Ishida 1928). For example, the expression 火燒祆廟 (*huǒshāoxiānmào*, meaning ‘the Xian temple [Chinese Zoroastrian temple] catching fire’ [sic!]) alludes to an amorous tryst with erotic nuances. Liu argued that 白眉神 (*báiméishén*, ‘a god with white eyebrows’) is a guardian deity for Zoroastrian prostitutes (Liu 1942–1944: 1–16). These literary allusions may be a reflection of views of Zoroastrianism in the Tang period (Lin 2005c: 316–320) and these motifs simply survived until the Qing period (1644–1911). According to Jiang’s personal memory, activities of the Sinicized Zoroastrian temple(s) were witnessed in the Hanyang prefecture of Hubei province (central China, north of Lake Dongting) until the 1940s (Jiang 2004: 331–332).

The Parsis in the Far East (the 18th–21st Centuries)

Parsis from Bombay arrived in southern China in the 18th century. Parsi studies were completely neglected by Far Eastern academics, although the research of Western and Indian scholars is often criticized by them for not using Chinese and Japanese materials and for their point of view being biased towards the West.

Early Chinese documents on Parsis were written not in Standard Chinese (Mandarin) but in Cantonese (Southern Chinese or Guangzhou / Hong Kong dialect). Even the proper noun ‘Parsi’ is transcribed in many ways, such as: 巴斯 (*bāsī*), 八思 (*bāsī*), 八師 (*bāshī*), 叭史 (*bāshī*), 巴史 (*bāshī*), 巴士 (*bāshī*), 巴社 (*bāshè*), 包社 (*bāoshè*), 巴西 (*bāxī*), 派希 (*pàixī*), 帕尔西 (*pǎěr-xī*), 帕西 (*pàxī*), etc. For example, 巴士 is pronounced *bāshī* in Standard Chinese, but *basi* in Cantonese, which means ‘bus’ in Standard Chinese. Deciphering those complicated words is a difficult task even for Chinese scholars not from Guangzhou or Hong Kong. Otherwise, Parsis were referred to as 白頭 (SChin. *báitóu* and Canton. *baaktau*) ‘white heads’ probably because of their priests’ appearance, or identified simply as 英夷 (SChin. *yīngyí* and Canton. *yingyi* ‘English barbarians’), since Chinese offices had no reason to make a distinction between English citizens and Parsis declaring they came from the British Empire (Guo 2003: 38–44). The only clue to distinguish Parsi personal names among Cantonese documents is the Gujarati suffixes –jee/–ji = 治 (SChin. *zhì* and Canton. *ji*) and –bhoy/–boy = 皮 (SChin. *pí* and Canton. *peí*). For example, 羅心治 (SChin. *luóxīnzhì* and Canton. *loh-samji*) means Rustomjee,

別歌治 (SChin. *biégēzhì* and Canton. *bitgohji*) means Biccajee, 噫之皮 (SChin. *yīzhīpí* and Canton. *yijīpei*) means Jeejeebhoy, etc. (For an analysis of the Cantonese documents from the Qing period, see Guo 2005.)

In the international port cities like Macao, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Kobe, and Yokohama, there are Parsi cemeteries and remains. They are the main sites for studying the religious beliefs and economic activities of Parsis once diffused to southern China and Japan in the first half of the 20th century.

The first Parsis in the Far East, according to extant reports, were merchants arriving in southern China with the Portuguese in 1736. After them many Parsi merchants came to China during the period of the British Empire. Guo showed that the Parsi merchants constituted one third of the British living in China in the first half of the 19th century. Qing documents report that “Parsis are the most crafty and most greedy among all foreign merchants” (Guo 2005: 58). Those Parsis, supporting the British navy behind the front in the First Opium War (1840–1842), quickly utilized the opportunity to benefit from the unequal Nanjing Treaty (1842), thus acquiring immense wealth in China (Guo 2005: 131).

Before the First Opium War, Parsi activities were limited within the scope permitted by the Qing Dynasty, but after that it became possible for Parsis to communicate with Chinese people and even to take Chinese wives. For example, Zhang Ailing (1920–1995, Eileen Chang in English), a 20th-century Chinese novelist, described the love story of a Chinese girl with a Parsi boy named 潘那磯 (SChin. *pānnàjī* and Canton. *poonnasek*) = Banajee, in her autobiography first published in 1976 (Guo 1997; Zhang 2009).

Parsi merchants were, however, pushed out from Guangzhou by their Jewish and Hindu rivals after the 1850s. They then turned north to Shanghai and Kobe, where the first industrial revolution began in the 1890s and required raw cotton from India. Parsi merchants participated especially in Indo-Japanese trade and their colonies settled mainly at Kobe and also at Yokohama. Traces of their presence can still be found in those cities (Aoki 2006).

The oldest Parsi burial cemetery in the Far East was founded at Macao in 1829. In 1847, the Parsis, after the victory of the First Opium War, attempted to build a Zoroastrian site for excarnation, made of bamboo, at Guangzhou, but Chinese residents firmly refused this plan. So Parsis had to compromise, making a burial-style cemetery with stone coffins (Guo 2005: 160–178).

As a center in the Far East, Parsis built a Zoroastrian temple in Shanghai in 1866 with a big gate at its north and a fire-altar within it. The temple was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) (Gong and Yan 1998: 291). Gong unsuccessfully protested to the Chinese government not to destroy the fire-temple. Yan succeeded in finding and interviewing a *mowbed* in Mumbai in 2001, who had worked at this Shanghai temple during the 1930s (Yan 2008).

In Japan, Parsi cemeteries were built in Kobe (1905) and Yokohama (1915). Special features of Parsi tombstones in Japan are their Avestan, Gujarati, and English trilingual epitaphs. Avestan epitaphs can be found only in Kobe (Aoki 2006, 2009). There is no temple in Kobe, the Parsis there probably had to call *mowbeds* from Shanghai to conduct ceremonies.

In 1949, with the formation of the People's Republic of China, Parsis moved from China to Hong Kong. It was after the 1980s that the next wave of Parsis appeared in China proper. On a minor scale, the descendants of Parsis in Kobe and Tokyo have lived there for generations. Among them, we can find a doctor married to a Japanese woman, an international lawyer, and a writer working for a Japanese fashion magazine, etc. On August 4–6, 2008, Iranian Muslims living in Tokyo called a *mowbed* from London to reconvert to the religion of their ancestors (Kamran Jamshidi, personal email communication, 2008).

Conclusion: Studies on Zoroastrianism in the Far East

The study of Zoroastrianism in the Far East is an academic field that has not yet been sufficiently cultivated. It needs vast linguistic knowledge including Classical Chinese, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Japanese in addition to knowledge of Avestan, Pahlavi, Sogdian, New Persian, and Gujarati. A particularly difficult aspect is the analysis and transcription of Zoroastrian vocabulary in the Chinese and Japanese scripts. Unless we establish this missing link, however, the history of Zoroastrianism will remain unclear and, likewise, without the elucidation of Zoroastrian activity in China and Japan, Far Eastern history will lack an important ingredient.

Acknowledgments

My thanks are due to my Chinese colleagues Professor Kejia Yan (Shanghai) and Dr Xiaogui Zhang (Guangzhou) for their information on and proofreading of Chinese topics.

Appendix: Chronological Table of Zoroastrianism in the Far East

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| <p>116–111 BCE: Mithra worshiped at the court of the 7th emperor of the Han Dynasty, Wu (?).</p> <p>37–2 BCE: Zoroastrianism was first introduced to China (?).</p> <p>311–313 CE: The Sogdian <i>Ancient Letters</i> were written at the Hexi corridor.</p> <p>430 CE: The first Zoroastrian temple was built at Turfan.</p> <p>621 CE: A Zoroastrian temple was built in the Buzhengfang district of Chang'an.</p> <p>631 CE: A <i>mōg</i> was granted an audience by the 2nd emperor of the Tang Dynasty, Tai Zong. A Zoroastrian temple was built at the Chonghuafang district of Chang'an.</p> <p>673/7 CE: Pērōz III, the second son of Yazdgird III, took refuge with the Tang court, where he</p> | <p>began to serve as a general in 673. Iranian Zoroastrian priests and aristocrats came to China. The 3rd emperor of the Tang Dynasty, Gao Zong, built a Zoroastrian temple in the Liqunfang district of Chang'an.</p> <p>Between 678 and 707 CE: Pērōz III recovered Sīstān (?) with the military aid of the Tang, but was eventually defeated.</p> <p>684 CE: Manichaeism was introduced into the Tang Dynasty court by the Sogdian Manichaean priest Mihr Ohrmizd.</p> <p>707 CE: Pērōz III died at the Zoroastrian temple of the Liqunfang district of Chang'an.</p> <p>After 707 CE: Narseh, a son of Pērōz III, reconquered Tokharistan with the military aid of the Tang.</p> |
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- 727 CE: Narseh died at Tokharistan.
- After 728 CE: The last member of the Sasanian royal family, Khosrow, died at Chang'an.
- 755–763 CE: The half-Sogdian Zoroastrian An Lushan's rebellion took place. As a result, Chinese society became intolerant towards Sogdian Zoroastrians.
- 845 CE: Religious oppression in the Huichang era; 3,000 Zoroastrians were laicized.
- 874 CE: A tombstone of a woman from the Suren family was built at Chang'an.
- 926–930 CE: A Zoroastrian temple was built in the Xuanquan district of Dunhuang.
- 958 CE: A Zoroastrian temple was built at Khotan.
- 1008–1016: A Zoroastrian temple was built at Zhenjiang.
- 1235: The Zhenjiang's Zoroastrian temple was destroyed by a county director general; this is the last Zoroastrian temple recorded in classical Chinese.
- 1300–: Zoroastrian symbolism was established in Chinese folk literature as images of "lewd" or "amorous" people.
- 1738: First Parsi merchants appeared with the Portuguese in southern China.
- 1829: Parsis built the first Zoroastrian cemetery in Macao (now fourteen plots for coffins).
- 1847: Parsis tried to build a *dakhme* in Guangzhou but Chinese residents protested. Instead, they built a cemetery there (now eleven plots).
- 1852: Parsis built a Zoroastrian cemetery in Hong Kong (still in use).
- 1861: Parsis built a so-called "Parsi building" in Guangzhou (still stands but not in use).
- 1866: Parsis built a Zoroastrian temple in Shanghai.
- 1905: Parsis built a Zoroastrian cemetery in Kobe (twenty-seven plots and still in use).
- 1915: Parsis built a Zoroastrian cemetery in Yokohama (only one plot).
- 1923: Zoroastrian studies began both in China and Japan.
- 1940s: Last activities of the Sinicized Zoroastrian temple(s) were witnessed.
- 1966–1976: The Zoroastrian temple at Shanghai was destroyed.
- After 1999: Tombstones of Sogdian Zoroastrians and their descendants were discovered in northern China.

Further Reading

A lavishly reproduced coffee-table volume has been published since this chapter was completed: *Across Oceans and Flowing Silks. From*

Canton to Bombay 18th–20th Centuries (Godrej and Mistree with Seshadri 2013).

CHAPTER 10

The Parsis

John R. Hinnells

“Parsis” are descendants of Zoroastrian migrants from Pars or Persia and is a term used of them by various travelers. The Parsis are one of India’s smallest religious minorities. They are to be found mainly in Mumbai (Bombay) and Gujarat, especially in the city of Surat and the old religiously important town of Navsari (Desai 2008), but there are also communities in Pune (Poona), Kolkata (Calcutta) (Ray 2005), Bangalore (Unvalla 2004), Chennai (Madras), and a few in Delhi. Despite numbering only 69,601 (according to the Census of India 2001), a tiny community among India’s teeming millions, they have nevertheless contributed significantly to India’s modern history. This chapter will look at their history from the time of their arrival in India (the date is debated, but possibly in the 8th century) through the period of British rule (starting in the 17th century) down to Independence (1947) and into the 21st century. It will examine their role in commerce, education, and politics and will look in particular at religious issues.

The Early Days

It has generally been assumed that the Parsis fled from Iran because of religious persecution but recent excavations demonstrating there was a long-standing trade between Persia and north-west India, in particular with Gujarat, notably the port of Sanjan, suggest that trade was a major factor in the gradual development of the Parsis in the region (Nanji and Dhalla 2007). Previously the early history of the Parsis has been reconstructed from one narrative poem in particular, the *Qeşşe-ye Sanjān* (QS) written in 1599 by Dastūr Bahman Qobad Sanjana based on what he had been told by learned priests. Despite the fact that the QS was written centuries after the events which it relates it has been taken by most scholars (Modi 1917; Hodivala 1920) to be basically a historical

document relating the journey of some persecuted Zoroastrians fleeing from Islamic oppression in Iran, traveling by boat via the port of Diu in Gujarat, and then being blown by a storm to Sanjan where the Hindu ruler gave them sanctuary. In fulfillment of a vow made during the terrible storm they consecrated the highest grade of fire, an Ātaš Bahrām, which they referred to as “Irānšāh,” their king in exile. The tale then relates the story of how the Zoroastrians fought valiantly alongside the Hindus to try, unsuccessfully, to fight off a Muslim invasion of Gujarat, how the fire had to be taken into hiding in a distant cave in Bharut, then moved to Bansda before being moved to Navsari by the leader there, Changa Shah, in the 16th century (Kamerkar and Dhunjisha 2002: 48). Many years after the writing of the *QS* the sacred fire was moved first to the safety of Surat before it was brought to its present resting place in Udwada. So confident were scholars in the basic historical reliability of the *QS* that they give different, but precise, dates to the episodes related in that text. Jivanji Jamshedji Modi (1917) argued for the traditional date of 785 CE whereas Shahpurshah Hormasji Hodivala (1920) argued for a date of 936 CE. Alan Williams has argued convincingly that it should be interpreted more as an epic after the style of the *Šāhnāme* and in his translation in blank verse he reflects the poetic nature of the original Persian. He also shows how the whole poem is structured according to classic Zoroastrian theology (Williams 2009). Although it is not a historical text it nevertheless reflects how Parsis have come to think of their migration: They were guided in their travels by a wise astrologer priest; their fate was, as it were, written in the stars, they were saved in the storm by divine intervention and they were kindly received by the Hindu prince who made minimum conditions on their settlement. For their part, in what are known as the sixteen *Ślokas*, in Sanskrit, the Parsis presented their religion as being compatible with Hinduism, though there is doubt whether they were written by a Parsi or a Hindu, and whether they predate the *QS* (Schmidt 1960–1961; Williams 2009: 229–237).

There were Parsi settlements in various ports along the coast of Gujarat in places such as Surat, Broach, and Cambay. It seems likely that there was more than one migration (Cereti 1991: 14–16). The oldest inscriptions by Parsis in western India were in Pahlavi, in the Kanheri caves about twenty miles to the north of Bombay, the first was carved in 999 CE and another in 1021 listing the names of Parsi male visitors to the caves. The first inscription was carved by Ahoma, son of Avan Bandat Mandoon and Mah Adbar (Paymaster 1954: 16–17). The first *doxma/dakhme* (or what British travelers called a “Tower of Silence”) that we know of was at Broach before 1300 and a second one was built in 1309 (Palsetia 2001: 9), but Rukshana Nanji and Homi Dhalla identify a structure unearthed in their excavations as a 10th–11th-century *dakhme* (Nanji and Dhalla 2007: 50). By the late 13th century agreement was reached to divide Gujarat into five “ecclesiastical” divisions or *panthaks* centered near Sanjan, Navsari, Anklesvar, Broach, and Cambay and priests were to work only in their own *panthak* under the leadership of a *panthaki*, who allocated ritual duties to the other priests.

Another important religious development was the visit of a Navsari priest, Meherji Rana (approximately 1510–1591), to the court of Akbar. According to Parsi sources Meherji Rana impressed the eclectic Akbar, so much so that the latter started celebrating some Zoroastrian festivals and kept a fire burning at the Mughal court (Paymaster 1954: 94–96). He gave Meherji Rana a grant of land near Navsari and the people were

so grateful to the priest they recognized him as the senior *dastūr* ('high priest') over all the *panthaks* (Modi 1903b; Kamerkar and Dhunjisha 2002: 52–54). The religious authority of Navsari was reaffirmed by the consecration of a second Ātaš Bahrām there in 1765, so that it too became a center of pilgrimage (Cereti 1991; Desai 2008).

Important sources for the study of both Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians are twenty-six *Revāyats*, letters from Iranian Zoroastrian priests in reply to some questions sent by Parsis, mainly concerning ritual matters. The first was written in 1478 CE, twenty-one were written prior to 1700, and five more between 1700 and 1773 were sent to Parsis in Cambay, Broach, Surat, or Navsari. They mainly came from Torkābād and Šarīfābād. They are useful not only for understanding the rituals, but also contain information about the suffering of the Persian Zoroastrians. The Iranians also sometimes included manuscripts of religious texts. They also provide us with interesting data on Parsi acculturation to Indian life (Dhabhar 1932; Paymaster 1954: 66–84; Vitalone 1996).

The first European travelers to comment on the Parsis were two friars, Jordanus Catalani and Odoric of Pordenone, in 1322 and 1325 respectively. The Portuguese arrived in western India in 1498 seeking the trade in Gujarat textiles, began their rule of an area of over a thousand square miles and sometimes they commented on Parsis. For example, Father Anthony Monserrate in the late 16th century compared them to the Jews and mistakenly said that they practiced circumcision but accurately describes the *sedre* and *kostī* (Firby 1988: 91–92). The British started arriving in the 17th century and much of their attention was given to what was then a major international port, Surat, where they met Parsis. The first Englishman to comment on the Parsis was John Jourdain, who arrived in 1609, but the two important early British travelers were Edward Terry and Henry Lord, both Anglican chaplains employed by the East India Company. Terry wrote an account of Mughal India which was published in 1625 (Terry 1625), but his only reference to Parsis was to their funerals. Lord wrote a book (1630), the first part on the Banians, the second on the Parsis. Lord's account starts with the story of the arrival of the Parsis in India written only a couple of decades after the writing of the *QS*. He gives some different details from the *QS*, saying for example that they came in seven boats and that they had mainly settled near Surat. His account of creation is similar to that in the *Bundahišn* with a rather vague account of the Amahraspands. Lord gave quite a full and traditional account of Zoroaster and of priestly responsibilities. He went on to describe some of the religious rituals including veneration of the fire, the *gāhānbārs*, initiation, weddings, and funerals (Firby 1988: 97–113).

The Dutch started trading at Broach in northern Gujarat. Nora Firby studied one little-known Dutch account of the Parsis, a report written by Wollebrand Geleynssen de Jongh (1594–1674) who was appointed to take charge of the Dutch factory there in 1625. His account is fuller than Terry and Lord and less theologically biased and more concerned with the people, for example, he describes observances on sacred days and also their dress. His account is particularly interesting because he wrote before the British had any impact in northern Gujarat (Firby 1988: 115–136, 183–193 [Kreyenbroek's translation of the Dutch]). Geleynssen indicates that Parsis were in various forms of employment from casual labor to shopkeepers and merchants. Streynsham Master, in 1671, also says that "[t]hey were of all Professions, except Seamen"

(Firby 1988: 142), but John Ovington in 1690 in Surat wrote: "In their Callings they are very Industrious and diligent and careful to train up their Children to Arts and Labour. They are the principal Men at the Loom in all the Country, and most of the Silks and Stuffs at *Suratt*, are made by their Hands" (Firby 1988: 145). Alexander Hamilton, who sailed for Bombay in 1688, also refers to them as weavers, but he adds that they were good carpenters and involved in shipbuilding (Firby 1988: 147).

There were a number of travelers in the region in the 18th century, mostly British and associated with the East India Company. They testify to the growing commercial importance of the Parsis in Surat (Firby 1988: 137–153). These early travelers, therefore, give us important information about the various professions and roles which the Parsis pursued, but the most important from the perspective of Zoroastrian studies was the Frenchman Anquetil-Duperron (1731–1805). When he had pursued language studies he was shown some pages copied from the *Vīdēvdād* in Oxford which inspired him to learn Avestan. He decided to go to India, not Persia, so that he could also learn Sanskrit. He arrived in Pondicherry in 1755 and for three years he traveled through much of India learning languages, collecting manuscripts, and observing people. In 1758 he went to Surat where he was taught by Dastūr Kaus and Dastūr Darab Kumana, the latter being high priest of the Kadmis (Qadimis, followers of the "Ancient" or Iranian calendar). Anquetil-Duperron borrowed a *Vīdēvdād* manuscript from the leader of the orthodox priests, Muncherji Sett, to check the veracity of the *Vīdēvdād* from Dastūr Darab and once satisfied he began to translate it. When Anquetil-Duperron left Surat after two and a half years the chief of the English Factory, John Spencer, enabled him to obtain a passage on an English vessel to sail to England via Bombay. He not only had a large number of manuscripts and had observed various Parsi ceremonies; he claimed to have been in a fire-temple. When he reached England he was at first imprisoned because of the war with France, but on his release he traveled to Oxford to see the original *Vīdēvdād* manuscript which had inspired his India visit, and he met some of the leading academics. On his return to France in 1762 he gave several lectures to the Académie des Inscriptions where he was well received, but not outside French academic circles (Schwab 1934: 85–104). His French translation of the *Zend-Avesta* was finally published in 1771 (Anquetil-Duperron 1771). He included an account of Zoroaster based on the *Zarātoštnāma*, also a long account of the Parsi religious ceremonies relating to the texts concerned with purity; he also referred to the *Revāyats* and included the *Bundahišn*. Anquetil-Duperron's work was derided by one of the leading British orientologists, Sir William Jones, and his reputation suffered for twenty years, long after his death in 1805 (Schwab 1934; Firby 1988: 155–171; Stausberg 1998a II: 809–821).

Colonial India

The British traded at Surat from the early 17th century onward. Perhaps the most important of the early brokers was the Parsi, Rustam Manock (1635–1721). Panduronga S. S. Pissurlencar (1933) provides translations of eighty-six letters by the Portuguese viceroy to or about Rustam, frequently praising his zeal. He wrote to the Nawab in Surat saying: "I trust Your Highness will treat his [Rustam's] interests as my

own or those of the State [of Portugal]" (Pissurlencar 1933: 10–11). The viceroy resisted pressure from Portugal to discharge the "non-Christian" and appoint a Portuguese person because, he said, "I cannot do without your influence" (Pissurlencar: 1933: 55–56, 103–106). In 1689 Rustam was made broker to the new East India Company because of his record and contacts (White 1979). He helped the British find a residency. He took the first English factor (head official), William Norris, to the court of the king of Delhi, Aurangzeb, in 1701–1702 and successfully pleaded that the British be allowed to trade in Surat. This was made more difficult because Norris was an impatient man and because of the protracted nature of the negotiations he left the court and returned to Surat, a grave offense to Aurangzeb, whom Rustam had to placate with large bribes out of his own pocket (White 1979: 87–88).

Rustam was noted for his charitable work. He paid the poll tax or *jezīye* for poor Zoroastrians, and for the poor of other communities. He repaired roads, built bridges, cultivated barren land, erected grand buildings with beautiful gardens, built a place for Zoroastrians to celebrate weddings and *jashans*, dug wells, built reservoirs for cattle, had many major religious ceremonies performed (he was a *nāvar* but never performed as a priest), and he aided the poor for their children's marriages (Modi 1929: 126–127, 130). He was recognized as head of the Parsi community in Surat, indeed Modi speculates that he was head of the whole Indian community of Surat (Modi 1929: 142–145).

In 1662 Bombay was gifted to the British, but for some time it continued to be dominated by Portuguese currency and language. The British wanted it because it was a natural harbor and was free of Mughal rule, unlike Surat. A Parsi, Dorabji Nanabhai, had been a tax collector under the Portuguese and he continued in that role under the British. His son, Rustamji, followed in his father's footsteps but in 1692, while Bombay was afflicted with a cholera epidemic, he raised support for the British among the Koli fishermen and other residents to repel an attack by the Muslim Sidi of Janjira for which the British recognized him with the hereditary title of Patel or "chief." In Parsi eyes at least, this set something of a pattern for Anglo-Parsi relations (David 1973).

In the early 1670s Parsi numbers in Bombay had grown so that a *dakhme* was opened, and in 1673 the first fire-temple was consecrated, but it was the second half of the 18th century when the number of Parsis grew significantly. By 1811 the Parsi population of Bombay was estimated to be 10,042 (Palsetia 2001: 40). Perhaps the great family of these times was the Wadias. Surat had been the major center for the building of ships but the British for decades had wanted to build docks in Bombay and in 1735 they persuaded the foreman at Surat, Lowji Wadia, to come to Bombay with a few shipwrights and so the building of the Bombay dockyard began (Karaka 1884 II: 61–63). The running of the dockyard remained in the Wadia family into the 1850s (Wadia 1973). Being master builders the family became wealthy and some of its members branched out into various trades and professions, for example they became ship-owners and obtained significant leadership roles in the community (Wadia 1964). Numerous other Parsis were active in the early shipping industry in Bombay (Bulley 2000). Another important early Parsi family was the Readymoneys. Hirji and his brother Mancherji sailed for China in 1756 and established the first Parsi firm in Canton. But the records indicate that there were other Indian traders there at an earlier date.

The British were eager to buy tea and in exchange they took cotton initially and later opium (Thampi and Saksena 2009: 15–31). Parsis dominated the China trade, notably Jamsetji Jijibhoy (1783–1859). He gave away 2,459,736 rupees in his lifetime in communal and international benefactions (Palsetia 2001: 44). He had no formal education. Both his parents died when he was fifteen and he started working in his maternal uncle's shop selling empty bottles, then in 1800 he sailed with his cousin, Tabak, to China, working as his accountant. In 1802 he went on his second voyage to China, this time as his uncle's manager. He raised 40,000 rupees with which to trade himself. Much of his profit was destroyed in the Great Fire of Bombay in 1803, just twelve days before he was married, at the age of nineteen, to his childhood betrothed cousin, Avabai, then aged ten. His third journey to China was in 1803–1804, then in 1805, on his fourth visit to China, his ship was captured by the French who took all the cargo and marooned the passengers in South Africa, penniless with only the clothes they stood up in. Eventually he and others were given passage on a Dutch ship sailing for Calcutta. On that ship was William Jardine who later, with James Mathieson, set up the largest opium business at Canton; Jamsetji was to become their main collaborator in Bombay. In 1806–1807 he went to China on his fifth and final voyage and on this one he amassed a fortune. He began to rise in society; in 1827 he was among the first Indians to be allowed to sit on a jury and in 1834 he was one of the first Indian justices of the peace. In 1852 he was elected president of Bombay's first political association, the Bombay Association. From 1823 to 1859 he was a trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (see below), which he sought to reform. Jamsetji then began his lifelong philanthropic work, generously helping victims of fire and flood, he was a leading subscriber to various Indian newspapers, funded the translation of various Iranian books on Zoroastrianism, built fire-temples, dug wells, and built large waterworks for the people of Poona. He built Bombay's first hospital, which was opened in 1845. In 1842 at a function to celebrate his becoming the first Indian to be given a knighthood he announced the launch of the Parsi Benevolent Institution (PBI) by placing 300,000 rupees in the care of trustees, the interest on which was to be used for the poor in Bombay, Surat, Broach, Woodapore, and Navsari, the remainder for marriage and funeral expenses of the poor, blind, and lame. Above all he wanted to start schools so that impressionable Parsi youngsters would not be sent to missionary schools like that of John Wilson where two Parsi boys had been converted some decades ago (see below). By 1864 the PBI had twenty-one schools with 3,049 pupils. The first of the girls' schools was opened in 1850. Almost all schools beyond junior level gave instruction in English. In 1857 he opened the Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy School of Art. Shortly before his death Jamsetji was made a baron, again the first in India. When he died, banks, merchants' offices, and all shops were closed as a mark of respect (Mody 1959). Palsetia (2007) has convincingly argued that in much of his charity, for example the Bombay Hospital and the waterworks at Poona, Jamsetji saw himself as working in collaboration with the British. Some have questioned the morality of his dealing in opium but the British rulers not only encouraged the trade to fund much of the running of India, they even fought two wars against the Chinese to impose the trade on them. Jijibhoy was merely participating in a trade legalized by the British (though it was illegal to trade or use opium in Britain; see Aoki, "Zoroastrianism in the Far East," this volume).

Jijibhoy and the earlier Rustom Maneck were not unique in their philanthropy. It is a central religious duty long practiced to give aid to those in need, not only to Parsis but members of any community. It was emphasized in the early literature and commented on by travelers and other non-Zoroastrians. For example, Gandhi in 1931 asserted that the Parsi community did not need protection: "Their charities are so famed in the country that it has no parallel, that is their protection" (Hinnells 1985: 262). Medicine and education tended to be the main foci of charitable donations but vast amounts were also given to form housing colonies (*baugs*) for poorer Parsis to live in a Zoroastrian environment (Hinnells 1985). The foci of charities have varied over time because of changing needs and different personal interests. For example the period 1830–1900 was one of extensive building of fire-temples. With the increase of wealth not only were more Parsis able to fund such projects, as more families hired servants, usually non-Parsis, so the home was no longer pure enough for it to be the locale of many religious rites as in earlier times (Hinnells 1985: 266–267, 290–294). The same period saw an increase in the establishment of funeral grounds and *dakhmes*, also rest houses (*dharamsalas*) as Parsis migrated within India and overseas. In the early 20th century the leading figures in charitable donations were members of the Tata family, for example in 1945 the Sir Dorabji Trust established the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research focusing on physics, mathematics, and allied sciences. Other members of the family focused on medicine, aid in the face of natural calamities, and scholarships for higher education in Europe and America (Harris 1958: 326–327; Lala 1981: 131–140).

Reference was made above to the Panchayet, this now merits discussion. A *punchayet* is a traditional Indian form of communal government by five leaders (originally 'panj' means five in Hindi and Gujarati). The history of the Parsi Panchayet can be divided into different phases. From its inception in the late 1720s it functioned as a paternalistic semi-official governing body overseeing the wellbeing and social morals of the community (Stausberg 2002c: 34–41). From around 1830 its leaders were no longer elected but became hereditary and they favored their own kith and kin (Davar 1949). In 1838 the Legislative Council of India (a body established by government to oversee legislation) denied the Panchayet's request to reconstitute itself and reaffirm its authority over Parsis. In the mid-19th century it became increasingly clear that without the authority that the Panchayet had held there was no clear law to decide over issues such as inheritance, marriage, and divorce. They, therefore, became subject to English law, such as primogeniture, whereas the Hindus and Muslims had their own laws. In 1855 the Parsi Law Association was formed with a committee of fifty representing the different wings of the community, then a sub-committee was formed to provide a draft code of laws which were circulated in 1860, but conflicts grew when Parsis in the *mofussil* (provincial regions) objected to Bombay Parsis assuming authority and imposing their principles. The government favored the Bombay proposals, e.g., affirming the right of a wife to inherit her deceased husband's estate. Instead of reconstituting the Panchayet to adjudicate on marriage and divorce, in 1865 Parsi Matrimonial Courts were introduced and presided over by a high court judge with eleven Parsi delegates appointed by the government on the nomination of Parsi justices of the peace who were usually traditionalists and established leaders of the community such as Jamsetji Jijibhoy (Desai 1977;

Palsetia 2001: 197–226). In the twentieth century the Panchayet became a major body for distribution of charity, mainly from money left to them by deceased Parsis. It is now Mumbai's biggest non-governmental landlord. It also seeks to represent Parsi interests and concerns to the wider public and the government.

The Panchayet came into prominence in 1906. Ratanji Dadabhoy Tata married a French woman, Suzanne Briere, in 1903 after she had converted to Zoroastrianism, had her *navjote* performed, and claimed the right to go into fire-temples and on her death to have her funeral in a *dakhme*. The Panchayet, under the leadership of Sir Jamsetji Jijibhoy, 4th Baronet, took the matter to court where their opponents were led by Sir Dinshaw Petit, 2nd Baronet and included Ratanji D. Tata. The court was presided over by Mr (later Sir) Justice Dinshaw D. Davar who suggested he be accompanied by a second British judge, Sir Frank Beaman, a distinguished theosophist. The case was in two parts; one was that the plaintiffs questioned the validity of the position of the members of the Panchayet to manage the funds and properties of the Panchayet, the other issue was whether converts had the right to use Panchayet properties, and could invalidly appointed trustees exclude converts? The court found against the validity of the present trustees' appointment but gave them permission to continue until a voting system had been put in place. The second part also involved a Rajput lady who had married a Parsi, though neither lady appeared in court. There had been a large communal meeting (*anjuman*) in 1903 in anticipation of the court case, which had voted against accepting converts and called for priests who administered such initiations to be condemned. But these conclusions were rejected by many because they argued that the meeting consisted of unrepresentative individuals. The 1906 case represented a way of testing the outcome of the *anjuman* vote. Fundamentally the case was about being a Zoroastrian and was this different from being a Parsi? The court proposed a compromise, namely allowing conversion under limited circumstances (Sharafi 2007), but this was not acceptable to either party. Davar found that the trustees had abrogated to themselves rights on the appointing of successors in what historically was a democratic institution. Davar agreed with the defendants that, as the plaintiffs were Parsis, and as none of their rights had been denied, they really did not have a case as the two ladies had not appeared in court. But Beaman thought that the plaintiffs had made as good a case for converts as could be made and they had the right to raise the issue. Davar questioned the claimed precedents asserted by the plaintiffs, arguing that men having the *navjotes* performed of their illegitimate children born of foreign mistresses was not a good precedent. Davar expressed his disapprobation of the plaintiffs who had brought a Hindu-born woman, Soonabai, who had been brought up by a Parsi, to Bombay and had deliberately taken her into temples so they could quote the example in their court case. He discounted the historic examples the plaintiffs had put forward, for example Meherji Rana's visit to Akbar's court. He argued that Mrs Tata and the Rajput lady were the only full conversions that had happened since the Parsis came to India. Davar defined "Parsi" as an ethnic or racial term and it was restricted to the descendants of the Persian emigrants, those born of Parsi parents who profess the Zoroastrian religion, and the Iranis who settled in India. He maintained that not all Zoroastrians were Parsis. Both Davar and Beaman said that Parsis had been influenced by the caste structure in India. Beaman viewed the historical examples rejected by Davar as more convincing and

condemned the defendants' bigotry for being willing to accept immorality and any Iranian without knowing their background yet rejecting a blameless foreigner, of whose character and conduct they have "the completest assurance" (Palsetia 2001: 226–251, Stausberg 2002c: 52–57; *Judgments* 2005: 1–193; Sharafi 2007: 159–180).

There was a similar but different case in the Court of Lower Burma 1915–1918, usually referred to as "the Rangoon Navjote Case" (see Sharafi, "Law and Modern Zoroastrians," this volume). Bella was an orphan with a Parsi mother and had been raised by a Parsi family. The high court in Burma found in favor of Bella and said she could enter the temple, but the case was appealed to the privy council which overruled the Burma judgment and said the trustees could exclude her if they wished and they did so. The Rangoon case was different from the Punchayet case because in this case it involved the offspring of a Parsi female. It was also a problem because of the question of the validity of adoption in the Indian subcontinent (Palsetia 2001: 266–275; *Judgments* 2005: 195–207; Sharafi 2006; Sharafi 2014).

The 19th century was a period of dramatic change for Parsis. In the first part of the century many Parsis, not just Sir Jamsetji, pioneered education at all levels. This resulted in major social reform, for example Behramji Merwanji Malabari with his "Age of Consent" Bill as part of his campaign to end child marriage (Palsetia 2001: 194–195), and Sorabji Shapurji Bengali, who campaigned for progressive social and factory legislation (Kulke 1974: 206–207). Parsis were pioneers in the newspaper industry, banking, railways, textiles, and in such cultural activities as drama, serving as patrons, directors, and actors (Gupt 2005). They were at the forefront of politics, leaders in the Bombay Association (formed in 1852, making it one of the earliest political campaigning bodies). At its first meeting over half of those attending were Parsis and they moved nearly all the resolutions and donated greater funds than any other community. The Association stressed its loyalty to the British and said its aim was to represent to government measures calculated "to advance the welfare and improvement of the country" (Kulke 1974: 160–161). However, a split developed between the *shetias* (wealthy merchants) and the intelligentsia (university educated). Sir Jamsetji Jijibhoy resigned as president as the educated wished to press for more reforms than the *shetias* were comfortable with. Despite a brief revival in 1867 the Association gradually became moribund (Dobbin 1972: 79–97). In 1885 a new body, the Bombay Presidency Association, was inaugurated to further the political causes of the Bombay population. Again Parsis were prominent. Sir Jamsetji Jijibhoy was elected president, eight of the sixteen vice presidents were Parsis, as were half the council members. Prominent figures were Pherozechah Mehta and Dinshaw E. Wacha who were joint secretaries. Dadabhai Naoroji and S. S. Bengali were among the vice presidents. Sir Jamsetji Jijibhoy resigned when the Association decided to get involved in British politics by openly supporting certain members of parliament (MPs) at the forthcoming election (mostly Liberals) and opposing others (mostly Tories) according to whether they were sympathetic to Indian causes. Pherozechah Mehta emerged as the leading figure of the Association; he also dominated the Bombay Municipal Corporation and became known as "the Lion of Bombay." In 1890 he was elected president of the Indian National Congress and he remained a prominent figure until his death in 1915 (Masselos 1974: 235–242; on Mehta, see Mody 1963).

The most prominent Parsi politician was Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917). He was the first Indian to become a professor in mathematics and natural philosophy at the prestigious Elphinstone College. In his youth he was an active social reformer, campaigning particularly for female education. He was also a religious reformer among Parsis, criticizing the priesthood and starting the reforming religious body the Rahnumai Mazdayasniān Sabha, which was organized by students. In 1855 he started the first Indian firm in England in London and Liverpool with Kharshedji Rustomji Cama who went on to become a religious teacher in Bombay, but his brother Muncherji Homusji Cama stayed on in business in Britain and started the Zoroastrian Trust Funds in London. However, Dadabhai Naoroji separated from them in 1858 because of their involvement in the opium trade. From 1859 to 1885 he made further visits to England, but conducted most of his political campaigns in India. However, in 1886 he settled in England to campaign there for political reform in India. He became the first Indian to be elected as a member of parliament (1892–1895). While in parliament he increased his campaign argument that Britain drained India of its wealth in taxes and money being transferred to England when officials retired. He also argued that the minimal employment of Indians robbed India of necessary experience (Naoroji 1901). When he left parliament he continued to work for the Liberals and for India until poor health made him retire to India. He was the only person to be elected president of the Indian National Congress three times (1886, 1893, and 1906) (Masani 1939).

Two other Parsis were elected members of parliament, the Conservative Mancherji Merwanji Bhowanagari (1895–1905) (Hinnells 2000: 307–334) and Shapurji Saklatwalla (first Labour then Communist, 1922, 1924–1929) (Squires 1990 [a political biography]; Saklatwalla 1991 [a daughter's account]; on the three MPs, see Hinnells 1996: 156–218). It is also important to note that a number of Parsis were involved in the Indian National Congress.

The Parsis did not forget their Iranian heritage. The *Revāyats* did not end contact. In 1720 and in 1736 two Iranians (Dastūr Jamasp Velayati and a layman Jamshid), traveled to India and brought to light the fact that Parsis were following a different calendar from that followed in the homeland. This triggered a calendar-based breakaway movement, the Kadmis, who followed the Iranian calendar, but the majority of Parsis continued with their old calendar, the Shenshai or “Royal” calendar (see Sheffield, “New Persian,” this volume). A Kadmi Ātaš Bahrām was consecrated in Bombay in 1783 by Kaus Jalal, who with his son Peshotan (later known as Mulla Firoze) had studied languages and ritual matters for several years in Iran and gained great respect not only in the Parsi community but also among British officials (Hinnells 2007: 105–106). In 1796 one Kay Khosrow-e Yazdyār fled Iran because a wealthy Muslim in Yazd was attracted to his daughter, Golistān-Bānū. Father and daughter escaped to Bombay where they were befriended by a Parsi family. In time she married a Parsi, Framji Bhikaji Panday; both of them and their children worked tirelessly to help Iranian Zoroastrians and a number migrated to Bombay. One of the sons, Meherwanji, started the Society for the Amelioration of the Conditions of the Zoroastrians in Persia (Boyce 1979: 209–211). An emissary of the Society, Maneckji Limji Hataria, went to Iran in 1854. He labored until his death in 1890 to help his Iranian co-religionists, working to increase Muslim respect for the Zoroastrians, and he raised money in India to help

rebuild the Ātaš Bahrām at Yazd and at Kermān, as well as some village temples. He also rebuilt *dakhmes* in Yazd and Kermān, and in the orthodox village of Šarīfābād. But he is best known for eventually succeeding in getting the crippling *jezīye* tax abolished through his petitions to the shah and with help from others (Boyce 1969a; Stausberg 2002c: 153–164). At the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries a number of Iranian Zoroastrians migrated to India seeking sanctuary. They were generally referred to as “Irani,” which now serves as a surname for most of them. Many opened teashops and restaurants (Hinnells 2005: 79–81).

All these educational, commercial, social, and political developments inevitably had their impact on the religion. The important starting point is the first Christian missionary to focus his attention on the Parsis, John Wilson, who started a school near where most Parsis lived in the Fort area of Bombay in the hope of enticing young Parsi boys to his school where he could convert them. When he converted two young boys in 1839 there was an uproar in the community. He attacked Zoroastrianism in the press and in lectures and sermons and in a book published in Bombay in 1843, entitled: *The Parsi Religion: as contained in the Zand-Avesta and propounded and defended by the Zoroastrians of India and Persia, unfolded, refuted and contrasted with Christianity*. Using the *Vīdēvdād*, and Greek and Roman classical sources he argued that Zoroastrianism was a dualism, propagating two gods (Ahura Mazdā and Anra Mainiiu), and because of the Aməša Spəntas he argued that Zoroastrianism was polytheistic, and he argued that Zoroaster’s religious authority could not have been great because he did not perform miracles (Hinnells 2000: 179–181, 245–246).

For many years afterwards Parsis tried to prove these accusations were untrue. They were aided in this by the work of Martin Haug (1827–1876), Professor of Sanskrit at Poona. In his 1884 book, Haug argued that if Parsis focused just on the prophet’s words in the *Gāthās* (he was the first scholar to separate them out from the rest of the *Avesta*) they would see that theirs was a monotheistic faith and an ethical dualism with the conflict being between good and evil. Further, he asserted that Zoroaster did not teach a ritualistic or superstitious religion (Haug 1884).

Samuel Laing, a finance minister in India, wrote books trying to apply modern science to religions. In a book published in 1890 on Zoroastrianism he argued that the discovery of electricity and the positive and negative forces reflected the Zoroastrian thought on the positive forces of good and the negative forces of evil that underlies all life. Further he argued that the purity laws, scoffed at by Wilson, were in fact good hygienic practices. Coming after Wilson these two Western authors restored something of the self-respect of Parsis because important Westerners were seen to treat Zoroastrianism with respect and with sympathy.

The first Parsi to pursue Western-style scholarship was Kharshedji Rustomji Cama, who pursued studies in Europe and then in 1861 started classes for adults to study Avestan and Pahlavi in a Western style so that they could refute missionary attacks on Zoroastrianism (Palsetia 2001: 163–164). Perhaps even more important was Maneckji Nusserwanji Dhalla (1875–1956). He grew up in a priestly family in Karachi and delivered lectures and published articles in newspapers propounding a strict orthodoxy. He came to Cama’s attention who arranged for him to study in Bombay where he met the visiting professor Abraham Valentine Williams Jackson (1862–1937)

from Columbia University, New York. He encouraged and facilitated Dhalla's studies in Columbia for four years from 1905, first for an MA then a PhD. Dhalla himself stated explicitly that he came to New York a traditionalist and left it a reformist. On his return he was invited to be the *dastūr* of the community in Karachi (Dhalla 1975: 272–284).

In four books (1914, 1938, 1942, and 1950) he expounded a theology shaped by his Columbia experience. He taught that Zoroastrianism was the high point of the spiritual evolutionary ladder because of the revelation of an ethical monotheism to Zoroaster, but this was corrupted by his less spiritual followers who returned to the nature worship and polytheism of ancient times and priestly inspired superstition and magical beliefs. Dhalla called on his co-religionists to return to the pure teaching of the prophet. Although in his two histories (1914 and 1938) he outlines the traditional teachings on creation and eschatology, in his devotional work (1942) none of this is referred to. (On Dhalla, see also Sheffield, "Primary Sources: Gujarati," this volume.)

Rationalism became so widespread among the educated reformers that one, Dhanjishah Meherjibhai Madan (1909), argued that as in life it is widely accepted that knowledge gained for one's self is better than knowledge imposed by others. So in religion, he argued, revelation was a lower spiritual level than insights that had been thought out rationally.

Such Western rationalism inevitably provoked an orthodox backlash and a new cosmology was needed which related to contemporary ideas. It first came in the form of the widespread influence of theosophy, claiming revelation from some hidden masters in Tibet, preaching asceticism, vegetarianism, and the occult power of prayer. When the founders, Madam Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891) and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1937), moved their base from New York to Bombay many Parsis were attracted to it and some became senior members of the movement. Olcott called on the Parsis to preserve their ancient traditions because Western-educated scholars did not appreciate the profound truth lying at the heart of Zoroastrian practices. He said he would prove to them that Zoroastrianism rested on the rock of truth, "the living rock of Occult Science." He claimed that in an Armenian or Iranian cave there were tablets from Zoroaster himself (Olcott 1882: 12, 14, 39, 48). When theosophy's base was moved to Madras in 1907, and was led by the more Hindu-inclined Annie Besant (1847–1933), many Parsis left the movement (Hinnells 2000: 191–192, 251–252), but that did not end the need for some sort of cosmology.

The founder of the "Zoroastrianized theosophy" was Behramshah Naoroji Shroff (1858–1927). He grew up in Surat but at the age of eighteen he is said to have left home and traveled north where he met a caravan of secret Zoroastrians who took him to a hidden colony of Zoroastrian spiritual masters in a great cave beneath the mystical mount Damāvand north of Tehrān. There he was taught in a paradisaical 'Firdaus' by the 'Grand Chief' (*ustad saheb*) amid the spiritual and material treasures of ancient Iran. When he left Firdaus, Shroff spent ten years traveling around India, but he remained silent about his experience until he began teaching in 1907 under the auspices of the Parsi Vegetarian and Temperance Society (PVTs) and the Theosophical Lodge writing in the PVTs monthly magazine *Frashogard*. His movement, *Ilm-i Khshnoom* 'The Path of Spiritual Satisfaction', proclaimed a teaching that was similar to theosophy, for

example, the occult significance of Avestan prayers and their vibrations; rebirth; vegetarianism; and the distinct mystical aura surrounding each person; but in place of theosophy's secret Tibetan Masters he taught about the hidden Iranian Masters (Hinnells 1989; see also Sheffield, "Gujarati," this volume).

There have been various interpretations or developments in Khshnoomic belief. The first book in English on the subject was written by one of Shroff's contemporaries, Phiroze Shapurji Masani (Masani 1917). Masani argued that the whole of the *Avesta* was the word of Zoroaster, unlike the studies of Haug and Dhalla. He maintained that there are different religions in the world catering for different levels of souls according to their spiritual development and Zoroastrianism was for those souls in the foremost stage of spiritual progress (Masani 1917: 78). It is essential for spiritual development that one is vegetarian otherwise the person eats dead matter. Masani's account of the enfoldment of the soul in matter and the quest to achieve spiritual unfoldment strongly recalls the teaching of Sri Aurobindo and Masani's emphasis on the effectiveness of mantras on the reciter's physical, mental, moral, and spiritual development recalls much contemporary Indian thought as well as some strands of thought in Pahlavi literature. Similarly a Khshnoomic writer interpreted Zoroaster not as an ordinary mortal but as a heavenly being who was descended from god, reflecting the Hindu belief in the avatar (Dastoor 1984).

The most prolific and controversial contemporary Khshnoomic writer is (Mrs) Dr Meher Master-Moos who claims to have found trunks full of unpublished manuscripts written by Shroff, which she then published as books. Khshnoomists commonly talk about a person's aura which Master-Moos believes is shown by Kirlean photography which shows the heat output of a person's body which she identifies as the aura (Master-Moos 1981, 1984). Ilm-i Khshnoom is not a separate cult, but a different, mystical interpretation of Zoroastrianism. There are no separate rites and there exists only one Khshnoomic temple, which exists at Udwada near the Iranshah fire. It is impossible to give any numbers for them because many accept parts of the teaching without being followers of Shroff (Stausberg 2002c: 118–127).

Various Parsi writers have used Hindu vocabulary in their work, which is natural as they seek to make Zoroastrianism meaningful in the Indian setting. Sometimes there is explicit reference to Hindu teachers, for example Jal K. Wadia (1968) states his indebtedness to Swami Virjananda. More commonly Parsis have taken technical Hindu terms to express their Zoroastrian belief, for example Irach J. S. Taraporewala (1926) uses the ideas of *purusha* and *prakriti* to explain his beliefs on good and evil and he expounded his belief in the ideas of *karma* and rebirth. Wadia writes about the fire not only in the sanctuary but also within one's self. He writes of a "certain kind of Shakti which can awaken inner spiritual or Divine Fire within man" (Wadia 1973: 29).

Numerous Parsis are affected by Hinduism in their daily lives. Many practice yoga or visit the shrines of holy men such as Sai Baba of Shirdi or Satya Sai Baba, holy men who encourage people to see mystical truth in their own religion; unlike Christianity they do not seek conversion or the rejection of one's old religion (Hinnells 2005: 103, 109–113; see also Stausberg 2004a). Other Parsi writers avoid Hindu terms, but also avoid referring to the traditional myths, for example Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, who mainly wrote on academic subjects (so much so that he was given two honorary doctorates and was

knighted for his work). A catechism he wrote for children referred to a life after death but makes no mention of any of the mythology (1911: 12; similarly Masani 1938).

Parsis in Independent India

Some Parsis viewed independence with some caution, fearing the removal of British rule under which they had flourished, and feared they might be caught in a Hindu–Muslim conflict. Nevertheless on Independence Day they held a celebratory function and sent messages of congratulation and good will to both Nehru and Jinnah (Hinnells 2005: 54–55 and Appendix 1). Because so many Parsis were in the toddy trade (where they took the sap off a particular tree to make an intoxicating drink) they suffered because of independent India's early attitude to teetotalism but over the decades they have on the whole flourished economically with, for example, three large corporate houses being Parsi-owned. The Tatas have flourished even to the extent of buying Corus (the old British Steel), Jaguar, and Land Rover. The Godrej industries have grown considerably, beyond their original specialism of making safes. Shapoorji Pallonji and Company has become international builders. A Parsi has been head of each branch of the armed forces in India, the most famous being Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw (Singh 2002). They have also been prominent in the judiciary, for example, in the 21st century Soli Sorabji was India's attorney general and Tehmtan Andhyarunjia was solicitor general (Hinnells 2007: 259). A point made to me by my informants was that Indira Nehru married Firoze Gandhi, so with the custom being that descent was through the male line, then technically in Indian law Sanjay and Rajiv Gandhi were Parsis.

An influential religious figure is the Mumbai-based Khojeste Mistree. After working as an accountant, Mistree studied Zoroastrianism under Robert Charles Zaehner and Mary Boyce at Oxford and SOAS (see Stausberg and Vevaina, "Introduction: Scholarship on Zoroastrianism," this volume). After graduation he returned to Mumbai and started giving public lectures which were so popular that one of Bombay's largest auditoriums had to be hired and lectures were repeated. He started his group, known as Zoroastrian Studies, in 1977. In 1979 he began formal structured courses; entry to these was dependent on a piece of written work submitted in advance. He has carried his teaching to much of the diaspora, for example Britain, North America, and Australia (Hinnells 2005: 106–109). He is basically "orthodox," accepting the authority of the Pahlavi literature, concerned to preserve the purity laws, and strongly opposed to intermarriage (Mistree 1982). From childhood he has experienced the paranormal (Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001: 126–145). He was a founding trustee of a fund to support the priesthood (though he is a layman). He was also a founding trustee of the strictly orthodox movement the World Alliance of Parsi Irani Zarthoshtis (WAPIZ) and is vigorous in his support for the traditional rites of exposure of the dead in *dakhmes*. He was elected a trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) in 2009 and has long been active in charitable work and in campaigning for the environment, an important Zoroastrian concern. Naturally Mistree has provoked opposition from the liberal and secular wings of the community (Hinnells 2005: 106–109).

The Punchayet has changed since independence. Although it still claims to speak with authority, for example excluding intermarried persons from having a funeral at the *dakhme*, it has become mainly a charitable body. A further change is that there is virtual universal suffrage in electing the trustees. A Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India was formed in 1972. One of its main aims was for the larger established *anjumans* to aid smaller *anjumans*, and to protect Zoroastrian buildings which had fallen into disuse, especially in the rural areas. Unfortunately some personality clashes weakened its effectiveness and when the liberal Delhi Parsi Anjuman, led by Lt. General Shiavax Nargolwalla, voted to allow non-Zoroastrian spouses to join the Association the Federation was split as the BPP withdrew followed by various others such as Surat and Poona (Hinnells 2005: 77–78). Nargolwalla also called for community-wide democratic elections for the Association's trustees. Eventually Bombay rescinded its withdrawal and again joined the Federation in 1978 and it, too, accepted community-wide elections to trusteeship in the 3rd millennium.

Parsis have also flourished in Pakistan, for example, a Parsi, Jamshed Marker, was Pakistan's ambassador under successive governments in France, the United States, and the United Nations, where he was spokesman for the non-aligned nations. Parsis have also been important shipowners, in the hotel business, and in the field of law (Hinnells 2005: 220–227).

The issue of intermarriage became acute at the end of the 20th century partly because it is thought to have increased substantially, but also because of some high profile cases. In 1990 a Parsi woman, Roxan Nadir, married a Jain, Darshan Shah, under the Special Marriages Act of 1954 which recognizes marriages between people of different religions. She was killed in a road accident and her family wanted her remains to be consigned to the *dakhme* but the Bombay Parsi Punchayet refused permission. The matter went to court where the position of the Punchayet was upheld. In 1993 Jehangir Ratanji Dadabhoy Tata died. He had been the product of intermarriage and had himself married out of the community, but an orthodox priest from London performed part of the funeral rite in Paris and at the funeral grounds in Bombay two *dastūrs* and ten priests performed the fourth-day ceremony for his soul, and were condemned by the orthodox press and some leading priests.

In 1994 there was further controversy. The Wadia family had given considerable funds to the community. In 1984 they were reported to have donated 1,585 flats in five colonies. Sir Neville Wadia's father had married out of the community and he himself had been baptized into his parents' Christian religion. But on various visits to Bombay Sir Neville gave various hints that he wanted to be a Zoroastrian. The three high priests in Bombay in 1994 agreed to him being initiated on the grounds that it was not a conversion, but a return to his ancestral faith. There was an outcry in the press contrasting the treatment given to Roxan Shah and that to Sir Neville Wadia and his son Nusli, and in Nusli's case he was the son of a Christian father and a Muslim woman, Jinnah's daughter. In an interview to the magazine *Parsiiana*, Sir Neville said that he did not go to the temple very often, but he prayed daily and on his death he was given a Zoroastrian funeral (Hinnells 2005: 125–135).

A matter of grave concern in the community is the declining birth rate and the annual excess of deaths over births (Hinnells 2005: 48). The number of Parsis in India

has decreased from 114,890 in 1941 to 69,601 in the 2001 census. It is, therefore, an aging and diminishing population. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that a large proportion of the young–middle-aged educated population is migrating overseas (see Hinnells, “The Zoroastrian Diaspora,” this volume).

Final Remarks

Although a small and diminishing community the Parsis have made a huge contribution to India, especially from the 18th century to the present in terms of education, culture, politics, commerce, and industry. From the mid-19th century they have also undertaken considerable political and charitable work for their co-religionists in Iran. Although a small community they probably represent the majority of Zoroastrians in the 21st century, though the number of Zoroastrians in Iran is uncertain.

Further Reading

Palsetia (2001) is perhaps the best book written in English on the Parsis in recent times. Kulke (1974) is a pioneering work in the sociology of the Parsis and in its use of hitherto unused sources. Kreyenbroek with Munshi (2001) contains a series of extensive interviews with Parsis of various persuasions plus reflections. Williams (2009) is a major study of a key text for the understanding of how Parsis view their settlement in India. Godrej and Mistree (2002) is an encyclopaedic work with thirty-six contributors, Zoroastrian and

Western scholars. It covers the whole sweep of known history and a broad range of cultural topics including dress and food. It is beautifully illustrated. Hinnells and Williams (2007) is a collection of thirteen essays by some of the leading scholars on the Parsis. Hinnells (2000) contains eight essays on the Parsis in India. Firby (1988) is an invaluable collection and critical study of the accounts of travelers to Iran and India. Luhrmann (1996) and Walthert (2010) are anthropological and sociological studies of the Parsi community.

CHAPTER 11

Zoroastrians in Modern Iran

Michael Stausberg

In the centuries following the Arab/Islamic conquest of Iran Zoroastrianism was reduced from a diffuse and partly dominant majority religion to a compact subordinate religious minority. By the 19th century the geographical expansion of Iranian Zoroastrianism was reduced to two geographical areas in central and south-east Iran respectively: the cities of Yazd and Kermān and some surrounding villages. While Zoroastrians still constituted the majority in a number of such villages, the number of these insular majority villages shrank in the long run. There were Zoroastrian quarters, or rather ghettos, in the cities, but these were eventually likewise infiltrated and reduced or even destroyed in the course of the centuries.

For the second half of the 19th century, available figures (Stausberg 2002b: 365–366) indicate that the number of Zoroastrians in the Yazd and Kermān regions together was well below 10,000. Moreover, reports show that the Zoroastrians were suffering from pervasive and persistent discrimination and various forms of humiliation on the part of the Shī'a-Islamic majority population (Amighi 1990: 83–119; Stausberg 2002b: 368–372). These took the form of proscriptions such as the wearing of a certain kind of dress and prohibitions against wearing rings or glasses, riding a horse or a donkey in the presence of Muslims, using certain wells, or of touching fruits and vegetables at the bazaar. The latter rules were governed by principles of purity and pollution, which Iranian Shī'ites shared with and largely inherited from Zoroastrians (see also Williams, “Purity Pollution / The Body,” this volume). Others were clearly meant to stigmatize, such as prohibitions against Zoroastrians adding a second floor to their houses, which incidentally made them easy to access for robbery. Zoroastrians did not enjoy basic civil rights: Threats, blackmailing, burglary, robbery, raids, assaults, rape, abduction, and murder were far from uncommon. Not even social status or wealth provided effective measures of protection (Boyce 1991: 17). Conversion to Islam, however, could seem to promise an escape route and held additional promise since a convert had the

right to inherit the whole estate of his parents at the expense of his non-Muslim siblings. Not unsurprisingly, there occurred a constant small-scale flow of conversions to Islam – partly by choice, but partly also enforced, such as when Zoroastrian girls were abducted and married to Muslims against their will. Conversions were a demographic but also material threat to the persistence of the community. Like other formally acknowledged minorities the Zoroastrians had to pay the poll tax (*jezīye*). Levying this tax often resulted in crisis and violence and amounted to acts of exploitation and assault.

The memory of this large-scale discrimination is still very much part of the collective identity of present-day Iranian Zoroastrians. In retrospect, it is not unlikely that the very existence of the Zoroastrian communities would have been endangered in the long run if they had had to continue struggling in isolation against the same odds. At that point, transformative change could only come from the outside – and so it did, in the 19th century, as a direct and indirect consequence of the colonial world order. As a result of developments during the subsequent century (as outlined in the following), the number of Zoroastrians almost tripled to some 25,000 (or even 30,000) in the mid-1970s (Stausberg 2002c: 240–241).

Since the 15th century, there had been occasional but regular contacts between the Iranian Zoroastrians and the Parsis, their co-religionists in India. With the Indian west coast becoming part of colonial trading and political networks, and the Parsis getting increasingly involved in trade and establishing close ties with the British (see Hinnells, “The Parsis,” this volume), the contacts between the Iranian and Indian Zoroastrians became more regular. In fact, something like a mass exodus of Iranian Zoroastrians to western India started in the late 18th century, only to intensify during periods of the 19th century, and to continue down to World War II. This kind of refugee network again came into effect after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The Iranian Zoroastrians who migrated to India in the modern period have constituted something like a sub-group of Indian Zoroastrianism, known as “the Iranis,” who maintain some of their own traditions including language (dialect), narratives, and some religious practices.

The Amelioration Society, the Struggle against Discrimination and New Agencies

Stimulated by various factors such as the arrival of the Iranian refugees, a continued attachment to their “original homeland,” new reports on the devastating conditions of their brethren in Iran, intermarriage between Parsis and Iranis, and the claim to the heritage of a glorious ancient civilization (Iran) that could enhance their cultural prestige in the colonial context, the Parsis not only accommodated Iranian Zoroastrian refugees, but they eventually also intervened in Iranian affairs. The most effective way of doing this turned out to be the founding, in 1853, of the “Society for the Amelioration of the Conditions of the Zoroastrians in Persia,” a name that concisely and explicitly described its aims. In 1854, this association, which in Iran came to be known as the Noble Society of the Parsis (*anjoman-e akāber-e pārsīyān*), sent an emissary, Manekji Limji Hataria (1813–1890), to Iran who filed important reports about the miserable situation of the

Iranian Zoroastrians (in which he also blamed their ignorance and lack of education and collaboration for their fate). Manekji also initiated and coordinated a vast array of activities that served to lastingly relieve the distress of the Iranian Zoroastrians and to rehabilitate and update their material culture, such as renovating religious buildings; to some extent these activities can be described as foreign aid. Manekji remained in Iran for almost thirty-five years and married an Iranian Zoroastrian woman from Kermān. He networked and campaigned widely, also involving foreign diplomats and international connections (Boyce 1969a; Stausberg 2002c: 154–164; Ringer 2009).

Manekji's activities resulted in a substantial legal change: in 1882, by an imperial decree, Zoroastrians were in perpetuity liberated from the payment of the poll tax (*jezīye*). Apart from abolishing the *jezīye*, the imperial decree put the Zoroastrians, at least in theory, on equal footing with the Muslims in all matters of taxation. In 1898 there was another royal decree officially abolishing all the discriminations suffered by the Zoroastrians (Stausberg 2002c: 164–165). Even so, there was a very long way from the lofty promises of royal decrees to the day-to-day realities in the provinces; Zoroastrians continued to be discriminated against, and even the poll tax was temporarily reimposed (Stausberg 2002c: 165–168). Now, however, circumstances had changed in such a manner as to allow them to challenge their fate, and the royal decrees were a way to provide legitimacy to their claims. Moreover, the Zoroastrian community of Kermān found itself in the special situation that the British consul had assisted the Zoroastrians, since a vast majority of the Zoroastrians, namely the Parsis in India, were British subjects (Sykes 1906: 760). Yet, as Jamsheed Choksy (2006b: 144–146) has rightly pointed out, unlike the close links between the Parsis and the British colonial power in India, there never developed strong ties between the Iranian Zoroastrians and the British in Iran.

The work of the Parsi emissary and regionally the occasional intervention of the representative of British colonial power were crucial to open up the closed situation of powerlessness the Iranian Zoroastrians found themselves locked in. Towards the end of the 19th century the Zoroastrians started to affirm their own political agency. This was facilitated by the creation of new community organizations or associations (NP *anjoman*), first founded by Manekji in Yazd and Kermān in 1854, though they then fell into disuse and came to be reconstituted some decades later (Stausberg 2002c: 241–242). The importance of these *anjomans* grew as the influence of the Amelioration Society decreased and Iranian Zoroastrians increasingly obtained the means to run their own businesses. The *anjomans* served to regulate the internal affairs of the local Zoroastrian communities and to represent them to the outside world. The associations set up a series of social and charitable activities (Ringer 2011: 149). Apart from providing forums for protest against maltreatment, this reorganization of the community administration had implications for the power structure within the communities; collective effort replaced the authority of the elders, mostly merchants and priests (Mehr 2002: 287).

From the late 19th century, Zoroastrian merchants managed to accumulate capital and they started other ventures and enterprises, including banking; their capital and networks allowed them not only to react to injustice but to contribute more actively to influencing the political agenda and to developing a framework for the future development of the Zoroastrian communities. The Zoroastrian community organization

(*anjoman*) was for the better part of the 20th century dominated by wealthy merchants or businesspeople who relied on their own economic and social resources and networks to run its activities.

Constitutional Changes

The Tehrān association had first been founded in 1891 by Khān-Šāḥeb, Manekji's successor as agent of the Amelioration Society, but eventually it went dormant. It was re-founded in the context of the Constitutional Revolution between 1905 and 1907, when various sorts of associations were founded in Iran. The re-establishment, in 1907, of Tehrān's Zoroastrian association by some wealthy Zoroastrians was coordinated by Keykhosrow Šāhrokh who had already been instrumental in re-establishing the *anjoman* in his hometown, Kermān. Keykhosrow Šāhrokh was elected as the president of the association and he would remain so until his death in 1940. Initially, the office of the *anjoman* was in a house owned by the then extremely rich merchant, estate owner, and banker Arbāb Jamšīd Jamšīdīyān (1850–1932) who played a vital role in creating the Zoroastrian community in Tehrān (Stausberg 2002c: 244–246; Ringer 2011: 165, 170–171).

Arbāb Jamšīd Jamšīdīyān and other leading Zoroastrians contributed to the Constitutional Revolution by providing shelter, weapons, and funds. In 1907, in the context of the revolution, Arbāb Parvīz Šāhjahān, a Zoroastrian from Yazd, was murdered. This event prompted the British vice-consul to send a report to the British minister in Tehrān in which he listed the heavy oppression suffered by the Zoroastrians in Yazd. As a result the British minister wrote a letter to the Persian foreign minister in which he urged the Persian government to concern itself with the safety of the "Parsees," as the Iranian Zoroastrians were then typically referred to (Oberling 1978: 17–18).

The debate on the new constitution, which was mainly modeled on the Belgian constitution and proclaimed in 1906, dealt among many other things with the position of Islam and the civil status of the religious minorities. Seen from the perspective of the minorities, the results were ambivalent. In the Supplementary Constitutional Law (1907) Islam, in its Ja'fari ('Twelver Shī'a') form, was affirmed as the official religion of the country (article 1). Islam thereby acquired a legal primacy and article 2 stipulated that no law must ever be established at variance with the principles of Islam and Islamic legal traditions; surveillance of legislature was assigned to a special committee of '*olamā*'. While the existence or the rights of other religions are nowhere affirmed, article 8 decreed that all people of the Persian Empire were to enjoy equal rights before the law – a wording reportedly smuggled into the text by Keykhosrow Šāhrokh as opposed to the original draft in which that privilege was only granted to Muslims (Stausberg 2002c: 174–175). This change was vigorously contested by Islamic thinkers who held that the idea of equality was against Islam (Arjomand 1988: 334–370; Stausberg 2002c: 171–173). Hence, a "fundamental contradiction – between a secular notion of equal rights regardless of religion and the reaffirmation of *ulama* authority in ascertaining compliance of all legislation with the shari'a" was inscribed in the constitution (Ringer 2011: 168).

Articles 9 and 10 of the constitution specified a series of legal provisions concerning life, property, etc. This provision was soon to be tested when a prominent Zoroastrian banker and constitutionalist was murdered for political motives. While there was a public outrage demanding the execution of the murderers, the idea that several Muslims should be executed for the death of a single Zoroastrian was apparently inconceivable and the murderers were instead punished by lashes and prison (Afary 1996: 138). While this was a high-profile case in the center of the empire, for most minority people in the remoter provincial areas the provisions given in the constitutional laws remained lofty words (Choksy 2006b: 151).

Even though the 1906 constitution (which largely remained unchanged, but without being always in force, until 1979) did not mention Zoroastrianism as a religion, it did grant the Zoroastrians, as people of the Iranian Empire, fundamental civil rights. Nevertheless, individual Zoroastrians (or members of other religious minorities for that matter) were far from being on equal footing in the political system. Note that article 58 specifies that only Muslims can attain the rank of minister. Moreover, a Zoroastrian cannot become an elected representative of Muslims in the parliament (*majles*). On the collective level, however, the non-Islamic religious minorities are implicitly acknowledged since the Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians were given the right to elect representatives of their own – amounting to an indirect recognition of their existence and giving them a minimal loophole of participation in the political system. Even this minimal acknowledgment, however, was perceived as so problematic as to potentially jeopardize the nationalist movement, resulting in a “request,” in reality a threat, to the minorities not to execute their rights. While the Jews and the Christians complied, the Zoroastrians maneuvered their way around and got their first representative, Arbāb Jamšīd Jamšīdiyān, admitted to the *majles*, otherwise an all-Muslim body (Afary 1996: 70; Stausberg 2002c: 173; Mehr 2002: 281). The Jewish and Christian representatives were admitted from the second period onward. Now, however, it was stipulated that all candidates had to declare their adherence to Islam, and even the three minority candidates had to have a “sound” religious reputation in their respective religion (Afary 1996: 263). Moreover, as in the case of the individual rights, while this scheme worked on the national level, it was not immediately transferable to the provinces; hence, “[i]n Yazd, contrary to specific regulations from the Majles that the provincial anjumans [councils] must represent their regional constituencies, the anjuman refused to seat a Zoroastrian, since the ‘ulama would not recognize the rights of the Zoroastrian community to public representation” (Afary 1996: 316).

Under the Pahlavīs

The political turmoil of the country until the rule of Rezā Šāh (1925–1941) effectively ruled out the enforcement of the spirit and the letter of the constitution. The reign of Rezā Šāh brought important legal changes that can be described as a secularization and nationalization of the judiciary system. The legal system was divested from the control of the ‘*olamā*’ and its substance was partly made independent of the *šarī’a*. In the long run, “the uniform national nature of these civil codes ... brought greater physical safety,

increased access to education, enhanced opportunities for employment, and provided freedom of expression of religious and cultural practices for Zoroastrians” (Choksy 2006b: 154).

During the reign of Reżā Šāh some specific forms of discrimination were formally abolished, albeit not without resistance by some Muslims. Here are just two examples: Zoroastrian men were no longer forced to wear the yellow dress, and Zoroastrians were eventually allowed to ride on mules, donkeys, and horses (Stausberg 2002c: 169–170, 180). When general conscription was introduced in 1925, members of the minorities were first excluded; this law was changed in 1938, and henceforth Zoroastrians were also allowed to fight for the country they identified with (Stausberg 2002c: 180). The inclusion of Zoroastrians in general conscription is generally celebrated as an achievement and not as an act of exploitation; Zoroastrians actively sought to be admitted. In a speech in the parliament in March 1925, in the context of a debate on conscription, Keykhosrow Šāhrokh argued that this issue should not divide the Muslim from non-Muslims Iranians. In his eyes, not being considered for conscription would amount to Zoroastrians being separated from the honor of “Iranianism” (Shahrokh and Writer 1994: 136).

In the early 1930s, minorities were granted separate personal status laws, which took some time to be accepted by the government, mostly because of a specific rule in Zoroastrian laws of adoption and divorce (Stausberg 2002c: 181). Yet, a generation later, the Family Protection Law of 1967, which was applicable to all Iranian citizens, and which also made it possible for Zoroastrian women to apply for divorce in civil courts (Mehr 2002: 295), brought the Zoroastrian community under closer patronage of the state.

The fact that the Zoroastrians in theory enjoyed equality under public law, on equal footing with the other people of the empire (except in some matters of family law), went a long way to providing some amount of agency to minorities by putting an end to the subordinate position to which they had found themselves confined. The theory, however, was not always followed in practice; discrimination and prejudice remained “daily experiences” for minority people living in the province (Sanasarian 2000: 56). Zoroastrian girls also continued to be abducted and insults and harassment still occurred (Choksy 2006b: 161). On a greater scale, the more stable and equal treatment of the Zoroastrians came into effect only towards the end of reign of Reżā Šāh’s son, Moḥammad Reżā Pahlavī (r. 1941–1979), shortly before the Islamic Revolution (Choksy 2006b: 154), but in a climate of general political repression. Zoroastrians experienced a more equal treatment especially in the capital, where, as a result of rapid urbanization, around half of the Zoroastrian population of Iran was living by the 1960s (Stausberg 2002c: 240). In the 1960s some Zoroastrians managed to enter the political system in addition to the representative in the *majles*: there was a Zoroastrian member of the Tehrān city council, two generals with administrative posts, and some Zoroastrians became heads of departments within ministries (Amighi 1990: 219). Some others became eminent in medicine, the national bank, and the university system (Amighi 1990: 234).

In the period from the mid-19th century to the 1960s the percentage of the Zoroastrian population living in Tehrān increased from 1 to over 50 percent of the

entire Iranian Zoroastrian population, with the main increase occurring after the 1950s (Stausberg 2002c: 239–241). This process has continued since then (see below). When the number of Zoroastrians in Tehrān increased and they held a wider spectrum of jobs than before, the Zoroastrian community in Tehrān began to diversify beyond the *anjoman*. A youth club was established in the 1960s, followed by other clubs and societies, which were concerned with promoting professional interests, education, and social ties (Amighi 1990: 246–247). The Tehrān community could provide a wide range of services (Amighi 1990: 250). While there is one residential housing colony, some residential buildings, and some neighborhoods with a higher concentration of Zoroastrians, in general the Tehrān community is scattered in spatial terms. There is what can be described as a kind of community center with a fire-temple, the seat and offices of the community organization, and a hall to celebrate initiations and weddings in Tehrān; recently, a library and hospital were reopened. Yet, many Zoroastrians continue to regard the former settlements in the province as the more important ritual centers. From a compact minority, Zoroastrianism has turned into a diffuse and scattered one both in spatial and social terms.

With the migration to Tehrān, the Zoroastrian dialects (called *behdīnānī*, *darī*, *gavrī*, or *gavrūnī*; see also Sheffield, “Primary Sources: New Persian,” this volume) were largely replaced by Persian as a medium of communication. Previously, there were almost twenty sub-dialects that sometimes made it hard or even impossible for speakers of other sub-dialects to understand each other. The Kermān branch of Zoroastrian dialects and some other sub-dialects have largely disappeared, while other varieties have gradually been interspersed with Persian (and now also English) phonetics, lexicon, and grammar. Nowadays, some people try to maintain the dialects; there have been recordings and linguistic studies (Mazdāpūr unpublished).

Agriculture lost the position as the economic and social basis of the Zoroastrian communities. Iranian Zoroastrianism changed into something like an urban middle-class society. This development was also reflected in the leadership structure. In the *anjoman* election of 1968, the former elite of the wealthy merchants and businesspeople was replaced by new professional elites (in fields such as medicine or engineering) and civil servants. Some Zoroastrians even obtained prominent positions in the state bureaucracy and the army, but even during the reign of the Pahlavī dynasty “Zoroastrians continued to be barred from the judiciary” (Mehr 2002: 299). In 1968, Dr Farhang Mehr, who held several prestigious positions in the state (he was minister of finance, general deputy minister, head of an insurance company, and president of Pahlavī University in Šīrāz), became head of the *anjoman*. Yet, without the funds and time available to the former leaders, the new leadership was lacking in finances and manpower (Amighi 1990: 256–257).

Nationalism: Ideological Reappraisal and Civic Zoroastrianism

Concurrently with the Zoroastrians developing the capital of the modern state as their main stronghold, Zoroastrianism also moved into the symbolic core of a modern political ideology: nationalism.

Zoroastrians constitute the oldest religious community living in Iran, and Zoroastrianism can claim to be the original religion of the country. (See Stausberg 2011 for Zoroastrianism and the notion of Iran.) Already in apologetic and polemical texts in Middle Persian, written in the first centuries of Islamic rule, Zoroastrian theologians presented their religion as the Iranian religion per se, the given (natural) religion of the Iranians, contrasted to the foreign ones and to the religions of the non-Iranians. Insofar as Iran is better than all the other countries, this also implied an ethnocentric and apologetic evaluation of the religion of the Iranians, namely Zoroastrianism. About the texts written by Zoroastrians between the 15th and 20th centuries, Aptin Khanbaghi has observed:

One of the most interesting features of the texts produced by the Zoroastrians in the Medieval period is their belief in their apanage of Iranian identity. Iranian and Zoroastrian are synonyms in these texts and it is only in the 20th century that Zoroastrian authors accept their non-Zoroastrian compatriots as Iranians. (Khanbaghi 2006: 147–148)

Thus the Zoroastrians have a long history of religious proto-nationalism, which they stubbornly maintained in spite of their increasing marginalization in Persian society.

Modern nationalism could engage various attitudes to religion, from anti- or irreligion to various reinterpretations of traditional religion, from stressing continuity to rupture between pre-Islamic and Islamic Iran. An important ideological resource for nationalist identity myths (Smith 1991: viii) and discourses was recourse to pre-Islamic Iranian civilization. Since the 1860s, one finds several programmatic attempts at studying ancient Iranian history, and Manekji actively involved himself in these projects (Stausberg 2003). Even though he had a largely ahistorical and mythical view of Iran (Ringer 2011: 159), Manekji was actively involved in a series of publications on ancient Iranian history, not only works he himself edited, but also supporting the work of contemporary *literati*, to whom he apparently seemed like a representative of that longed for golden age, as if he “had just walked out of a time machine” (Zia-Ebrahimi 2010: 384; see also Marashi 2008: 61–63; Grigor 2010: 56–58). Manekji traveled the country widely and eagerly collected traces of pre-Islamic history to document and safeguard them for the future. He hoped to eventually display his finds in a museum, but this plan did not materialize (Stausberg 2003).

The project of recovering “Iranianness” (*īrānīyat*) could go along with portraying the Arabs as the ultimate cause of all problems the country was facing then and now. Accordingly, this version of nationalism would seek to debunk and eliminate traces of “Arabness.” For Zoroastrians and some intellectuals, Islam would fall under this label, while others would regard Iranian (Shī‘a) Islam as superior to Arab (Sunnī) Islam. Another key aspect of nationalism was language politics, i.e., the attempt to “purify” the Persian language by “cleansing” Arabic elements from it and by “restoring” its “purity.” Moreover, in 1925, in the early period of Reżā Šāh’s reign, the calendar was reformed by introducing a solar year (with the Hijra as the starting point for the era), the twelve months of which were given the names of Zoroastrian deities and divine beings, in tune with the Zoroastrian calendar (apparently upon suggestion by Keykhosrow Šāhrokh). This is an example of an element of a minority religion becoming

part of mainstream civic culture. In the field of onomastics, in nationalist-minded circles one finds a preference for “Iranian” names, mostly taken from pre-Islamic history and epics – including the very name of the country which in 1934 was changed from “Persia” to “Iran.” When surnames were introduced, people were exhorted to choose genuine Iranian names. Archaeological projects of recovery were initiated and excavations conducted, for example at Persepolis, and symbols from pre-Islamic Iran became prominent on public buildings (Stausberg 2002c: 208–215; Grigor 2009). The *Šāhnāme* obtained the status of a “national epos” (which all “civilized” nations were supposed to have) and, partly upon the initiative of the Zoroastrian member of parliament (Keykhosrow Šāhrokh), a mausoleum for the poet Ferdowsī was erected in the eastern frontier town of Tūs (which was renamed Ferdowsī). This mausoleum has been called “the ultimate emblem of Iran’s modernization under Reza Shah and after” (Grigor 2009: 49; see also Marashi 2008: 124–125). A major street in Tehrān was also renamed Ferdowsī Avenue; at its northern end, the new Ferdowsī Square was adorned by a statue of the poet, which was donated by the Parsis (Grigor 2009: 71).

In the context of the creation of the national state (which comprises nationwide integrated systems of administration, communication, defense, education, law, taxation, and transportation) the invention and celebration of the ancient Iranian past “became a convenient template on which to reinvent Iranian culture in a modern form” (Marashi 2008: 136). Nationalist discourse replaced religious discourse as the ideological axis that provided legitimacy to the state and the short-lived Pahlavī dynasty, their very name alluded to pre-Islamic Iran. The second and last Pahlavī šāh followed the path set by his father. A significant instance was Moḥammad Reżā Šāh Pahlavī’s assumption of the fictive ancient Iranian title *Aryāmeh*r (‘Light/Sun of the Aryans’) in 1967. In the run-up to this event, a programmatic four-volume work entitled *Pahlavīsm* that made the ideological foundation of his reign explicit was published. These books, which also emphasized the Aryan roots of Iran and its historical proximity to the West, expressed the goal of “overthrowing the clerics and their dominant interpretation of religion” (Shakibi 2013: 122). Instead, Zoroaster is “presented as one of the main pillars of Iranian identity” (Shakibi 2013: 122), and Iran supposedly derives its main values ultimately from Zoroastrianism (see Ansari 2012: 169–172 for the construction of Zoroastrianism among Iranian historians of the period). Then there were the pretentious and pompous feasts to celebrate 2,500 years of kingship in Iran at Persepolis in 1971 and the replacement, in 1976, of the Hijra as the starting point of the era by the alleged date of the founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great, which turned the year 1355 (solar Hijri) into the year 2535 of the royal era (*šāhanšāhī*). This act of imperial hubris provided another attempt at “de-Islamifying” public national culture and provoked outrage among opponents who, led by Ayatollah Khomeini, claimed that replacing the Islamic era amounted to a desire to abolish Islam. Acts such as these nourished rumors that Moḥammad Reżā Šāh Pahlavī – similar rumors had already been circulated about his father – secretly adhered to Zoroastrianism (Stausberg 2002c: 211–214). Representing a source of symbolic capital, Zoroastrianism moved closer to power and its abuse.

As these (unfounded) rumors demonstrated, there was a fine line dividing discourses on pre-Islamic Persia from discourses on Zoroastrianism. Declaring an attachment to

the pre-Islamic past can be positively or negatively related to a commitment to Zoroastrianism. While one can, theoretically, be interested merely in the architectural, artistic, literary, martial, or political aspects of the pre-Islamic past, aficionados of pre-Islamic culture would generally also hold a sympathetic attitude towards Zoroastrianism since this religion was a part of the whole cultural package. From a marginal, marginalized, discriminated, and suspicious minority Zoroastrianism had moved into the core of mainstream discursive, imaginary, and symbolic representations of Iranian identity, giving it some degree of symbolic power. This “civic” Zoroastrianism entails a discursive or symbolic attachment to a former national religion but not a commitment to a specific religious minority group, which did not derive any material benefit from its new symbolic representation. The community is of interest only insofar as it has kept the flame of memory alive. This becomes apparent, for example, when the main fire-temple of Yazd is overcrowded by visitors during the New Year (*nowrūz*) celebrations. Others can proclaim themselves to be Zoroastrians at heart, even if they would not seek formal admission to the religion, but some did and some still do (albeit now mostly covertly). Especially in the Islamic Republic, proclaiming a Zoroastrian identity appears as a mode of cultural critique, as a third way between state-Islamism and Westernism. While there is also an Islamic Iranian nationalism, which tends to regard Islam as the fulfillment of ancient Iranian civilization and thereby replaces Zoroastrianism as a point of reference, pre-Islamic Iranian nationalism tends to be secular with a un- or even anti-Islamic flavor.

Religious Boundaries and Modernization

The organization of the religious field has traditionally operated with clear-cut boundaries between robust and compact religious groups. Several of the social, legal, and political changes indicated above resulted in making such boundaries less visible and apparently less important (albeit far from non-existent). This is also reflected in religious practice. The main actor was Keykhosrow Šāhrokh, the leader of the Zoroastrian community in Tehrān in the three decades from 1909, when he became the Zoroastrian representative in the *majles*, to his death in 1940. He also served as the president of the Tehrān *anjoman* from 1915 onwards. One of the most consequential changes he effected was the change of the funerary system. In 1934 land was purchased where a new cemetery (*ārāmghāh*) was established subsequently; hence, burial replaced the exposure of the corpses in the *dakhme* erected by Manekji south of Tehrān (in Ray) in 1863. While the use of the *dakhme* had been somewhat impractical and the structure had repeatedly been violated, and there were rumors that the corpses were used for medical studies, the decision was apparently taken by Keykhosrow Šāhrokh because he was convinced that the traditional funerary practice was unhygienic and contrary to the teachings of Zarathustra (Ringer 2011: 189; Stewart 2012: 69–70). The decision taken by the Tehrān community created quite strong resistance among the Parsis in India (Ringer 2011: 190–192), but in the meanwhile the Iranians had emancipated themselves from the authority of the Indians. For several decades, the older Zoroastrian settlements continued to practice exposure until the 1970s when all the *dakhmes* had been replaced

by cemeteries. Unfortunately, many of these traditional funerary architectural sites are on the verge of destruction, and the current political authorities are unwilling to grant them protected heritage status.

The funerary system is intimately linked to ideas of purity and pollution (see Williams, “Purity Pollution / The Body,” this volume). Purity rules are an important mechanism of creating and maintaining boundaries within and between different religious groups and are prominent both in Zoroastrianism and in Shī‘a Islam. Accordingly, in tune with the decreased importance of community boundaries, purity rules came to be downplayed in the long run. During World War II and the subsequent chaotic years, however, the Tehrān *anjoman* was steered into a more traditional direction with ritual and social boundaries being emphasized and some traditional ceremonies being reintroduced (Amighi 1990: 189–190). Since the 1960s and 1970s, first in the towns, important rituals of purification were no longer practiced and the purificatory substance considered most efficient, namely consecrated bull’s urine (*nīrang*), was no longer produced and applied. Educated Zoroastrians, with some progressive priests in Tehrān at the lead, apparently found these practices meaningless and embarrassing. In a similar fashion, the extended priestly rituals, often systematically connected to both the rituals of purification and the funerals (see Stausberg 2004b for an exhaustive treatment), were considerably shortened or even discontinued. Related to this “reconfiguration of rituals” (Rose 2011b: 186), the significance of fire as a ritual and divine agent was redefined and the fire cult was simplified. Inspired by Parsi patterns, in modern temples the fire is placed more centrally and is fully visible. In some places, the natural fire has been replaced by fires lit by gas whenever required. As in India, temples in several cities draw on elements of Achaemenid architecture as elements of facade design. Contrary to India, however, even the modern Iranian temples are enclosed by high walls, so that they remain invisible from the street (Stausberg 2004b: 196; Grigor 2010: 58). In a radical departure from previous stipulations, the more prominently located fires and fire-temples have partly been made accessible to people belonging to other religions (see also Choksy, “Religious Sites and Physical Structures,” this volume). In Yazd, the temple-fire, a natural fire burning in an Indian-style vase, is visible through a glass panel from the entrance hall for outsiders, while Zoroastrians have direct access from the other side. While the glass pane permits visitors to see the fire, it also protects the fire from potential desecration. Religious innovation is ongoing, e.g., by the admission of members of the laity and women to the priesthood (see Stausberg and Karanjia, “Rituals” and Rose, “Gender,” this volume).

In two popular books Keykhosrow Šāhrokh attempted to reformulate the religion in modern terms; drawing on many quotations from the Avestan texts, he de-emphasizes ritual and develops a universalist reading of the Zoroastrian religion (Ringer 2011: 192–195). In his memoirs, Keykhosrow Šāhrokh (Shahrokh and Writer 1994: 27) reports that Ebrāhīm Pūrdāvūd (1885–1968) had told him that reading his books had stimulated his interest in Zoroastrianism. In 1924, invited by a Parsi organization, the Iran League, Pūrdāvūd, a Muslim nationalist journalist, publisher, poet, and activist, traveled to Bombay where he would stay for the next two and a half years. In Bombay, he collaborated with the president of the Iran League, the Parsi scholar and philanthropist (Sir) Dinshaw Irani, on Zoroastrian history and a Persian translation of the Avestan

texts (Marashi 2013; see also Sheffield, “Primary Sources: New Persian,” this volume). The first and probably most significant result of this work was his translation of the *Gāthās*, which was published in 1927. Dinshaw Irani had himself published an English translation of the *Gāthās* in 1924. Heavily influenced by Christian Bartholomae’s German translation (1904), Pūrdāvūd dismisses the value of the Zoroastrian hermeneutical tradition and claims to have recovered the original meaning of Zarathustra’s words. He compares Zarathustra to Moses, but finds that Zarathustra had broken with the traditional polytheism. Zarathustra’s monotheism was not ontologically but ethically dualistic, i.e., there was only one all-powerful deity but within the human soul humans have to fight evil. For Pūrdāvūd the world-affirming “philosophy” of the *Gāthās* had nothing to do with rituals, sacrifices, and prayers for salvation. This interpretation has become the standard religious discourse among progressive Iranian intellectuals and Zoroastrians alike. It has also been endorsed by influential priests in Tehrān since the late 1960s.

Later, Pūrdāvūd also translated most of the remaining parts of the Avestan corpus and he published works on ancient Iranian history. In 1939, he started to teach at the University of Tehrān (established in 1934). His popular works “became the intellectual foundation for much of what the Pahlavī state came to promote as Iran’s official nationalism” (Marashi 2013: 195). Pūrdāvūd is considered as the master or mentor of a series of Iranian scholars who have published extensively on Zoroastrianism. Despite his contacts with Zoroastrians and sympathy for Zoroastrianism, Pūrdāvūd was never formally initiated into Zoroastrianism. This step, however, has been taken by Ali Akbar Jafarey (b. 1921), who grew up in Karachi, where he was influenced by the progressive scholar-priest Manekji Nusservanji Dhalla (see Hinnells, “The Parsis” and Sheffield, “Primary Sources: Gujarati,” this volume). In 1967, the Tehrān Zoroastrian women’s association, where lectures on the *Gāthās* used to be held (Mazdāpūr unpublished), published Jafarey’s book *Peyām-e Zartošt* (“The Message of Zarathustra”) that provided a synthesis of Pūrdāvūd’s and Dhalla’s hermeneutical approaches. (See Stausberg 2002c: 226–234 for a discussion of examples of post-Pūrdāvūd scholars of Zoroastrianism.) Jafarey held several positions in state institutions in the 1960s and 1970s, but left Iran after the revolution. He was one of the founders and continues to be the mentor of the Zarathushtrian Assembly, founded in California in 1991 (see Hinnells, “The Zoroastrian Diaspora,” this volume). In the meantime, Jafarey has traveled widely around the globe to propagate Zarathustra’s message and he has initiated people into Zoroastrianism in many countries. Thereby, Zoroastrianism has become decoupled from the ethnic community that had kept it alive in a marginal existence during the centuries of discrimination. (Stausberg 2007b has coined the term “Para-Zoroastrianisms” for this and other forms of appropriation of Zoroastrianism beyond the traditional ethnic communities.)

The Islamic Republic

During the 125 years from Manekji’s arrival in 1854 to the šāh’s departure in 1979 the situation of the Iranian Zoroastrians experienced a substantial socioeconomic improvement: From a subordinate minority group the Zoroastrians were on their way

to becoming citizens of the Iranian Empire, and their religion had received positive recognition in nationalist discourse. This does not mean that all Zoroastrians were uncritical supporters of the šāh. In fact, on occasion Zoroastrian representatives have emphasized the community's contribution to the revolution.

Nevertheless, once the revolution steered onto an Islamicist path and the country turned into an Islamic Republic the political change took a heavy toll on the situation of the Zoroastrians, even though the revolution as such did not cause casualties among Zoroastrians. Khomeini, the charismatic leader of the revolution and the subsequent head of state, was highly critical of the pre-Islamic nationalist discourse. He held a traditional view of the religious minorities as impure heathens and he consistently used derogatory vocabulary when referring to them, even though he made more accommodating statements after coming to power (Stausberg 2002c: 188, 190).

The constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran from 1979 is the first legal document in Iranian history that officially acknowledges the rights of the "recognized" religious minorities, namely Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians (in this order). This "institutionalization of segmentation" under the label of *aqallīyat* ('religious minorities') has become "a unique byproduct of the new regime" (Sanasarian 2000: 154). According to the constitution, "within the limits of the law," the religious minorities "are free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies, and to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education," as article 13 has it. It turned out that the seemingly innocent qualification "within the limits of the law" could entail serious restrictions and entailed a permanent control on behalf of the government. Moreover, whenever Moḥarram occurs the more public of the generally pronouncedly joyful calendric semi-public feasts arranged by the Zoroastrians are in imminent danger of being canceled. The tax exemption of places and worship and their societies introduced under Moḥammad Reżā Šāh was upheld in the Islamic Republic.

Article 14 states that "the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and all Muslims are duty-bound to treat non-Muslims in conformity with ethical norms and the principles of Islamic justice and equity, and to respect their human rights." Taking past experiences with the interpretation and application of "Islamic" principles of justice and equity by Iranian Muslims into account, such a wording could not instill much confidence among the concerned parties.

In continuity with the constitution from 1906, minorities including Zoroastrians maintained the right to elect their own representatives to the parliament. On the negative side of this, a Zoroastrian still cannot be elected to represent a Muslim electorate, and the Zoroastrian representative hardly has any significant power within the political system of the Islamic Republic. His main roles are that of a watchdog, a lobbyist, and a community advocate by trying to prevent the parliament from passing laws that would be detrimental to the Zoroastrian community, by protesting against discriminatory statements made by representatives of the state (such as when the secretary of the Council of Guardians of the Constitution in 2005 compared Zoroastrians to "sinful animals" [see Choksy 2011]), by reminding the parliament of the existence and dignity of the Zoroastrians (for example by suggesting adding Zarathustra's birthday to the list of national bank holidays), and by proving a forum for potential grievances of all sorts (see also Foltz 2011: 77–78). All these activities require some tactical skills and it has

happened that a representative was disqualified for re-election by the government, apparently because he touched on too sensitive issues (Fozi 2014).

Article 4 of the constitution stipulates: "All civil, penal financial, economic, administrative, cultural, military, political, and other laws and regulations must be based on Islamic criteria. This principle applies absolutely and generally to all articles of the Constitution as well as to all other laws and regulations." Given that this reversed the secularization of the legal system introduced under the Pahlavīs, this stipulation turned out to have very serious ramifications for the Zoroastrians, especially with regard to the penal code and the law of inheritance, which again makes conversion to Islam an attractive option. Where they occurred, such conversions were publicized as part of pro-Islamic propaganda. (See Sanasarian 2000: 130–131 for the example of a convert from Zoroastrianism.) A particularly sensitive issue has been the question of the compensatory blood money (*dīye*) that was denied in the case of murders of non-Muslims. In this question, however, after persistent lobbying and after former president Khatami's visit to the UN in 2001, in 2002 the government has changed its policy by acknowledging an equal share of compensatory blood money for the recognized minorities. The law was eventually approved in 2004.

Apart from the paradox of the simultaneous constitutional recognition and discriminatory legal stipulations, especially in the early period of the Islamic Republic subordinate minority status has once again characterized the negotiations of daily life. Zoroastrians were facing more hostile reactions and more limited public security, some amount of persecution and compelled marriages. There occurred an occasional revival of the concept of ritual impurity (*najēs*) and the use of insulting terms such as *gabr* and *kāfer* (NP 'infidel' < Arab. *kāfir*) (Choksy 2006b: 164–165). Recall also the restrictions in public appearance and behavior imposed on all inhabitants of the Islamic Republic. Given that the state has an explicit Islamic identity serving the interests of Muslims as its main constituency, careers in the army and the public sector are effectively blocked for Zoroastrians (Choksy 2006b: 166). "Job discrimination became rampant throughout the 1980s" for all minorities, reports Sanasarian (2000: 87). The war with Iraq (1980–1988) and the perpetual economic crisis of the Islamic Republic, resulting in high unemployment and inflation, have affected Zoroastrians as much as all Iranians without specific access to the networks of power. While it would be wrong to classify the Iranian Zoroastrians as a poor community by Iranian standards, there certainly is a fair amount of poverty in the community, and the emigration of wealthy members of the community occurred at the expense of networks of support, even though many rich people continue to provide various forms of aid from abroad. Discrimination at school or at work is not uncommon and there are recurrent property disputes, where Zoroastrians often find courts unresponsive to their legitimate demands. (See Stewart 2012 for the drawn-out conflict on the property around the Zoroastrian cemetery in Tehrān.)

As among all other religious minorities (Hemmasi and Prorok 2002), after the revolution urbanization has continued and even increased. Cities and villages around Kermān and Yazd have largely lost permanent Zoroastrian residents and the population that may be left mostly comprises the elderly, so that these settlements are not sustainable.

Ecological factors aggravate this process. In Yazd, the desert is advancing so that some old villages are slowly being covered by sand. With them the traditional architectural legacy is also on the verge of disappearing. The earthquake at Bam in 2003 forced Zoroastrians living in this area to relocate (Mazdāpūr unpublished).

The general prospects for the community appear to be relatively grim given the structural framework of the Islamic Republic. While Zoroastrian spokespersons have occasionally criticized the government right from the beginning (Sanasarian 2000: 70–71), and some have continued to do so (Choksy 2006b: 180–181), no individual Zoroastrians have become prominent in any sort of resistance movement, and as a community the Zoroastrians understandably keep a low profile.

Despite some misleading information contained in previous census records, which the Zoroastrian community did nothing to dispel and which is occasionally used by scholars (e.g., Hemmassi and Prorok 2002), since the establishment of the Islamic Republic the Zoroastrian population of Iran has declined by some 25–30 percent to less than 20,000 adherents. The further demographic development for Iranian Zoroastrians points towards further decline. There are three main reasons for this development (Foltz 2011: 81–82). First, their birth rate is well below replacement level. Second, there is an increasing number of divorces and in cases of marriages with Muslim spouses the prevailing law forces the Zoroastrian partner to renounce her or his religion. Third, there has been and continues to be a strong trend of emigration. This is not limited to Zoroastrians, but because of special refugee programs it is easier for members of religious minorities to leave the country than for others. According to Foltz (2011: 82), moral appeals by community leaders or stigmatizing emigration as “betrayal” notwithstanding, “a majority of Zoroastrians we spoke with during our visits to Iran in 2008–2009 and 2010 either planned to emigrate or were encouraging their children to do so.” The government is probably not averse to as many Zoroastrians as possible leaving the country.

Yet, despite legal, social and political restrictions, continuous economic crisis and dwindling numbers an outside observer states:

[The] Zoroastrian community life in Iran today is strikingly alive. The sheer number of Zoroastrian organizations of all kinds throughout the country is astonishing, and the list of their activities is endless: religious festivals, cultural events such as art exhibitions and theatre plays, recreational outings such as picnics and hikes, educational programs (including religious education), scholarly workshops on historical topics, computer classes, and perhaps most visible of all, sports activities. (Foltz 2011: 79)

In Tehrān, the Zoroastrian organizations include the main Zoroastrian association, a women’s organization, youth and students organizations, a bookstore, periodicals, several boys’ and girls’ schools, a kindergarten, a library, a clinic, and a home for the elderly (the latter three opened or reopened in recent years). The social life of the community proceeds mostly on exclusivist lines (Fozi 2014).

For religion, the main trends observed for the Pahlavī period have continued and there has been no rise of any form of Zoroastrian fundamentalism. In general religion has certainly attracted greater attention in the Islamic Republic than before; there has

been something like “a revival of faith among some Zoroastrians, but in a devotional rather than a ‘fundamentalist’ sense” (Rose 2011b: 187). The imposed sense of being part of a religious minority “has served to galvanize the community, strengthening its sense of identity, purpose and continuity” (Choksy 2006b: 172). The dominant religious idiom of public discourse in the Islamic Republic has also affected the role of religion among Zoroastrians. The government heavily regulates the field of education, including religious education, even within Zoroastrian schools. (See Sanasarian 2000: 76–84 for the conflicts and negotiations between the government and the recognized religious minorities on matters of education.) Even though textbooks used in schools appear to be permeated by discrimination and intolerance, and religious diversity is generally not acknowledged, “references to officially recognized religions are, for the most part, positive or neutral and no effort is made to criticize or negate them” (Paivandi 2008: 41).

The government does not give Zoroastrians access to the media in order to disseminate insider perspectives on Zoroastrianism, nor does it easily grant permission to erect new religious buildings. Plans to construct new temples, for example in Tehrān, are perceived to have greater success politically if tactically launched as “cultural centers” (Fozi 2014). In spite of these restrictions, a number of smaller shrines have come into existence and others have been renovated. *Pīr-e Sabz* (‘The Green Saint/Shrine’), a desert shrine some 30 miles (50 km) north-east of Yazd now functions as something like a national Zoroastrian pilgrimage center, attracting large crowds during the annual pilgrimage in summer; state security police prevent Muslims from access to the shrine, thereby at the same time protecting and shielding the event. (See Langer 2008 for an inventory of Iranian Zoroastrian shrines and pilgrimage-sites.) Images of Pīr-e Sabz, and sometimes also of the other main shrines, adorn walls in many Zoroastrian spaces, so that it has become something like the new navel of Zoroastrian religious geography. Shrines and temples are also regularly visited by groups of Parsis, so that one finds Parsi-style devotional objects or images at several of these sites. Some Parsi organizations or travel agents have been setting up such tours annually since the past several decades, some with a greater emphasis on religion, others on culture. In this way, tourism has offered a new avenue of performing the importance of Iran for the religious identity of contemporary Zoroastrians.

Religious rituals (including initiations and marriages) and feasts (see Rose, “Festivals and the Calendar,” this volume) are the only legitimate occasions for certain rules of conduct imposed by the Islamic Republic to be relaxed, at least as long as these events are shielded from the Muslim population and have been authorized by the government. These celebrations are often held with an air of joyfulness, which is in sharp contrast to the emphasis on sorrow displayed by Shī’a rituals. Especially in the cities, but less so in the villages, speeches and cultural displays are prominent parts of these rituals and feasts. These speeches and displays typically emphasize the ancient Iranian roots and the history of these celebrations, or the Zoroastrian and Iranian virtues supposedly expressed by them. They therefore also serve as stages to negotiate ideologies of Zoroastrian and Iranian identity in the context of the Islamic Republic (Fozi 2014). Some feasts are also occasions for women to put on supposedly traditional dresses as part of the Zoroastrians’ cultural heritage. (In urban contexts, Zoroastrian women

ceased wearing the earlier colorful dresses, some of which have now become collector's items.)

Fifteen Zoroastrians who lost their lives as soldiers or in bombings during the war against Iraq, are now generally acknowledged as 'martyrs' (NP sg. *šahīd*, pl. *šohadā*). This index of the sacrifice of Zoroastrian blood for their motherland is proclaimed in official pronouncements and to some extent also acknowledged by the government. Photographs of these martyrs are found in Zoroastrian public buildings and are displayed in public celebrations. There is an apparent mimesis of the martyr-discourse of the Islamic Republic, given that the concept of a martyr had been absent in Zoroastrianism (Stausberg 2002c: 218–219; 2004b: 533–534).

Some Conclusions and Prospects

In the millennium spanning the 3rd to the 13th century CE Zoroastrianism shifted its position from a dominant majority religion to a subordinate religious minority. The subsequent six centuries have reduced the spread of the religion to some limited geographical areas, to become a compact regional religion in the Iranian context (see Daryae, "Religion and Politics under Islam," this volume). Larger-scale geopolitical developments and the modernizing project of the Iranian nation, with the Zoroastrian community actively sharing in this endeavor, have again changed the picture, and Zoroastrians came to successfully challenge their fate. They were on their way to becoming "ordinary" citizens of the state, with the prospect of social equity and economic opportunities and a concomitant de-emphasis of religious and ritual boundaries and a reformulation of the doctrinal, ritual, and organizational structure of the religion. In the nationalist context, Zoroastrianism moved upwards in the symbolical and discourse universe, so that both the religion and its adherents became part of Iranian civic culture. This process was stopped and to some extent reversed after the Islamic Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic. In the Iranian Republic the Zoroastrians staunchly maintain the claim that Zarathustra had laid the fundament for all later Iranian culture, that Zoroastrianism presents Iranian identity in its purest forms, and that even specifically Iranian forms of Islam such as mystical poetry or some elements of Shī'a practice are informed by Zoroastrianism (Fozi 2014). Although some Zoroastrians bravely voiced criticism, often in the name of the Iranian nation, which the Zoroastrians claim to represent in a primordial, semi-exclusivist, essentialist, and vicarious manner, there was neither militancy nor mobilization; the prevalent responses were submission and loyalty, emigration/exit, a "clannish" (Wirth 1945: 360) withdrawal into themselves, and a return to more group-specific identity projects, mainly of a religious focus, albeit retaining the claim of national significance. Throughout these 20th-century trajectories, Zoroastrianism sacrificed some of its distinct traits, in particular those related to purity and purification, to this project of nationalist mimesis and modernization. Zarathustra's supposed ethical message of choice and equality (not least of gender) has gained prominence as discursive points of reference, but religious sites and celebrations continue to safeguard the material presence of the "good faith."

Further Reading

The most comprehensive overviews are Stausberg (2002c: 152–262 [= chapter C]) and Choksy (2006b). Foltz 2011 (=2013: 256–264) conveys impressions based on shorter field-trips. Mehr (2002) is a learned insider perspective by a prominent Iranian Zoroastrian. There are four ethnographical studies: Boyce 1977 [reprint 1989] is based on fieldwork in the rather remote village of Šarīfābād in 1962/1963; Fischer (1973) on fieldwork mainly in Yazd (but also in Tehrān and cities of Pakistan and India) in 1970–1972; Amighi (1990) on research in Tehrān conducted in 1972–1973; Fozi (2014) on fieldwork in Tehrān in 2007. All four provide contrasting views of Zoroastrians and Zoroastrianism. Of the four, only Boyce (a philologist by training) is entirely dedicated to religion. Amighi is mostly a social, economic, and institutional history of the Tehrān community. Fozi analyzes different types of celebrations and rituals. Fischer is distinctive because of his strategy to focus on several religious communities in the Yazd region. In his later work (e.g., Fischer and Abedi 1990; Fischer 2004) Fischer has continued to discuss aspects of Zoroastrianism. Sanasarian (2000) is a political scientist's comparative survey of Iran's religious minorities during the

first two decades of the Islamic Republic. Almost exclusively based on work published in English, Ringer (2009) provides a comparative discussion of religious reforms among Zoroastrians in India and Iran. Important source materials in Farsi have been compiled by Amīnī (2001) and Ūšīdarī (1976). Nemirānīyān (2008 [1387]) is a comprehensive history of Zoroastrianism in Iran (*non vidi*). The important interaction with the Bahā'īs is treated by Momen ("The Bahā'ī Faith," this volume). Sheffield ("Primary Sources: New Persian," this volume) summarizes some important sources including community magazines. Sarah Stewart (SOAS, University of London) has conducted an extensive oral history project in Iran; so far, results are unpublished.

This chapter uses samples of a text generously submitted by Katāyūn Mazdāpūr (Tehrān), which also comments on a tiny local group called *jadīd* (lit. '[the] new [ones]'). These families are a hybrid composite: they are both Muslim and Zoroastrian (or neither Zoroastrian nor Muslim). They have special names, sometimes Muslim and Zoroastrian ones. They are closely bonded and have a separate cemetery next to the village of Cham, where the corpses are buried in stone graves.

CHAPTER 12

The Zoroastrian Diaspora

John R. Hinnells

There have been Zoroastrian diasporas since Achaemenid times in Anatolia, the Caucasus, India, and probably in ancient China. In modern times there have been different periods of migration and settlement. From the 18th century Parsis in colonial India took part in trade throughout the British Empire and established settlements in various commonwealth countries. Today, the Parsis are the biggest Zoroastrian diaspora in the world with around 60,000 adherents.

Zoroastrians in China

The earliest known Parsi trade was with China in the late 18th century at Canton. The most famous of the early traders was Sir Jamsetji Jijibhoy who made his first visit in 1799 (he made others in 1802, 1804, 1805, and 1807). He traded in cotton and particularly in opium. From the evidence of lists of signatories to petitions and donations to charities it would seem that there were approximately seventy Parsi merchants in Canton in the mid-19th century. They appear to have had a high status among the merchants because two were put on the committee of the newly created chamber of commerce. The main base in the 19th century was in Canton, but Indians were not permitted to remain there outside the trading season, so the Parsis raised the money for a building at Macau where they could stay when not in Canton. From 1834 the Canton community had their own priest and from 1845 they had their own funeral grounds but plans to erect a building for religious ceremonies were long delayed. Nevertheless these measures indicate that there was a real sense of community in Canton. The Parsis in East Asia also raised funds for burial grounds on Macau in 1829 and in Shanghai in 1854. By the 1930s the community in Shanghai numbered 124 people, including some wives and children. Although a building was not erected in Canton until 1926,

one was built in Shanghai in 1862. In 1866 a building with a library was constructed and in 1872 formal trust funds were drawn up, some money was given to poor local Chinese, some to Iranian Zoroastrians but mostly money was sent to Parsis in Bombay, mainly for education and medicine. By 1899 the number of Parsis in Shanghai had increased, which meant that an additional floor had to be added over the old prayer hall. In the 1920s Shanghai Parsis became wealthier and they were able to build a new prayer hall, using existing funds without loans. Significantly, women were encouraged to get involved in meetings and functions. Because of the enforcement of purity laws non-Zoroastrians were not allowed to attend religious functions, but they were welcome at social events. By 1927 there were growing fears about external politics, particularly the threat of a Japanese invasion, and it was decided to put their investments outside the city. In World War II the Shanghai Parsis did not suffer as much as those in Hong Kong, where Indians were seen as collaborators with the British, but when the Communists took over China in 1947 all the Parsis had to vacate and leave their property, including the graveyard, despite their protests. As a result, people and funds were transferred to Hong Kong, which then became the locus of Parsis in East Asia.

The Hong Kong Association started as an offshoot from Canton with one of the first firms to move their offices to Hong Kong being Cowasjee Pallanjee & Co in 1841. A cemetery was acquired in 1845 and a religious building was opened in 1861, followed by a Parsi club in 1871. Successive buildings were opened in 1931, which were extended in 1970 and replaced in 1993. The importance of built spaces for the development and maintenance of a sense of community identity cannot be overemphasized for small diaspora groups like the Parsis.

One of the early successes in Hong Kong was Dorabji Naoroji, who went to Hong Kong from Bombay as a cook. His bakery became famous and he moved into the hotel business, owning a string of big hotels. In 1880 he started the famous Star Ferry linking Hong Kong Island with the mainland at Kowloon. Parsis were important in the development of banking in Hong Kong. When the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank was formed in 1864 Parsis were on the planning committee and two became directors. Another important Parsi was H. N. Mody, who engaged in land investment and with Sir Paul Chater formed the Hong Kong Land Company, which still owned much land into the third millennium. Mody also developed the Hong Kong Share Market and Stock Exchange and was also central to the founding of Hong Kong University, paying for all the establishment costs.

Indians in general, including Parsis, suffered during the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong during the Pacific war. Several are known to have been tortured but perhaps the best known was Mr Shapurji Jokhi. He was imprisoned for eleven months, tortured and sentenced to death for giving food and medicines to British prisoners. Shortly before the sentence was to be carried out he had a dream that he would be set free and he vowed that if he were he would build a housing colony in his native Navsari. A new commandant came to the camp and reviewed all the death sentences. He asked Mr Jokhi why he had given the parcels, the reply was: "Because of my religion" and Jokhi said he would have done the same for Japanese prisoners if they were in need. The commandant was himself religious so he commuted the death sentence to imprisonment and three months later Mr Jokhi was set free. He kept his vow and built three blocks of

flats, housing some 2,000 poor and middle-class Parsis. While he was in hospital in Bombay he saw the Parsi General Hospital needed help and he gave generously. After his death further donations were given to the hospital and to religious buildings. Such a case, with its vivid story, narrativization of Parsi ethics, and its powerful social impact speaks to the often overlooked role that peripheral groups and individuals have played in community-building in Parsi society in India.

Another important postwar Parsi family in Hong Kong has been the Ruttonjees. Hormusjee Ruttonjee began as a wine merchant in Hong Kong and his son Jehangir started the Hong Kong brewery. The brewery was occupied by the Japanese during the war, and on its return to the Ruttonjees they sold it to San Miguel breweries. Jehangir diversified into flats and it is said he had 2,000 tenants. In 1948 he funded the building of a tuberculosis sanatorium in memory of his daughter Tehmina, who had died of TB. In 1956 he funded a convalescent home in memory of his second daughter, Freni, who died of cancer. In 1994 a new hospital was built by the government to replace these two buildings, but in recognition of what the family had done it was named the Ruttonjee Hospital by the then governor, Chris Patten.

After the war funds were in very short supply, but as Hong Kong recovered economically the Parsis also began to flourish. There was some trepidation at the handover back to China, but numbers grew as people were relocated by their multinational companies. There are now fewer people in business, with more employed in the professions, especially after higher education overseas, but many then stay in their new country, though few in Hong Kong contemplate leaving. But as the number of young Zoroastrians is very small it is thought that intermarriage will increase and few see the future of the community extending beyond fifty years (Stausberg 2002c: 278–282; Hinnells 2005: 145–188; see also Aoki, “Zoroastrianism in the Far East,” this volume).

Zoroastrians in East Africa

The story of Parsis in East Africa began with the settlement in Aden, particularly the Cowasji Dinshaws, who ran the biggest business there, more or less controlling the port, which inevitably became more important with the opening of the Suez Canal. They ran a major shipping line and built a fire-temple in Aden (Stausberg 2002c: 284–287). Parsis also settled in Zanzibar. Although there were earlier settlers, the main moves began with one of the claimants to the throne of Zanzibar, Barghash, being exiled to Bombay in 1856 where he stayed in the Parsi quarter. When he acceded to the throne in 1870 he took some Parsis with him to Zanzibar. Most of the early settlers were educated professionals, several running important government offices. The Anjuman was started in 1875 and in 1882 the first priest was brought from India and the first ritual fire was consecrated in one of the leaders' homes. Although they numbered only twenty-six in 1884 the following year they bought a community hall, priest's quarters, and kitchen and began to lay the foundations of a *dakhme*, but they were legally prevented from completing it. In 1895 they built a prayer hall. In 1884 the Cowasji Dinshaws opened an office in Zanzibar and because of their wealth, gained from international trade, they ran the Anjuman. Parsis continued to occupy senior positions in

the island after World War II. The community became divided in the 1950s when the Cowasji Dinshaws said that if they were to continue to fund all the developments then their representative was to be considered head of the community. The majority of the community objected but there was still a substantial proportion supporting the Cowasji Dinshaws. The divisions became acrimonious, not least over the treatment of the priests, who were treated as menial employees, being given no authority even in religious matters. Although there is no evidence of theological debate, there was a high level of religious activity. Although there does not appear to have been a female trustee, women were active in the community, appearing, for example, with men in Parsi dramas and there was even a women's cricket team. There were various protestations of loyalty to both the sultan and to the queen. After independence Zanzibari Parsis thought they would remain on the island, but after the revolution in 1964 almost all Parsis left (Stausberg 2002c: 284–291; Hinnells 2005: 245–288).

Parsis appear to have begun to settle on the African mainland at the start of the 20th century though there was an Anjuman in the 19th century. The growth was due to the building of the East African railway. Mostly people came from India, but a number came from Zanzibar and a few from Aden. Socially Parsis in Mombasa were active in cricket and they ran a successful dramatic society. Another Parsi, Dara Patel, was a public supporter of Jomo Kenyatta prior to independence. The Parsi *Shemba* (Swahili for *baug* or housing complex) included a cemetery, a building for *navjotes*, weddings and funerals, and a sweet-water well. After World War II buildings were erected for rental flats and a rest house was built, so, too, was a prayer hall. The community is overall “traditional.” People look back at the 1960s as the golden age, when there were about 350 Parsis in the city. But in the 1980s there were serious disputes, basically over the question of leadership, for example over who had the authority to call meetings. Eventually the African district officer was called in to arbitrate, but he was unsuccessful and the managing committee was disbanded. In these particularly small diaspora groups conflicts tend to be very divisive due to the personal nature of the animosities. This proves to be one of the more challenging aspects of writing a structural analysis of these groups as the personal traits and characters of the leaders in question often receive greater attention than they might in a larger community.

The building of a community in Nairobi took place later. The Anjuman was formed in 1904 by a handful of Parsis. Their first property was a funeral ground. The early settlers were a mixed group, but gradually in the 1930s it became a more professional body. Two bodies developed the Nairobi Parsee Anjuman and the later Parsee Zoroastrian Association of Kenya, the latter being formed in 1942 having numbers in the fifties. The government granted them land but the shortage of materials during the war hampered its development though a rest house was erected which served as a social center. The highpoint of the Nairobi community was in the early 1960s when there were over 200 Parsis there and social and religious functions increased. In 1963 Kenya became an independent republic and the Parsi community wrote a letter to the new president, Kenyatta, offering congratulations and loyalty. In the early 1970s, Parsis began to emigrate to Britain, and as the number of deaths exceeded the number of births it was a diminishing community. It thus proved difficult to maintain the size of the managing committee and membership dues diminished. There were also debates about expressing

ties to India, for example by sending charitable funds, at a time of increasing nationalism. With diminishing numbers in-marriage became more difficult and advice was sought from Bombay concerning the Special Marriages Act (relating to marriages between members of different religions), as to whether someone who had such a marriage could still be considered a Parsi. Generally the aging community remained traditional (Stausberg 2002c: 291–295; Hinnells 2005: 288–313).

Parsis in Pakistan

Originally the main base of Parsis was in Hyderabad, but when the British moved to Karachi, so did many Parsis. Initially fortunes were made as suppliers to the British army, notably in their Afghan campaigns, and in the liquor trade. Some of the early settlers practiced the Zoroastrian tradition of philanthropy, for example Eduljee Dinshaw, who moved for business as a supplier to the British forces then diversified into real estate and factories. He was the main donor to fund the Sind Arts College in 1883 and was the major donor to the Lady Dufferin Hospital in Karachi in 1896. He also funded a number of dispensaries. He was made a director of the Land and Shipping Company, a delegate of the Parsi Matrimonial Court, a trustee of the Karachi Port Trust, and a member of the Municipal Corporation. Figures such as Dinshaw testify to the powerful role that certain individuals have played in community building across a wide spectrum of socio-economic activities.

After the work of Maneckji Limji Hataria in Iran (1813–1890) a number of Iranian Zoroastrians traveled to the Indian subcontinent, hoping to receive the sort of treatment that they had received from Hataria, but sadly they faced discrimination and encountered language difficulties. A number settled in Sind and several opened teashops. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries births exceeded deaths among the Parsis, so community numbers grew.

A funeral ground was opened in Hyderabad before 1846 and one was started in Karachi around 1840, the first *dakhme* was opened in 1848, and a second larger one was consecrated in 1875. The first priest was appointed in 1848 and a temple was consecrated in 1849, schools were built in 1859 and a second temple was consecrated in 1869. These were followed by dispensaries, a *baug* for poor Parsis, and an institute for social and religious functions. It should be noted that the Karachi Parsis were the first Parsi group to have communal housing (Hinnells 2005: 208).

A pioneering theologian was Maneckji N. Dhalla (1875–1956). He was born in Surat but raised in Karachi and was initiated as a priest when he was fifteen. He was fiercely “orthodox,” read voraciously and wrote newspaper articles which brought him to the attention of the reformer K. R. Cama in Bombay, who arranged for Dhalla to do a degree in Bombay in Avestan and Pahlavi. He came to the attention of the distinguished visiting professor Abraham Valentine Williams Jackson (1862–1937) from Columbia University and funds were raised for Dhalla to study for an MA then a PhD in New York. (On Jackson’s contribution to the study of Zoroastrianism, see Stausberg and Vevaina, “Introduction: Scholarship on Zoroastrianism,” this volume.) Dhalla attended lectures on various subjects. Dhalla himself states that he had arrived in America in 1905 an “orthodox,” but he left

as a “reformist” (Dhalla 1975: 157–158). On his return to Karachi he was elected Dastur where he led a simple but devout life. He organised a series of annual Zoroastrian conferences (1910–1919) where he attempted to balance “orthodox” and “reformist” voices but rumors spread that he was trying to inculcate reformist policies, the conferences became controversial, and eventually he had to give them up. He wrote a series of important books (e.g., Dhalla 1914, 1938) in which he expounded his theological position in the light of his studies (his 1944 book is a devotional text). The impact of the theory of the evolution of religion is evident, though he balanced this with his conviction that Zoroaster had a vision from Ahura Mazdā and so stood aside from evolution. In his academic works he recounts the Pahlavi accounts of the afterlife and their eschatology, but these are not mentioned in his devotional text. His major work contains a sharp attack on the “orthodox” and a sustained attack on theosophists (Dhalla 1938: 481–482, 502–508).

Since Partition there has been an increasing rise in deaths compared with initiations, and increasingly Pakistani Parsis are migrating overseas. In Pakistan there have been some important figures in the 20th century. One of them was Jamshed N. Mehta (1886–1952) who was born into a wealthy middle-class family, but lived ascetically and gave away all his wealth to help the poor. He devoted his life to the municipality of Karachi. He was elected president of the municipality for thirteen consecutive years, and when the office of mayor was created he was elected to that. He was known as “the maker of modern Karachi.” He eventually resigned from the council in 1937 because he said corruption was rife. When Sind was separated from the Bombay Presidency in 1936 Mehta was elected to the Sind Legislative Assembly but once again resigned after three years because of corruption. He was a religious man and was associated with the Parsi community but he gave most of his talks in the Theosophical Society. It is estimated that 100,000 people lined the streets at the time of his funeral.

Various Parsis have held important posts and exercised influence. Muhammad Ali Jinnah was close to the Parsis. He was married to a Parsi, the daughter of Sir Dinshaw Petit, and his daughter married a Parsi. His political mentor was Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and he helped Dadabhai Naoroji in his first political campaign in England and was his secretary during his presidency of the Calcutta Indian National Congress meeting. The early pre-cabinet meetings after Partition were held in a hotel owned by a Parsi, Dinshaw Avari. It was also used by staff from various embassies moving to Karachi. The Avari family bought the Avari Towers hotel, originally built as a Hilton hotel, and they own the Lahore Hilton. Another prominent Parsi family in Karachi is the Marker family. They owned an ice-factory in Quetta and a pharmaceutical company, and one member of the family, Jamshid, has served under successive governments as ambassador to such important postings as France, Russia, Japan, the United States, and the United Nations. The Edulji Dinshaws have been a highly respected family before and after Partition. Hoshang N. E. Dinshaw (d. 1967) founded the Nadir Dinshaw Engineering College, which went on to become a university. He also played an important role in the economic development of the new nation as chairman of the Public Investment Council and of the Reorganisation Council. He was president of the board of directors of the National Bank from 1952 to 1964. The Cowasjees are also a prominent Parsi family, owning a large portion of Pakistan’s fleet of commercial ships.

Another important Parsi was Mr Justice Patel who was elevated to the supreme court; he was one of the three judges who tried ex-President Bhutto, and was the one judge who opposed Bhutto's execution.

As far as religion is concerned there is a severe shortage of priests and no young ones so the next generation of Parsis is going to face even more difficulty in maintaining their ritual-communal lives. However, in the general atmosphere of great enthusiasm for Islam on the part of young Muslim Pakistanis, likewise, young Zoroastrians are showing more enthusiasm for their religion than the elders recall of their early years. This is a trend that is often spoken about in other diaspora communities as well and will be well worth observing in the decades to come.

One of the main concerns of the Anjuman has been housing. After Partition a number of Parsis had funds tied up in India and so could not afford a home, but, as the Parsi population in Pakistan decreased by twenty-five percent in the 1990s, there is less of a housing shortage. One of the social organizations is the Banu Mandal. Created in 1912 as a ladies' sewing circle it became the main social organization of Parsis in Pakistan, undertaking considerable charitable work, especially in education and medicine. There are two Parsi schools in Karachi, one for boys, one for girls, but relatively few Parsis attend them, preferring the high academic standards of the Catholic school. But Sunday school is organized to teach young children about the religion. There have been several teachers of Zoroastrianism, all ex-pupils of Dastur Dhalla. The most prominent teacher of religion has been Ervad Godrej Sidhwa (b. 1925).

One of the most famous Parsi novelists is Bapsy Sidhwa, who was born in Karachi in 1938 but grew up in Lahore. Her three novels about Parsis tell the stories of successive generations of Parsis in Pakistan. The first, *The Crow Eaters*, tells the story of a lovable rascal, Freddie, taking his family by bullock cart to Lahore to pursue trade with the British. He eventually becomes wealthy and a prominent citizen and marries his daughter to the son of one of the great Bombay Parsi knights. Her second novel, *Ice Candy Man* (sold in North America under the title *Cracking India*) is a semi-autobiographical account of a young disabled Parsi girl growing up in increasingly divided Pakistan after Partition. She relates that whereas Hindus and Sikhs felt it essential for them to flee to save their lives, the Parsis remained, feeling that as they had always been neutral they would be safe in the new Islamic state – which they were. Finally, *An American Brat* tells the story of a Parsi girl who while studying in the USA falls in love with a Jewish boy, but her mother comes to visit and is resolved to break the relationship and eventually succeeds (Writer 1994: 171–184; Stausberg 2002c: 264–273; Hinnells 2005: 189–244).

Zoroastrians in Britain

The first Zoroastrian to visit Britain was Naoroji Rustomji, the son of Rustom Maneck (see Hinnells, "The Parsis," this volume) in 1724. Rustom had been favored by the then governor of Bombay, Charles Boone, but his successor, William Phipps, took a very different attitude. He accused the family of profiteering, dishonesty, and indebtedness and gave the trade to their Hindu rival, Vitaldas Parak. He put Rustom's sons under house

arrest and made the family pay to be allowed to feed them, despite the pleas of Commodore Mathews, who knew them because they had provisioned the British fleet. The Muslim governor of Surat also spoke for them. Eventually Naoroji thought only a petition to the court of directors of the East India Company would solve the problems. He managed to get away and Commodore Mathews gave him passage on a ship bound for London. Naoroji spent a year in London and when the verdict was given it was in favor of the Maneck family. Full financial restitution was made, with interest. Naoroji used some of the money to load a ship with goods for trading in India. On his return to Bombay he acquired considerable standing; a hill in Bombay was named after him and the income from this land made his family rich for two centuries. He was elected leader of the first Parsi Punchayet and had a high status with other traders. But it was only in the middle of the 19th century that many other Parsis visited Britain, for education and training. The first Indian firm to be established in Britain was started by the Cama brothers and Dadabhai Naoroji in 1855 with offices in London and Liverpool. Once Bombay University was started in 1857 for undergraduate studies then Parsi students traveled to England for further education, most commonly in law, medicine, and technology.

Gradually in the 1860s whole families traveled and settled in Britain. So in 1861 the first Indian Association in Britain was started, the Religious Funds of Zoroastrians of Europe. In 1862 they acquired a burial ground in Surrey. London Parsis used their position at the heart of empire to approach the Šāh on his European visits, in 1873 and 1899, on behalf of the Iranian Zoroastrians; a move supported by Bombay Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians (Hinnells 1996: 111–114).

In 1908 Dadabhai Naoroji resigned as president of the Association, as he had returned to India on health grounds and Sir Muncherji M. Bhowmagree was elected in his place. Bhowmagree (a lawyer) made two significant changes to the Association. First he put it on a firmer legal basis by getting parliamentary lawyers to draw up a constitution. Second, he transformed what had essentially been a burial club into more of a high-status social body by organizing trips for picnics and splendid formal dinners to which prominent non-Parsis were also invited, thus building Parsi cultural capital. Inevitably, this provoked a countermovement, the Parsi Social Union, which seems to have catered mainly for students and reflects a broader sense of the need for more social functions. But there was rivalry between the two, with the Union criticizing the Association for its emphasis on grand occasions, and Bhowmagree dismissed the Social Union as “a very small body of very small means” (Hinnells 1996: 119). Ironically, perhaps, it was the Union which obtained the first Zoroastrian building in Britain, when in 1909 they agreed with Sir Shapurji Broacha to buy a house in Edinburgh for Parsi students there (mainly medical students). Unfortunately the housekeeper was racially prejudiced and, though she let Europeans stay there, she would not admit Parsis. In 1945 the property was sold and the funds given to the London Association. Such examples of racial prejudice are to be found across all the diaspora groups and are often major components of the corporate identities of the groups in question.

The slump in the 1920s affected the Association badly. There was a decrease in subscriptions and an increase in impoverished people seeking assistance to get back to India. After some debate the Bombay Punchayet eventually agreed to help in deserving

needy cases. In 1920 the Association purchased its first property in South Kensington, however, it was too large for the Association's needs and required substantial sums for its renovation. So in 1925 it was disposed of and a smaller property was purchased in 1929 that had a small room for ritual purposes, some social rooms to make it a social club, and rooms for visitors or the impoverished to stay in.

From the 1930s there were proposals for a new Zoroastrian House. Raising the money in postwar Britain proved very difficult but in 1967 they managed to buy 88 Compayne Gardens where there was better accommodation for both social and religious functions. It was also near an underground railway station. Two years earlier, in 1965, Dr Kutar was formally recognized, in India as well as in London, as a Dastur, a high priest, still the only one in the diaspora so recognized in India. By the 1990s numbers had increased further with migrations from Kenya and Uganda and some Iranian Zoroastrians after the fall of the Šāh in 1979. There was evidence of a growing interest in the religion among the youth and so again a new project was started to get bigger premises. To try and avoid controversy extensive consultations were undertaken and a study made of where most Zoroastrians lived and a priority was given to finding something near an underground station. In 2000 a disused Art Deco cinema was found and purchased for £1,358,000, with half the money given by the Zartoshty brothers, Faridoon and Mehraban, Iranian Zoroastrians from Yazd who had studied in Bombay. Extensive renovations were undertaken and a prayer room was created on the style of fire-temples in India. Plans for a consecrated temple have not yet been successful (Stausberg 2002c: 300–312).

An important movement also started in London, the formation of the World Zoroastrian Organization (WZO). There had been calls for such an international body at successive world congresses; one of the objectives was to pool resources internationally and to speak out for small vulnerable groups such as those who suffered in East Africa and, later, Iranian Zoroastrians. Some international leaders, for example Professor Farhang Mehr, deputy prime minister of Iran and chancellor of Šīrāz University under the Šāh, urged London to take the initiative as nothing was being done in Bombay. So two leaders in London, Shahpur Captain and Dr (Mrs) Kutar, started the planning. They resolved to have the main committee work in London but chose representatives from all the countries where Zoroastrians live. They have run a number of seminars that were subsequently published, and produced a magazine, *Hamazor*, now edited in Karachi, which is quite widely read by Zoroastrians around the world. They undertake substantial charitable work, notably medical aid, help for priests and help for poor farmers in Gujarat, for example with housing, digging wells, and organizing irrigation.

Inevitably it provoked opposition, especially in Bombay. It was argued that it was self-appointed and many objected to the idea of one person, one vote, thus allegedly undermining the major institutions such as the Bombay Parsi Punchayet that was opposed to direct adult franchise until 2008. There was a change of leaders of WZO in London, which resulted in WZO being told to leave the premises and so they became opposing sides, something which was the subject of dispute for several years. WZO was also alleged to be "liberal / reforming," especially when it said that non-Zoroastrian spouses could become members. There have been attempts to establish a different world body, which would give Punchayets more influence and seek an agreement that people

in India might accept, but the proposals have not been successful (Stausberg 2002c: 313–317; Hinnells 2005: 606–635).

One issue which needs highlighting, before concluding on Britain is that most Zoroastrians believe there is widespread racial discrimination in Britain, and this conviction comes from Parsis who have always felt they have some affinity with the British (Writer 1994: 229–237; Hinnells 2005: 688–689).

Zoroastrians in North America

There were few Zoroastrian contacts in the 19th and early 20th century (Hinnells 2005: 446–452). The main period for migration has been since the passing of the Hart-Celler Act in 1965, implemented in 1968, which opened the doors to Asian immigrants to the USA. In Canada a points system was introduced in 1967, rather than the previous fixed quota system, which had specified how many immigrants could come from a specific country. The earliest informal associations were in Montreal, Vancouver, and Chicago; an informal association was started in Toronto in 1966. Formal associations were started in Quebec (1967), British Columbia (1968), Ontario (1971), New York (1973), California (1974), Houston (1976), and today there are twenty-three formal associations in North America. The first community building was in New York (1977), California, and Toronto (1980). North American conferences have been organized in alternate years; at several of these proposals were made for the establishment of a continent-wide organization that could pool resources and support the smaller groups. This was controversial because no association wanted to lose its independence, but it was finally achieved with the registration in 1987 of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA). Newsletters used to be vital to keep contact with fellow Zoroastrians, and they continue, but FEZANA has such a good journal that there is no longer quite the same need and their web presence is also increasing. There is a great awareness of the danger of the youth leaving the community with them having such frequent contact at school, college, or at work with non-Zoroastrians, but the big distances between and within associations make meeting fellow Zoroastrians difficult, so considerable effort is put into organizing youth activities such as camps, Zoroastrian Olympics, scout groups, and their own youth congresses. FEZANA has also organized social events like a Caribbean cruise and ski trips, and while such events have yielded a few in-marriages there is increasing skepticism on the parts of the youth and concern on the parts of the organizers that more Zoroastrian youth are not marrying each other.

There are more Iranian Zoroastrians in North America than in Britain, especially in British Columbia and California, but also a number in Toronto and New York, so there are also some Iranian publications, notably *Payk Mehr* ('Messenger of Love') edited by Dr Mehraban Sharvini in Vancouver, which first appeared in 1986. Somewhat later Fariborz Rahnamoon, also in Vancouver, started *Iran Zamin*, which is also available on his website (www.ancientiran.com). Both journals are in Farsi and English, but their main focus is on Iranian Zoroastrians. The two main Zoroastrian benefactors in North America are Iranian Zoroastrians. Arbab (an honorific title) Rustom Guiv was born in

Yazd but at the age of twenty he went to Tehrān where he and his brother flourished in the import–export business and they subsequently went into real estate. He was active in the Anjoman and was elected president in 1940. In 1942 he was elected to the Iranian parliament (*majles*) as the representative of the Zoroastrians. He was elected to the *majles* for five consecutive terms of office, until the Šāh excluded him on the grounds he had done enough and made him a senator. With members of the Aresh and Tafti families he built a colony in north Tehrān for poor and low-income families. Subsequently, he sold his home and went to live in the colony as well. He funded boys' and girls' schools in Tehrān. On the advice of his friend, Dr Rustom Sarfeh, and Professor Farhang Mehr he started giving funds to build “fire-temples” or what he called “Darbe Mehrs” in North America, giving \$180,000 to the New York community in 1975, \$600,000 to the Toronto community, \$150,000 to Chicago, and \$108,000 to Zoroastrians in California. Before he died he established a trust fund mainly for Zoroastrian buildings and grants to be administered by the trustees for religious activities of the Zoroastrians.

Another Iranian Zoroastrian family active in philanthropy are the brothers Faridoon and Mehraban Zartoshty, mentioned earlier. In 2000, Faridoon died but Mehraban insists that all grants are to be given in the name of both brothers. After the Iranian revolution in 1975 Mehraban moved first to Britain, then to British Columbia, now he lives with his family in California. They have given substantial funds not only in North America, but also in Britain, India, and Australia. They have also funded the Ātaš Bahrām in Yazd for many years.

There is much debate in the Zoroastrian communities in North America concerning what change is necessary to make the religion attractive to young people. There are obviously great challenges. There are no consecrated temples in which to perform the higher rituals, there are also no *dakhmes* for funerals. Because of the distances between centers, it is sometimes difficult for two priests to perform some rituals even when two are necessary. Many of the priests perform rituals for which they have no training, with many having come to North America for their secular employment and beginning to function as priests only when it was essential to have someone act in an officiating capacity. Some people are now asking whether there should be a specially trained priesthood for the New World, trained not only in rituals but also in the comparative study of religion and psychology for pastoral purposes. Whereas in India most priests (*Dasturs* apart) do not have high levels of secular education, those in North America do have such an education earning them high levels of respect. Many of my informants said that they had become more committed to their religion after migrating than they were before, because of the perceived threat of the “melting pot” in the USA. Also many said that they had come to see religion as a key part of their identity. Most of my informants said they thought an increase in intermarriage was inevitable, what then of the initiation of a spouse, and of the initiation of the offspring of these intermarried Zoroastrians? This issue is the focus of debate in many diaspora groups, but especially in North America.

In 1983 an incident occurred in the New York center when four priests initiated a man from a Christian background, Joseph Peterson. At a congress in Montreal the previous year Peterson had given a paper in which he stressed the extensive reading he had undertaken on Zoroastrianism, how he had made his own *sedre* and *kostī*, and how

he sought to live a Zoroastrian life. The news that he was to be initiated caused uproar not only in North America, but also in Bombay. Articles were written in newspapers and magazines, letters of outrage poured in from numerous Parsis. Defenders of the action argued that it would be contrary to the constitution of the United States to deny him the religion of his choice. Others argued that Zoroastrianism had in previous times accepted converts, an argument the traditionalists disputed. The debate provoked some to question what authority religious bodies in Bombay had over people in the diaspora and a number of Zoroastrians in North America have expressed the view that the future of the religion lies in the New World, not in India, because those who have migrated are younger and they argue that it is the elite who have migrated. Indeed, one prominent Parsi said “the best of a community has been brought by a divine plan” (Hinnells 2005: 485 quoting Dr Lovji Cama). It is perhaps worth mentioning that after all these years many members of the Zoroastrian community use Peterson’s website (www.avesta.org).

There are also tensions, not just between “orthodox” and “reform” groups, but especially between Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis. This is more evident in North America because there are more Iranian Zoroastrians there than anywhere else in the diaspora. There are obvious language problems, with Parsis not understanding Farsi and Iranians not understanding Gujarati (and some of the older generation of Iranians are not fluent in English either). There are dietary divisions as well. Iranians think Parsi food is too spicy and Parsis think kebabs are boring. But the differences go deeper than the culinary. The Iranians do not value the priesthood as much as traditional Parsis do and most Iranians stress the authority of revealed scripture, the *Gāthās*, rather than the later Pahlavi texts which “orthodox” Parsis value. There is also a different value placed on rituals. Doctrinally there is a difference between attitudes to conversion, with most Parsis being opposed to it and most Iranians accepting it. A number of Iranian Zoroastrians find Parsi attitudes somewhat racist. Iranians resent Parsis’ assumption of one person / one vote in elections, because with the majority being Parsi they tend to dominate, although in some centers some seats on the boards of management are reserved for Iranian Zoroastrians. So, in several places two associations, one Parsi and one Iranian Zoroastrian, have formed. The first place where this split occurred was in New York in 1984. In British Columbia they have remained united, but Iranians tend to go to certain functions, Parsis to others. This has most recently occurred in southern California (2010) with the purchase and inauguration of the new Parsi center. Many Parsis felt like second-class citizens in the Iranian-funded center they had previously attended.

Fear of the melting pot has resulted in Zoroastrian religious education being given a higher priority in North America, than in any other area I have visited. There are also determined efforts made to enable young Zoroastrians to socialize with other Zoroastrians partly to aid in-marriage. There is serious concern that the public does not know who Zoroastrians are, which has sometimes resulted in offensive media coverage. For example, in Toronto the word “cult” was used with reference to Zoroastrianism while a picture of the Zoroastrian Center was on the screen (Hinnells 2005: 501–502). One widely used tactic to get the religion known is to ensure good publicity for community heroes such as the Classical conductor Zubin Mehta.

There are differences between the communities in North America, for example Houston tends to be more traditional than Chicago in terms of frequency of praying, attitudes to intermarriage, and allowing the non-Zoroastrian spouses and their children to enter the prayer room; this is often explained as being due to the large Pakistani population there. Fewer people in Chicago said they believe prayers for the dead to be essential. It is therefore dangerous to generalize concerning North American Zoroastrians. One highly controversial group in North America is the Zarathustrian Assembly, formally launched in 1991 by a group of Zoroastrians mainly in California; notable among them was Professor Kaikhusroo Irani (of New York) and Dr Ali Akbar Jafarey. The latter grew up in a Muslim family in Pakistan. He worked in Iran during the time of the Šāh, before migrating to North America. He is controversial partly because of his rejection of much of the Avestan and Pahlavi literature, basing his teaching exclusively on the *Gāthās*. He rejects many of the rituals practiced by the Parsis. He asserts he does not seek to convert people to Zoroastrianism but he does accept people of any race who wish to practice the religion. Although most of Jafarey's followers are Iranians, some are Parsis and a few come from South America, one notable Brazilian group calling itself *Comunidade de Asha* 'Community of Truth' (Writer 1994: 199–223; Stausberg 2002c: 334–372; Hinnells 2005: 425–542).

Zoroastrians in Australia

A growing Zoroastrian diaspora is to be found in Australia and New Zealand. As in North America there was a strong "whites-only" policy for immigrants (mainly restricted to British and some northern European peoples). But in the 1970s ties with Britain weakened as there was seen to be a lack of sense in being so linked with a power that was no longer colonial and which was on the other side of the world. A new Australian government in 1975 was conservative in many areas but liberal on immigration and more Asians were admitted. Zoroastrians, mainly from India, came in the 1970s–1980s. It was mostly the well-educated, middle-class professionals who came. The reasons for migrating to Australia were the climate, easier immigration than to the USA, English language and education, and better job prospects. The first association, the Australian Zoroastrian Association, was formed in 1970 in Sydney. It was mainly a social body organizing picnics, theater visits, and discussions but Sunday schools were held on alternate weeks for the children from 1976. Money was raised by the members and a property was bought in 1985, but benefactors were sought to develop the property. The Zartoshty brothers promised a donation without conditions but the Guiv Trust insisted that they own the property and offered to buy it off the community and lease it to them for one dollar per year, for hundreds of years if necessary, and that the trust choose the managing committee which should have at least two Iranian Zoroastrians. The negotiations were protracted and acrimonious but finally the AZA gave way to most of the Guiv demands and a new building was erected. But problems continued as neighbors objected to the building, citing noise, traffic, and other problems so that the property had to lie unused, and not even Sunday schools were allowed (a similar issue is currently occurring at the center in San Jose, California).

The neighbors and politicians were invited to come and meet the members of what the newspapers offensively called a “sect.” The community debated whether to sell and move to a new property or to go to the high court. They decided to go to court. The appeal started in 1990 and lasted for five days. The court visited the site and the homes of the neighbors and judgment was finally given in favor of the AZA, but the case and its costs left the community in an impoverished state. Some Association members, especially newcomers, questioned the wisdom of having a building but the community fought on and the new building was opened in July 1993. Debates continued, however, over the fittings of the property, for example whether to have a rose garden with plaques in memory of deceased members, a space surrounded by conifers to give privacy. But the proposal was voted down because it would look too much like a Christian cemetery. Similarly Iranian Zoroastrians objected to celebrating Christmas and the use of Christmas trees. Coming from a Muslim culture they thought such celebrations too Christian, whereas Parsis from India had become more accustomed to such celebrations because of British influence.

A distinctive feature of the Sydney community is the unusually close relations between the Parsis and other Indian diaspora groups in the region, for example participating in the India–Australian cricket league and table tennis competitions. Yoga classes are advertised and sometimes held at the AZA house, which also displays notices concerning Diwali and Goanese evenings. The several times president of the AZA, Noshir Irani, was also elected president of the Indo-Australian Cultural Society.

It is more difficult to comment on the Iranian links of the community. The Iranian family, the Ostawaris, was important in the early days of the Association and again in the 1990s when the Darbe Mehr was opened. Persian classes have been attempted at various times and the Association was active in helping Iranian refugees after the 1979 revolution. After protests from some Iranian Zoroastrians more Iranian festivities were included in the programme and more Persian food was provided at functions.

The Sydney community is fiercely patriotic, especially on sporting occasions. It is also more open to accepting intermarriage. Individuals not born Zoroastrians (spouses) have served on the managing committee, and have edited the newsletter *Manashni*. An active priest is married to someone not born a Zoroastrian. From early times the emphasis has been on social concerns and the managing committee in 1982 decided that the president did not have to be a practicing Zoroastrian, however, in later years religion became more of a focus, but apart from Khojeste Mistree, a neo-conservative community scholar from Mumbai, no Indian religious leaders have spent time in Australia.

Sydney houses the largest Zoroastrian community in Australia, but it is not the only one. The second largest is in Melbourne, home of the Zoroastrian Association of Victoria (ZAV), which was formally established in 1978. Its constitution places great emphasis on relations with wider Australian society. In the definition of “Zoroastrian” it makes no reference to ancestry. There is far less contact in Melbourne with other Asian communities. Early moves were made to start a building committee, but because the community is smaller and mainly composed of young people or more recent migrants who have not yet built up great funds, they did not have the financial resources, and after seeing Sydney’s experience they did not want to go to the Guiv trusts and so plans for a building

were put off. From the early 1990s there have been attempts to unite Parsi and Iranian Zoroastrians, but the community is dominated by Parsis. There have been deep divisions over leadership and who had the right to invite speakers and organize conferences, e.g., over the World Zoroastrian Youth Congress held in Melbourne in 2009. Other attempts to involve the youth have not been very successful, a number of whom say they have been alienated by the bitter disputes between their elders (Hinnells 2005: 543–602). There are also groups of Zoroastrians in Perth, Adelaide, Brisbane, and Darwin, but the growing center in the southern hemisphere is in New Zealand where there are estimated to be 300–500 Zoroastrians, mainly in Auckland, but there are divisions between “orthodox” and “reforming” groups there as well (Stausberg 2002c: 377–378).

There are small Zoroastrian communities in other countries such as Sri Lanka, where there is a fire-temple, two Zoroastrian cemeteries, and a sports club, though now only sixty Parsis remain (Choksy 2007a). There is a small group in South Africa and there are active individuals in France, Germany, Sweden, and in Russia (mainly converts) (Stausberg 2002c: 284–287, 296–299, 322–334 respectively; Tessmann 2012; Stausberg and Tessmann 2013).

Final Remarks

Because it has been mainly younger people who have migrated, the diaspora communities have a higher birth than death rate, unlike Mumbai. It is also mainly the educated professionals and scientists who migrated, or successful businessmen, so the diaspora communities are served by priests who are well educated and are respected for their achievements. The Zoroastrians in the diaspora are typically dynamic people with vision and enterprise. Because they have chosen to dramatically change their lives, they are more likely to call for change in the religion, though in all communities, but especially Britain, there are many “orthodox” Zoroastrians. A concern in all communities is how to transmit the tradition to subsequent generations educated wholly in the diaspora, especially if their cultural and linguistic ties to the old countries – Iran and India – are weakened. To counter these perceived threats there is considerable networking on religious, social, and business issues. Zoroastrianism is now practiced in more countries than ever before, but the fear is that such dispersal will result in numbers dropping below a critical mass.

Further Reading

For Zoroastrians in Britain, see Hinnells (1996). For the most comprehensive study of Zoroastrian communities in the global diaspora, see Hinnells (2005), though it focuses primarily on the Parsis; see also Hinnells (2007, 2013). See also Stausberg (2002c: 263–377) and Mehta (2007). For the Iranian

Zoroastrians in Canada, see Foltz (2009). See Mehta (2010) for an in-depth quantitative study of purity laws in Europe. For Parsis and the China trade, see now Godrej and Mistree with Seshadri (2013). For the East Asian diaspora, see Aoki, “Zoroastrianism in the Far East,” this volume.

Appendix Chronological table

Country	First visits	Burial ground (BG) Cemetery (C) Dakhma (D)	Priest (P) Fire / fire- temple (F)	Association / Anju- man (A) Trust (T)	Social facilities:				
					Building (B) Club (C) Education (E) Hospital (H) Prayer hall (PH) Sanatoria (S)	Numbers (max)			
China – Canton	1799	1845 (BG)	1834 (P)		1926 (B)	70 (mid 19th) > (1899) 124 (1930s)			
China – Shanghai		1854 (BG)		1862 (B) 1872 (T)					
China – Macau									
Singapore		1829 (BG)							
China –Hong Kong	<1845	1845 (C)	1861		1871 (C) 1931 (B), ext 1948 (S) 1970 1993 (B)				
Pakistan – Karachi		1840 (BG) 1848 (D) 1875 (D)	1848 (P) 1849 (F) 1869 (F)		1869 (E) 1883 (E) 1896 (H)				
E. Africa – Zanzibar			1882 (P) 1882 (F)		1875 (A) 1885 (B) 1895 (PH)				
E. Africa – Nairobi				1904 (A) 1942 (A)		200+ (1960s)			

Sri Lanka				60+
Australia – Sydney	1970 (A)		1976 (E) 1985 (B) 1993 (B)	
Australia – Melbourne	1978 (A)			
New Zealand				300–500
UK	1724	1862 (BG)	1861 (A) 1909 (B) 1920 (B) 1929 (B) 1967 (B) 2000 (B)	
North America			1987 (A- FEZANA)	
USA – New York	1973 (A)		1977 (B)	
USA – Chicago				
USA – California	1974 (A)		1980 (B) 2010 (B)	
USA – Houston	1976 (A)			
Canada – Ontario	1971 (A)		1980 (B)	
Canada – Quebec	1967 (A)			
Canada – British Columbia	1968 (A)			

Part III

Structures, Discourses, and Dimensions

CHAPTER 13

Theologies and Hermeneutics

Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina

Theology is commonly understood as the systematic study of the divine and the exploration of religious truths. The term originates with Greek *θεολογία* (*theologia* ‘discourses on god’; Plato, *Republic*) and can be more narrowly defined as reflective or reflexive narratives about god and religion or even as intellectual interpretations of a particular religion, typically by adherents of the religion in question. The term hermeneutics originates with Greek *ἑρμηνεύω* (*hermeneuō* ‘translate’ or ‘interpret’; Aristotle, *On Interpretation*) and is often maximally understood as referring to theories of human understanding and cultural interpretation. Hermeneutics in its more narrow sense refers to theories of textual interpretation, i.e., theories of how we read, understand, and interpret texts. As Werner Jeanrond has stated for interpretation as a category of theological thinking: “theology produces texts when it reflects on texts” (Jeanrond 1988: xv) and, hence, the principled interpretation of texts, especially sacred texts, is a crucial category of theological discourse as crystallized in texts that themselves often then come to be viewed as normative within a particular religious tradition.

This chapter presents a topical survey of “Classical” Zoroastrian theological discourse and hermeneutics as found in just such a body of literature, the Pahlavi (Zoroastrian Middle Persian) texts from about the 3rd to the 12th century CE. In terms of Zoroastrian textuality, the Pahlavi corpus represents the crucial intellectual pivot between an ancient oral society reflected in the extant Avestan texts (c. 1500–700 BCE) and the fully literate Islamic era in the Iranian world from the mid-7th century onwards (see Andrés-Toledo, “Primary Sources: Avestan and Pahlavi,” this volume). It bears stating that while the Pahlavi corpus is not the earliest or largest body of Zoroastrian literature, it is nonetheless the first one where we find religious discourse gaining a reflective dimension. This survey of Zoroastrian theological discourse and hermeneutics focuses specifically on questions of theism, the problem of evil, human nature, scriptural symbolism, spiritual authority, religious education, and heresy and polemics. Besides the desire to

avoid overlap with other chapters in the present volume, the particular choice of topics and their treatment reflects a discursive shift away from older positivist and essentialist arguments of an “orthodox” or “essential” Zoroastrian theology by following an approach that presupposes that Zoroastrian theologies and hermeneutics (in the plural) are to be understood as manifestations of diverse and complex historical processes of socialization, contestation, interpretation, and reinterpretation. Put simply, this chapter showcases Zoroastrians (more properly Zoroastrian texts) speaking self-reflectively about, from, and, within the Zoroastrian “religion” (Pahl. *dēn*, for which, see below) representing diverse and sometimes competing theological claims and hermeneutical voices, and, as such, it does not lay any claim to a normative Zoroastrianism or a mainstream theology.

Our earliest Zoroastrian textual corpus, the Avestan texts, provides a glimpse into an archaic world of ritual, myth, and hymns of praise to various deities, but generally lacks self-conscious statements about “religion” as an object of analysis and reflection – theology in its more restricted sense. The desire to focus more narrowly on Zoroastrian knowledge production on “Zoroastrianism” in this chapter is motivated by the disciplinary history of the study of Zoroastrianism (see Stausberg and Vevaina, “Introduction: Scholarship on Zoroastrianism,” this volume). As a philologically dominated field, much of our scholarship in Zoroastrian studies has historically focused on editing, emending, and commenting upon texts in largely fragmentary corpora – salvage philology – in an attempt to reconstruct the contours of early Zoroastrianism. As an unfortunate consequence of this orientalist obsession with origins, Zoroastrian theological and hermeneutical traditions and knowledge production have not extensively been studied on their own terms, especially when late antique and early Islamic period discourse and sources diverge from the putative “original” and hence “authentic” meaning of the much earlier Avestan texts as debated and argued over by philologists (Vevaina 2012: 466). (Bailey 1943; Zaehner 1955; Molé 1963; Shaked 1994a are notable exceptions as book-length synthetic studies.) In addition, adequately historicizing post-Classical theologies and hermeneutics is simply not possible yet since even less philological and historiographical work has been done for the medieval and early modern periods both in Iran and India, a further legacy of orientalism (Stausberg 2008a: 586; see Maneck 1997; Sheffield 2005 [2009], 2012). Furthermore, we still lack critical in-depth close readings and textual studies of modern and contemporary Zoroastrian thought and discourse, a major desideratum in the study of living Zoroastrianism. (For surveys of modern Zoroastrian thought and discourse, see Hinnells 1997; Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001; Stausberg 2002c; Ringer 2011.)

Despite these historiographical and disciplinary challenges, we can study and write about “Classical” Zoroastrian theologies, if we recognize that these self-reflective discourses about religion and the divine in Pahlavi literature employ coherent literary strategies and forms that are often bewildering and unfamiliar to modern readers. For instance, such self-conscious theological discourses in Pahlavi literature are often based on a question and answer (Pahl. *ham-pursagīh* ‘consultation’, compare Av. *hqm. parštama* in *HN* 2.14) rhetorical style – often between Ohrmazd and Zarathustra or between a religious authority and a layperson – reflecting the inherited oral heritage of the Avestan texts, and we also find highly complex forms of citation, allusion, and

intertextuality (see e.g., Molé 1963; Cereti 2010a; Vevaina 2010b). Albert de Jong points to three types of scriptural citations that reflect this transition from a purely oral to a wholly written tradition: 1) the most general and ubiquitous: “it is said (somewhere) in the revelation”; 2) a more specific type: “it is said in the *Dāmdād Nask*”; 3) the most precise references being to chapter and verse: “in the fifth fragard of the *Zand* of the *Vendīdād*” (de Jong 2009: 40; see also Williams 2012). These literary forms and scriptural citations reflect the changing sociolinguistic realities of millennia-old oral performances of religiosity finally being put into writing in the late antique and early Islamic eras (Cantera 2004; Skjærvø 2012b). Since the Pahlavi corpus straddles the Arab (Islamic) conquest that fully ushered in the age of the “Book” and heralded the minoritization of Zoroastrians in Iran (see Daryaei, “Zoroastrianism under Islamic Rule,” this volume), the major historiographical challenge we face is our inability to adequately locate these texts in their respective sociocultural contexts – pre-Islamic or early Islamic – especially given the lacunary nature of our sources, and their tendency to often speak in a timeless – ahistorical – manner, thus thwarting our best historicist impulses (though see Secunda 2012 for just such an attempt). As de Jong has noted for the relationship between group composition and our putative notions of authorship: “We shall not be discussing books, but texts and shall have to resist viewing texts as carefully composed units. We shall not be discussing authors, but authorities, without any certainty that the named authorities ‘behind’ Zoroastrian texts actually composed them” (de Jong 2009: 29–30). While a few prominent scholar-priests are datable – e.g., the brothers Manuščihr and Zādspram in the 9th century CE – little if anything is known about most of the authorities cited in Pahlavi literature (Gignoux 1995; Secunda 2012), and, in general, many texts simply state knowledge from the “religion” (*dēn*). It is also vital to recognize that, with the potential exception of the Pahlavi-Pāzand (Middle Persian written in the Avestan script) *Škand-gumānīg Wizār* (‘Doubt Dispelling Disquisition’), perhaps produced by a layman, Mardānfarrox, son of Ohrmazddād in the 10th century CE (see Timuş 2010; Thrope 2012), all the knowledge and textual production of pre-modern Zoroastrianism appears to have been produced by the male Zoroastrian priesthood who understood the *dēn*, the term generally translated as “religion,” as both an independent and objective cosmological and social reality utilizing forms of rationality that were themselves tradition-constituted. It is only in “modernity” that we clearly see “religion” being understood as a product of human subjectivity with Zoroastrian men and women now feeling the acute need to make inherited forms of Zoroastrian knowledge and cultural production conform to various “secular” views of reality, be it modernity, science, or humanism respectively.

“Religion” and the “Sacred Word”

Zoroastrian modes of interpretation – hermeneutics – as we find in Pahlavi literature are largely intertextual and associative in style, with the Zoroastrian theologians equating all religious and social phenomena with the sacred corpus (Vevaina 2010a, 2010b). *Dēn* (from Av. *daēnā*-), the Pahlavi word conventionally rendered as “religion” is a complex theological term whose basic (original?) meaning is derived from the Avestan (and Pahlavi) texts as being a person’s (religious) vision; that is, the totality of a person’s

thoughts, words, and deeds embodied as a (beautiful or ugly) woman who comes to each person when they die (compare *Bd* 30.14, 18; see Molé 1960; Vahman 1985). As the Avestan term *daēnā-* is etymologically derived from the verbal root *day-/dī-* (NP *dīdan* ‘to see’), it seems to refer to the faculty that allows humans to see and be seen in the other world (Kellens 2000: 106). Over a millennium later the semantic field of the term *daēnā-* appears to have eventually come to mean “one’s (religious) view(point),” and by the 3rd century CE we see the prophet Mani using the term contrastively with other faiths as “religion” in his *Šābuhragān*: “The religion (*dēn*) which was chosen by me is in ten things above and better than the other religions of the ancients” (Gardner and Lieu 2004: 109). In Pahlavi literature we also find the inherited terms *weh-dēn* ‘the good religion’ (Av. *vaŋhi- daēnā-*) and *dēn ī māzdēsni* ‘the religion of Mazda worship (lit. ‘sacrifice’)’ (Av. *mazdāyasni- daēnā-*), which are regularly then contrasted with other faiths, often referred to as *ag-dēn* ‘of evil religion’ (from an unattested Av. **akō-daēnā-*).

Beyond the individual’s vision soul, the Pahlavi texts employ this polyvalent term as representing both the entire religious tradition of Zoroastrianism, a *Weltanschauung* or worldview in its most expansive sense, as well as signifying the corpus of sacred wisdom and learning, both in Avestan (Pahl. *abestāg*) and in Pahlavi (Pahl. *zand*), the *Zend-Avesta* of older publications, in its more restricted – textual – sense (Vevaina 2010b; see also Shaki 1996 and Stausberg 1998b). Both senses are being simultaneously invoked when we find the ubiquitous statements in Pahlavi literature: ‘as it says in the *dēn*’ (*pad dēn gōwēd kū*) or ‘as it is revealed in the *dēn*’ (*pad dēn paydāg kū*), as a means of citing both religious and textual authority. So, for example, we find a somatic analogy for the relationship between “religion” and the “sacred word”: “The religion (*dēn*) is bound (*paywast*) to the sacred word (*mānsr* from Av. *mąθra-*, compare Skt. *mantra-*, lit. ‘instrument of mind’) and is in harmony with it in the same way as flesh (*gōšt*) is with skin (*pōst*) and as a vein (*rag*) is with its enveloping hide (*čarm*)” (*Dk* 6.324, Shaked 1979: 129). The figurative language in this passage reveals the often subtle ways in which the Zoroastrian theologians understood the intimate connection between their inherited religious tradition, the *dēn*, and their equally revealed ritual formulae, *mānsr*; between wisdom and the word.

Good and Evil, Truth and Falsehood

Despite the ontological status of the *dēn*, the Zoroastrian theologians raise the questions of what knowledge must a Zoroastrian have from the *dēn* and how must they know it? In the *Čīdag Andarz ī Pōryōtkēsān* (‘Selected Precepts of the Teachers of Old’) also called the *Pandnāmag ī Zardu(x)št* (‘The Advice Book of Zarathustra’) we find the most fundamental existential questions being raised and attributed to the ancient sages:

The Teachers of Old (Pahl. *pōryōtkēsān*), who have the foremost knowledge of the Religion (*dēn*), have said that, at the age of fifteen, one should know the following: “Who am I, and to whom do I belong? Where did I come from, and to where will I go back? ... And what are my duties in the world of the living (*gētīg*), and what is my reward in the world of thought (*mēnōg*)? ... Do I belong to Ohrmazd, or do I belong to Ahreman, to the gods or to the

demons, to the good or the bad? Am I a human or a demon? How many are the paths, and which is my Religion? ... Are the Origins one or two? (*buništaḡ ēk ayāb dō*) From whom is goodness and badness?" (PZ 1, after Skjærvø 2011a: 192–193)

Here we see that by the ideal age of fifteen one must know the answers to these most important existential and doctrinal questions in order to live meaningfully as a good (competent) Zoroastrian. The answers that are provided to these fundamental questions speak to the radically opposed nature of good and evil:

I belong to Ohrmazd, not to Ahreman, to the gods, not to the demons, to the good, not to the bad. I am a human, not a demon, the creature of Ohrmazd, not of Ahreman ... My duties and obligations are to think about Ohrmazd that he is, has always been, and will always be, that he is the immortal ruler, boundless, and pure, while Ahreman is not and shall be destroyed ... I must have no doubt about this too, that the Origins are two: the Creator and the Destroyer. The Creator is Ohrmazd, from whom all goodness and all light emanates. The Destroyer is the wicked Evil Spirit, who is all badness and full of death, wicked and deceiving. (PZ 2, after Skjærvø 2011a: 193)

Despite this unequivocal statement of a radical dualistic cosmology, the myth(s) of the origins of good and evil that we find in various Pahlavi texts (e.g., *Bd* 1, *WZ* 1) are not fully narrativized in Avestan literature (de Jong 2009: 39; but see e.g., *Yt* 13.77–78, *Y* 13.4, *Yt* 19.46). The radically opposed nature of good and evil commonly seen in Pahlavi literature is however found already in a famous Gathic passage from perhaps a millennium or so earlier:

Thus, I shall proclaim the two inspirations (*Av. mainiiu-*) at the beginning of (this?) state of existence, of which two the life-giving one shall tell (him) whom (you know to be?) the Evil One: "Neither our thoughts, nor announcements, nor guiding thoughts, nor preferences, nor utterances nor actions, nor visions-souls (*Av. daēnā-*) nor breath-souls (*Av. uruuān-*) go together." (*Y* 45.2, after Skjærvø 2003a: 420; compare also *Y* 19.15 for a Young Avestan citation of this Old Avestan strophe)

While the origins of the demons (Pahl. *dēw[ān]* from *Av. daēuuā-*, cognate with Skt. *deva-*, Lat. *deus* 'god' and *divus* 'divine') by an un-created Evil Spirit are explicit in the Pahlavi texts, in the *Gāthās* we find an alternative claim: "Between these two, the *daēuuas* did not discriminate at all correctly, because deception would come over them as they were asking one another, so they would choose the worst thought" (*Y* 30.6, after Skjærvø 2011c: 73). The *daēuuas* or demons, perhaps still being understood as the "old gods" of pre-Zoroastrian – Indo-Iranian – times are themselves led astray by indiscriminately choosing to side with evil in this Gathic strophe (Skjærvø 2011c: 63–65; for the Indo-Iranian genealogy of the *daēuuas*, see Skjærvø, "Early India and Iran," this volume).

For the Zoroastrian theologians in late antique and pre-modern Islamic Iran the origins of good and evil were not simply based on human choices or products of human behaviors but rather fundamentally opposed metaphysical realities as we find in the *Gāthās*:

The bad, by separation from the good existence, is originally evolved in such a manner that the one is really no cause of the other. Because each one is existent through its own self, owing to the perpetual injury and antagonism which are manifestly theirs, one towards the other. (ŠGW 8.89–91, West 1885: 159; see de Menasce 1945: 98–99)

We also find it suggested that Ohrmazd and Ahreman have two radically opposed natures and therefore there can be no mediation between the two:

(And) everything can change except good and bad nature. A good nature cannot change to evil by any means whatever, and a bad nature to goodness in any manner. Ohrmazd, on account of a good nature, approves no evil and falsehood; and Ahreman, on account of a bad nature, accepts no goodness and truth. (MX 10.7–10, after West 1885: 37; compare also ŠGW 2.6–9)

This fundamental opposition is played out daily between the gods and demons (PRDD 65.14).

In the *Škand-gumānīg Wizār* all natural, social, and ethical taxonomies therefore fall under this rubric of dualism: “Even when there are many names and many species of competitors, still then all are within the compass of two names. And these two names are their including-source, which are good and evil” (ŠGW 8.96–97, West 1885: 159; see de Menasce 1945: 98–99). So, for example, the animal world is likewise taxonomized in dualistic terms between “beneficial” animals, creatures of Ohrmazd, and “maleficent” animals (Pahl. *xrafstar* from Av. *xrafstra-* found already in the *Gāthās* in Y 28.5, 34.5), creatures of the Evil Spirit: e.g., reptiles, rodents, carnivores, parasites, insects, and fantastic animals as well, such as dragons (for enumerations of these noxious creatures, see e.g., Vd 14.5–6 in Avestan and PRDD 21.45–46 in Pahlavi; for “evil” animals, see Moazami 2005). The heavens are also taxonomized accordingly with the stars and their fixed orbits being beneficent and the planets with their irregular orbits being seen as maleficent (see Panaino, “Cosmologies and Astrology,” this volume). In terms of epistemology we find a corollary in the *Škand-gumānīg Wizār*, namely, that truth and falsehood ultimately reflect two distinct sources: “The possession of truth (*rāstīh xwadīh*) is the one power of the faithful (*ōstīgān*), through the singleness (*ēkīh*) of truth. The many kinds of falsehood, which must be confused (and) mutually afflicting to many, are, in the aggregate, from one source of deceitfulness (*ēk bun ī drōzanīh*)” (ŠGW 1.33–34, West 1885: 120; see de Menasce 1945: 26–27). Such an idea of the singularity of “Truth” is found already in the closing section of the *Yasna* liturgy in Avestan: “One is the path of Truth (Av. *aša-*). Those of the others are all non-paths” (Y 72.11, *aēuuō paṇtā yō ašahe vīspe anīiāēšqm apaṇtqm*; the term *aša-* is often also translated as ‘Order’ or ‘Harmony’; for the semantics of this term in Avestan and Vedic, see Skjærvø 2003a: 413–416).

The Nature, Will, and Desire of God

Ohrmazd (Av. Ahura Mazdā ‘the All-Knowing Lord’; Skjærvø 2011a: 13), the supreme deity in Zoroastrianism, is described in Pahlavi literature as the “greatest knowledgeable one, who nurtures and protects, who is beneficent and pure, whose

deeds are good, who forgives, whose judgments are good, who has all powers, and whose worship is great and enduring” (*Dk* 3.81, Skjærvø 2011a: 75; see de Menasce 1973: 90–92). This Pahlavi passage loosely reflects much older Avestan descriptions of Ahura Mazda as in the *Yasna Haptaŋhāiti*: “In this way we now worship Ahura Mazda, who has created the cow and Truth (*aša-*), (who) has created the waters and the good plants, (who) has created light and the earth and all that is good” (*Y* 37.1, after Hintze 2007: 35). In Pahlavi literature we find a number of such positive (cataphatic) statements that attribute to Ohrmazd all good things, which are then contrasted with the malevolent attributes of his un-created counterpart, Ahreman, the Evil Spirit (see below). So, for example, in the largest extant Pahlavi text, the *Dēnkard* (‘Acts of the Religion’) we find it explicitly stated that: “It is revealed (Pahl. *paydāg*): every good thing was created by Ohrmazd and every bad thing was created by Ahreman” (*Dk* 6.B1–2, Shaked 1979: 133).

As part of the dualist myth in the first chapter of the *Bundahišn* (‘Creation’) that exculpates god from all forms of evil and suffering, Ohrmazd, prior to the ‘creation of the creation/creatures’ (*dām-dahišnīh*) offers the Evil Spirit a compromise despite his omniscience of the evil to come: “Then Ohrmazd, with His knowledge of the end of the affair, went to meet the Evil Spirit and proposed peace and said: ‘Evil Spirit, provide help for my creatures and offer praise, so that as a reward therefore you may become immortal and without feeling or decay’” (*Bd* 1.19, [*Bd* 1.20 in] Cereti and MacKenzie 2003: 34–35; for a more detailed analysis of Zoroastrian cosmogony, see Panaino, “Cosmologies and Astrology,” this volume). Given his absolute goodness and omniscience, Zoroastrian theologians like the 9th-century CE high priest of Kermān, Manuščīhr, in his *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* (‘Judgments According to the Religion’) take great pains to justify Ohrmazd’s choice not to act preemptively to save the world from evil:

To go to a preemptive battle against the Lie (*druz*), when that other one is not fighting against the lights, to smite him when he has not smitten the lights, to demand expiation before the damage, to demand revenge before an act of vengefulness has taken place – this he did not consider to be right and lawful. (*DD* 36.13, Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998: 113)

Manuščīhr’s concerns speak to the importance of fulfilling the principle of righteousness (*ahlāyīh* from Av. *aša-*) and living according to the law (*dād*) (see Macuch, “Law in Pre-Modern Zoroastrianism,” this volume). Ohrmazd is himself not exempt from this cosmological and moral order, which in the *Gāthās* is itself Ohrmazd’s thought (compare *Y* 31.7).

We also find it claimed that Ohrmazd produced the world through his “innate wisdom” (*asn-xrad* from Av. *xratu-* ‘guiding thought’, *MX* 1.49; compare also *Y* 31.7) and that: “Ohrmazd the Lord (*xwadāy*) created these creatures through character (*xēm*), he holds them with wisdom (*xrad*), and takes them back to himself through religion (*dēn*)” (*Dk* 6.11, Shaked 1979: 7; compare *Dk* 6.279). *Dēnkard* Book 6 here conceives of the *dēn* as the instrument that Ohrmazd uses to affect his desire to ultimately defeat the Evil Spirit. In this vein, Manuščīhr states: “He created the creation on purpose for the propagation of his own will (*xwēš kāmag*) in order to complete the good by dispelling

evil” (DD 2.8, Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998: 45). Despite his ability to create the world and provide humans with the *dēn* to guide them, Ohrmazd’s will to triumph over evil is unfulfilled until the end of the world when evil is ultimately defeated and Ohrmazd will finally reign supreme: “As it is said in the Religion (*dēn*): ‘In that time (i.e., the Renovation) I, who am Ohrmazd, will be the supreme ruler (*spurr pādixšāy*) and the Evil Spirit will be ruler of nothing” (DD 6.3, after Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998: 53). Manuščihr’s citation from the *dēn* speaks to the ubiquity of Zoroastrian theological discourse on the final triumph of Ohrmazd over his evil rival and the metaphoric language of sovereignty to mark Ohrmazd’s supremacy (see Cereti, “Myths, Legends, Eschatologies,” this volume).

The Nature of the Evil Spirit and the Demons

The chief adversary of Ohrmazd is Ahreman (Av. Anra Mainiiu; often called *gan(n) āg mēnōg* ‘The Evil [lit. ‘Foul’] Spirit’; also Pahl. *peṭyārag* ‘the Adversary’; and Pahl. *druz* ‘the Lie’). Prior to Ohrmazd’s creation, Ahreman was “deep down in the darkness, in post-knowledge and aggression” (Bd 1.3, after Cereti and MacKenzie 2003: 33). Here we see Ahreman’s intrinsic nature; he resides deep in the “endless darkness,” his knowledge of the world is essentially reactionary to Ohrmazd’s perfect wisdom and foresight, and he is inherently aggressive, and, thus, he is responsible for bringing evil, pollution, and suffering into the world: “The Evil Spirit fashioned forth his own creatures from material darkness, the form of a frog, black, ashy, worthy of darkness, (and) evil, like the most sinful-natured *xrafstar*” (Bd 1.46, [Bd 1.47 in] Cereti and MacKenzie 2003: 39). Much like Ohrmazd’s good creations, which will ultimately redeem the world, the *Bundahišn* claims that Ahreman’s counter-creations – the demons and noxious creatures – are ultimately responsible for his own final undoing in the *Bundahišn* (‘Creation’): “For he created that creation by which he made himself worse, in that he will become powerless ... From his own creation he will become powerless” (*az ān ī xwēš dām-dahišnīh a-gār bawēd*, Bd 1.48, [Bd 1.49 in] Cereti and MacKenzie 2003: 39). We also find it stated in the *Bundahišn* that he set his demons upon Ohrmazd’s creations: “He let loose Lust, Needfulness, Danger, Pain, Disease, Vice and Lethargy upon the Bull and Gayōmard [the first protoplast of humanity]” (Bd 4.19, after Anklesaria 1956: 51), and also that the effects of his evil actions can be felt in the natural world as well: “He came to the fire, he mingled smoke and darkness within it” (Bd 4.27, after Anklesaria 1956: 53). Zoroastrian scribes commonly expressed their scorn by writing Ahreman’s name upside down in manuscripts.

Despite his evil and aesthetically hideous counter-creations, certain Pahlavi theologians understood Ahreman as having a limited nature when they suggest that “Regarding Ahreman it is said that he has no material existence” (*ahreman rāy guft ēstēd kū gētīg nēst*, DD 18.2, after Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998: 73) and that he “never existed and does not exist” (*ahreman hamē nē būd ud nē būd*, Dk 6.278, after Shaked 1979: 109; for the non-existence of evil, see Shaked 1967; Schmidt 1996; Lincoln 2009: 53–55). Conversely, we also find it stated (in the same text, Dk 6) that he inhabits human bodies: “For the dwelling of Ahreman in the world is in the body of humans. When he will have

no dwelling in the bodies of humans, he will be annihilated from the whole world; for as long as there is in this world dwelling even in a single person to a small demon, Ahreman is in the world” (*Dk* 6.264, after Shaked 1979: 103).

As is evident from these examples, “thinking with demons” was a prominent strategy of Zoroastrian theologies in Pahlavi literature (Lincoln 2012a: 31–42); aging and death were considered inevitable by-products of evil being caused by the demons *Zarmān* (‘old age’) and *Astwihād* (lit. ‘the bone-untier’, i.e., the demon of death) (see e.g., *PRDD* 5.1 and *DD* 36.38). For instance, the origins of death and human suffering were understood by Manuščihr as being due to Ahreman’s inability to attack Ohrmazd directly:

Now when the Lie (*druz*) and dark seed demons (*tār-tohmaḡān dēwān*) could not reach, through their dark substance, the pure heavenly gods (*abēzaḡ mēnōḡān yazdān*), and the place of the luminous supreme heaven, then, through the power of falsehood, he (Ahreman) commanded victory over the glory of the worldly creatures by two weapons, one, the destruction of the living by the power of death, and one, the captivity of souls by the way of wickedness. (*DD* 36.37, Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998: 125)

Here we find the origins of both extrinsic and intrinsic evil: Death and wickedness in this world are due to the fact that Ahreman – here referred to as the Lie (*druz*) – and his demons are unable to attack Ohrmazd in the world of thought (*mēnōḡ*) and so must resort to a proxy war in this world (*ḡētīg*) (for these two states of existence, see Panaino, “Cosmologies and Astrology,” this volume). We also find theological attempts to rationalize death as serving a valuable purpose when it is suggested that death, while bad, is better than men constantly striving negatively and harming each other because if they never aged or died they would be forced to compete for scarce resources (*PRDD* 13a8). Manuščihr suggests that humans should be happy at the knowledge of a finite existence since it limits the ability of evil to make humans suffer endlessly (*DD* 36.28), and that death is ultimately self-defeating for Ahreman because it claims his own evil followers from the world (*DD* 36.65).

As we see in the mythological examples above, Zoroastrian theologies on Ahreman’s counter-creations and their effects on humans and the natural world were understood in multiple and overlapping registers of metaphysics, ethics, cosmology, and eschatology. The basic epistemological challenge of Ahreman and his demons for humans is explicitly described in criminal terms in *Dēnkard* Book 5:

One must know how Ahreman and the demons deceive and lead astray; how they are mixed into every part of the good creatures; how they hide the straight and true road and way; how they crookedly exhibit what is as what is not; how they act as highwaymen in the minds, thoughts, words, and deeds of beings in the material existence; and how they untiringly comply with the commitment of crimes. (*Dk* 5.7.2, after Skjærvø 2011a: 201; see Amouzgar and Tafazzoli 2000: 38–39)

Evil distorts reality and, hence, it is incumbent on Zoroastrians to understand the separate origins of good and evil in that world and their manifestations in this world in order to discriminate wisely.

The Divine Plan, Predestination, and Time

Given this metaphysical dichotomy of good and evil and its profound effects on human existence, how much agency do humans actually have in this mixed existence? While the *daēuuas* chose poorly in the *Gāthās*, in Pahlavi literature the choice to fight evil was given to humans prior to their earthly existence when Ohrmazd offered their pre-souls (Pahl. *frawahr* from Av. *frawuašī-*) a foretaste of the world to come and they chose – rightly – to enter the world and fight evil:

The pre-souls of humans saw by the wisdom of all-knowledge, the evil would arrive in the world of the living (*gētīg*), on account of being from the wicked Ahreman, and that the final opposition of the Adversary would (ultimately) disappear (at the end); and they agreed to go to the world of the living ... (*Bd* 3.27, [*Bd* 3.24 in] after Anklesaria 1956: 45; see also Cereti 2007a)

Despite this insistence on choice, certain Zoroastrian theologians nevertheless understood the world as being deterministic, with several texts discussing Zarathustra's pleading for immortality and Ohrmazd's refusal: "It cannot be done, for (if so) Tūr Brādrēš the *karb* ['evil priest' from Av. *karapan-*], whom Ahreman created for the purpose of killing you, he (also) will become immortal, and there will be no Resurrection [Pahl. *rist-āxēz*, lit. 'raising of corpses'] or Final Body, in which the poor have hope" (*PRDD* 36.6, after Williams 1990 II: 63; compare also *ZWY* 3.1–3 and *Dk* 6.B5). Here we see the potentially deleterious effects of attempting to change what Ohrmazd knows will or must happen in this dualistic battleground. We find similar roles expressed for mythoepic figures from the Avestan texts: "Fredon [Av. θraētaona] desired to kill Aži Dahāg [Av. Aži Dahāka]. Ohrmazd said: 'Do not kill him now, for this earth may become full of reptiles'" (*Dk* 6.B4, Shaked 1979: 135; compare *Supp.Šnš* 20.18). We find it suggested that it is the lesser of two evils to endure the misrule of Aži Dahāg and Frāsiyāg (NP Afrāsiyāb), a dragon and sorcerer respectively, since otherwise the Evil Spirit would have given dominion to the demon Xēšm ('Wrath') and "it would not have been possible to take it away from him till the Resurrection and Final Body, for this reason, because he has no bodily existence" (*MX* 27.35–37, after West 1885: 60–61; see Cereti, "Myths, Legends, Eschatologies," this volume).

Despite the fact that humans have the responsibility to choose between good and evil, hence free will, we do also find several discussions about predestination: "Even with the might and powerfulness of wisdom and knowledge, even then it is not possible to contend with fate (*brēh*)" (*MX* 23.4, after West 1885: 54); "they (the gods) grant destiny (*baxt*) and divine providence (*baγōbaxt*). Destiny is that which is ordained from the beginning, and divine providence is that which they also grant otherwise" (*MX* 24.5–6, West 1885: 55). We also find it stated that fate transforms both the good and the bad (*MX* 51.1–7); and that all is predetermined by Zurwān, the deity of Time: "Because the affairs of the world of every kind proceed through fate (*brēh*) and time (*zamānag*) and the supreme decree of Zurwān, the king (*pādixšay*) and lord of long rule (*dagrand-xwadāy*). Since, at various periods, it happens unto every one, for whom it is destined,

just as that which is necessary to happen” (MX 27.10–11, after West 1885: 57; for “Destiny,” see Timuş 2006).

As part of an alternative monist cosmogony in the Iranian world, Zurwān, as the hypostasis of Time, was understood as being the father of two twin deities: one good, Ohrmazd, and one evil, Ahreman (Zurwān is found in a number of Av. passages: *Vd* 19.13, 126, 29; *Y* 72.10; *Ny* 1.8; for the Pahlavi passages on “Time” and Zurwān, see Zaehner 1955: 276–408; Rezaia 2010: 241–280). Most foreign accounts, such as we find with the Armenian Christian apologist Eznik of Kolb (4th–5th centuries CE), agree that Ahreman was conceived due to a moment of “doubt” on the part of “Father Time,” an otherwise omnipotent and omniscient godhead. The origins of this myth appear to be based on interpretations of *Yasna* 30.3 in the *Gāthās*: “But those two spirits, in the beginning, renowned as twin ‘sleeps,’ (as) two thoughts and speeches, they are two actions, a good and a bad. And, between those two, those giving good gifts have discriminated correctly, not those giving bad gifts” (Skjærvø 2011c: 66). A defense of radical dualism in *Dēnkard* Book 9 states:

And from the sayings of Zarathustra, about how the demon Arš howled to mankind: “Ohrmazd and Ahreman were brothers from one womb!” ... And about how the demon Arš lied about the separate origin of light and darkness, about the goodness of him who is most (full of) light through (good) choice and actions, and about the badness of him who is (full of) darkness. (*Dk* 9.30.4–5, Vevaina 2012: 474–476)

In this defense of radical dualism, i.e., the separate origins of good and evil (as “light” and “darkness” here) instead of a philosophical argument we find instead another example of “thinking with demons” where the demon Arš (OAv. *ərəš*, a Gathic adverb meaning ‘rightly’ being re-tasked as a demon) naturally “lies” about the way the world really was created by suggesting that the two un-created rivals are in fact brothers from a single womb (though Zurwān is not named explicitly in this text; compare also the Manichean Polemical Hymn, M 28 I Rii 1–4: “And they say that Ohrmezd and Ahrimen are brothers,” Skjærvø 2011c: 68).

There remains doubt as to whether “Zurvanism” was a distinct religious movement or mythology (Shaked 1992a *contra* Zaehner 1955) or whether it should be understood as a Zoroastrian “heresy” (Boyce 1990) or even as the dominant form of Zoroastrianism (Christensen 1944). We face a profound historiographical challenge in that there are significant and unresolved discrepancies between the Zoroastrian theological sources that are largely silent on the subject versus the non-Zoroastrian accounts of Classical, Armenian, Syriac, and Islamic authors like Plutarch (c. 46–120 CE), Elishe Vardapet (d. 480 CE), Theodore bar Konai (9th century CE), and al-Shahrastani (d. 1153 CE) in which Zurwān is featured very prominently. While we do not appear to have any firm iconographic, ritual, or ethical metrics to determine whether there were distinctive social practices associated with “Zurvanism,” names like *Zarvandād* ‘created/made by Zurwān’ in Syriac and *Zrwmbntk* ‘slave of Zurwān’ in Sogdian nonetheless testify to his importance and popularity in the greater Iranian world (Vevaina 2013: 7187–7188; see also Shaked 1994a; Rezaia 2010). What we can see in these examples are numerous theological tensions between differing notions of determinism both as predestination and fatalism (one must accept things as they are supposed to be), the

subjective agency of personal actions (the choice of individuals to choose between good and evil), the choice to be embodied in just such a mixed state of existence (itself being given to humans prior to their physical existence), fate or destiny being itself corrective or agentive on an objective level, and mythological speculations about the paternity of Ohrmazd and Ahreman resulting in monist (re)interpretation(s) of the more radically dualist cosmogonic myth(s) such as we find in the first chapter of the *Bundahišn*.

Human Behavior, Religious Wisdom, and Life Practices

Moving from these unresolved theological problems of agency to the level of human agents' practical actions in the world, we find that the Pahlavi texts do presume an active subject and so: What do Zoroastrian (Pahlavi) theologies have to say about life practices and their legitimation? How do these life practices reflect Zoroastrian (Pahlavi) views of human behavior? The Pahlavi texts speak a great deal about doctrines and the need for appropriate social behaviors with the recognition that religion has the power to ground human behavior within the dualistic nature of the world: "The substance (*gōhr*) of religion (*dēn*) is like a mirror; when one looks at it one sees oneself in it ... one who knows how to look sees all goodness and evil in it" (*Dk* 6.261, after Shaked 1979: 101). While humans are responsible for their choices with harm and evil being part of the human condition in the mixed state of existence (*gumēzišn*), nonetheless since harm and evil ultimately do not originate from Ohrmazd, they were understood as being essentially "unnatural," since they are parasitic to Ohrmazd's creation: "Since the harm and evil which arise from humankind and cattle are not naturally their own (*xwēš-gōhrīhā*, lit. 'of their own substance') but are owing to the destruction, deceit, misery, and deception of the Lie" (*ŠGW* 3.22, after West 1885: 126; see de Menasce 1945: 38–39).

In *Dēnkard* Book 6 Ahreman was understood as having four strategies to lure humans to his side: authority, wealth, hypocrisy, and heresy (*Dk* 6.47). It is this seductive power of evil that humanity has to contend with and, thus, the Zoroastrian theologians claimed that humans, despite their origins being wholly good, are morally malleable and susceptible to negative peer pressure: "The soul fears a crowd as much as the body fears a desert, the reason being that it is mainly in a crowd where the meeting of wicked people occurs" (*Dk* 6.E26–27, Shaked 1979: 196–197). In the *Mēnōg ī Xrad* we find a tripartite typology of people: humans (*mardōm*), demi-humans (*nēm-mardōm*), and demi-demons (*nēm-dēw*). The first type has no doubt about the dualistic origins of the world and believes exclusively in the goodness of Ohrmazd and rejects heresy (*jud-ristagīh*); the second type makes purely selfish choices that indiscriminately choose between both good and evil; the third type merely mimics humans in appearance but ultimately believes neither in good nor evil and thinks nothing of personal judgment in the next world (*MX* 42.1–16, after West 1885: 82–83).

In terms of living well the Zoroastrian theologians suggest their version of the Golden Rule, living without the fear of the unknown, and having the humility to acknowledge one's lack of knowledge:

That character (*xēm*) is best, one who does not do to another that which is not good for oneself. That wisdom (*xrad*) is best, one who knows how to enjoy the fruit of a good thing that has come, and does not have fear of an evil thing that has not come. That sagacity

(wīr) is best, one who knows: “I do not know” with regard to a thing which one does not know. (*Dk* 6.2, Shaked 1979: 5)

Such quotes, especially as found in *Dēnkard* Book 6 are part of a larger genre of wisdom literature – *andarz* – in Iran (Shaked 1964, 1987a; Boyce 1968a: 51–55). One’s duty or *xwēš-kārīh*, lit. ‘one’s own work’, is referred to often in Pahlavi literature. For example, it is suggested that one must discipline one’s character, find no fault with others, and keep an eye on the world (*Dk* 6.228, Shaked 1979: 89). Other daily duties include the requirement to “ward off the demon of defilement from the body, to profess the Religion and to perform meritorious deeds” and “to make an enemy a friend, to make a wicked person righteous, and to make an ignorant person wise” (*Supp.Šnš* 20.4, 6, Kotwal 1969: 82–83; see Cantera, “Ethics,” this volume).

Pahlavi texts often cite the words of Ādurbād, son of Mahraspand, a 4th-century high priest:

Every person ought to know: “Where have I come from? For what purpose am I here? Where do I return?” I, for my part, know that I came from Ohrmazd the Lord (*xwadāy*), that I am here so as to make the demons powerless, and that I shall return to Ohrmazd. (*Dk* 6.D9, Shaked 1979: 185)

Likewise, the actions of the righteous (hu)man are understood in very specific terms by Manuščihr: “A righteous (hu)man (*mard ī ahlaw*) is a creature who has accepted that responsibility which is provided for them, and is completely watchful in the world of the living in order not to be deceived by the inciting Lie (*druz*)” (*DD* 2.19, after Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998: 47–48). The actions of the righteous (hu)man are also seen as re-enacting the will of Ohrmazd: “For the righteous (hu)man is the counterpart of Ohrmazd. When a righteous (hu)man acts, then his/her action becomes that of Ohrmazd” (*Supp.Šnš* 15.8, after Kotwal 1969: 59; see also König 2005).

Perhaps some of the most interesting statements about sin in Zoroastrian literature focus on the psychology of sin. For example, in *Dēnkard* Book 6 we find it claimed:

when a (hu)man commits the sin (s)he first does it with hope, confidence, and authority, (thinking:) “No one will know, I shall not tell, if any one knows (about it), I shall deny it. Perhaps I shall be found innocent. Otherwise I shall affirm it and say: I had to do it in this manner.” (*Dk* 6.59, after Shaked 1979: 23)

The Zoroastrian theologians were also acutely aware of the fact that the bodily desires of humans in this world often lead the soul to poor choices. As a result, one of the strategies they advocate is delayed gratification as a means to forestall sin, thus disappointing the demons day by day (*Dk* 6.89). Ultimately, humans sin and the Zoroastrian theologians suggest that one have pity for sinners rather than simple condemnation: “No one should be an enemy and a wisher of evil to any person who commits a sin, one should be merciful of a sin which has been committed (?), and think thus: ‘It is indeed oppression when (that person) is deceived and misled in this manner by Ahreman’” (*Dk* 6.243, after Shaked 1979: 95).

Despite the moral certitude we typically find in Zoroastrian literature, we do occasionally find acknowledgments of the efficacy of immoral acts: “The best thing is truth, and the worst thing is falsehood; (yet) sometimes one tells the truth and becomes thereby wicked, and sometimes one tells a lie, and becomes thereby righteous” (*Supp. Šnš* 20.14, Kotwal 1969: 85; see also Cantera, “Ethics,” this volume). Such an example undermines the homogenizing tendencies we often find in essentialist approaches to Zoroastrianism, or any religious tradition for that matter, and speaks to the importance of the interpretive agency of theologians to sometimes “read against the grain” as it were of the dominant views and claims we find in the texts.

“The Problem of Evil” and Defenses of Dualism

As we see in many other religious traditions, the Zoroastrian theologians attempted to answer the age-old question regarding the problem of evil: Why do bad things happen to good people, despite Ohrmazd being wholly good and on humanity’s side in this metaphysical and ethical battle? Manuščihr suggests that it is good people who disproportionately experience evil: “in general harm happens to evil people only through the demons and to good people through the demons and also through evil people” (*DD* 5.4, Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998: 51). The 4th-century Sasanian theologian Ādurbād, son of Mahraspand, is quoted as saying: “I am thankful that I am so good a man that the accursed Ahreman brought this misfortune upon me because of my goodness” (*Dk* 6.A5, after Shaked 1979: 130–131). Conversely, Ohrmazd, based on his compassion, allots happiness equally between the good and bad (*MX* 35.4).

Certain Zoroastrian theologians took great pains to preserve the goodness of Ohrmazd within a dualistic worldview and still argue that, despite the presence of evil in this world, he is perfect and omnipotent simply by knowing his own limits. So, for example: “In no matter whatsoever is Ohrmazd powerless (*a-tuwāngar*), and never was” (*Dk* 6.277, Shaked 1979: 109; compare *DD* 21.4 where Ohrmazd is called *wisp-tuwān*, lit. ‘one who can do all’) and yet, “Ohrmazd does not think of a thing which He cannot do and the Evil Spirit does think of a thing which he cannot do and moreover vows (to do it)” (*Bd* 1.56, [*Bd* 1.57 in] Cereti and MacKenzie 2003: 41). In the *Škand-gumānīg Wizār* we find the central question of the problem of evil:

Why does the creator Ohrmazd not keep Ahreman back from evil doing and evil seeking, when He is the mighty maker (*tuwān kardār*)? The answer is this, that the evil deeds (*wad-kunišnīh*) of Ahreman are owing to the evil nature (*wad-gōhrīh*) and evil will (*wad-kāmagīh*) which are always his, as the Lie (*druj*). The omnipotence (*wisp-tuwānīh*) of the creator Ohrmazd is that which is over all that is possible to be (*wisp šāyēd*), and is limited (*sāmānōmand*) thereby. (*ŠGW* 3.2, 4–6, after West 1885: 124; see de Menasce 1945: 38–39)

The philosophical compromise inherent in radical dualism in the Zoroastrian texts is generally the admission that god is not omnipotent though he is omniscient and

omnibenevolent; in the passages above we find it stated that Ohrmazd is in fact “omnipotent” but just over all that is possible, i.e., all that he could think: God would never attempt to make a rock he could not lift, so to speak.

In terms of the “problem of evil,” the Greek philosopher Epicurus (341–270 BCE) is believed to have posed the following riddle: “If god is willing to prevent evil, but not able, then he is not omnipotent. If he is able, but not willing, then he is malevolent. If he is both able and willing, then whence cometh evil? If he is neither able nor willing, then why call him god?” We find a similar set of rhetorical questions being posed in the 11th chapter of the *Škand-gumānīg Wizār*, Mardānfarrox’s critique of Islam:

God (i.e., *Allah*, Pāzand *yazat*), if there existed no opponent (Pahl. *hamēmāl*) and adversary (Pz. *patyāraa*, i.e., Pahl. *petyārag*) of His, was able to create all those creatures and creations of His free from misfortune; why did He not so create them? Or was it not possible for Him to wish it? If it were not possible for Him to wish it, He is not completely capable. If it were possible for Him not to wish it, He is not merciful ..., (ŠGW 11.118–121, after West 1885: 183; see de Menasce 1945: 134–137)

Here we find a Zoroastrian polemic by Mardānfarrox that points to the contradiction between Allah’s mercy, his goodness, and his omnipotence by suggesting that since he has no evil counterpart he should be able to wish away evil in the world but since there is in fact evil in the world, it logically follows that if he is all-powerful he is not merciful and, hence, it appears that the *Bismillāh*: “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate” (Arab. *Bismillāh-ir-Raḥmān-ir-Raḥīm*) is perhaps being critiqued.

The argument that human nature (*gōhr ī mardōmīh*) is simply responsible for evil (rather than god) is also called into question with regard to Islam (and monotheism more generally):

If they say it (evil) arose after humankind, as to that, when human nature (Pz. *gōhar ī mardumī*) is likewise a production of the sacred being, and the sacred being did not produce evil in the nature of humankind, how has it sprung into action from them? If the evil was set in action by them (humans), apart from the will (*kām*) of God, and a knowledge, as to their setting about it, existed in God, that implies that God is imperfect in His own will, and humankind is victorious and triumphant in setting aside the will and command of God, and doing evil competing with the will of God. (ŠGW 11.183–190, after West 1885: 187–188; see de Menasce 1945: 140–141)

In this passage Mardānfarrox makes a fundamental critique of monotheism that suggests that if human nature is responsible for evil, i.e., humans make mistakes after they are created by god (Allah in this case), but human nature itself is a product of god, then there exists a fundamental tension between human agency and divine will. For if god knows they will err then his will to be omnibenevolent is suspect and if he doesn’t know that they will stray from his will, i.e., humans exercise their agency, then his omniscience is in question and humans can therefore compete with the will of god.

We also find a critique of Christianity that suggests that natural evil (evil in the natural world or evil not caused by human agents) is inconsistent with an omnipotent and omnibenevolent god: “If humankind commit sin and crime by their own free will (*āzād-kām*) through the will of the sacred being, through what free will and sin are the sin and crime of the lion, serpent, wolf, and scorpion – the stinging and slaying noxious creatures – which are the natural actions that ever proceed from them?” (ŠGW 15.82–83, after West 1885: 236; see de Menasce 1945: 216–217). Mardānfarrox suggests that if god (the Christian “lord” in this case) is omnibenevolent and allows humans the opportunity to sin and commit evil due to their (god-given) free will then perhaps human evil in the world would be explainable; but then why did he make dangerous animals whose basic nature is to harm humans? Put simply, any natural calamity not caused by human agents is still “evil” and god is once again ultimately responsible. It is important to recognize that such sustained rationalist critiques in Pahlavi literature are largely limited to the *Škand-gumānīg Wizār*, a text perhaps produced in the 10th century CE in the Islamic milieu by a layman, and most likely influenced by Islamic rationalist theology – *‘ilm al-kalām* (Thrope 2012: 14), and therefore it perhaps more closely resembles styles of theological discourse that are familiar to us as modern (Western) readers.

Textual Taxonomies: The *Ahunwar*, the Twenty-One *Nasks*, and the *Dēn*

While such systematic attempts at theology are not generally found in Pahlavi literature, the Zoroastrian theologians did actively employ hermeneutical modes that textually organized and schematized the *dēn* based on a parsing of the *Ahuna Vairiia* or *Yaθā Ahū Vairiīō* (Pahl. *Ahun(a)war*, Y 27.13) prayer (Av. *maθra-*) into twenty-one words (Cantera 2004: 13–20; see Kotwal and Kreyenbroek, “Prayer,” this volume). The *Ahuna Vairiia*, the opening strophe of the Old Avestan text collection, is described as “the most victorious amongst the utterances which are chanted” (*Supp.Šnš* 12.19, Kotwal 1969: 33). Ohrmazd was the first to utter the *Ahunwar* when he recited its three verse-lines (*gāh*) as discrete speech-acts to subdue the Evil Spirit prior to his creation of the world into two realms: the world of thought and the world of the living (*Bd* 1.29–31). In its three verse-lines we have the unfolding of the cosmos from cosmogony to eschatology. With Ohrmazd’s recitation of the *Ahunwar*, the Evil Spirit experiences a foretaste of things to come including his own ultimate demise and the destruction of his demonic minions as he is shown the resurrection of humanity and the final and total victory of the forces of good (see Cereti, “Myth, Legends, Eschatologies,” this volume).

In *Dēnkard* Book 9 we find the hermeneutical claim that the twenty-one words of the *Ahunwar* represent the entire religious tradition: “And about how He (Ohrmazd) spoke to Zarathustra, the best of creations, the ‘words worthy of being enumerated’ (*abāyišnīg-ōšmurišn saxwan*), (*i.e.*) the *Ahunwar*, which is an encapsulation of everything (*hangirdīgīh hamāg*)” (*Dk* 9.2.17, Vevaina 2010a: 124). In *Dēnkard* Book 8 we find the Pahlavi theologians directly associating these three verse-lines of the *Ahunwar* with three textual taxonomies of the *dēn*: the Gathic (*gāhānīg*), the ritual-scientific(?) (lit. ‘with *maθras*’) (*hadāmānsrīg*), and the legal (*dādīg*). Moreover, this threefold taxonomy of

sacred knowledge based on the three verse-lines of the *Ahunwar* was also explicitly homologized with the division of the cosmos into three realms: the world of thought (*mēnōg*, i.e., the Gathic, *gāhānīg*), the world of the living (*gētīg*, i.e., the legal, *dādīg*), and that which is between the two (i.e., the texts ‘with *maθras*’, *hadāmānsrīg*) (Dk 8.1.5, Vevaina 2010a: 120).

This hermeneutical strategy of schematizing the cosmos on the basis of the twenty-one words of the *Ahunwar* and its three verse-lines also extends to the division of the *dēn* – as sacred corpus – into twenty-one *nasks* or ‘bundles’ (often translated by scholars anachronistically as ‘books’) perhaps sometime in the late Sasanian era. Manuščihr states this took place during the reign of Khosrow I (r. 531–579 CE):

As that Weh-Šāhpuhr [the Mowbedān Mowbed, the highest religious authority] in the council of Khusraw Anushirvān, the king of kings, son of Kavād, showed (*nimūd*) the 21 divisions in such a manner that the priests (*mayīyān*) abided by them, and they sealed (*hawāšt*) the writing so that it was agreed to, as it was decreed. (NM I.4.17, Kanga 1966: 56–57; see Bailey 1943: 173)

Avestan *naska-*, the pre-form of Pahlavi *nask*, is found just once in Avestan in the *Hōm Yašt*: “Also, on those who sit in their houses (Av. *kata-*) querying the *nasks* (*naskō. frasāṅhō*), Haoma bestows life-giving wisdom and learning” (Y 9.22). In the Avestan passage “querying the *nasks*” appears to be an oral and discursive process that took place at home, though the later Pahlavi translation interprets it as having occurred at the priestly school (*hērbdestān*). The most tempting etymology suggested for Av. *naska-* is from a pre-form **nad-ska-* from a root **nad-* ‘to tie, to bind, to connect’, and perhaps meant a ‘bundle’ or ‘sheaf’. This perhaps suggests that in the Zoroastrian hermeneutical traditions counting the knots on bundles might have served as a metaphor for the classification of the twenty-one *nasks* into three different fields of knowledge, themselves correlated with the three verse-lines and twenty-one words of the *Ahunwar* (Vevaina 2010a: 140). Zādspram, the high priest of Sirjān and the brother of Manuščihr, explicitly associates the three divisions of the *dēn*, the twenty-one *nasks*, and the *Ahunwar*: “Regarding the three divisions of the *dēn*, which are the ‘all-inclusive’, the ‘middle’, and the ‘detailed’ are none other than the *Ahunwar*, the symbol (*nišān*) of the *nasks*” (WZ 28, Vevaina 2010a: 124; see Gignoux and Tafazzoli 1993: 91). These Pahlavi theologians viewed the *Ahunwar* as foundational – the origin of all other words being Ohrmazd’s first recitation – and as symbolizing an all-encompassing corpus of twenty-one *nasks* that are themselves isomorphic with the entire sacred tradition – religion (*dēn*).

Like the *Ahunwar* and the twenty-one *nasks*, the *Gāthās* were also discussed in Pahlavi literature as part of complex numerological speculations and homologies that correlate these most sacred of texts with other realms of reality. So, for example:

The *ahyā yāsā* (Av. *ahiiāsā hāiti*, Y 28.1–11), *xšmaibyā* (Av. *xšmāuuōiia.gēuš.uruuā hāiti*, Y 29.1–11), and *attawaxšyā* (Av. *aṭ.tā.vaxšiiā hāiti*, Y 30.1–11) (have) eleven strophes (*wačast*) each, because eleven things flow within the body of humans: the mind (*ox/ahu*), the consciousness (*bōy*), the vision-soul (*dēn*), the breath-soul (*ruwān*), the pre-soul (*frawahr*),

thought, speech, and action, seeing, smelling, and hearing; and the body of humans and other creatures also are created from water, fire, and air. (*Supp.Šnš* 13.4, after Kotwal 1969: 41; for numerology in Avestan and Pahlavi respectively, see Windfuhr 2001 and Vevaina 2010a; for conceptions of the human body in Pahlavi literature, see Shaked 1994a: 135–152; see also Williams, “Purity and Pollution / The Body,” this volume)

By conceptualizing and employing these homologies between their sacred texts and the metaphysical components and embodied nature of humans, the Zoroastrian interpreters conceived of wisdom as being fundamentally embodied and the *Gāthās* as being infinitely interpretable (Vevaina 2012; for these homologies, see Vevaina 2010a).

Sacred Wisdom, Priestly Authority, and the Teaching of Religious Knowledge

One of the modern scholarly claims questioning Zarathustra’s putative authorship of the *Gāthās* is based on the fact that we have several references to Zarathustra that are *not* in the 1st person (see Kellens 1991; Skjærvø 1997b, 2003b; for the construction of the poetic persona in the *Gāthās*, see Jamison 2007). More than a millennium ago, the Zoroastrian theologians felt compelled to address similar issues of authorship as they understood the *Gāthās* and, for that matter, the entire Avestan corpus as being the words of Ohrmazd communicated to Zarathustra:

The divine words (*mānsr*) of Ohrmazd to Zarathustra were in many voices, but it is all something that can be relied on and in no way contradictory. For the *Gāthās*, which you too regard as in their entirety spoken by Ohrmazd to Zarathustra, were some of them spoken in the voice of Zarathustra, some in that of the Amahrspands, some in that of Gōšūrūn [Protector of Animals], some in that of the other gods (*yazdān*), yet in no way contradict the fact that they were all spoken by Ohrmazd to Zarathustra. (*Dk* 3.7.5, after Skjærvø 2011a: 241; see de Menasce 1973: 33)

Clearly, voice and direct speech notwithstanding, the Pahlavi theologians viewed the contents of the *Gāthās* as being fundamentally cohesive given their ultimate god-given status and *not* merely the words of Zarathustra, as is usually claimed by most modern scholars and believers alike (see Stausberg, “Zarathustra: Post-Gathic Trajectories,” this volume).

In *Dēnkard* Book 9 we encounter the literary device of the “Four Ages,” more familiar to us from Hesiod and the Book of Daniel, but used to discuss the transmission of sacred wisdom from Ohrmazd to the present (the Islamic era):

First, the golden (age), in which Ohrmazd showed (*nimūd*) the *dēn* to Zarathustra. Second, the silver (one), in which Wištāsp [Zarathustra’s first royal patron] received/accepted (*padrīft*) the *dēn* from Zarathustra. Third, the one of steel, the age in which Ādurbād, son of Mahrspand, redresser of Righteousness (*ahlāyīh ārāstār*) was born [4th century CE]. Fourth, the age in which iron was mixed, is this in which the rule of the heretics and the

other bad ones (*ahlomōy ud abārīg wattarān*) proliferated (*frāy-zīšnīh*, lit. 'was born more'). (*Dk* 9.8.2–5, see Vevaina 2011 for a discussion of this passage and the Four Ages)

The framing device of the Four Ages is used here to provide a genealogy of the divine origins of the all-encompassing *dēn*, its revelation from Ohrmazd to Zarathustra, its subsequent adoption by Wištāsp, here representing sovereignty, and its subsequent transmission from Sasanian times to the present, i.e., Islamic era when religious authority structures were being severely taxed (both physically and metaphorically) (see Kreyenbroek 1987).

Given the discontinuous history and transmission of Zoroastrian knowledge and cultural production, how did the Zoroastrian priests construct and apprehend the sacred power of the *dēn*? How was religious knowledge made accessible to adherents? Who had access to it? Who should teach and who should be taught? Our primary textual source for pedagogy comes from the *Hērbedestān* ('Priestly School'), an Avestan–Pahlavi bilingual text (Kotwal and Kreyenbroek with Russell 1992). Failures to memorize or recite correctly on the parts of disciples were ultimately the responsibility of the teacher in question (*Hēr* 14.5) with the length of study with a teacher typically being defined as a year (*Hēr* 12.1). In the Avestan–Pahlavi *Nērangestān* we find a debate between various Zoroastrian priestly authorities on whether women can publicly perform the prayers and rituals (*N* 22.1–3, 5, Kotwal and Kreyenbroek 1995: 120–125). The role of women (and children) as public ritual performers was not proscribed or forbidden in the Avestan original but it is debated in the later Pahlavi translation, where the theologians simultaneously acknowledge the diversity of contemporary legal rulings while upholding the centuries old privileges of the male hereditary priesthood by interpreting the Avestan text in a far more restricted manner (for women priests, see Rose, "Gender," this volume).

Despite these examples of hermeneutical agency, the Zoroastrian theologians were acutely aware of the status of the Pahlavi translations cum commentaries – *Zand* – as a second order discourse vis-à-vis the Avesta(n) and yet they acknowledge its hermeneutical currency:

Why did God utter this *dēn* in the unknown and hidden language called Avestan? This divine word of the *dēn*, the Avesta(n), containing all-awareness, by being in a form close to the good beings in the other world, in all the voices of beings in this world, is so amazing that it has passed beyond the grasp of humanity. But the *Zand* is spoken in such a manner that it can be better known in this world. (*Dk* 5.23–24.12, after Skjærvø 2011a: 250; see Amouzgar and Tafazzoli 2000: 72–73 and 82–83)

Here we appear to see an acknowledgment of the loss of precise understanding of their ancient Avestan texts and their concomitant reliance on the Pahlavi translations cum commentaries (on the issue of transmission, grammatical knowledge, and interpretive agency, see Cantera 2004 and the review by Skjærvø 2008b). In *Dk* Book 4 we also find two hydronic metaphors for the proper understanding and dissemination of sacred knowledge with a reference to theological disputations and controversies during the reign of Shapur II (r. 309–379 CE) as "contamination of the waters" (*ābān āhōg kardan*) and that,

so greatly has the Avesta(n) been kept oral in pure saying, adorned with writing from tales in books, and, to put it in the manner of the common people, been “drained” (and cultivated), in making people aware of what it says. And so, the entire knowledge comes from “wells” in the Mazdayasnian *dēn* for this reason, which we have come to know ... (*Dk* 4.20 and 4.23b, after Skjærvø 2011a: 42–43; see also Skjærvø 2012b: 23–24)

Clearly, the diversity of doctrines and theologies that we find in the Pahlavi texts are reflections of these Sasanian religio-political debates that we often only hear about from Classical, Christian, Jewish, or Islamic sources.

Knowledge found in the ‘religion’ (*dēn*) is intimately tied to both education (nurture) and innate capacity (nature). The teaching of religious wisdom is never an apolitical – neutral – act and so we find it stated: “When one has the choice one should not learn *Avesta*, *Zand*, and other instruction (*frahang*) for each profession, from evil people” (*Dk* 6.C27) and concomitantly, “One should not teach *Avesta* and *Zand* to evil and heretical people, for sin becomes more current in the world” (*Dk* 6.C28, both quotes after Shaked 1979: 155, 157). In order to control and disseminate the “proper” understanding of religion, the importance of having a spiritual authority was thus repeatedly stressed: “And about one who due to not having a Dastwar [lit. ‘Authority’] (as is prescribed) by the law; the inability of keeping any of (one’s) good deeds one had done, and (s)he will not arrive to the Best Existence” (*Dk* 9.9.4, compare *Supp.Šnš* 12.2; for spiritual authority, see Kreyenbroek 1994b). The authority of the priests is also invoked in the context of not teaching *Zand* (i.e., Pahlavi) to everyone. In the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* we find a quote attributed to Khosrow I in response to the threat posed by Mazdak and his collectivist followers: “Do not keep these *Yasnās* in concealment, but do not teach the *Zand* outside your offspring” (*ZWY* 2.2, after Cereti 1995b: 150; compare *Dk* 6.254 for teaching *Zand* at home; for Mazdak, see Rezaia 2012).

In a largely oral priestly tradition religious knowledge and spiritual wisdom were not primarily found in books but rather embodied in the person of priests who controlled access and regulated correct praxis through their choice of disciples. Thus, the importance of religious education is repeatedly stressed: “Do not consider attending the *hērbedestān* as bad; for attending the *hērbedestān* is the life of the people” (*Dk* 6.316, Shaked 1979: 125) and “Do not neglect to attend the *hērbedestān*. For when one attends the *hērbedestān* for many years with this one knowledge, that (s)he is without doubt (*abē-gumān*) that the gods exist and the demons do not, Ohrmazd the lord does not bring punishment upon him/her” (*Dk* 6.98, after Shaked 1979: 39).

The arrival and subsequent spread of Islam in the 7th century, however, saw increasing apostasy, the breakdown of priestly hierarchies, and a consequent weakening of religious training (Kreyenbroek 1987). Manuščihir refers to the faithful as being “scattered like jewels” (*wehān gohrān ēwēnag wistarīd*, *DD* Intro. 26, Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998: 38–39) and he and the other Zoroastrian theologians were increasingly faced with defending the faith and asserting their personal authority through recourse to the true teachings of the Teachers of Old (*pōryōtkēšān*). Faced with the reality that contemporary circumstances and past practices and beliefs were not always easily reconcilable, Manuščihir states: “Since our knowledge arises from those ancient authorities who were better and wiser and (our) masters, (spiritual)

chiefs and authorities, if they disagree with each other, I have written (my) decision about this subject according to the opinion chiefly held by the authorities of our time and family” (*DD* Intro. 20, Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998: 37; compare *Dk* 3.16). Manuščihr does add, however, that “the clear interpretation of religious practice mostly derives from two sources: one is the interpretation of the principles by the innate wisdom (*āsn-xrad*) of the (current) leader of the faithful (*dēn-pēšōbāy*); and the more important one from the foundations of the earlier blessed leaders, the great teachers of the faith” (*DD* Intro. 23, Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998: 37). Ultimately, the power of then contemporary priestly authority was vouchsafed for by the cohesive power of shared priestly lineages stretching back to the legendary Manuščihr (Av. Manuščiθra), the first of the Šāhs of Iran in the *Šāhnāme*: “All other Mowbeds who, in the *xwadāyih nāmag* [‘Book of Lords(ship)’], are said to be from the same family (*ham-dūdag*), are of this genealogy (*tōhmag*, lit. ‘seed’) of Manuščihr; those Mowbeds too, who now exist, are all, they say, from the same family” (*Bd* 35A.7, after Anklesaria 1956: 305).

Dēnkard Book 6 provides us with a causality string which extols the ultimate value of education in terms of the teleology of Zoroastrian cosmology:

From knowledge of the Religion there comes about consideration of the Sacred Word; from consideration of the Sacred Word there comes about increase of (one’s) calling in Religion (*pēšag ī dēn*) and worship of the gods (*yazišn ī yazdān*); from increase of the calling in Religion and of the worship of the gods, the elimination of the demons from the world; from the elimination of the demons from the world there comes about immortality, the Renovation (*frašgird*) and the Resurrection. (*Dk* 6.C75, Shaked 1979: 171)

Education here is the linchpin to affect positive change first in oneself and then in the world, ultimately leading to the eradication of evil at the end times.

Religion and Polemics: Disciplining Selves and Critiquing Others

Beyond Pahlavi literature, the Middle Persian inscriptions of the 3rd-century CE high priest Kerdīr provide us with the earliest datable evidence for questions of orthopraxy and the disciplining of those who did not religiously conform in Sasanian Iran (224–651 CE) (see de Jong, “Religion and Politics in Pre-Islamic Iran,” this volume). Kerdīr claims that: “I furthered the Mazdayasnian Religion and the good priests in the land and honored them. But the heretics (*ahlomōy*) and (sexual?) deviants (*gumarzāg*) among the priests who did not live correctly by the Mazdayasnian Religion and the services to the gods, those I punished and reprimanded until I had made them better” (§16, after Skjærvø 2011a: 238). The term for ‘heretic’ or ‘apostate’ in Pahlavi, *ahlomōy*, comes from Av. *ašəmaoya-*, perhaps meaning one ‘who obfuscates Order/Truth [*aša*], shams/pretends orderly/truthful behavior’. The Avestan form appears to be a cognate of Old Indic *mugh-/muh-*, *mógha* which appears to mean ‘wrap in darkness, obfuscate’ and is also used in the sense of ‘counterfeit, pretense’ (Skjærvø 2003a: 401–402). In *Dēnkard* 3.331 we find it stated that “the characteristics of the heretic are evil-mindedness (*akōmanīg*) (and) (having) a

dissimulating nature (*nihān-xēmīh*)” (Vevaina 2011: 244, fn. 31; see de Menasce 1973: 309). The Pahlavi theologians typologize heretics into three types: a deceiver, a deceived, and a self-lover (*xwad-dōšag*), with the third type “twisting things away from the manner in which they were taught by the early masters (*pōryōtkēšān ī pēšēnīgān*)” (*Dk* 6.C83d, Shaked 1979: 175; see also Cantera 2003). They also suggest that, “the mark of heresy is ... one who thinks of the great work of virtue (*kirbag*) as petty and the petty work of virtue as great” (*Dk* 6.159, Shaked 1979: 65). One of the qualities of heretics besides their sophistic abilities was that their physical bodies were understood to be polluted: “From the exposition(s) of the Religion (*az dēn niqēz*), the souls of demon worshipers and the deceitful heretics, owing to their impure nature (*rēman xēm*), although (located) in a living body, are (as if) possessing a dead body (*murd tan*)” (*Dk* 3.36, trans. mine, see de Menasce 1973: 51).

One of the most discussed passages in Sasanian history is another polemical claim made by Kerdīr: “Throughout the realm, Jews (*yahūd*), Buddhists (*šaman*), Hindus (*braman*), Nazoreans (*nāzarā*), and Christians (*kristiyān*), Baptists (*magdag*), and Manicheans (*zandīg*) were struck down, idol temples were destroyed, and the lairs of the demons were ruined and turned into thrones and seats for the gods” (§11, after Skjærvø 2011a: 238). While there is no corroborating historical or material evidence for these persecutions, Pahlavi literature does contain a number of polemical passages on other religions, with loyalty to the faith being a key component of Zoroastrian theology and self-definition (de Jong 2003). So, for example, “Of the pure law (*abēzag dād*) and of the Good Religion are we, and of the supreme teaching are we; and of the mixed law (*gumēzag dād*) are the disciples of Sēn [an archetypical heretic]; and of the worst law are the Manicheans (*zandīg*) and the Christians (*tarsāg* [‘god-]fearing’) and the Jews (*yahūd*), and the others who are of this sort” (*Šnš* 6.7, Tavadia 1930: 97; compare also *Dk* 3.150).

The perfection and truth of the *dēn* relative to others was also a common theme: “These faiths (*kēš*) and beliefs (*wurrōyišn*) and diverse customs (*jud-ristaqīh*), which are so mutually afflicting one another in this world, are not worthy to be from the creation of the gods (*yazdān*); because the religion of the gods is truth (*rāstīh*), and its law (*dād*) is virtue (*frārōnīh*)” (*MX* 1.38–41, after West 1885: 7) and “there is then no (other) belief, through which it is possible for one to obtain and know the matter (*xīr*) of the world of the living and the world of thought so explicitly and clearly” (*MX* 13.17, after West 1885: 40). Here we seem to find the epistemological claim that Zoroastrianism is the best way to know about the true nature of the world and hence, no real plurality of religious truths is thinkable (recall: “One is the path of Truth. Those of the others are all non-paths,” *Y* 72.11). Nonetheless, we do also find statements to the effect that those of other religions are not bad simply for following other religions: “A Jew is not wicked (*druwand*) merely on account of their Jewish faith, and followers of other bad religions (*aq-dēn*) are (likewise) not wicked merely on account of their bad religions” (*Dk* 6.321, after Shaked 1979: 129). Albert de Jong has argued that Zoroastrian polemics may never actually have been read by any non-Zoroastrians and that these claims were largely for internal consumption in an era of stiff religious competition (de Jong 2003: 17; see also Stausberg 2002b: 345).

Conclusions

Since any writing of the past is mediated through the lens of the present, how we as scholars choose to locate ourselves, what, and whom we choose to include in our scholarly purview will determine how pre-modern Zoroastrian theological discourses are understood in the 21st century. While we find rhetorically persuasive normative theological claims in the pre-modern Zoroastrian texts regarding the unity of “religion,” we can also clearly see a multiplicity and diversity of hermeneutical practices and rhetoric precisely undercutting these powerful homogenizing claims. This survey has attempted to preserve the diversity of these Zoroastrian voices from the past by demonstrating that a critical study of emic hermeneutics as self-interpreting discourse, both of sacred texts as sacred knowledge and objectified religion as an ontological given, is the best way of showcasing the internal diversity of Zoroastrian theologies, and the tensions internal to Zoroastrians’ self-reflective interpretations of their myths, beliefs, and practices.

This survey 1) raises the historiographical problem of and yet scholarly imperative to investigate Zoroastrian self-understandings of “Zoroastrianism” in the absence of fully adequate methods to historicize the sources with the backdrop of an orientalist legacy of scholarship that until recently largely relegated late antique and early Islamic era Zoroastrian (emic) knowledge production to being mere misreadings of the “original” meaning(s) of the earlier Avestan texts; 2) it provides a brief discussion of the genealogy and semantics of the polyvalent term, *dēn*, that encompasses “worldview,” “religion,” and “sacred corpus”; 3) it presents the basis of good and evil and provides textual descriptions of the metaphysical entities who personify the two sides and the subjective consequences of good and evil, i.e., life and health versus sickness and death that constitute the human condition; 4) it interrogates some of the tensions inherent to the relationship between personal agency to choose between these two sides and deterministic and fatalistic speculations about the role of time and destiny in human affairs; 5) it addresses some of the claims put forth about human behaviors as products of this bifurcated existence and provides some salient examples of Zoroastrian wisdom literature; 6) it surveys Zoroastrian views on the “problem of evil,” perhaps the central question animating Zoroastrianism, and the ways in which dualism is defended vis-à-vis the monotheistic faiths; 7) it examines some of the taxonomic and symbolic interpretations of the Zoroastrian hermeneutes with regard to their schematizing of their sacred texts; 8) it attempts to demonstrate the essential connection between hermeneutical praxis and priestly authority and the fundamental importance of proper education; 9) and, finally, it briefly presents some passages on the disciplining of internal difference in terms of “heretics” and critiques of external difference with regard to other faiths.

To avoid making normative statements about “Zoroastrianism” as a stable, objectified social phenomenon through time (i.e., a normative or authentic religious tradition), this survey neither assembles nor reconstructs a systematic theology, nor does it provide an essentialist or rationalized account or enumeration of core beliefs and practices. Rather, it attempts to present a multiplicity of competing voices that taken together showcase Zoroastrian theologians’ own problematizations of their central concerns about the divine, the social, and the individual realms by using the texts’ own

hermeneutical practices and (often implicit) theories as explanatory models and thematic guides, while admitting the historiographical obstacles to generalizing these analyses beyond their own historical and social contexts, i.e., earlier or later periods of Zoroastrianism (or Zoroastrianisms). While this intellectual exercise in presenting Zoroastrian intellectual approaches to a “modern” readership might seem apropos in a volume such as this, the Pahlavi theologians themselves provide us with a pithy definition for the importance of the social and performed nature of religion: “Religion (*dēn*) is that which one always does” (*dēn ān ī hamē kunēd*, *Dk* 6.34, after Shaked 1979: 15).

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Further Reading

For surveys of Pahlavi literature, see West (1896–1904), Tavastia (1956), Boyce (1968a), de Menasce (1975, 1983), Cereti (2001), and Macuch (2009b). For theology, see Stausberg (2002a), Hultgård (2004), and the response of Ahn (2004). For hermeneutics, see Kreyenbroek (1999) and Vevaina (2010a, 2010b, 2012). For evil in early Zoroastrianism, see Mendoza Forrest (2011). For synthetic studies of “Classical” Zoroastrianism in Pahlavi, see Molé (1963), Shaked (1994a), and Kreyenbroek (2013a). For the *Zand*, see de Menasce (1958), Josephson (1997), Shapira (1997), Shaked (1996, 2003c), and Cantera (2004). For questions of orality, textual transmission, and theology, see Bailey (1943), Kreyenbroek (1996, 2006 = 2013a), Hintze (1998a), Huyse (2008), and Skjærvø (2005–2006 [2007], 2012b).

CHAPTER 14

Cosmologies and Astrology

Antonio Panaino

Zoroastrian texts present the world as a positive creation, and already in the earliest Avestan framework (Y 30.4) ‘life’ (Av. *gaiia-*) was opposed to the ‘impossibility of life’ (*ajiiāiti-*). It is Ahura Mazda who established the cosmic order, from which all the fundamental pillars of the universe and the basic means for natural existence derive, as we deduce from the rhetorical questions put forth by Zarathustra to Ahura Mazda himself in Y 44. According to this source, Ahura Mazda’s cosmological actions were the following: *dā-* ‘to create, fix’, *dar-* ‘to support’ (with reference to heaven), while he was also called *huvāpah-* ‘artificer’. Ahura Mazda is the god (*baga-*) who, according to the Old Persian inscriptions (6th–4th centuries BCE), created (*adā*) heaven and earth, man, but also happiness for him. It is improbable that Ahura Mazda was conceived as a divinity who had created the world from “nothing” as in a kind of *creatio ex nihilo*. Rather, he put in order the whole universe, establishing a general harmony in a primordial state. As also in the case of some Vedic gods, he operated with a primeval stock, a kind of basic “substance,” in a still latent phase between cosmic order and disorder. Unfortunately, a full description of the earliest phases of the creation is not attested in Avestan mythological sources, but only in later texts. Thus, we cannot assume that the oldest cosmology exactly followed the same patterns presented by a number of Pahlavi texts such as the *Bundahishn*, etc. In particular, this book of the 9th century CE offers a complete description and explanation for the origin and meaning of existence. It is therefore necessary to compare all the extant data in Avestan and Pahlavi (and in other languages as well), but without assuming a priori that the latest doctrines merely followed exactly earlier traditions without inner evolutions or contradictions. Furthermore, although the extant sources have given room for many different interpretations, the following paragraphs will offer an essential guide to the main Mazdean cosmological doctrines along their historical evolution. Subjects concerning astral mythology and Sasanian astrology will be also discussed in the framework of their cosmological relevance in Zoroastrianism.

The Cosmic Fight and the Double Dimension of Existence and of Creation

According to the Gathic sources, two Mainiius, presented as twins, one called Spənta, 'beneficent', the other Angra (OAv, Anra in YAv.), i.e., 'bad', made a 'choice' (*var-*), the first for *aša-* (Ved. *ṛtá-*) 'the order, the right', the latter for *druj-* 'the lie, the disorder' (Ved. *druh-*). These twins thus behave as two mental powers (*mainiiu-*, from the root *man-* 'to think') and represent the model of the fundamental alternative between life and death (or 'impossibility of life'; Y 30.4: *gaiia-* vs. *ajiiāiti-*). Ahura Mazdā, 'Lord Wisdom', whose relations with the two Mainiius are unclear (maybe he is their father, but this conclusion is based only on an inference deduced from a difficult passage such as Y 47.3), is not only the supreme divinity, but also the father of *aša-* (Y 47.2: *hūwō ptā ašahiīā mazdā* 'Mazdā is the father of *aša-*'). The primordial choice assumed by both Mainiius determined a number of consequences concerning human and earthly existence, where the fight between these opposite forces becomes manifest, while Ahura Mazdā remains on a higher level, not directly involved in the conflict. Differently, in the later Avestan corpus, it is Ahura Mazdā that progressively covers part of the functions played by Spənta Mainiiu (as a twin of the antagonist in the *Gāthās*), while now he directly faces Angra Mainiiu. The later antagonism between Ahura Mazdā and Angra Mainiiu (Pahl. Ohrmazd and Ahreman), whose opposite behaviors are no longer presented in connection with a deliberate choice, but as due to their own natures, reflects a new synthesis and is one of the most important aspects of the post-Gathic Zoroastrian radical dualism. Such a pattern is very different from apparently similar doctrines attested in the Gnostic and the Manichaean frameworks. In the Mazdean tradition, in fact, the physical or corporeal dimension is never considered as negative, and there is no opposition between spirit and matter. On the contrary, these two aspects of 'existence' (Av. *ahu-*, m.) are considered in the whole Zoroastrian tradition complementary and, in principle, both as positive (Gnoli 1962, 1963; Shaked 1971). The first, the "mental one" (and not only strictly "celestial"), is described in OAv. as *manahiiia-* or *manahjō* 'of the thought', in YAv. as *mainiiuuua-*, in Pahl. as *mēnōg* (all from a verbal root *man-* 'to think', present in Avestan stem *man-ah-* 'thought', as act or result of thinking, but also in *ma'n-iiu-* 'thought/intention', then, 'spirit', but as a free activity of the mind producing thought, which is personified in the two antagonist twins, both called *mainiiu-*). The second aspect of existence is the "living" one, representing the physical dimension in its seminal form, earlier named in OAv. *astuuant-* 'having bones', but later referred to with the adj. *gaēiθiiā-*, f., 'living', a stem built on *gaēθā-*, f., 'creature, beast(s), ensemble of living beings', and ultimately derived from the verbal root *jī-* 'to live' (Av. *gaiia-*, m., 'life', *ajiiāiti-*, f., 'non-life', *jiiātu-*, m., 'subsistence'), and attested in Pahlavi literature as *gētīg*.

While Ahura Mazdā (with his creatures) and Angra Mainiiu (with his *daēuuas* and the other demoniac beings) share the dimension of the "mental" state or existence, whereas the "living" state, in its positive, seminal, qualities belongs exclusively to the good Creator. Life, in fact, is completely extraneous to the evil forces, because they represent an absolute negativity, the 'impossibility of life' (*ajiiāiti-*), and are in direct antagonism with the idea itself of life (*gaiia-*). For this reason, the evil principle is weaker on the level of the living dimension, because he is not seminal, and behaves as a bringer of

death, so representing an active negation of existence, whose target is the complete destruction of the living world. For these reasons Pahlavi sources affirm that Ahreman does not properly exist in the *gētīg* dimension (Schmidt 1996), and the *GBd* 1, states that, while Ohrmazd, his space, religion, and time ‘were, are and ever shall be’ (*būd ud ast ud hamē bawēd*), in reality Ahreman ‘(was), is, yet will not be’ (<*būd*> *ud ast kē nē bawēd*; Zaehner 1972: 278, 287, 312). Thus, Aṅra Mainiiu is ontologically extraneous to the world and the creation (Bianchi 1958: 24). Consequently the presence of death and any negative aspects of human existence do not depend on Ahura Mazdā’s creation, which was originally perfect, but is a consequence of an extra-cosmic attack produced by Aṅra Mainiiu, whose negative actions operate essentially on the mental level, although they can corrupt the living world and interfere with it.

The invasion and pollution produced by demons is represented in Pahlavi sources as the period of the ‘mixture’ (*gumēzišn*) between the positive and negative forces. Then, the suffering present in the physical world does not derive from Ohrmazd’s inefficiency, but is again the fruit of an extraneous force, stemming from a negative cosmic principle, *druj-*, and enacted throughout the wrong choice by Aṅra Mainiiu and his followers, the *daēuuas*. While Ahura Mazdā, in YAv. sources, is called *dāman-* ‘creator, organizer’, Aṅra Mainiiu is only *duzdāman-*, i.e., ‘a bad, evil organizer’; his fabrications have been only sharpened/miscreated against those realized by Ahura Mazdā, and not for an autonomous creative aim. This is the case of the evil ‘contra-fabrications’ (*paitiīāra-*), which the Evil Spirit fashioned (*frākərəntaṭ*) on the earth, according to the first chapter of the *Vīdēvdād*, in order to oppose the good works of Ahura Mazdā (Gnoli 1963) who made the sixteen regions where the Aryans live. Although, in Y 57.17, the two Mainiius, ‘the beneficent (*spənta-*) and the bad one (*aṅra-*), apparently arranged (two?) creations’ (*mainiiu dāman daiḍītəm yasca spəntō mainiiuš yasca aṅrō*), this statement is not in contradiction with the asymmetrical function of both protagonists of the myth, because the activities attributed to the two primordial Mainiius refer to directly opposite “creations,” which are, in their inner quality, very different: one is seminal and living, the other mortiferous (Shaked 1967).

According to the *DD* 64, Ohrmazd generated a ‘form of fire’ (*āsrō-kirb*), which seems to be associated with god himself, from the ‘light without beginning’ (*asar rošnīh*; YAv. *anaṅra raocâ*); Gnoli 1962: 117–118). In its turn, *GBd* 1.44 (Gnoli 1962: 117–118; Cereti and MacKenzie 2003: 38), shows that Ohrmazd fashioned forth the form of his creatures from his own essence, from the ‘material light’ (*gētīg rōšnīh*), in a ‘form of fire’ (*Ohrmazd az ān ī xwēš xwadīh, az gētīg rōšnīh, kirb ī dāmān ī xwēš frāz brēhēnīd pad ātaxš kirb*); contrariwise, Ahreman (*GBd* 1.47) sharpened his creation from the material darkness, which is his own essence (*gannāg mēnōg az gētīg tāriḡīh ān ī xwēš-tan dām frāz kīrrēnīd*). The qualitative difference of their creations is expressed by means of two different verbs: Ohrmazd *frāz brēhēnīd* ‘fashioned forth’, Ahreman *frāz kīrrēnīd* ‘sharpened, miscreated’, where *kīrrēnīdān*, originally meaning ‘to cut’, is strictly daēvic (see Lincoln 1997, where the semantics of the verbs connected to the operative divine or demoniac actions is discussed). Already in Avestan, the use of a double terminology in order to distinguish good and evil actions, as well as positive or negative creatures, animals, or parts of the body (e.g., *sāra-*, m. ‘head’ [good, or Ahuric], *kamərəda-*, n., ‘head (of a demon)’ [evil, or daēvic], etc.), was current. Such a tradition continued also

in Pahlavi. The dark *gētīg* (*gētīg tāriḡīh*), although such a terminology seems contradictory, because a positive concept such as *gētīg* is directly called ‘dark’ (Shaked 1967: 232–233), probably tries to define the negative primordial essence of Ahreman, just as, if we would use modern terms, a kind of anti-matter, aspermatic and poisonous.

Unlimited and Limited Time

In the framework of the Zoroastrian cosmology, speculations about time have assumed a remarkable development. Starting from the later Avestan sources we find a basic distinction between a ‘time without origin (or borders)’, Av. *zruuan- akarana-* (in Pahl. *zurwān* [or *zamān*] *ī akanārag*) and a ‘time with a long dominion’, Av. *zruuan darəγō. xʷadāta* (Pahl. *zurwān* [or *zamān*] *ī dagrand-xwadāy* or again *zamān ī kanāraqōmand* ‘finite time’, *zamān ī brīn* ‘limited time’; Zaehner 1972: 106–111). But, if in the later *Avesta* these two forms of time, already divinized, are of minor importance, both gained a first rank position in the Sasanian and post-Sasanian theological speculations, although some earlier doctrines have been recently posited. As Kellens (2001a) has explained, commenting on some difficult passages from the *Tištār* (*Yt* 8.11) and the *Mihr Yašt* (*Yt* 10.55 and 74), it is evident that Ahura Mazda was thought of as permanently staying in infinite time, which is *akarana-* ‘without borders’. On the contrary, in certain moments, gods like Tištriia, the star Sirius, or Mithra, can get out from their eternal conditions in order to play an active role in the limited time of the mixed world (Pahl. *gumēzišn*, lit. ‘mixture’). This means that the later sources in Pahlavi, distinguishing between infinite and limited time, follow an earlier scheme. The location of Ahura Mazda in the infinite dimension, confirmed in Pahlavi literature, shows his superiority with respect to his antagonist, who, after entering the good creation, will be imprisoned not only in its physical reality, but also in limited time, while Ohrmazd will control the fight from an external position, appearing on the earth only for the final battle against Ahreman (Panaino 1999b, 2003).

According to the first chapters of the *Bundahišn*, the fight between Ohrmazd and Ahreman takes place in the framework of a cosmic cycle of 12,000 years (Panaino 1998: 163–164). Time is there presented as a divine instrument distinguished from the eternity and the infinite. Ohrmazd, thanks to his absolute ‘omniscience and goodness’ (*harwispa-āgāhūh ud wēhīh*), at the moment in which he realized the existence of the opposite principle, i.e., Ahreman, decided to interrupt “infinite time.” This was a sort of preventive action in order to avoid any *direct* conflict with his antagonist. Otherwise, if a primordial battle suddenly occurred without any stable precondition, it would have been never-ending, because played out in infinite space and time, so without physical and temporal limits. Thus, the cosmic war would have been eternal and any definitive solution would be impossible. The enactment of limited time begins before that of the creation of the universe and of the human world. The introduction of limited time, then, was an autonomous operation decided by Ohrmazd after he had perceived the need of a radical conflict against Ahreman. From this point of view, that “time” was not yet the “historical” one, but it represented its essential precondition. In fact, the duel between the two primordial forces does not start with the direct confrontation between the two highest spirits, but already with the

interruption of infinite time and with the introduction of the earliest phase of creation, which covers the first 3,000 years of the *mēnōg* state. Only because of a new event, according to the Pahlavi sources (particularly the first chapter of the *Bundahišn*), will the rules of the struggle be defined. Ahreman, who parlayed with Ohrmazd, was asked to take part in the good creation, making peace with Ohrmazd, but, because of his innate ignorance and 'post-knowledge' (*pas-danišnīh*), the Evil Spirit was not able to understand the honesty of the proposal. He thought that Ohrmazd's attempt to obtain a peaceful agreement with him was only a manifestation of fear and weakness. Thus, Ahreman declared his desire for the destruction of the good creation. This answer was expected by Ohrmazd. Thanks to his a priori knowledge he prepared a trap for Ahreman in advance. Ohrmazd, in fact, suggested that the battle should be fought – as it would have been done by two warriors meeting for a duel – in a fixed time and in an established place. The time of the cosmic duel will be that of the cycle of 9,000 years (plus 3,000 in which Ohrmazd had already prepared the preconditions for the meeting with Ahreman, in order to get him into the trap), while the place was that of the world created by Ohrmazd. Ahreman did not see the risks hidden behind such a proposal and accepted it, so the trap was closed. In this way the antagonist is compelled to fight in the limits of finite time and in the space of the *gētīg* creation, where he will be completely destroyed at the conclusion of limited time. Just after this agreement, Ahreman falls asleep for a period of 3,000 years thanks to a prayer, called *Ahunwar* (Y 27.13), pronounced by Ohrmazd himself. During this second period, the divine 'creation' (*bundahišn*) was enacted in its 'living' (*gētīg*) form, but in a state of immobility, which has been described by Molé (1959: 443; 1963) as the *gētīg* in the *mēnōg*, comparable with the Platonic representation of the "kingdom of the ideas." With the conclusion of this second phase of 3,000 years, the first half of the Mazdean cosmic cycle of 12,000 years also ends, while a second one starts, that of the *gētīg* state (for another 6,000 years). It is at this moment, between the end of the *mēnōg* and the beginning of the *gētīg* period, that Ahreman is finally woken up by the demoness Ĵeh, the primordial prostitute. The Evil Spirit attacks the creation, piercing the celestial vault enveloping the world and the earth from the northern side (which, in the Zoroastrian cosmology, belongs to the demons). With this invasion the *gētīg* state of limited time definitively begins and becomes visible, because only after Ahreman's invasion were the astral bodies put in motion, revolving along their own orbits. Furthermore, the stars close and obstruct the hole produced in the heaven by Ahreman, so imprisoning all the demons in creation and in time. Thus, although the corruption of the good creation seems to be a victory, Ahreman has to fight in an inferior position, because he does not possess any real creative power in the framework of the *gētīg* dimension, extraneous to his ipseity, and then becomes prisoner of the space-temporal dimension of the cosmos created by Ohrmazd. From this very moment, according to the Zoroastrian cosmology, another 6,000 years of the *gētīg* state will remain until the final destruction of Ahreman. The first 3,000 years of the *gētīg* end with the revelation of the Mazdean faith to Zoroaster, while the final period of 3,000 years will be characterized, at the end of each millennium, by the birth of one of the three sons of Zoroaster. They will announce the liberation from the darkness, and, with the birth of the third son, the Revitalizer par excellence, the Sōšāns (*Av. saōšiiaṇt*), the destruction of Ahreman will be definitively realized. Only at that moment, with the final descent of Ohrmazd in the fight and his complete triumph, will limited time elapse and the infinite be re-established.

We can resume the cosmological scheme: a sort of cosmic period of 12,000 years presents each millennium under the protection of a zodiacal constellation. This cycle is divided in two sub-periods of 6,000 years each: the first phase is the *mēnōg*, the second one the *gētīg*. Both phases can be divided again into two periods of 3,000 years each. Side by side with this scheme based on four periods of 3,000 years, there is also another simpler pattern, which considers just three moments: 1) the phase before the battle, i.e., that of the primordial creation (*bundahišn*); 2) the phase of the mixture and of the fight with the demons (*gumēzišn*); 3) the final period, named in Pahlavi *fraš(a)gird* (from Av. *frašō.karāti-*, f., lit. ‘the act of making splendid [the existence]’), or the final “renovation” of the world, which comes back to its original state of perfection but without the impending presence of Ahreman and all the attendant aspects of evil – death, aging, suffering, etc.

Another version of the cosmic events has been transmitted by Christian Armenian (Eznik of Kolb and Eliše Vardapet) and Syriac (Theodore bar Kōnay and Yohannān bar Penkayê) authors (Zaehner 1972: 419–429, 447–440). The supreme god of time, Zurwān, desiring a son, performed a sacrifice lasting 1,000 years. At its conclusion, Zurwān doubted the efficacy of his ritual performance. Consequently, Ohrmazd was generated from the sacrifice, Ahreman from the doubt. Notwithstanding some apparently pessimistic trends, Zurvanite cosmology too assumed the final destruction of Ahreman as a certain result. Also, in this case, time maintained its linear dimension, where the evil principle is only an accident to be overcome and destroyed through the living superiority of the creation. A certain influence from the Mesopotamian world on the different Iranian speculations about the power of time cannot be excluded, but the Indian doctrines about *Kāla* ‘time’ and the Greek traditions regarding *Aiōn* (‘infinite time’) deserve a comparative evaluation as well. (For Zurwān, see also Vevaina, “Theologies and Hermeneutics,” this volume.)

The already described elaboration of a cosmic period lasting 12,000 years, divided into two great equal sub-periods, clearly presents some astrological implications. Although each of these twelve millennia was dominated by a zodiacal constellation (as clearly stated in a later New Persian source such as the ‘*Olamā’-ye Eslām*; Zaehner 1972: 410–411), it is in the period *gētīg*, from the 7th millennium onwards, after Ahreman’s irruption, that the whole celestial sphere is put in motion. With the beginning of the *gumēzišn*, the ‘domination’ (*hazārag xwadāyīh*) of the new millennium passed to the Balance (*GBd* 5B.15–17), a sign representing the most significant point of astrological depression for the Sun (and, then, for Ohrmazd’s forces), but also Saturn’s place of exaltation. Thus, *Kēwān* (Saturn), the most dangerous of the planetary demons, became the lord of that millennium (Panaino 1996a), and after thirty years determined the death of Gayōmard, the first man.

The exact date for the introduction of this millenary period cannot be precisely determined, but it should be reasonably old, because already in an Av. fragment embedded in the Pahlavi commentary to *Vd* 2.19, the millennium of Yima was mentioned. Also the *Drwāsp Yašt* (*Yt* 9.10) clearly refers to a period of 1,000 winters (*hazaṣrō.zima-*; Panaino 2004c). Some early Greek sources dating the birth of Zoroaster 6,000 years before Xerxes’ crossing the river Hellespont (480 BCE; Xanthus of Lydia, quoted by Diogenes Laertius) or before Plato’s death (347 BCE; Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis*

Historia XXX, 1, with reference to Eudoxus of Cnidus), could be interpreted – although the matter is debated – as a reference to the creation of his pre-existing soul or *frauuuāši-* in the *mēnōg* state, and consequently as another witness of the existence of these two great cosmic periods (Gnoli 2000: 43–94). From all these data we can at least deduce that a millennial doctrine was already known in the period in which Younger Avestan texts were composed and, although no explicit reference to the twelve millennia (but only to single millennia) is attested in these sources, it is presumable that an earlier mythic chronology followed the same pattern of the Pahlavi texts. It probably took its model of inspiration from the division of the ecliptic in twelve zodiacal constellations, easily connected to each millennium (thus corresponding to a cosmic month). Such an interpretation of the data does not necessarily imply that the original doctrine was of an astrological nature, because Classical astrology was not yet practiced at the time of composition of the Avestan sources already mentioned (see below). Moreover, it reflected a speculative equation between a cosmic year divided into twelve months (each one of 1,000 years) and the basic calendrical pattern of twelve months, already attested in the Old Persian, and later also in the Zoroastrian, calendars. Only in late antiquity was this doctrine fully adapted to the astrological framework, although with a number of innovations and additions (Panaino 2004a).

Human history is the history of the ‘mixture’, of the suffering produced by Ahreman’s invasion. The fight in this time is a basic necessity in order to destroy Ahreman and rid him, his minions, and their effects from the universe. Actually, as Shaked (1971: 72) has underlined, “*Gētīg* is the place where the existence of Ahreman can be ontologically denied, and where the outcome of the battle can be foreseen with confidence, despite the fear which the apparent equality of powers arouses.” It is, in fact, in the soul of human beings that the most important struggle for the complete salvation of the world has to be played. The target of history is, at the same time, history’s end, the liberation from the dialectic of the struggle between good and evil, the re-establishment of infinite time, where humanity will spend its life in the *tan ī pasēn*, the ‘future body’ or *corpus resurrectionis*, which will not abolish the *gētīg* existence, but will promote it into an archetypal and ideal state. Although Pahlavi sources describe a paradise (*garōdmān*) and a hell (*dušox*), the last, although full of suffering, is not eternal. It is attested also as a sort of intermediate purgatory (*hammistagān*), where only the persons whose sins and good actions have been evaluated as equal will be temporarily sent. But, with the final apocatastasis or restoration, produced by the last Sōšyāns, all the human beings, good or evil, will physically resurrect and will be admitted to the final salvation and the happiness of paradise.

The Organization of the World and the Place of the Iranians in the Mazdean Cosmography

Heaven

Although an earlier simple distinction between heaven and earth, both fashioned by Ahura Mazdā, is frequently attested in Avestan sources and in the Old Persian inscriptions as well, ‘heaven’ (*asman-*, m.) was considered as divided in various levels, the first

three belonging, in ascending order, to the stars, the moon, and the sun, while in the fourth, attributed to the 'lights without beginning' (*raocā anayra*), the paradise of Ahura Mazda was located. This subdivision has been linked to the three following steps, correlated with one's thoughts, words, and deeds, which the soul of any dead person should make after the final judgment. The attested order is of a religious nature, because it marks the increasing brightness seen during the ascent to paradise (Duchesne-Guillemin 1962a: 201 = 1978: 12, 1966: 424–425), although it is astronomically inconsistent, because the stars are patently farther from earth than the moon and the sun. The origin of this tradition is a matter of debate, but it is necessary to note that some Babylonian mystical texts from the beginning of the 1st millennium BCE adopted a celestial model with three different superimposed heavens, each one made of a precious stone, locating the stars in the lowest one. A possible influence of the Iranian sequence (stars, moon, sun) on that of some pre-Socratic Greek philosophers like Anaximander of Miletus (6th century BCE), but also Metrodorus of Chios (4th century BCE), a disciple of Democritus, and Crates (presumably the Theban Cynic; 4th–3rd century BCE) has been suggested and deserves serious consideration (Burkert 1963; West 1971: 91; Panaino 1995b).

Avestan cosmogony is already described in Y 44 (Panaino 2007a), where Ahura Mazda is presented as the supreme god who fixed the course of the sun and of the stars, and through whom the moon waxes and wanes (Y 44.3), who upheld the earth below and the 'nimbus' (*nabah-*, n.) above (i.e., the heavens) from falling (Y 44.4), through whom dawn, midday, and night were fixed, and who also arranged the lights and the darkness (Y 44.5). It is to be noted that neither the stem *diiu-* (of IE origin) nor *asman-* are attested in OAv. sources; they appear only in Younger Avestan texts, although *diiu-*, m. (*hapax*), is only a linguistic fossil used here in the fixed expression *diiāoš patat* '(A)ra Mainiiu fell down from the sky' (Yt 3.13). Probably the Iranians, as the Greeks, preserved the image of the heaven as made of stone (Av. *asman-*, in fact, means both 'stone' and 'heaven', and it is etymologically connected with Greek *ἄκμων* 'meteoric stone, thunderbolt, anvil' – while the Greek god Ouranos is sometimes called Akmonides, or son of Akmon – and with Ved. *ásman-*, m., meaning 'stone, rock, sling-stone, thunderbolt'; Bartholomae 1904: 207–208, sub *asan-*, m.; Reichelt 1913; Lazzeroni 1973; Crevatin 1974, 1975, 1976–1977). An Avestan word for 'firmament' was *tβāša-*, n. (Bartholomae 1904: 797–798; Pahl. *spāš*), from OIr. **twarda-* (Ved. *tvar-* 'to hurry'), meaning 'he who hurries'. This was probably a divinity of Mithra's entourage, three times mentioned with Zruuan in the Avestan framework (Zaehner 1972: 89). In the *Rašn Yašt*, we find a description of the celestial travel made by Rašnu throughout the seven continents of the earth or *karšuuars* (see below) and the various constellations and stars in order to reach the paradise of Ahura Mazda. We also find a reference to the circular movement of the stars, moon, and sun turning around the peak of mount Haraiī (Yt 12.25), which plays the role of the cosmic *axis mundi*. It is also possible that from Indo-Iranian times *Sárasvatī* and *Arəduuī Sūrā Anāhitā* (Witzel 1984; compare Lommel 1954), were associated with the Milky Way, but, if so, such a link was no longer operative in the later Mazdean context, when *Anāhitā/Anāhīd* was connected with the planet Venus (see below).

Earth

The world was conceived as round (but not spherical) and divided into seven large regions, called in Avestan *karšuuar-/karšuuān-* (Pahl. *kišwar*). The most important one, corresponding to X^vaniraθa and to the ancestral ‘homeland of the Aryans’ (*Airiiānqm vaējah-*), was the central one; there, the Vourukaša Sea, the central mountain, Us.həṇḍauua-, in connection with another one called *Harā-* (‘watch-post’) or *Haraitī-* (*barəz/bərəz-* or *bərəzaitī-*, i.e., ‘high’) were located. Such a model is similar to the Hindu and Buddhist ones, where the world is divided in seven *dvīpas* with Mount Meru (or Sumeru) at the center of the region Jambūdvīpa (Kirfel 1920: 18*–19*, 29–30*, 112; Gnoli 1985: 15–30). This mythic geography is probably of common Indo-Iranian origin. According to the *Anthologies of Zādspram* (WZ 3.31) (Gignoux and Tafazzoli 1993: 46–47), a Pahlavi text of the 9th century CE, Mount Harburz (i.e., Av. *harā bərəzaitī*) rose increasing in its height for a period of 800 years, while the other mountains continued to ascend only for 600 years. During the first 200 years of this entire timespan Harburz reached the sphere of the stars, while another 200 years were necessary to touch that of the moon, another 200 to reach the sphere of the sun, and, finally, in the last 200 the top of this mountain was connected to the summit of heaven. Another common Indo-Iranian heritage can be seen in the similar location of the Vourukaša Sea of a mythical tree, at the south of X^vaniraθa, and that of the Jambū tree, exactly at the south of Mount Meru in Indian cosmography (Boyce 1975a: 132–141). Such a mythical center of the world is frequently associated with a mountainous region and its main river Varj^hī Dāitiā (Pahl. *weh dāitī*). In this geographical framework the earliest mythical cycles are located (Boyce 1975a: 132–141), as in the case of the ‘uncreated Bull’ (Av. *gav-aēuuō.dāta-*, Pahl. *gāw ī ēw-dād*) and Gayōmard. The story of one of the most remarkable Indo-Iranian mythical heroes, Av. *Yima* (Ved. *Yama*), takes place in this region, and his *vara-*, the enclosure where he escapes with part of humanity after the arrival of the winters, is there (Malandra 1983: 178).

An early (i.e., post-Indo-Iranian) Iranian development concerns the importance attributed to the *Airiiānqm Vaējah* or ‘the space of the Aryans’ (Pahl. *Ērānwēz*), not simply considered as the homeland of the Aryans, but of Zoroaster and his revelation (Gnoli 1987: 47). Close to Mount Harā, frequently named also *Hukairiia* ‘having good works’, there is the Činuad Bridge (Av. *cinuatō pərātu-*), through which the souls of the dead ascend to paradise or hell (Boyce 1985: 812). One side of it is connected with the mountain Čagād ī dāidīg, the other to the Harborz (Alborz) chain (*DD* 20.2, Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998: 76–77), probably, as stated by Mary Boyce (1985), in the north, because the bridge must pass through the mouths of hell (*Dk* 9.20.3; *AWN* 53.1). The Iranian innovation concerning the central location of the Airiiana Vaējah, in connection with the central continent and Mount Harā was developed in the Manichaean tradition, where the *Aryān-waižan* was considered the region governed by Wištāsp (the first Iranian lord to accept Zoroaster’s religion), located at the footsteps of Mount Meru or Sumeru (Henning 1943). Another link between the ‘peak’ (Av. *taēra-*) of Harā and Sumeru is attested in the Khotanese Buddhist sources, which give Sumeru a clearly Iranian appellation (Khot. *ttaira haraysä*; Bailey 1961: 12,

1979: 467). In the Avestan hymn to Mithra (*Yt* 10.13–15), it is attested in a list of the territorial areas covered by the Aryans (*airiīō.šaiiana-*). Mithra flies from Mount Harā passing over all these lands, preceding the movement of the Sun, and comes back to its summit (Gershevitch 1967: 39–40, 78–81, 171–176), which is described as a paradisiacal place (*Yt* 10.50; Gershevitch 1967: 99–102). The waters of the river Arəduuī Sūrā Anāhitā descend from this peak to the Vourukaša Sea (*Yt* 5.3; compare Lommel 1927: 32; *Bd* 10.5–6; Pakzad 2005: 140–141), the most important source of waters and rains for the Aryans. The primordial Iranian heroes who worship Anāhitā sacrifice at the footsteps of the Hukairiia (*Yt* 5.96; Gnoli 1989: 48). The Avestan space is strongly connected with the Hindukuš (*Av. Upāiri.saēna-*), the Sīstān basin, and probably also the Pamir region, although already in the Sasanian period the mythic horizon was clearly transposed to the western lands, probably because of the centrality played by the new royal dynasty and its church in Fārs (Gnoli 1967: 115–116). This explains why the name Alborz presently refers to the whole chain of mountains from Armenia to the Hindukuš (Eilers 1985). Already in *Yt* 19.1, from the high Harā, the first mountain listed in this source, a magnificent ring of mountains embraces western and eastern lands. Such a description of the space corresponds to the Indian *lōkālōka-*, which denominates a mountainous ring encircling the regions of the world (Boyce 1985: 811–812). According to *Yt* 19.7, the total number of mountains was 2,240 (Hintze 1994: 89–90; Humbach and Ichaporia 1998: 28, 80). Their creation was probably enacted by Ahura Mazdā himself (*Yt* 19.2; Hintze 1994: 71–73; Humbach and Ichaporia 1998: 27, 66), and their function is that of sustaining the priests, the warriors, and the herdsmen (*Yt* 19.8; Hintze 1994: 90–92; Humbach and Ichaporia 1998: 29, 98). Avestan mountains are strictly connected with the *xʷarənah-* ‘the light of glory, fortune, etc.’, and in fact it is not by chance that the first part of *Yt* 19, which was dedicated to it, opens with the most important Old Iranian source concerning the mountains. The germinal force of the *xʷarənah-* (Gnoli 1982: 253–254), works also inside the earth and must be connected with the strength which produced the elevation of the mountains toward the heaven. The *Bundahišn* (6C.1; Pakzad 2005: 101–102) and the *Anthologies of Zādspram* (WZ 3.26–33; Gignoux and Tafazzoli 1993: 44–47) state that the origin of the mountains was a consequence of Ahreman’s assault. It is important to recall that, according to the *GBd* 34.18–19, 31–33 (*IBd* 30.19–20, 31–33; Pakzad 2005: 382–383, 387–388), at the end of the struggle against the demoniac forces, the earth will become again flat and the mountains will be leveled to the ground. From the same mountains a river of molten metal will flow out. In it all the resurrected human beings will bathe themselves. The righteous ones will not be harmed, while the impious ones will suffer a lot, but after three days all of them will be purified and admitted to the final happiness. The same river will destroy the celestial dragon Gōzihr (or Gawčih; Panaino 2005c), and its metal will also close the hole produced by Ahreman’s assault in the celestial vault. The image of the leveling of the mountains, as noted by Lincoln (1983), is surely old, because it was known already by Plutarch in his *De Iside et Osiride*, chapter 47, in the framework of a passage strictly concerning Mazdeism, and probably derived from an earlier source attributed to Theopompus of Chios (first half of the 4th century BCE).

Early Iranian Astral Cosmology and Mythology

Iranian astral cosmology and astrology represent one of the most interesting aspects of the Zoroastrian tradition. The documented representation of heaven inevitably underwent changes and adaptations connected with a continuous development of astronomical knowledge, which was continuously affected by cultural contacts with other civilizations. Avestan sources do not present any form of astrology, which was the result of a Hellenistic evolution. In fact, astrology is not simply the same as just any form of celestial divination, although based on a number of astronomical discoveries, neither is it possible to consider as properly “astrological” any doctrine concerning the power of the astral bodies and their divine influence on human life. Astrology, in its most technical and restricted meaning, was developed by Greek Alexandrine scholars, who transformed earlier traditions, mostly of Mesopotamian and Egyptian origin, embedded in the framework of an Aristotelian conception of the celestial vault assumed to be geometrically spherical. According to the astrological doctrine, nature was composed of four elements (earth, water, air, and fire) and the macrocosm played a direct influence on the microcosm through the action of the seven planets and the twelve constellations. A direct correspondence between human body and heavenly world or between body and the *gētīg* world (as a macrocosm) was developed in the Pahlavi texts, as in the most evident case of the entire chapter 28 of the *Greater (Iranian) Bundahišn*, whose title is *tan ī mardōmān handāzag ī gētīg* ‘about the body of mankind as that of the living world’; Pakzad 2005: 329). Another example appears in the astrological subdivision of the body, which will be treated with reference to so-called *melothesia* (see below).

Not only did astrological traditions have an influence on Iranian culture, but Greek physics, with all its implications, was also known and studied in the Sasanian religious framework (Bailey 1971). These doctrines of Greek origin were essential as the introduction of an elaborated geometrical model of the cosmos and of the mutual relations occurring among the planets and the two luminaries (sun and moon) inside the Zodiac. All these data constituted the necessary premise for any description of an individual nativity (*thema natalis*), i.e., for the calculation of all the pertinent astronomical data concerning the character and the destiny of a person cast according to the general configuration of the heavenly bodies for the exact date, moment, and place of birth.

Classical astrology entered Iran in Parthian times, and became current, with some adaptations, in the Sasanian period. Although scholars have used the term *horoscope* (or *proto-horoscope*) for some Babylonian interpretations of heaven in relation to an individual date of birth, a practice first attested in the Achaemenid period, a “horoscope” was only what is now usually called “ascendant,” i.e., the astronomical point on the horizon just rising at the moment of the birth of an individual (Neugebauer and van Hoesen 1959: 7; Pingree 1993, 1997: 22–24). From this degree, all the other significant astrological points (named in Latin *cardines*) of the *thema natale* (in popular terms, the individual horoscope of birth) were carefully calculated. Babylonian diviners never used such a technique, neither can we attribute to them the same image of the heaven (from the geometrical and physical points of view) established by Greek philosophers.

For these reasons it is more prudent to use the term *astrology* strictly for those doctrines, attested in Iran since the Sasanian period, which patently adopted the whole system of astral predictions developed by Greeks and partly modified by other cultures. Furthermore, in the case of the Avestan tradition, we do not find any *clear* knowledge of the planets as independent astral bodies sharply distinguished from the stars. The existence of mythological cycles concerning the stars or the worship dedicated to them, but also the sun and the moon, has nothing to do with Classical astrology, rather, they appear to be a kind of astral lore of ancestral origin, partly connected with the Indo-Iranian and Indo-European backgrounds (Scherer 1953), partly influenced by contacts with local “non-Indo-European” traditions.

The Avestan Heaven and the Astral Bodies

The sun and the moon have been considered as divine beings, to which respectively the sixth and seventh Avestan hymns have been dedicated. Their names, *huuar-/x^var-*, n. ‘sun’ and *māh-*, m. ‘moon’ are of clear Indo-European origin. In later sources, and particularly in the Middle Iranian context, we observe a progressive identification of Mithra (Pahl. *Mihr*) with the Sun, which, in Khotanese was etymologically associated to Ohrmazd (compare Khot. *ormizde* ‘sun’). Although the identification of the Sun with Mithra, probably also influenced by the role attributed to Šamaš (Sun) in the Mesopotamian framework, is fundamental for the developments attested in the Roman Mithraic Mysteries, it is not supported by any direct Avestan evidence for the earliest times (Gnoli 1979). In *Yt* 6, for instance, Mithra and the Sun are sharply distinguished, while in the *Mihr Yašt*, Mithra and Rašnu announce the Sun, but do not correspond to it. Speculations on the Sun’s lights were probably current, because its luminosity was considered as a weapon against the demons who live and increase their strength in darkness. A speculative connection of pseudo-etymological origin between the rays of the sun (*huuar-/x^var-*) and that of the *x^varənah-* can also be supposed. Not only the moon but also its different phases were worshiped in *Yt* 7.4, while, in 7.2, we also find a reference to its synodic period (“fifteen days the moon waxes, fifteen days the moon wanes”). A special link between the moon and the *x^varənah-* possessed by the Aməša Spəntas should be deduced from *Yt* 7.3, where these entities are mentioned in relation with their (nocturnal?) function as distributors of the *x^varənah*.

The names of some stars and few constellations are attested in Avestan literature, in particular in the *Tištār Yašt*, the eighth hymn dedicated to Tištriia, a divine being (*yazata-*) to be now unanimously identified with the star Sirius, a Canis Majoris, the brightest one visible in the sky from earth (Panaino 1995a). In the same source and in other scattered Avestan passages a few of the stars and constellations were mentioned: *Tištriiaēinī* ‘the stars of Tištriia’ (Canis Minor); *Paoiriiaēinī* (Pleiades, whose importance was very remarkable; Bartholomae 1912–1913); *Upapaoiriia* (Aldebaran); *Haptōiringa* or ‘the seven signs’ (Big Dipper); *Vanañt-* ‘the winner’ (Vega), to which a little hymn (*Yt* 21), particularly important in the invocations against the demons, was dedicated (Panaino 1987b); *Satauuāēsa-*, ‘having hundred servants’, should be probably identified with Fomalhaut (a Piscis Austrini). In particular, Tištriia, Satauuāēsa, Haptōiringa, and

Vanant became in Sasanian cosmology the generals of the four cardinal points and they were put in direct antagonism with the planetary demons (see below). To the present list we must add also *hapta.srū-*, ‘the seven horns’, probably the ‘Little Dipper’, once mentioned in *Vd* 19.42, together with the ‘Peg’ of the heaven, *mərəzu-*, representing the celestial center (just like Dhruva in Vedic and Sanskrit sources), but not the Pole Star, which is astronomically a later discovery (Panaino 1995–1996).

The Myth of Tištriia and the Astral Battle against the Falling Stars

The mythic cycles connected with all the stars attested in Avestan literature are unfortunately unknown with the exception of that of Tištriia, to which two complex and interconnected myths are related. Sirius was considered the chief of the astral army, and directly compared to the role assumed by Zarathustra among human beings. Thus, Tištriia played a remarkable role in the framework of the Indo-Iranian mythological theme of the fight against a demon who had imprisoned the waters (Ved. Indra). Tištriia, rising over the Iranian lands for a whole month of thirty days changes his own body every ten days; first, he appears in the body of a fifteen-year-old virile boy, then in that of a golden-horned bull, and finally in that of a beautiful white horse with golden ears. Assuming the form of a stallion, he asks human beings for sacrifices and then approaches the Vourukaša Sea. The demon Apaoša, in the form of a terrible black horse, aggressively runs against him. Both horses, ramping against each other, fight in order to take possession of the Vourukaša Sea, which seems to assume the form of a mare. After three days and nights of combat Tištriia is defeated and compelled to run away from the sea, sadly lamenting his defeat. Then, the *yazata* declares that his failure was due to the lack of sacrifices by humans, who did not offer him the due worship in which his own name should have been pronounced (*aoxtō.nāman- yasna-*). At this point, it is Ahura Mazdā who offers such a sacrifice in order to strengthen his champion. Thus, Tištriia can charge again against Apaoša and, after an undetermined period of time, he wins at midday. Now, Tištriia enters the Vourukaša, agitating its waters. The star Sirius raises from the sea, followed by Satauaaēsa, and the clouds also ascend from the mountain *Us.həṇdu*, which lies in the middle of the waters. *Aṗam Napāt*, ‘the Son/Nephew of the waters’, an important divinity of Indo-Iranian origin, concurs to distribute waters and rains on the material world.

In order to understand such a myth it is necessary to consider the possible astronomical connexions that are clearly contained in the framework of the second duel attributed to Sirius, as explained in the same *Tištār Yašt*. As previously noted, there are no clear references to the planets in Avestan sources, with the exception, in itself unclear, of a proper name belonging to a Mazdean man, called *tīrō.nakaθβa-*, m. (*Yt* 13.126, Eilers 1976: 7, 47; Panaino 1995a: 61–85), where we can recognize the name of a western Iranian divinity, called *Tīriya* (just as Nabû, Thoth, and Hermes were associated with the planet Mercury), in Pahlavi *Tīr*. He was also considered the patron of the scribes in the Achaemenid milieu. If this connection is true, the existence of the planets was already known in western Iran thanks to the impact of Babylonian culture. Although it is known that such a divine name was attested, at least in onomastics,

in eastern Iran, nothing more can be stated about any eventual role attributed to such a planetary divinity among Avestan communities. While the planets assumed a negative role only in Pahlavi sources, in the *Avesta* this hostile function was clearly played by demons called *yātus* ‘wizards’ and *pairikās* ‘witches’. In particular, the latter were called *stārō.kərəmā-* ‘starred-worms’ (Panaino 2005c), and they probably represented the falling stars, whose commander was the *pairikā dužiīāiriīā* ‘the witch of the bad year’, the direct enemy of Tištriia. As in the case of Apaoša, Tištriia, leader of the fixed stars, defeats the army of the falling stars, thus preserving the cosmic order against the famine brought by the *pairikās* actually flung by Aṅra Mainiiu himself in order to defeat Sirius and the (fixed) stars, named *aš.ciθra-*, i.e., ‘possessing the image (or, as generally assumed, the origin/seed) of the waters (or, of the rains)’. In addition to the *aš.ciθra-*, we find, in *Yt* 12.29–31, two other kinds of stars: the *zemas.ciθra-* ‘possessing the image (or the origin) of the earth’ and the *uruuarō.ciθra-* ‘possessing the image (or the origin) of the plants’. Thus, the combat between Ahura Mazdā’s forces and those of Aṅra Mainiiu, fundamental in the Zoroastrian tradition, assumed a particular development in the celestial dimension according to a theological pattern in which the regular and harmonious movement of the fixed stars became a manifestation of cosmic order (*aša-*), while that of the falling stars, unpredictable and disordered, was considered as a demonic example of cosmic disorder (*druj-*) and, thus, connected with famine and climatic cataclysms. The same pattern was later adopted with the demonization of the planets, which assumed the same negative function of the falling stars.

Returning to the mythical cycle of Tištriia, we may note that his three *avatāras* chronologically correspond to the phase of the heliacal rising of the star Sirius (an astronomical phenomenon that occurred c. June 17, 800 BCE, until the beginning of the Vulgar era, i.e., around the 1st century CE; Panaino 1995a: 24), in season in which the Iranian lands suffer famine and lack of rains. The two following combats against Apaoša, the first one of three days, the second one of undetermined length, approximately cover the temporal space necessary for the return of the rainy season (September) in the Iranian plateau. In this part of the myth we find only a limited connection with the astral dimension, because the astronomical role of Apaoša, if any, is not determinable. On the contrary, the astral framework of the confrontation with the Pairikās, clearly in connection with the high frequency of meteoric showers in summer, appears evident (Panaino 1995a). The double victory of Tištriia against both Apaoša and the Pairikā Dužiīāiriīā represents the success of the Ahuric forces over the famine introduced by Aṅra Mainiiu.

In the Sasanian period, in a different context such as that of the astrological tradition, the confrontation between fixed and falling stars was transformed into that between fixed stars and planets, now demonized (as, e.g., in the *GBd* 5A.3):

Those planets, when they rushed into the firmament in this manner, fell striving with the fixed stars (as follows): the dark sun and moon with the sun and moon (proper), the princes of luminaries (*rōšnān šahryār*); Jupiter (Ohrmazd) with the Great Bear (Haftōreng), general of the north; Venus (Anāhīd) with *Sadwēs* (Fomalhaut?), general of the south; Mars (Wahrām) with Vega (Wanand), general of the west; Mercury (Tīr) with Sirius (Tištar), general of the east; Saturn (Kēwān) with Polaris (Mēx ī Gāh), the commander-in-chief. (compare MacKenzie 1964: 515)

The planetary demons were called *parīgān* (i.e., *pairikās*), and they were considered responsible for any negative influence on the sublunar world. Their demonization cannot be separated from the fact that the planetary orbit assumes in certain phases a retrograde movement, so appearing to be irregular. This phenomenon was connected with one of the main characteristics of the falling stars. Thus, the later denomination of the planets as *abāxtar(ān)* in Pahlavi derives from OIr. **apāxtara-* ('backward-turning, retrograde'), a comparative stem built on *apāk-/apāṅk-* 'backward' (from the preposition *apa* 'behind'; Eilers 1987; Panaino 1993). We cannot exclude the possibility that such a denomination was put in relation with the northern direction, the side of the demons, because another meaning of **apāxtara-* was 'north'. The Greek denomination of the planets (πλανήτης) also testifies to their irregular movement, being derived from πλανάομαι 'to wander'; it fittingly corresponds to Pahl. **wiyābanīg* (from the verb *wiyābān-* 'to deviate'), attested in the Middle Persian reversed denomination of the stars, considered as *a-wiyābanīg*, 'inerrantes, not deviating' (Henning 1942a: 98, n. 3). Moreover, in the *Avesta* another *Pairikā*, named *mūš* 'the rat', is once mentioned in *Y* 16.8. Her memory survived in Pahlavi texts as *Mūš Parīg*, as for instance in *GBd* 5A.6, where she is described as *dumbōmand* 'tailed'. If we consider that in other ancient traditions like the Arabic one, comets' tails were usually referred to, we could reasonably suppose that such a demon was a comet.

Later Mazdean Cosmology and Astrology

While our direct knowledge about the actual development of Iranian cosmology and astral sciences in the Parthian period is very poor, Pahlavi sources offer a relevant number of historical data regarding astral subjects. The already described elaboration of a cosmic period lasting 12,000 years clearly presents many astrological implications and a number of developments, already mentioned. But some Arabic sources (Abū Ma'shar and al-Sijzī; Kennedy and van der Waerden 1963: 316–317; Pingree 1968: 28–29; van der Waerden 1977–1978: 368–370) make references to other cosmic cycles used for astronomical calculations in Sasanian times. Three different examples of the cosmic year were actually quoted: that "of the Indians" of 4,320,000,000; that of Āryabhaṭa (*Arjābhaz*), of 4,320,000; and the one attributed to the "Persians" and some "Babylonians," of 360,000.

In Sasanian times, the interest in science increased enormously, and Pahlavi texts confirm strong activity, politically supported by Sasanian kings, directed to the acquisition of foreign books and doctrines, although all these importations were presented as a recuperation of an earlier Iranian wisdom, scattered after the invasion of Alexander the Great (Bailey 1971; Shaki 1981; Panaino 1999c). As a result, a number of Greek and Indian texts of astrology and astronomy, physics, medicine, and mathematics were translated into Pahlavi, and after the collapse of the Sasanian Empire some of these books were retranslated into Arabic; some still partly survive in Byzantine Greek and Mediaeval Latin (Nallino 1922; Pingree 1989).

Persians were very careful about calendrical problems, and for this reason they organized general meetings of scientists in order to prepare and improve their own sets of astronomical tables (*Zīg ī Šahryārān*), of which at least three different redactions are known, in particular thanks to the Arabic astronomers who used them (Panaino 1998). The syncretistic tradition adopted by Sasanian scholars was very significant, because they rarely invented new doctrines. In fact, in the elaboration and adaptation of the astrological art to Mazdean theological patterns such a mixture of methods and patterns of different derivations is frequently visible (Brunner 1987). Sasanian astrology, however, also produced a few relevant innovations, such as the doctrine of the planetary conjunctions of Saturn and Jupiter (Kennedy 1964; Pingree 1997: 42–44; Yamamoto and Burnett 2000), an astrological method that endured until the European Renaissance. Another innovation concerned the creation of a so-called “continuous” astrology, in which historical horoscopes were cast thanks to a number of planetary chronological periods and sub-periods. These cycles were essential for the calculation of the continuous astrological influence upon a person or a land (Kennedy 1964: 26–30; Pingree 1997: 44). This practice probably derived from a Hellenistic tradition. We must also remark that political astrology was current in Sasanian times, while it was, for instance, forbidden in the Roman Empire. “Catarchic” and “interrogative” astrology (the first, aiming at the determination of the most auspicious moment to begin an enterprise; the second, aiming at answering a particular question posed to the astrologer according to the horoscope of that precise moment) were practiced (Pingree 1997: 47). These practices entered Iran not only from the Hellenistic world, but also via India, where Greek astrology, with a number of Egyptian additions (as, for example, the thirty-six Decans, i.e., a subdivision of every zodiacal sign (= 30 degrees) into three zones, each one of 10 degrees; Panaino 1987a), was already adopted and adapted to Hindu local religious and mythological traditions (Pingree 1997: 31–50). Examples of “interrogative” astrology, presented with a technical terminology about the planetary positions, are patently attested in two astrological previsions of the *Kārnāmag ī Ardašīr ī Pābagān* (KAP 3.4–7; 4.6–7; Panaino 1994). Both these reports were requested by Ardawān, the last Parthian king, from his astrologers when the young Ardašīr (who later became the first Sasanian *šāhān šāh*) escaped from the direct control of his master. The Parthian king, in fact, desired to know whether it would be possible to catch the fugitive. These horoscopes closely followed some interrogative rules well attested in Greek astrological literature.

In the framework of the spherical model, we find a division of heaven between an extra-galactic sphere, named *spīhr ī agunēzišnīg*, i.e., ‘unmixable’, to which the Milky Way was related, and an inferior one, the *spīhr ī gumēzišnīg* ‘sphere of mixture’, including the twelve constellations (Pahl. *12-axtarān*) involved in the “mixture” with the demoniac and evil forces (see *GBd* 2.8–9; Henning 1942a: 232–233, 240; Belardi 1977: 125–126). It is to be noted that not only the geometrical concept of sphere itself but also the Pahlavi word for ‘sphere’ (*spīhr*) was of Greek origin. The Sasanian syncretism in astrological and astronomical matters is patently visible also in the case of the two main horoscopes attested in the Pahlavi literature; the first, described in chapter 5 of the *Greater (Iranian) Bundahišn* is precisely a ‘world horoscope’ (*zāyč ī gēhān*), or *thema mundi*. This horoscope is like that of Gayōmard (*GBd* 6F), which does

not follow the Hellenistic *thema mundi*, as previously assumed by MacKenzie (1964: 523–525), but shares the same patterns with the Indian horoscope for the birth of the highest type of *mahāpuruṣa*- ‘eminent man’, i.e., for that of the best kings. This astronomical configuration is attested in the Sanskrit astrological treatise *Yavanajātaka* (‘The Horoscopy of the Greeks’) 8.3–5; 9.1, attributed to Sphujidhvaja, who wrote a versified version in 269/270 CE (the prose text attributed to Yavaneśvara was translated from Greek in 149/150 CE; Pingree 1964–1966 = 1973: 123; 1978 II: 27, 30, 225–228). In the Mazdean world horoscope as well as in the Indian the seven planets (i.e., the five planets plus the sun and the moon) respectively occupy the exact degrees corresponding to their own astrological exaltations (i.e., that particular place in the Zodiac where a planet assumes its own strongest position and the maximum of its influence), as occurring in the zodiacal signs, with the exception of Mercury, which the composer of the *Bundahišn* did not put in *Virgo* (15 degrees), where its standard point of astrological exaltation was traditionally located, but rather in *Pisces*. This probably happened because such a planet would have been too far from the Sun (*Mīhr*), its longest elongation from such a luminary being 22 degrees 30 (Raffaelli 2001: 93–94). Although the simultaneous disposition of all the planets in their exaltations was astronomically impossible, the Indian prototype adopted this rule for speculative reasons. The same Pahlavi horoscopes of the *Greater (Iranian) Bundahišn* use the Greek astrological system of the twelve ‘houses’ (or ‘places’; Pahl. *gyāg* and Gk. *dōdekátōpos*). In WZ 30 (Gignoux and Tafazzoli 1993: 98–99) we find a *melothésia*, a symbolic representation of the correspondences connecting the parts of the human body to the planets and the zodiacal constellations. This source can be, at least partly, compared with the *melothésia* preserved in the *Yavanajātaka* 1.123–126 (Pingree 1978 II: 251–252, 325–326). Very interestingly, this Pahlavi text does not consider the planets as negative, but as harmonic parts of the creation. In GBd 28.4, the use of hands and feet is compared with the seven planets and the twelve zodiacal constellations (*ud dast ud pāy abzār čiyōn haftān ud dwazdahān* ‘hands and feet are like the seven [planets] and the twelve [constellations]’; Pakzad 2005: 330).

As noted before, the extraordinary role attributed to the conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn (occurring about every twenty years) was one of the most important original elaborations of Sasanian scholars (Pingree 1963a). These astrologers, on the occurrence of any of these conjunctions, started to calculate “historical” horoscopes, trying to identify the most important events for the following twenty years. As carefully explained in the Islamic sources (partly of Pahlavi derivation), these conjunctions were divided into four periods: “Little Conjunctions” (every twenty years), “Middle Conjunctions” (after *c.* 240 or 260 years, with a shift of triplicity) and “Great Conjunctions” (after *c.* 960–980 years): a whole cycle of four Great Conjunctions (less than 4,000 years) corresponded to a “Mighty Conjunction.” This theory was based on the evidence that every conjunction takes place twelve (in some cases thirteen) times exactly in the same astrological triplicity, i.e., only in the three signs of the Zodiac of the same nature (three signs of “fire,” three of “earth,” three of “air,” three of “water”). A Middle Conjunction, occurring after about 240 or 260 years, corresponded to an astrological shift from one triplicity to the following one, from the triplicity of fire to that of earth, then to that of air and finally to that of water, when the entire cycle started again. While the Little

Conjunctions were connected with the appearance of rebels and of religious sects, the Middle Conjunctions were closely associated with the destiny of royal dynasties, possibly resulting in historical violent change of power, but it was the “Great” Conjunction, more or less corresponding to the turn of a millennium, that assumed particular religious importance (Kennedy 1964: 30–37). For instance, Islamic astrologers focused on the importance of the shift of triplicity, which was considered as a witness of the birth of Muḥammad and the appearance of the Islamic religion (for more details see Labarta 1982: 77–82). Although the full cycle of the Saturn/Jupiter conjunctions did not exactly correspond to the millennial scheme previously adopted by Zoroastrians, an association between the two systems was established, as it happened in the case of Māšā’allāh (a Persian Jew from Baṣra, surely one of the most important astrologers in the ‘Abbāsid caliphate, who died in 815 CE), whose astrological chronology of the world history depends on a millenary cycle of 12,000 years, although it includes the Deluge and takes into account the birth of Christ and Muḥammad in the 10th millennium (Pingree 1968: 73–75; Kennedy and Pingree 1971: 73–75).

The astrological chapters of the *Bundahišn*, in particular, offer a good example of the complex elaboration of astrological doctrines of different origins made by a class of professionals, called *axtar(ā)mār*, *starōšmār*, or *kēd*, whose importance was also relevant at the Sasanian court. They, in fact, cast horoscopes for the king and the royal family, offered predictions at the beginning of every regnal year, and were consulted before relevant enterprises, but also played an intellectual role at the highest levels, as translators from other languages, and as specialists in calendrical, mathematical, and geometrical problems. According to the same patterns developed in the framework of Greek astrology some of the planets (*GBd* 5B.14; MacKenzie 1964: 520) were associated with the basic natural elements: Tīr with air and Venus with water (Raffaelli 2001: 54–56). As in Hellenistic astrology, each planet was provided with two “domiciles,” one nocturnal and one diurnal (Pahl. *kadag-xwadāy* ‘the lord of the house’ or ‘domicile’, i.e., the place where it assumes the maximum of power; MacKenzie 1964: 528, n. 76). But we also find some innovations, as in the case of the lunar knots, located in Gemini and Sagittarius, which were known but not used in Classical astrology. The two knots were inserted among the planets by Sasanian astrologers, following an Indian pattern (probably of the 5th century CE), where the two invisible demons of the eclipses, Rāhu and Ketu, were considered as additional planets, which then became nine (*navagraha*- ‘the nine planets’). For this reason, we find in the Pahlavi world horoscope a ‘black sun’ (*mīhr ī tamīg*) and a ‘black moon’ (*māh ī tamīg*), duplicates of the two Indian “false” planets, which were considered as two dark astral bodies that occulted the sun and the moon, producing the phenomenon of eclipses. Clearly they played the same function of the Head and Tail of the heavenly Dragon, named *Gočīhr* or *Gawčīhr* in Pahlavi (Panaino 2005b; compare also various pertinent articles by Hartner collected in 1968). Iranian sources in Pahlavi, Sogdian, and Chorasmian confirm the existence and adaptation of the Indian system of the *nakṣatras* (Pahl. *xwurdag*) with twenty-seven and twenty-eight “asterisms,” or more simply groups of stars (e.g., *GBd* 2.2; Henning 1942a: 231, 242–246), normally referred to as “lunar stations” of 13 degrees 20, because the nocturnal movement of the moon was put in connection with their positions.

The Planets, Their Names, and Their Demonization

The name of the five planets visible by the naked eye are clearly attested only in Middle Iranian sources, although the knowledge of these astral bodies should be much more ancient; in Pahlavi they are: *Anāhīd* (Venus), *Tīr* (Mercury), *Wahrām* (Mars), *Ohrmazd* (Jupiter), and *Kēwān* (Saturn). The later demonization of the planets appears to be in evident contrast with the peculiar fact that some of them have the same names of the most important Mazdean gods. When western Iranians discovered the existence of the planets, they followed the earlier Mesopotamian denominations, exactly as the Greeks did. The Mesopotamian schools of astral divination first distinguished and then denominated the single planets, associating them with some of the highest divinities of the Iranian pantheon. Then their names became so deep-rooted that they could not be changed even when the planets were demonized.

The table below provides the key for this development: one planet was named “Mars” because it was associated with the star of the god Nergal; another “Mercury” because of its association with Nabû, god of the scribes; “Jupiter” was so named because of his identification with the god Marduk, the highest one; Venus, the only planetary divinity with a feminine name, after a patent connection with Ištar, goddess of fertility; finally, Saturn, the slowest planet, with Kajamānu. In their turn, the western Iranian people adopted the same scheme after a process of association between their own divinities and the Semitic ones, as follows:

Planet	Akkadian	Greek	Old Persian	Middle Persian	Sogdian	New Persian
Mars	Nergal	Áres	*Vṛθrayna-	Wahrām	Unxān	Bahrām
Mercury	Nabû	Hermês	*Tīriya-	Tīr	Tīr	Tīr
Jupiter	Marduk	Zeús	A ^h uramazdā-	Ohrmazd	Urmazt	Urmazt
Venus	Ištar	Aphrodītēs	Anāhitā-	Anāhīd	Nāxid	Anāhīd
Saturn	Kajamānu	Krónos	*Kayvānu-	Kēwān	Kēwān	Keyvān
cf. Lat. Saturnus			(*Zruvan)	(Zurwān)		

The planets, when referred to as demons, were called *abāxtar* ‘retrograde’ or *nē axtar* ‘non-star’, but they were sometimes also called *gēg* ‘robbers, bandits’ in opposition to the stars, the ‘givers’ (*bagān*) par excellence:

spihr gyāg ī bagān ī nēwagīh baxtārān kē-šān har nēwagīh baxtārīh az-iš hamē baxšēnd rāstīhā ud haftān stār karapān parīgān ī azēr āwēšān dwārēnd appurdārān ī jud-baxtārān kē-šān dēnīg nām gēgān. ‘The sphere is the place of the ‘givers’ (*bagān*) who are distributors (*baxtārān*) of goodness and they distribute (*hamē baxšēnd*) in a right way their own apportion (*baxtārīh*) of goodness, and (it is also the place of) the seven stars (i.e., the planets), the *karapān* (the wizards) and the *parīgān* (the witches), which move beneath them, are robbers (*appurdārān*) and antagonistic distributors (*jud-baxtārān*). They are named ‘bandits’ (*gēgān*) according to the religion.’ (ŠGW 4.8–10; de Menasce 1945: 50–51)

Only in a later source like the *'Olamā'-ye Eslām* (Zaehner 1972: 412) do we find a desperate attempt at justifying their denomination. Ohrmazd (the supreme god) surrounded the planets (and very peculiarly also the luminaries) with light, giving them Ahuric names, instead of their real (demoniac) denominations, which were: *Zerij* (Saturn), **Tarj* (Jupiter), **Nānyaiθ* (Mars), *Tarmad* (the Sun), *Xišm* (Venus), **Sēj* (Mercury), and *Bēš* (the Moon).

The process of demonization was not without contradictions: For instance, *GBd* 5B.12, following the standard patterns of the classical astrological doctrine, denominated two of the planets as *kirbakkar* 'beneficent' (Ohrmazd, Anāhīd), two as *bazakkar* 'maleficent' (Kēwān, Wahrām), while Mercury (Tīr) was considered as astrologically "neutral." It is also important to recall that some later Mazdean sources attest a frequent confusion between Tištar and Tīr, a situation probably due to a relevant number of earlier connections between these two astral bodies (Panaino 1995a: 61–85). Other contradictions appear in the case of some rituals attested in Zoroastrian folklore as, for instance, in a number of apotropaic incantations (in Pāzand) to the planets, like the following one: *pa zōr axtaran u aβāxtaran tan darust baṭ* "by the power of the stars and the planets, may he be healthy" (Kanga 1900: 144–145; Panaino 2005a). The Mazdean planetary denomination still survives in the Arabic and Latin versions of the famous magic medieval treaty *Picatrix* (Pingree 1976: 178–179), although their names appear in a corrupted Arabic spelling: *Kēwān, Hurmuz, Bahrām, Mihr, Anāhīd, Tīr, Māh*; Lat.: *Kayhven, Harmiz, Baharam, Maher, Anyhyt, Tyr, Mehe*. This source of enormous importance for Western magic was translated in medieval Spain in 1256 CE at the court of Alfonso X the Wise, king of Castile, from an Arabic original, entitled *Gāyat-al-hakīm* 'The Aims of the Savior', and attributed to al-Majrīī (d. 1004–1007 CE) from Cordoba.

An important part of the cosmic battle against Ahreman was played out in the heavens. While the superior level of the galactic sphere, closer to paradise, was not involved in the fight, the planetary field of operation, or the area in which the planetary demons were able to cause harm, was the *spīhr ī gumēzišnīg* ('the sphere of the mixture'), or more simply the zodiacal belt. Here these demons fought against the fixed stars (*GBd* 2.8–9; Henning 1942a: 232–233, 240; Belardi 1977: 125–126), so that every planet attacked one of the "cardinal" stars or asterisms (*GBd* 5.4; Panaino 1999a):

Cardinal point	Planetary demon	versus	Star or constellation	
North	Ohrmazd (Jupiter)		Haftōring	(Ursa Major)
East	Tīr (Mercury)		Tištar	(Sirius)
South	Anāhīd (Venus)		Sadwēs	(Fomalhaut)
West	Wahrām (Mars)		Wanand	(Vega)

Saturn, Kēwān, at the center and in the highest heaven, opposed the general of the generals, the Pole Star, *Mēx ī Gāh* (Henning 1942a: 231, 241–242; Panaino 1995–1996, 1999a).

Zoroastrians (and Manichaeans too, although with some different implications; Panaino 1997) adapted an Indian astral model, in which the irregular movement of the

planets was governed by means of cords (*band*, *zīg*, *hampaymānag*, *rag*). These bindings should put a limit to any potential damage produced by planets in the sublunary world (ŠGW 4.46; de Menasce 1945: 54–55). The same cords appear in a mechanical model of the astral sphere (see *GBd* 5B.1–3; MacKenzie 1964: 517). Here all the astral bodies, moving around Mount Harburz, are pulled by cords of wind, just as in the Purāṇic literature where all the astral bodies rotate around Dhruva, the fixed Pole of the heaven (Panaino 1998). The function of these cords (Skr. *vāta-/vāyu-raśmi-*; *vātabaddhāni-*) had, in the Iranian framework, a remarkable anti-demoniac importance, which was probably connected with an earlier Iranian tradition in which Tištriia had to bind the Pairikā Dužiiāiriā with an infinite number of bindings (*Yt* 8.55). A fatalistic development regarding the function attributed to the cords of wind is attested in the *Wizārišn ī čatrang*, paragraph 30, a Pahlavi text dedicated to chess and backgammon, where the turning of the counters in the game of *nard* (a kind of backgammon), due to the dice, was compared with the destiny of human beings, living in the *gētīg* world, who were tied by a bond to the *mēnōg*, so that all of them must turn around and move according to movement of the planets and the zodiacal signs (Panaino 1998, 1999c: 251; for text and translation see also Daryaee 2010).

In the framework of the Mazdakite doctrine, an Iranian heretical movement of the 6th century CE, of Mazdean derivation but full of Gnostic doctrines, the planets were not demonized; Šahrastānī (1086–1153 CE), a Persian historian and heresiographer, who wrote an important source concerning “the Sects and the Creeds” (Gimaret and Monnot 1986: 631–636), states that four powers were sitting in front of the god; these forces operated through seven minor figures corresponding to the five planets and the two luminaries revolving inside a circle divided among twelve spiritual beings (the constellations). The precise identification of all these celestial images is still a matter of discussion (Christensen 1925: 81–82; Klíma 1957: 188–191, 219–221; Shaki 1985: 535–541; Gimaret and Monnot 1986: 634–636). As also in Western countries, the names of the seven days of the week were associated and denominated according to the planets and luminaries in various Iranian countries, probably thanks to Christians and Manichaeans. This tradition also entered western Iranian lands during the Roman Empire between the 1st and the 3rd century CE (Panaino 1995a: 69, n. 39).

Other Doctrines

Although all the stars should have been considered divine and positive according to the Zoroastrian tradition, an Arabic astrological text attributed to Zoroaster (*Ketāb al-mawālid*; Kunitzsch 1993) held that there were stars with a negative influence (Panaino 1996b). This peculiar doctrine, attested also in the Persian *Revāyats of Farāmarz* (Dhabhar 1932: 431) probably derives from a Greco-Babylonian background. Some traditions diverging from the official Zoroastrian theological patterns were probably current in Iranian folklore. For instance, according to Eznik of Kolb, an Armenian Christian writer of the 5th century CE (*De Deo*, or *Against the Sects* 2/8), the sun was generated through the incest of Ohrmazd with his mother, the moon through that with his sister. There was a tradition, confirmed by statements attested in the

Christian martyrologia and other polemical texts, which attributed Ohrmazd with the generation also of the stars thanks to incest, presumably with his own daughter. The relation of this legend to Zurvanism is not at all certain (Panaino 2008).

The Iranian astral iconography, basic to the interpretation of the so called *sphaera barbarica* (i.e., the representation of the astral bodies and their characters according to a view of the heavens, which was different from that usual in the Greek and Roman traditions), survived thanks to a mass of Arabic and Latin translations, as for instance in the remarkable case of the prestigious works composed by Abū Maʿšar, where a lot of Sasanian material was used. This is how the thirty-six originally Egyptian Decans (Pahl. *dahīg*), three per zodiacal sign, which had been transferred to India (where they appear in the *Yavanajātaka*; Pingree 1963b, 1978), entered Iran, where their Sasanian reception still reflected the intermediation played by the famous Indian astrologer Varāhamihira (6th century CE). These Pahlavi materials were finally known through Arabic translations, as in the case of Abū Maʿšar's *Introductorium maius in Astronomiam* or 'The Larger Introduction into Astronomy' (Dyroff *apud* Boll 1903: 482–539; Sezgin 1979: 139–51) and its Latin compilation (*Astrolabium Planum*) by Pietro d'Abano (c. 1316), in Europe between the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Renaissance (Warburg 1922; Pingree 1963b: 223; 1987, 1989; Saxl 1985: 280–291; Burnett and Pingree 1997).

Final Remarks

As we have seen, Iranian cosmology presents a number of similar patterns to the early Indian one, which probably derive from a common heritage, although many particular developments took place in the framework of the Mazdean tradition. If the opposition of *aša-* vs. *druj-* can be also compared with the Vedic one between *ṛtá-* and *druh-*, it assumed special significance outside of a restricted ritual framework. Furthermore, the Iranian distinction between a "mental" and a "living" dimension was one of the most important original doctrines elaborated by Zoroastrians. It is strictly connected with the concept of time and its division between eternal and limited time. This doctrinal background had enormous influence on Iranian mythology, cosmology, cosmography, and uranography as well. The representation of the world as an enormous trap set for Ahreman, considered ontologically inferior with respect to the seminal and creative power of Ohrmazd, must be again underlined. Thus, the representation of the heaven and of the astral beings as one of the essential components of this fight had significant influence on the way in which astral mythology and later Classical astrology were adapted and developed. In addition, the particular role of Iran in the transmission and circulation of astral pseudo-scientific and scientific doctrines was remarkable during its whole history. From East and West and contrariwise, Mesopotamian, Indian, and Greek traditions had an enormous influence on Mazdean astral lore and its later astrological developments. Sasanian Iran, in particular, was enormously important for the number of translations of original Greek astronomical and astrological sources and of Indian books, which partly survived in Arabic and Latin versions. This confirms not only the close attention dedicated by priestly schools to these subjects, but also the tremendous legacy left by the Iranian pre-Islamic world to medieval culture, a heritage which was not without special and original interpretations of Mazdean origin.

Further Reading

Iranian cosmology has been the subject of very many investigations, although a basic description can be found in every general history of Zoroastrianism. The reader will profit from the studies by Gnoli (1962, 1963, 1985, 1995), Molé (1959, 1963), Shaked (1967, 1971, and his pertinent articles collected in 1995), Schmidt (1996) and Zaehner (1972) about the *mēnōg* and *gētīg* and regarding the concept of limited and unlimited time (Zurwān). Avestan mythical geography has been mostly investigated by Gnoli in a number of works quoted in this chapter (in particular 1982, 1985, 1987, 1989), which generally contain an enormous bibliography. For a more detailed discussion of Avestan astral mythology see Panaino's edition (1990b) and discussion of the *Tištār Yašt*. Still fundamental are the articles by Henning (1942a) and MacKenzie (1964) about astronomy and astrology in the *Bundahišn*, which need revisions in light of the various studies by Pingree. For a summary of his researches in this field see Pingree (1997), and Panaino (2009), and the presentation of the Sasanian world horoscope offered by Raffaelli (2001). Important contributions on astral subjects have been published in the *Encyclopædia Iranica* by Pingree (1987), Brunner (1987), and various entries by Panaino (see "Haftōrang," "Tištrya," "Zodiac"), and in *The Encyclopedia of Ancient Natural Scientists* (Keyser and Irby-Massie 2008). Also important is the

early article by Nallino (1922) where the Pahlavi versions of Greek sources have been analyzed, and the overview by Sezgin (1979) about Arabic reception and by Pingree (1998) about Arabic, Latin, and Indian cultural exchanges with the Iranian world. The controversial discussion (mostly between van der Waerden and Pingree) concerning the influence of the different Indian astronomical schools (*paḫsas*) on Sasanian astronomy and the interpretation of the mathematical parameters adopted for the redaction of these cycles has been summarized by Panaino (1998: 161–179), in the framework of the discussion of the whole doctrine of the astral wind chords. For a more detailed analysis of the theological adaptation of this astrological doctrine to the Mazdean millenary system, see the comments given by Pingree *apud* Panaino (1996a), with regard to the ZWY 6.4, 6.10, 7.10, 9.14 (Cereti 1995b), where the history of the world was arranged according to this system of the planetary exaltations.

The Christian cycles of the magi that were developed around the pericopes (extracts from a text) contained in the Gospel of Matthew (*Mt* 2.1–12) is full of Iranian elements, strongly connected with the reputation of the Mazdean priests as sky watchers and observers of astral phenomena (Panaino 2004b, 2012). On the latter see also Frenschkowski, "Christianity," this volume.

CHAPTER 15

Myths, Legends, Eschatologies

Carlo G. Cereti

According to Mazdean tradition, the history of humankind covers six millennia, from the First Man, Gayōmard, to the last of the three future saviors, Sōšāns. Central to this mythical history is Zoroaster, who, according to that tradition, was born 2,970 years after the Onslaught of Evil and who conversed with Ohrmazd in the year 3,000, receiving the Religion from him. According to most sources the Zoroastrian cosmic cycle was thought to last 12,000 years, divided in two equal halves by Ahreman's assault on the material world, which determined the death of the sole-created Ox and, thirty years later, that of Gayōmard, these being the first two created creatures. When dying, they gave birth to plants, animals, and mankind itself. The Mazdean (Zoroastrian) cosmic cycle has been variously said to include 12,000; 9,000; and even 7,000 years, but the latter number is explicitly stated only in Islamic texts. Moreover, Christian authors such as Eznik of Kolb (5th century) or Theodore bar Kōnai (late 8th century) (see further Lommel 1930: 139–140) implicitly reported a "Zurvanite" cycle of 10,000 years. No certain conclusion can be reached about the relative antiquity of the different calculations, though it may be stated that 9,000 is the only number common to Pahlavi works and to the Christian tradition about Zoroastrianism as found in Armenian and Syriac writers, since it seems to be the basis on which two other calculations, that of the 12,000 and that of the 10,000 years, were built, while the 7,000 years cycle appears rather to derive from the Zurvanite myth (Cereti 2005c).

When speaking of Iranian mythical history, two different traditions can easily be distinguished. One being the "royal" or "courtly" history, aptly defined by Ehsan Yarshater (1983) as "Iranian National History," the other belonging, instead, to the "religious" or "priestly" sphere, centering on the life of the prophet Zoroaster and essentially describing the history of salvation, a sort of eschatological history of humankind. The existence of these two traditions, one "religious" and one "national," was vigorously underlined already by Arthur Christensen, who held that the religious

tradition originated in pre-Sasanian times, while he assigned the “national” tradition to the empire of the heirs of Sāsān (Christensen 1931 [1932]: 41, 1936: 33–34). This view was challenged by Yarshater (1983: 395–401), who rightly underlined the importance of the oral tradition as well as the role played by minstrels and professional storytellers, whose presence at Iranian courts can be traced back at least to the Parthian period (Boyce 1954, 1955, and 1957). Chances are that a reworking of national history took place during the Sasanian period, possibly in the later years of that empire, when royal names show clear traces of the popularity reached by the Kayānid saga. These legendary kings of old represent the second great dynasty of Iranian national history (Yarshater 1983). Two other dynasties play a prominent role in this historical saga, the first being that of the Pišdādīyān, whose rulers all present traits characteristic of “civilization heroes” (i.e., mythical heroes who have in one way or another fostered the progress of humankind) and the third that of the well-known historical dynasty of the Sasanians.

Remarkably, the Arsacid kings, under whose dominion epics blossomed and whose courts have left a lasting impression in the recitation of the deeds of many heroes, are only passingly remembered in the *Šāhnāme*, probably due to the reworking of the saga under the Sasanians. Those may well have been the times when the epic tales of old were set in a continuous narration, laying the foundations for the version of Iranian national history which has come down to us mainly through Ferdowsī’s *Šāhnāme* and the Islamic renderings of the *Xwadāy-nāmag*. The exact definition of this term is still disputed. Most modern scholars employ this term to refer to a sort of Sasanian royal chronicle of which we preserve some traces in the 3rd and 4th books of the *Dēnkard* (*Dk*) (see below). However it has also been used, more loosely, to describe a number of similar works, mostly belonging to the epical or (pseudo-)historical genre and written in pre-Islamic times. To fully understand the context, it should further be underlined that already in the Sasanian period religion played a predominant role in Iranian national life. Though probably the alliance between throne and altar was less binding than what one may imagine when reading the late Pahlavi texts, still the existence of an official ideology linking the two is shown by the constant presence of the fire-altar on official coinage. Therefore the “royal” tradition reflected in the *Xwadāy-nāmag* was influenced by the Zoroastrian outlook on history and its meaning, just as much as Ferdowsī’s narration is set within the boundaries of Islamic thought. No clear-cut division between “national” and “priestly” tradition can be made, particularly for the period before Zoroaster.

Following Christensen (1931 [1932]: 35–43, 1936: 9–41) and Yarshater (1983: 393–401), we will consider as constituent elements of the religious tradition “the millennial scheme, the cosmic view of world history, the prophetic events of the future and the eschatological roles of the immortal kings and heroes, as well as the intervention of the deities, demons, Amashaspands and the fravašis” (Yarshater 1983: 395). Therefore, the following pages will focus on: giants and heroes who play a specific and important role in the eschatological history of the cosmos; the legendary life of Zoroaster; the heroes belonging to the family and court of Wištāsp; and the lives of the three future saviors. Recall that no specimen of the Middle Persian *Xwadāy-nāmag* has come down to us, but a short chapter found in the 4th book of the *Dēnkard* (*DkB*

[320].16–[322].9) and the parallel passage of the 3rd book (*DkB* [316].9–[318].4), both outlining the history of the transmission of the *Avesta* and the role played in this respect by several sovereigns, may have been taken from the Sasanian Chronicle and represent a good example of its style and conciseness, as well as of the influence that priestly circles may have had on the writing of royal records. When dealing with Iranian national history, in both its variants, the “religious” and the “national,” it must always be kept in mind that it did not aim at narrating facts, but rather at providing an edifying example for kings and nobles, a model to be followed by the scions of the great families (Yarshater 1983: 367–370). In addition to this, religious history was an eschatological history, a necessary means to achieve the final victory of good over evil, and accordingly it can only be interpreted by taking into account the different levels – mythical, ritual, relational, etc. – which determine its structure (Molé 1963). This historical narration, so typical of Iran, is the final result of the summing up and molding into one only extensive synthesis of a number of different strata belonging to different epochs. This determines a number of “archaisms” in the culture and civilization depicted in our texts, though the society described is that of Sasanian Iran, partly still feudal – possibly a trait inherited from the formative period, which took place in the Arsacid and early Sasanian period – but characterized by the strong authority of the King of Kings, legitimized by his adherence to the Good Religion and his possession of the royal *xwarrah* belonging to the rightful king (Yarshater 1983: 403–411).

The Beginnings

According to the Iranian tradition, as we have just seen, human history begins with Gayōmard, a primordial giant from whose dead body the first human couple is born. In fact, the death of Gayōmard and of his companion, the sole-created Ox, gave life to the vegetal and animal worlds, as well as to mankind. Fifty-five different types of grain and twelve medicinal herbs rose from the dead body of the Ox, while from his sperm, purified by the light of the moon, a bull and a cow were born, the ancestors of 282 animal species (*Bd* 6E). At the time of the Onslaught of Evil on the earth, Ahreman sent Astwihād, the demon of death, against Gayōmard, but to no avail, since the First Man could not pass away before the conclusion of the thirty years which had been allotted to him, be it by the spheres, by time, or by god. When Gayōmard finally died, falling on his left side, his sperm dropped to the ground and was purified by the sun. Metals were born from his body. Nēryōsang – a divine guardian or messenger, whose name probably means ‘of manly utterance’ – took two thirds of the seminal liquid under his protection and Spandarmad the remaining third. Forty years later the first human couple, Mašyā and Mašyāne, sprouted out of the earth in the form of rhubarb plants, born of Gayōmard’s seed (*Bd* 4.10–28, 6F, 9; *WZ* 2.10–11, 2.18–22, 3.67–76). Gayōmard’s birth, together with that of his children and of the next generation, was used to show the antiquity and sanctity of *xwēdōdah*, the endogamic marriage of the Zoroastrians. Gayōmard was born from sexual intercourse between Ohrmazd and his daughter, Spandarmad, later his sperm fecundated his own mother to give birth to Mašyā and Mašyāne, who coupled to give birth to the first human beings. Thus humankind was

thought to be the product of the three main forms of *xwēdōdah*: those between father and daughter, son and mother, and brother and sister (see Skjærvø 2011a: 202–207).

The centrality and importance of Gayōmard to Zoroastrian myth is shown by the fact that, together with Sōšāns, he was held to be at the same level as Zoroaster (Yarshater 1983: 418), symbolically representing the beginning, the end, and the focal point of human history. Gayōmard was the first to accept Ahura Mazda's religious doctrine in its entirety, though he did not choose to contribute to its spread. According to the Sasanian *Zand* he was created by Ohrmazd, lived 3,000 years in peace and finally died thirty years after the Onslaught of Evil (*Bd* 6F). Middle Persian literature adds that he was the sixth of the seven creations (*Bd* 1a, 13). According to later Iranian tradition he was the first man and the first king, a powerful civilization hero (*Šāhnāme* I: 21–25). According to Hoffmann (1976), Gayōmard is the Iranian counterpart of Vedic Mārtāṇḍa, the youngest son of Aditi (*RV* X.72.8.9), who came into this world through a miscarriage caused by the other Ādityas that were jealous of his potential greatness. Just as his Indian counterpart – should this hypothesis be correct – Gayōmard was the progenitor of mankind and himself an entity which stood somewhere between human being and divinity; they were certainly more than human, but not entirely divine. Moreover both characters share a spherical shape. Particularly interesting is *Bd* 6F, where his birth horoscope is given, corresponding to the so-called horoscope of the world found in *Bd* 5a (MacKenzie 1964: 513–517, 522–523; Raffaelli 2001: 59–135). As shown by Christensen (1917: 32), in the *Younger Avesta* Gayōmard is mostly seen as the prototype of humankind, while later, in Pahlavi literature, he is mainly described as the first man and begins to take up embryonic traits characteristic of the first king, such as being the first human to possess the *xwarrah*, being called *gilšāh/garšāh*, or even being the first mortal to practice *xwēdōdah*, a trend further developed in the works of early Islamic historiographers, such as Ya'qūbī, Ṭabarī, Mas'ūdī, and Bīrūnī, just to mention the more prominent ones (on the whole subject, see Christensen 1917; on the relevant Islamic literature, see 4–101), who were well aware of Zoroastrian tradition. This development found its logical conclusion in Ferdowsī's work, where this character became the first king to rule over humankind. According to the *Šāhnāme* Gayōmard ruled thirty years. Ferdowsī narrates that he had a beautiful and brave son, Sīyāmak, whose killing was ordered by Ahreman. Thereafter, Gayōmard chose his own grandson, Hōšang, to be his heir, who led an army of wild animals, birds, and *parīs* – in Persian literature this term refers to a type of female magical beings comparable, but not identical, to English fairies – to a victory over the evildoers. Hōšang killed the black *dēw*, the son of Ahreman, with his own hands. Having obtained his revenge, Gayōmard died satisfied.

Chapter 14 of the *Greater Bundahišn* (*GBd*) “On the Nature of Mankind,” dwells on the life of Mašyā and Mašyāne and on the three generations from Gayōmard to Hōšang, a timespan which saw the birth of the different human races, a version at variance with Ferdowsī's narration. According to the 33rd chapter of the *Bundahišn*, the 1st millennium of the “mixed” state (*gumēzišnīh*) began with the Onslaught of Evil, when only Gayōmard and the sole-created Ox existed, continued with the lives of Mašyā and Mašyāne, of Hōšang and of Tahmurab (NP Tahmūraš), to end when the *dēws* sawed Jam (Av. Yima- xšaēta-, NP Jamšīd) apart (*Yt* 19.46). In Iranian national history Hōšang, Tahmurab, and Jam are all civilization heroes or, as Christensen (1917, 1934) showed,

“First Men” originally belonging to different Iranian traditions, which were later joined together to form part of Iranian national history.

Yima (Jam), a character with clear Indo-Iranian roots, as shown by the existence of Yama in Indian mythology, is no doubt the most important among the kings of the Pišdādiyān dynasty (see further down).

Yima Vīhuuaghūša is mentioned in the *Gāthās*, where he seems to be accused of some wrongdoing (*Y* 32.7–8). In the *Younger Avesta*, in the *Yāsts* as well as in the *Vīdēvdād*, a positive role is assigned to this king, whose character however retains some obscure traits – an action or a lie which led to losing his *xʷarənah* (*Yt* 19.33–34; *Y* 32.8) – a theme later developed in Pahlavi literature and later still in the New Persian traditions (see Humbach 2002, 2004).

As a matter of fact, Avestan evidence suggests the existence of a version of Jam’s myth according to which the entire 7th millennium was under the rule of this king that may be older than the one preserved by Pahlavi text. Thus, in *Yt* 9.10 Yima obtains the boon of keeping all evils away from mankind for a millennium, while according to *Vd* 2.1–18 he thrice enlarges the earth, at intervals of 300 years, because it was too full of men, animals, and fires (*Dk* 7.1.21–22). Again, in the *Frawardīn Yāšt* (*Yt* 13), he is named first in a list of ancient kings whose *frauuāšis* should be praised (Christensen 1934: 36). By the Sasanian period the reign of Jam had been shortened to about 600 years to allow room for the reigns of Gayōmard, Hōšang, and Tahmurab (*Aog.* = 616 years, six months, and thirteen days; *GBd* 34.4 = 616 years and a half to which one hundred years in hiding should be added; *MX* 27.25 = 600 years, six months, and sixteen days; cf. Christensen 1934: 36). The 6th *karde* (chapter) of the *Zamyād Yāšt* (Hintze 1994: 172–235) narrates the history of Yima’s reign. Here he is shown to reign over the sevenfold earth, graced by the possession of divine glory, the *xʷarənah*- / Pahl. *xwarrah*, that he thrice loses because of a “Lie” (*Yt* 19. 33). The first time it is recovered by Mithra (Miθra), the second time by Ōraētaona of the house of the Āθβiias, who struck down the dragon Dahāka, the third time by Kərəsāspa, also a slayer of dragons, who will awaken at the end of times to kill Aži Dahāka, who will then have broken his fetters in the cave on Mount Demavand where he was held prisoner. Note that Viuuarjhaṇt, Āθβiia, and Ōrita, respectively fathers of Yima, Ōraētaona, and Kərəsāspa, were the first to press the sacrificial intoxicant Haoma. Jam’s reign was a happy one, weather was never too cold nor too hot, aging was unknown, and so was death. Men and beasts were all immortal, water and plants never dried up, and he ruled beneficently over humankind (Christensen 1934: 45–46; cf. *Dk* 7.1.23–24). Jam was also the one to organize Iranian society in four classes (*Dk* 7.1.20): priests (*asrōnān*), warriors (*artēštārān*), farmers (*wāstaryōšān*), and artisans (*hutuxšān*). Though the tripartition of society is in all probability an essential trait of Indo-European thought, this specific version of the tradition may be relatively more recent, given the presence of a fourth class, typical of sedentary dwellings.

One of Jam’s main deeds was his building of the *war*, an underground shelter where humankind, animals, and plants were to prosper under his just rule, to repopulate the world after the terrible Malkōsān winter, which will afflict humans in Ušēdar’s millennium, a theme that has often been superficially compared to Noah’s Ark (see Christensen 1934: 55–62; *Vd* 2.21–43; *Dk* 7.1.24, 7.9.3; *GBd* 33.30 and below). This myth may

have played a more important role in early Iranian eschatology, as suggested by Christensen (1934: 58), who thought that in an earlier phase it might have marked the end of the world. Moreover, this myth shows a clear parallel with Yama's role in Indian mythology, where the son of Vivásvant is reported to have been the first man to die and thus to be the ruler of the departed. No such characterization is true for the Iranian Yima, though a parallel may possibly be found in his rule over *war*, where mankind survived the dreadful Malkōsān winter, to later repopulate the earth. At the end of the 1st millennium of human history Jam was slain by the demons led by Dahāg (Av. Dahāka).

In the *Yašts* Dahāka appears as a monstrous dragon, with three heads, three mouths, and six eyes, a rival of Yima, attempting to seize the royal *x'arənah* (Yt 19.45–52) and unsuccessfully sacrificing to Arəduuī Sūrā Anāhitā (Yt 5.29–31). In Pahlavi literature he is a demon and a sorcerer, who defeats Jam and is only conquered by Frēdōn. As we have seen, at the end of times he will again rise to battle (*Bd* 29.9; *DD* 37.97; *ZWY* 9.22; in general on this character, see Yarshater 1983: 426–427).

A number of kings belonging to the Pišdādiyān dynasty, among whom Frēdōn and his scion Manuščihr, who avenged the death of his ancestor Ēraj by smiting Salm and Tuč, were assigned by the author of the 33rd chapter of the *Bundahišn* to the 3rd millennium of human history. In a way, Manuščihr inaugurated a new era in Iranian national history, an era in which the world was no longer united under the rule of only one king, but rather divided between the rival powers of the Iranians and their traditional enemies, the Turanians, a theme bound to characterize later epochs. Some of the Islamic authors who relied on the putative *Xwadāy-nāmag*, such as Mas'ūdī and Bīrūnī, were well aware of this break in the continuity of narration, so much so that they divided ancient Iranian national history into three great periods, one assigned to the Pišdādiyān, one to the Ailānian, the house of Manuščihr, and one to the Kayānian (Yarshater 1983: 434).

Zoroaster was born at the end of the 3rd millennium of human history. Since his appearance precedes that of some kings who seem to vaguely recall the Achaemenids, in a way he marks the passage from “myth” or “legend” to a sort of “mythicized history” (see also Hultgård 1995: 101–102).

Zoroaster's Life

Zoroaster's mythical biography is narrated in its fullest version in the 7th book of the *Dēnkard*, written in a period when the ancient *Zand* of the *Avesta* was still extant. Though less complete, other witnesses of this tradition contain interesting materials. Among these are the New Persian *Zarātoštnāma* (*Zn*) (Rosenberg 1904), but also other passages of the *Dēnkard*, chiefly the first chapters of the 5th book, Zādspram's *Wizīdagihā* (*WZ*) and the *Pahlavi Rivāyat* (*PRDD*) (Molé 1963: 276; for a French translation of a wide collection of relevant Middle Persian texts, see Molé 1967). The brief summaries contained in the 8th book of the *Dēnkard* allow us to infer that the *Spand Nask* was probably the main source of the writer of the 7th book of the *Dēnkard*, though some details were evidently taken from the *Čīhrdād Nask*, while the whole scene of Wištāsp's conversion may rely on the so-called *Wištāsp Sāst*. Classical authors do not preserve much material on the

prophet's life and those who do often present details that do not agree with the Iranian tradition. However, a number of authors (Dio Chrisostomos, *Oratio* 36.40–41; Pliny, *Historia naturalis* 2.42.242 etc.) preserve a tradition according to which Zoroaster spent a period of his life in isolation, and Dio adds that during that period he lived on a mountain that suddenly caught fire. The prophet escaped unharmed, a trait that recalls a slightly different episode reported by Iranian texts in which Zoroaster survived an assassination attempt by way of fire (see below; on the whole subject see the effective synthesis in de Jong 1997: 317–323). In what follows, only the main episodes of Zoroaster's legend will be addressed; for further details, although presented in an uncritical manner, the reader is referred to Jackson's classical (and now partially outdated) work on Zoroaster's life (Jackson 1899).

Before the prophet's birth a number of miracles took place, showing the nature of the child due to be born. Ohrmazd sent Zoroaster's *xwarrah* into the material world, into the fire burning in the house of Frāhīm-ruwān Zōiš, his maternal grandfather, from where it migrated into the body of Dugdaw's mother (i.e., Zoroaster's grandmother) and eventually from there into the baby. The house of Frāhīm-ruwān Zōiš was set ablaze by that *xwarrah* and shone in pure light. This set affright the *karaps* – priests of the older religion – instigated by the *dēws*, and eventually Frāhīm-ruwān was convinced to send his daughter away, to the village of the Spitāma, where she met Purušāsp, Zoroaster's father. Thus the only result of their evil schemes was to render Purušāsp's meeting with his future wife possible. *Xwarrah* being thus within reach, it was now time to provide for the other constituents. As those of all other human beings, Zoroaster's *frawahr* had been shaped at the end of the 1st trimillennium, to be then fashioned into a stalk of Hōm (Av. Haoma) by the Amahraspands, and then transferred into material existence, on Mount Asnawand (on Avestan geography, see Gnoli 1987; on some geographical names in Pahlavi literature, see Cereti 2005a, 2007b). When only thirty years of the 2nd trimillennium were left, thanks to Wahman and Ašawahīšt that stalk was transferred to a bird's nest on top of a tall tree where Purušāsp, driven by a vision, eventually collected it. Only the last element was left: Once formed by Ohrmazd, the substance of Zoroaster's body (*tan-gōhr*) escaped to Hōrdad and Amurdad, and from there to a cloud. It then fell to the ground together with rain, and from water it passed into plants. Purušāsp brought six white cows with yellow ears to graze in the very spot where Zoroaster's *tan-gōhr* had fallen to the ground, so that it passed from the plants to the body of these animals and from there to their milk. It was thus transferred to the prophet's parents through water, plants, and cow's milk. Purušāsp ritually mixed Hōm and milk, then, having overcome the hostility of the evil ones, he and Dugdaw made love and Zoroaster was conceived: the *xwarrah*, *frawahr*, and *tan-gōhr* of the prophet had been reunited (*Dk* 7.2). Quite clearly Zoroaster's conception is here likened to the Hōm ritual, and the similitude is rendered even more stringent by the fact that when the prophet's father went to search for the Hōm, it was only after he had washed his clothes (*Dk* 7.2.32) that Hōm descended from the top of the tree on which it had nested to allow Purušāsp to pick it up (for a discussion of the events leading to Zoroaster's birth, see Darrow 1987: 114–132).

At the time of his birth Zoroaster defied the Evil Spirit by reciting the *Ahunwar*. The choice was made (Molé 1963: 289–295) and his laughing at the moment of birth

revealed that he was aware of his duty and of his future beatitude (*Dk* 7.3.2; *WZ* 8.20). This is one of the few events in Zoroaster's life also to be known to Western authors such as Pliny (*Historia Naturalis* 7.16.72) and Augustine (*De civitate Dei* 21.14). Purušāsp then went to the *karap* Dūrāsraw to announce the birth of Zoroaster. The *karap* reached Zoroaster's house and, upon seeing him surrounded by *xwarrah*, attempted to crush his head with his own hands. But to no avail, his hands were paralyzed and he was unable even to bring food to his mouth. Zoroaster's youth was marred by the attempts by *karaps* and *kayaks*, another type of evil priest, to do away with him, attempts which were all bound to fail. Thus he was put on a fire, but the fire refused to burn him. Then he was laid in the path of cattle, but the largest of the bulls stood by him and did not allow any damage to be done to the child. Then again he was left near a fountain where horses went to drink, but the strongest of the horses stood by him in defense. Finally, he was left in the den of a she-wolf, after all her small ones had been killed, but the newly born baby was able to smash her fangs with the aid of the gods (thus according to *Dk* 7.3, but *WZ* 10 contains a slightly different version of the same story). The initiatory aspect of these four trials is evident, and it is made even clearer by the visit of the priests of the traditional religion to Zoroaster's house, since by overcoming these attempts on his life the prophet showed his independence from and superiority to the tradition represented by the priest of the ancient faith (Molé 1963: 302–303). According to *Dk* 7.3.20–23, Tūr ī Brādarōš, the most powerful of sorcerers, the priest whose life was miraculously bound to that of Zoroaster (*ZWY* 3.3; *PRDD* 36.5–6), recognized that the prophet had the characteristics of all three social classes: priests, warriors, and farmers, and that Wahman was bound to come to lead him to the Conversation with Ohrmazd. At the age of seven Zoroaster had a heated discussion with the *karaps*, refusing their authority to perform rituals.

The single most important event in Zoroaster's life is his meeting with Ohrmazd, when god reveals to him the religion (Pahl. *dēn*) in its wholeness and the prophet accepts it in order to spread it among humankind. This took place when Zoroaster reached the age of thirty. This event coincides with the beginning of the 10th millennium. On his way to the Conversation with the supreme god, Zoroaster crossed the four branches of the river Dāitī, possibly a reference to the fourfold pressing of the Hōm in the ancient Yasna ceremony (Molé 1963: 318; *DD* 48.30). Upon crossing the third arm, called *Ēwtāg, he saw Wahman (Av. Vohu Manah) approaching from the south. The god was in human form, but as tall as three men each a spear-length tall. The prophet crossed the fourth arm of the river Dāitī to meet the divinity, who asked: "Who are you, from whom are you?" Zoroaster answered: "Zoroaster am I, the Spitāma!" (*Dk* 7.3.55). After a short conversation in which Wahman asked Zoroaster what his aims and desires were, receiving the answer "I suffer for Harmony, I strive for Harmony, I desire Harmony, [it is what I need], I think about Harmony with all my will" (*Dk* 7.3.57), the Amahraspand led the prophet to the presence of god (*Dk* 7.3.54–62; *WZ* 21.4–11). Interestingly enough, Zoroaster's meeting with Wahman is also reported by Diodorus Siculus (1.94.2) and the scholiast to the *Greater Alcibiades* (1.122a; for both, see de Jong 1997: 322). It should be remarked that what Zoroaster strives and fights for is *ahlāyih*, this being the standard Pahlavi translation of Avestan *Aša-*. Once more the ritual connection of this part of Zoroaster's legend is clear, given the value that *Aša-*, whose Vedic

counterpart is *Rta-*, has in Zoroastrian rites. During his encounter with Ohrmazd, Zoroaster received the revelation and accepted it. However the entire religious wisdom was not revealed to him at once, rather during each of his meetings with the seven Amahraspand that were to take place in the next years, some part of the divine teachings was disclosed to him. The 7th book of the *Dēnkard* does not preserve the details of these meetings, leaving us to rely on the 22nd chapter of the *Wizīdaqīhā ī Zādspram*, where a short summary of the Conversation is found. Similarly, the following chapter (WZ 23) presents the seven meetings about the religion, each with one of the seven Amahraspands, each regarding a specific domain of creation, which took place in seven different places (as per the New Persian *Zarātoštnāma*, on the contrary, the meetings took place one after the other over a relatively short period of time). According to the Pahlavi texts, these encounters occurred at different points during a period of ten years, at the end of which Zoroaster was able to persuade his first follower, Mēdyōmāh son of Arāštāy, a cousin of the prophet, whose name was known already in the *Gāthās*.

The main difference between the revelation obtained by Gayōmard and that received by Zoroaster is that the latter was assigned the task of spreading the Mazdean doctrine throughout the world (Molé 1963: 340–347; *Dk* 7.4). This was not an easy task at all, at least to judge by the perils he had to overcome before being able to convert King Wištāsp, the sovereign bound to become the first patron of the new religion.

Once back from his meeting with Ohrmazd, Zoroaster proclaimed the truth of the religion, incurring the wrath of *kayaks* and *karaps*, the priests of the customary religion. The first to listen to his teachings with an open mind was Tūr ī Urwāitādeng ī Usixšān, a powerful warrior who in the end did not accept Zoroaster's message, partly because of the opposition of his own son, who considered *xwēdōdah*, the consanguineous marriage favored by Zoroastrians, to be aberrant. Notwithstanding his refusal to abandon the old ways, Pahlavi literature does not present a completely negative picture of this prince, who though not accepting the new religion understood and recognized Zoroaster's greatness. Much worse is the *karap* Waēdwōiš, a priest of the ancient gods who did not worship Ohrmazd (*Dk* 7.4.21). The Wise Lord sent Zoroaster to oblige the *karap* to worship him. When the prophet asked Waēdwōiš to pay homage to Ohrmazd by delivering one hundred boys, one hundred girls, and a four-in-hand, he received a very arrogant answer: "It is not thanks to you that I have much – my wealth is none of your doing – nor is it thanks to Ohrmazd. I am more lordly – I am richer – than you and than Ohrmazd also." This haughtiness eventually cost him his life. The 7th book of the *Dēnkard* further preserves the memory of an episode whose meaning is not entirely clear, but seems nonetheless to be ancient. Ohrmazd ordered Zoroaster to bring the Hōm water that he had taken from the river Dāitī to a four-year-old bull, his jaws broken, in the *gētīg* world. On the prophet's request, Paršat-gāw, this being the name of the bull, exalted Harmony (*ahlāyih*), condemned the *dēws*, denied the evil ones, but refused to accept the Mazdean religion, Zoroaster's fourth request. Nonetheless the prophet gave him the Hōm, and he was healed. According to the 7th book of the *Dēnkard*, the attack of the evil ones against Zoroaster, led by Ahreman himself, takes place after this episode (other texts, as we have seen, set the strike at the moment of the prophet's birth). At the conclusion of this incident, the 7th book of the *Dēnkard* proposes another short but interesting story. Ohrmazd foretold to Zoroaster that he would be tempted by a *druj* who,

having taken the form of a beautiful woman wearing a gold necklace, would ask Zoroaster to have intercourse with her. In fact, at the moment of their meeting, the creature told the prophet that she was Spandarmad. Zoroaster was not fooled and asked her to show her own back to prove the truth of her words. After many remonstrations she agreed to turn her back to him. Her true nature became immediately evident and the prophet chased her away by reciting a *Yaθā Ahū Vairiō* (*Dk* 7.4.55–62).

Another seminal event in Zoroaster's life is King Wištāsp's acceptance of the religion, which took place when the prophet had reached the age of forty-two. According to the 8th book of the *Dēnkard* (*Dk* 8.11), one of the *nasks* of the Sasanian *Zand-Avesta* (commonly *Zend-Avesta*), the *Wištāsp Sāst*, contained the description of the king's conversion to Zoroaster's faith. The main elements of this episode, i.e., the role played by the Amahraspands in convincing Wištāsp, his acceptance of the new faith and the ensuing war against Arjāsp are all present here. Among our different Pahlavi sources, the 7th book of the *Dēnkard* and the *Pahlavi Rivāyat* both supply us with essential portions of the narration that we find fully developed only in the New Persian *Zarātoštnāma*. On the contrary, what we find in the *Wizīdagihā ī Zādspram* is a very short narration, quite close to the *Wištāsp Sāst* (Molé 1963: 348–350). The Battle of the Religion opposing Wištāsp and Arjāsp is described in a short Pahlavi epic text, the *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* (*AZ*), and it must have been a very popular theme, since a different and much longer version can be found in the *Šāhnāme*. A late and corrupt Avestan text, the *Wištāsp Yašt*, also narrates the conversion of Wištāsp (its Pahlavi version has been translated by Molé 1963: 350–373).

Zoroaster, who foresaw that he would be slandered and hurt by his adversaries and consequently thrown in prison, nonetheless decided to go to Wištāsp's court. According to the *Zarātoštnāma*, a New Persian text most probably relying on Middle Persian sources, Zoroaster, having overcome his battle with the demons, went to Balkh, at the court of King Wištāsp. At first all went well, the prophet was received with all honors and triumphed in three days of discussions with the king's sages, at the end of which he declared himself to be Ohrmazd's prophet. He then presented the *Avesta* to the king, who asked for some time to study it and think about its contents. Trickery and ambush awaited ahead, for meanwhile the court priests thought out a scheme to foil Zoroaster's attempt to convert Wištāsp. They bribed the guard and hid impure things in the house where the prophet was hosted. Then they went and denounced him to the king as a sorcerer (*Zn* 874–916, the episode being known, though in a slightly different form, also to the author of the *PRDD* 47.5). Zoroaster was thrown in prison, where he suffered hunger and privation (*Zn* 917–941; *Dk* 7.4.68; *PRDD* 47.6). He was later freed thanks to a miraculous event, which is only fully narrated in the *Zarātoštnāma*, though it may have been known also to the compiler of the *Dēnkard* (*Dk* 7.4.69–70). While Zoroaster was in prison, Wištāsp's favorite horse, a black stallion, suddenly lost all four of his legs. One morning the king's stableman found the horse resting on his belly, his four legs mysteriously missing. He ran to the king, informed him of what had happened and the dismayed sovereign sent for his sages, none of whom was able to find a solution. When Zoroaster heard the news, he asked the guard to tell the king that he could restore the poor beast to its earlier state. Wištāsp sent for the prophet and the latter told him not to worry: The horse would be healed provided that the king accepted four conditions. In front of

the ailing horse, Zoroaster started posing his demands. First he asked to be recognized as a prophet, the messenger of the true god. Once the king had answered positively, Zoroaster prayed to Ohrmazd and the front right leg of the horse reappeared. Thereafter, each time that a request was granted another limb of the stallion rematerialized. The second wish was regarding Esfandyār, the great warrior of the age and the son of the king: He was to side with Zoroaster and protect him from all evils. Third he asked to be brought into the palace's private quarters, to the presence of the queen, and requested her to convert and accept the best of religions. Finally he asked that the guardian of the palace, the very person who held the keys of Zoroaster's apartments, be summoned to the king's presence to be interrogated about the whole affair. The guardian came and confessed, revealing the misdeeds of the priests. They were condemned and Zoroaster again recited the prayers he had learned from god, healing the king's horse (Zn 942–1094). Thus the truth of the religion was proved. According to the tradition preserved by the *Zarātoštnāma* (1095–1195), but not unknown to other texts and thus almost certainly old, Wištāsp asked Zoroaster for four boons, but the prophet replied that only one could be granted to the king himself, while the remaining ones would go to others at his court. Thus Wištāsp was able to foresee his own future, Pišōtan (Pēšyōtan) became immortal, Jāmāsp became omniscient, and Esfandyār got a body of steel. Ohrmazd sent Wahman, Ašawahišt, and his own Holy Fire – according to Zn 1121 the fires were two: Āzar *Khordād and Āzar Gušasp – to the court of Wištāsp and there they ordered him to accept the Good Religion, promising him a reign of 150 years and an immortal son, Pišōtan, if he accepted and threatening him with a terrible death if he did not accept (Dk 7.4.75–82). Zoroaster lived another thirty-five years after Wištāsp's conversion, serving as the king's Mowbedān-mowbed "Priest of Priests" (a title based on the "King of Kings" formulation). At the age of seventy-seven, forty-seven years after his Conversation with Ohrmazd, the prophet was killed by Tūr ī Brādrōš (Dk 7.5.1; PRDD 47.20–25). Before Zoroaster's death, Wištāsp fought the Battle of Religion against Arjāsp, the king of the Hyōn (on this ethnonym and the well-known ethnic name "Hun" in Zoroastrian texts, see Cereti 2010b), who having heard about his conversion threatened him with war unless he abandoned the new religion (Dk 7.5.7). The details of this battle are told in the only epic fragment preserved in Middle Persian, the *Ayādqār ī Zarērān* (Monchi-Zadeh 1981; cf. Cereti 2001: 200–202). The events after Zoroaster's death to the fall of the Iranian Empire (Dk 7, chapters 6 and 7) cannot be discussed here.

The End

An Avestan text, the *Zamyād Yašt* (Yt 19.88–89; 92–96; compare Hintze 1994: 364–367, 370–399) provides the oldest attestation of a continuous, albeit short, eschatological narrative in the Zoroastrian context: It mentions the title *Saošiiant-* and the name *Astuuat.ərəta-* and locates the scene in eastern Iran and more specifically in the area of the Hāmūn basin in Sīstān. Another Avestan text, the *Frawardīn Yašt* (Yt 13), also contains references to the eschatological cycle. However, the evidence it presents mainly consists in the names of persons whose *frauuaši-* should be celebrated. Despite the mention of the names of the three future saviors, those of their respective mothers, and

other details still, this source is much less probing because the repetitive structure of the hymn makes interpolations difficult to detect and therefore these details could have been added at a later time (*Yt* 13.62, 110, 117, 128, 129, 140–41, and 145). In fact, the legend of the three posthumous sons of Zoroaster is only fully developed in Pahlavi literature. Eschatology and apocalypticism were important themes for the Zoroastrians living in the Abbasid period, and thus we preserve several passages treating these themes. The *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* (*ZWY*) narrates the end of Zoroaster's millennium and the future times in great details. The same theme is also presented in the *Ayādgār ī Jāmāspīg* (*AJ*) (chapters 16 and 17), in the *Greater Bundahišn* (chapters 33 and 34), in the 7th book of the *Dēnkard* (chapters 7 to 11), in the *Wizīdagihā ī Zādspram* (chapters 34 and 35), in the *Pahlavi Rivāyat* (chapters 48 and 49), and in sparse passages belonging to other Middle Persian works. Among the New Persian texts, the two most important sources are the *Zarātošnāma* (vv. 1276–1521) and chapters 35 and 36 of the *Ṣaddar Bondaheš* (*SdBd*) (Cereti 1995b: 13–15, 1995a: 35–37). The lives of the future saviors repeat, with lesser variations, the scheme of Zoroaster's life. Moreover, Ušēdar's and Ušēdarmāh's millennia present structural similarities, while less is said of Sōšāns's fifty-seven years.

Zoroaster had conceived three sons during his lifetime, and three others will be born of his seed after his death. Each of the three future saviors will be conceived when, thirty years before the end of their predecessor's millennium, a virgin will bathe in lake Kayānsē, where Zoroaster's seed is guarded by 99,999 Frawahrs. Ušēdar will be conceived by a virgin called Nāmīg-pid who will bathe in Lake Kayānsē. At the age of thirty Ušēdar will converse with Ohrmazd and his millennium will start. At the moment of his birth the sun will stand still for ten days and nights and vegetation will blossom for three years (*PRDD* 48.1–3; *Dk* 7.8.55–60; *Bd* 33.29; *ZWY* 7.2 and 9.1; *SdBd* 35.10–14). During his millennium, in year 300, a huge demonic wolf will appear, only to be destroyed by the followers of the Good Religion once Ušēdar performs a sacrifice (*PRDD* 48.5–9; *Bd* 33.29; *Dk* 7.9.3; *SdBd* 35.17–18). Then, around the half of the millennium, Malkōs will cause a severe winter lasting a number of years, known as the Malkōsian winter, and he will be smitten by Dahman Afrīn (*PRDD* 48.10–16; *Bd* 33.30; *Dk* 7.9.3–6; *SdBd* 35.21–25). At the end of this terrible winter, mother earth will be populated again by men, animals, and plants from the *war* created by Jam (*PRDD* 48.17–21; *Bd* 33.29; *Dk* 7.9.7–12). According to the *Dēnkard*, after the 5th century of this millennium two thirds of the Iranian and Turanian countries will follow Truth and one third will follow the Lie (*Dk* 7.9.13), while according to the *Bundahišn* no one will die anymore because of illness (*Bd* 33.31). In year 970 of Ušēdar's millennium another virgin, Weh-pid, will bathe in Lake Kayānsē and conceive Ušēdarmāh. At the moment of his birth the sun will stand still twenty days and nights and vegetation will blossom for six years. At the age of thirty he will converse with Ohrmazd (*PRDD* 48.22–24; *Dk* 7.9.18–23; *Bd* 33.32; *ZWY* 9.11; *SdBd* 35.26–30). During this millennium all serpents will unite into a gigantic dragon, Ušēdarmāh will perform a *Yasna* and men will fight and defeat the dragon, freeing the world from all *xrafstars* (*PRDD* 48.26–29; *Bd* 33.32; *SdBd* 35.32–34). No one will die except of old age and violent death (*Dk* 7.10.7; *ZWY* 9.12). Dahāg will free himself only to be definitively slain by Kersāsp. Sōšāns as well as Kay Husraw and his companions will come to the rescue (*PRDD* 48.30–36; *Bd* 33.33–35; *Dk* 7.10.10, 9.23;

ZWY 9.13–23). Fifty-three years before the end of the millennium the Mazdeans will give up eating meat and when only three years are left to the end of the millennium they will also give up milk, eating only water and vegetables. In year 970 of Ušēdarmāh Gōwāg Pid, Sōšāns's future mother, will bathe in Lake Kayānsē. At the moment of the birth of the last of the future saviors, the sun will stand still for thirty days and thirty nights (*PRDD* 48.37–38; *Dk* 7.10.15–19; *Bd* 33.35; *ZWY* 9.24; *SdBd* 35.39–43). In the texts fifty-seven years are given both as the duration of Sōšāns's life and as the length of his millennium, the latter hypothesis being more plausible, according to the present writer. Probably this number is derived from the number of years which according to the *Dēnkard* (7.6.12) pass between Zoroaster's adherence to the Good Religion and the spreading of his message to the seven continents (see Cereti 1995a: 50–54 and Vevaina 2005 [2009]: 218–219, where other explanations of this number are found). Kay Husraw will be the king of the seven climes and Sōšāns the Mowbedān-mowbed. Humans will eat vegetables for the first seventeen years, only water for the next thirty, and in the last decade humans will feed off spirit alone (*Dk* 7.11.4). The *xwarrah* of powerful and famous men will join with that of Sōšāns to defeat Ahreman and the *dēws* (*Dk* 7.11.5–10). Sōšāns will perform a ritual leading to the Renovation of the World and the Resurrection of the Dead, Isadwāstar will chair his assembly and Ohrmazd will finally carry out the Renovation (*PRDD* 48.50–107; *Dk* 7.11.11; *Bd* 34; *WZ* 35.15–60; *SdBd* 35.45–51).

Scholars have endeavored to elucidate parallels to the Zoroastrian eschatological narration in other traditions, and have sometimes been able to spot convincing correspondences for individual passages and themes, but not for the narration as a whole. Among the texts brought into play are the Sibylline oracles – in particular the Persian Sybille – and the Oracles of Hystaspes (Boyce and Grenet 1991: 371–387; Hultgård 1995: 66; Sundermann 2004b), however too little of these interesting and relevant texts, possibly dating back to the Hellenistic period, has survived to allow for any clear stance to be taken.

Conclusion

This chapter delineates a summary of the history of humankind according to the written theological traditions of Zoroastrianism, dividing it into a beginning, where we focused on the characters of Gayōmard and Jam, a central part, represented by Zoroaster's legendary life, and an end, where the stories of the three future saviors are told. This whole history is further typified by the fight of good against evil, of Truth against the Lie. In other words, the entire path of humankind as represented in Zoroastrian religious texts is characterized by a tripartition in time and a dualism in state. The history of humankind and eschatology are directly and closely linked to cosmogony. Taken together they form the cosmological drama resulting from the fight between light and darkness, good and evil, where humankind plays the role of the protagonist, his actions and free choices being decisive for the final outcome.

The antiquity of Iranian religious history has been discussed by many and the age of the Zoroastrian apocalyptic has, as well, been a much debated theme. Here it is not

possible to go into the details of this intricate discussion. Suffice it to say that a number of scholars including Mary Boyce (1984a, 1987, 1989b), Anders Hultgård (1983, 1991, 1992, 1995) and Geo Widengren (1983, 1995a, 1995b) have argued in favor of a greater antiquity of Zoroastrian eschatology and apocalyptic, while other like Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin (1982), Philippe Gignoux (1986a, 1986b, 1987, 1988, 1999a) and the present author (Cereti 1995a, 1995b, 1996a, 1996b, 2007d) have preferred to argue in favor of a clear differentiation between an eschatology, certainly ancient, and an apocalyptic tradition, most probably late. To sum up the long discussion one can say that though no doubt many of the elements regarding the end of times are very old, and some of the constituents of the salvific history – at least concerning the individual – were known already to the religious reformer and poet who composed the *Gāthās*, it seems that the religious history itself, the narration spanning the period from Gayōmard to the Sōšāns, characterized by a linear conception of history, which still bears traces of a more ancient, cyclic conception, and centering on Zoroaster's legendary life, was only spun into a continuous narrative by the authors of the Sasanian *Zand*, who may certainly have relied on older materials, but sometimes may not have. This leaves open the possibility of an Iranian influence on some specific aspect of the belief in the last days as developed in the Judeo-Christian (and Islamic) world, although the positions of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, which saw Zoroastrian doctrines as the source of Judeo-Christian eschatology and apocalypticism can no more be held. To sum up, a model assigning a greater role to reciprocal influences and on relations between the different Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cultures of Classical and late antiquity, an elaboration of themes stretching into the Middle Ages, probably better explains the similarity between the different speculations about the end of times, than a model implying influence in only one direction.

Further Reading

In general the reader is referred to relevant entries in the *Encyclopædia Iranica* (www.iranicaonline.org). On Iranian national history, see Yarshater (1983). On Zoroaster's legendary life, see the classic, but uncritical, Jackson (1899) to which add the fundamental discussion by Molé (1963). A French translation of the main texts is found in Molé (1967), while an older English translation is West (1897). For a synopsis of the lives of future saviors, see Cereti (1995a). For a

presentation of apocalyptic and eschatological literature in Zoroastrianism and a summary of the academic discussion on the subject, complete of earlier literature, see the introduction to Cereti (1995b). The debate on the dating and origin of Zoroastrian apocalypticism has been quite heated in the 1980s and 1990s. For a taste of the arguments brought into play see Hultgård (1995) and the review article by Gignoux (1999a); see also Vevaina (2011).

CHAPTER 16

Gender

Jenny Rose

Despite the intellectual discourse concerning gender over the past 150 years, the topic continues to be emotive when applied within religious contexts. The development of a society in which women are educated, employed, and hold positions of authority has posed similar challenges for Zoroastrians as for other religious traditions. These challenges relate to the paradoxical positioning of women within the soteriological framework of the religion: In the past, the notion of gender equality in terms of the spiritual potential of women and men has been tempered by the regular exclusion of women from the ritual domain, due to their particular physiology.

This chapter considers how the function of gender is construed within Zoroastrian texts from the oral tradition of the *Gāthās* through to the New Persian communications of the *Revāyats*, alongside internal and external historical texts from the Achaemenid period onward. These texts form the basis not only for a study of gendered concepts of the divine, but also of the roles of Zoroastrian men and women in ritual and religio-social action and interaction. Particular attention is given to the comparative functionality of male priests and laywomen, both of whom are liminal – and therefore “powerful” – figures, circumscribed by strictures regarding their relative states of purity. It is difficult to determine, however, to what extent internal material concerning such circumscription reflects actual rather than ideal behavior. External accounts provide some illustrative evidence, but have their own inherent cultural biases.

A Gendered Concept of the Divine?

The Old Avestan nouns *Ahura* and *Mazdā* are both masculine, denoting a gendered (male) identity for the supreme divinity. In the *Gāthās*, *Ahura Mazdā* is identified as the “father” of *Aša* (“Truth” or ‘Order’) and as engenderer and ruler of the ordered

cosmos (Y 44.3–7), who is visibly perceived in the lights in the sky, particularly the sun (Y 43.16; YH 36.6). The inherent masculinity of Ahura Mazdā is reinforced through that of his male-gendered beneficent ‘spirit/inspiration’ (*spənta mainiiu*; Y 47).

Ahura Mazdā is also designated the father of *Ārmaiti*, ‘right mindedness’ (Y 45.4) – a quality associated with the earth. This relationship echoes an Indo-European mythological model in which the male sky divinity is counterbalanced by the female genius of the earth. The chthonic divinity *Spəntā Ārmaiti* brings into being the beneficent aspects of the earth: fertility, growth, and prosperity for living beings engendered through Ahura Mazdā (YH 38.1; Vd 2.10; Skjærvø 2002a: 403, 407). Together, the two function as “parents.” This familial relationship of Ahura Mazdā as father (sky) and *Spəntā Ārmaiti* as mother (earth) is expanded in the hymn to Aši, the *yazata* of “reward,” to include as “brothers” Sraoša, Rašnu, and Mithra, and as “sister” Daēna (Yt 17.16). The generation of the proto-human, Gayōmard, by Ohrmazd through Spandārmad from the earth (GBd 1a.13), becomes a relationship assumed for all of subsequent humanity. As a Middle Persian (Pahlavi) catechism reads: “My mother is Spandārmad, and my father is Ohrmazd...” (ČAP 2).

Ārmaiti, as ‘devotion’ that nurtures, contrasts with *Tarōmaiti* ‘scorn’ (Y 60.5). Such intra-gendered opposition is found in the *Gāthās*, where the beneficent spirit/inspiration that is life giving is countered by the spirit/inspiration that is evil (Y 45.2) and brings “not-life” (Y 30.4–5). This tension between two male forces – one good and creative, the other evil and injurious – is amplified in later texts, where *Agra mainiiu*, the ‘destructive spirit/inspiration’, emerges to challenge Ahura Mazdā (Vd 1.2–19). The *yazatas* are also challenged by *daēuuas* according to their gender: Just as *Ārmaiti* is opposed by *Tarōmaiti*, so *Vohu Manah* competes with *Aka Manah* (Y 33.4; ‘good thought’ versus ‘bad thought’ – these are both neuter terms), and the masculine *Sraoša* (‘readiness to listen’) counters *Aēšma* (‘wrath’; Y 57.10, 25; GBd 5.1). The passage in Bd 5.1 provides a comprehensive codification of this vertical, gendered counterbalancing of good and evil, beginning with Ohrmazd versus Ahreman, and following with the evil counterparts to the *aməša spəntas* and some of the *yazatas*, such as *Vaiiu*.

This struggle between the two forces takes place not only on the conceptual plane of abstract concepts, but also within the material world, with humans – both men and women – as protagonists. That this tension also operates at a cross-gendered level is inherent in the conception of the antithesis of *Aša*, a gender-neutral word, as *Druj* (‘deceit’) a word which is grammatically feminine (compare Y 30.5). Women are particularly vulnerable to the onslaught of *Druj*, as seen in allusions to ‘female *drəguuants*’ (Vd 20.10, 12). Although in the Old Persian inscriptions, the equivalent *Drauga* is masculine (DB 4.36–40), in Middle Persian texts, *Druj* represents a feminine personification of evil (GBd 1.49). Only in recent times, has the feminine character of the menacing and seductive *Druj* receded, as “the Lie” is accorded gender neutrality in popular conception (Choksy 2002: 33). *Aša* (MP Ard) remains a neuter noun and concept.

This male/neuter versus female model of good versus evil is reiterated in other instances where a female *daēuuu* is overcome by a male *yazata*. The female *Asrušti* (‘disobedience’) is trounced by the male *Sraoša* (Y 60.5; Yt 10.29), and *Mithra* (‘ally’, ‘bond’, or ‘contract’) wields his cudgel against *Būshīqstā*, the female demon of sloth (Yt 10.97).

Tištriia, the *yazata* of rain, defeats Dužairiia, a female *daēuuua* associated with severe famine (Yt 8.54).

A sense of gendered hierarchy also operates within each vertical plane of good and evil, which privileges the male. The *Yeḡhē Hātām* prayer, addressed to “the male and female ones” (Y 27.15) has traditionally been interpreted as referring to the *aməša spəntas* although it could refer to all the *yazatas*. In Young Avestan listings, the three feminine *aməša spəntas* appear less frequently than the three that are neuter (Kellens 2000: 48). That the number of the *aməša spəntas* is equal (six) could be construed as a balancing of “male” and “female” cosmic elements, although Ahura Mazda as the seventh tips the scale towards the masculine. In one Middle Persian classification of the elements of the cosmos associated with the heptad, the four “masculine” creations of sky, metal, wind, and fire, precede the “feminine” creations of water, earth, and plants (IBd 16.6). Since Middle Persian nouns are all gender-neutral, they do not retain any clear gender division regarding the *aməša spəntas*: In becoming neuter, Hordād (Av. Hauruuatāt), Amordād (Av. Amərətāt), and Spandārmad (Av. Spəntā Ārmaiti) lose their femininity, but, likewise, the male *aməša spəntas* are de-masculinized.

Those divinities that are feminine are not passive, however, nor defined by a “maternal” role. The female *yazata* of the waters is referred to by the epithets *sūrā* (‘strong’) and *anāhitā* (‘undefiled’), which assert her identity as both powerful and chaste. Anāhitā increases crops, herds, fields, and possessions, bestowing fertility on both men and women (Yt 5.1–2), but she also steers a chariot pulled by four horses, bringing victory to Iranian warriors and defeating their enemies, both mortal and demonic (Yt 5.11–13). This “warrior” aspect of Anāhitā continued through the Parthian period, when she was alluded to as “the Persian Artemis/Diana” (Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 27; Tacitus, *Annals* 3.62), into Sasanian times, when, according to the Perso-Arabic historian al-Ṭabarī (838–923 CE), the heads of enemies were sent for display at the dynastic temple of Anāhitā at Estakhr (Nöldeke 1879: 17; Labourt 1904: 72, n. 2). Such Zoroastrian mythology of powerful female divinities was not necessarily mirrored in the social standing of mortal women.

A similar combination of stereotypical “female” and “male” traits in one divinity is found in the function of the male *yazata*, Tištriia, who protects the celestial waters and distributes them to fertilize the material world, but who also fights “man to man” against the *daēuuua* of “drought,” *Apaōša*, and mortal sorcerers (Yt 8.21–28, 39). Likewise, *Druuāspā*, the female *yazata* of health and healing is also associated with horses, cattle, and chariots (Yt 9.1–2; GBd 26.65). *Druwāsp* appears in a grammatically and iconographically masculine form on a Kushan coin (Kellens 1996b). From the mid-2nd century CE, the Kushan Empire, based in the region of Gandhara, used Bactrian, a Middle Iranian language written in Greek script, on its inscriptions and coinage, which often refer to Zoroastrian *yazatas*.

Although the demonology of Zoroastrian texts reflects a male dominance, the female gender is also closely associated with evil. The pollution of dead matter is hypostatized as the female *Druj Nasu* (Vd 5.28–32), and the onslaught of menstruation is attributed to a female *daēuuua* named *Jahi* (MP Jeh). In Avestan mythology, *Jahi*’s gaze dries up rivers and vegetation, and her touch withers the *ašauuan*’s (‘follower of *Aša*’) ability to combat evil (Vd 18.63–64). In Middle Persian texts, *Jeh* becomes the personification of the

pollution of menstruation, and the epitome of uncontrolled female sexuality. As such, she is pitted against all virtuous women (*GBd* 5.3). In a rare etiological myth concerning menses, the *Bundahišn* narrates how Jeh, in a filial relationship with Ahreman, approaches him at the end of his 3,000-year stupor. She pledges to bring affliction upon the *ašauuan* and the toiling ox, and to harm the other elements of the good creation. Jeh's words revive Ahreman and he kisses her on the head, at which moment she becomes the first to be polluted by the blood of menstruation (*GBd* 4.1–4). In another Middle Persian text, Jeh appears as “the queen of Ahreman,” who leads her band of *dēws* to corrupt all women, and through them, all men (*WZ* 34.30–31).

Jeh represents the antithesis of both Spəntā Ārmaiti – the pious, obedient wife/daughter of Ahura Mazdā, mother of all, and “queen of paradise” (*PRDD* 8a.4), who purifies the wombs of women after birth (*Yt* 48.5) – and Anāhitā – the “undefiled,” who purifies the seed of males and the wombs of females in preparation for conception and childbirth (*Yt* 5.2). Just as Spəntā Ārmaiti aids in the preservation and regeneration of the seed of Gayōmard (*GBd* 14.5) and therefore the continued existence of all humanity, so Anāhitā preserves the seed of the future saviors of the world who will herald the time of renovation and separation, when Ahreman and his destructive forces, including Jeh, will cease to exist (*GBd* 33.36).

In contrast to the female *yazatas*, female *daēuuas* are recalcitrant, unrestrained, and deceptive (Choksy 2002: 35). A daevic group, known in the *Avesta* as *pairikā*, engages in sorcery and is associated with human witches (*Yt* 1.6; *Vd* 20.10). The New Persian form *parī* is often translated into English as ‘fairy’. A nebulous figure of Šāh Parī has become the focus of Zoroastrian women’s worship in Iran (Kalinock 2004: 532). Her name is thought by some to derive from the male Fereydūn (Av. Θraētaona), who heals sickness, but the story that accompanies the ritual *sofre* concerns a rather malicious *parī* (Boyce 1977: 62–63). A *sofre* is a large white cloth set out with objects that have a symbolic connection to the seven elements of creation.

Any consideration of gendered concepts of the divine must also include the use of imagery and symbolism. The feminine Avestan term *daēnā*, ‘[religious] insight’, is central in Zoroastrian eschatology. The strong, beautiful woman who accompanies the *ašauuan* to the abode of Ahura Mazdā (*Vd* 19.30) is identified as the totality of the thoughts, words, and deeds – the hypostatized *daēnā* – of the *ašauuan* (*HN* 2.11). In later texts, she appears before the *drəguuañt* as a noxious, stinking creature (*AWN* 17.12). Seventeenth-century illustrated copies of the *Ardā Wirāz-Nāmag* (*AWN*) show imagery of the soul and its *daēnā* (Choksy 2002: 70). Other gendered *yazatas* were represented iconographically much earlier, including Vərəθrayna, the *yazata* of “victory,” who, by Parthian times, was associated with Herakles, as evidenced in a 1st-century BCE syncretistic statue at Nemrud Dagħ in south-eastern Turkey. Iranian *yazatas* represented as Greek-style male divinities on the coins of Kushan kings include Ahura Mazdā, Xšaθra Vairiia, Vohu Manah, Vaiiu, Xwarənah, Ātar, Mithra, and Vərəθrayna (Cribb 2008: 124). Female divinities are less prominent, but Aši and Nana feature.

The prominence of Nana as a central female divinity in Kushan and later Sogdian iconography points to an image cult based on the goddess amongst eastern Iranians, similar to that of Anāhitā amongst western Iranians from the Achaemenid period. Whether the cult of Nana was “Zoroastrian” or not remains a matter for debate. Aspects

of Spəntā Ārmaiti have been discerned in Sogdian representations of Nana, which are similar to the Khotanese Saka *Śśandrāmatā* – that is, Spəntā Ārmaiti (Azarpay 1976: 541). Sogdian iconography also incorporated the male *yazata* of the wind, Vaiiu, known in Sogdian texts as *Wēšparkar*.

The Avestan concept of the divine component of each man and woman – the *frauuaši* – is described collectively as female beings, who fly to defend the material world against assault from evil (*Yt* 13.45–49, 67–70). The prescient decision of the *frauuašis* to aid Ahura Mazdā in the generation and subsequent protection of the world is put into effect through the formation of new “sons in the womb” (*Yt* 13.1–12, 87–91). The practical choice of the *frauuašis* prefigures the choice facing all humans: whether to think, speak, and act beneficently or not (*Y* 30.3, 5). Once the choice has been made, there is no standing on the sidelines for either the female or male *ašauuan*.

“Priesthood of Believers”

The concept of the *ašauuan* is, from the outset, applied to both men and women (compare *Y* 53.5, 6), who are encouraged to cultivate that which is true (*YH* 35.6) and to “expand the earth” (*Vd* 19.26). There is no overt hieratic, gender, or class distinction in this mandate to the *ašauuan*, nor is there any difference in terms of potential for spiritual achievement. Both ‘man and woman’ (*nā genā*) are mentioned together in a soteriological context; at death, both genders will be held accountable for their actions in life (*Y* 46.10; Schwartz 2003b [2007]: 3). The description in the *Ardā Wirāz-Nāmāg* (*AWN*) of the denizens of both heaven and hell lists the reasons for men and women to be in each place, and their respective rewards or punishments. Some of these are mentioned below.

Although such texts present the concept of spiritual parity for both men and women, Zoroastrianism developed historically as a patriarchal religion in which the priesthood is male and the liturgical life of the religion is in men’s hands. Zoroastrian women have largely been excluded from holding higher religious positions and becoming priests.

References to *magi* in the Persepolis Fortification Tablets (PF), in some Old Persian inscriptions, and in classical Greek writings inform that, in Achaemenid times, Iranian priests were male. Middle Persian religious texts, insofar as they are attributed to named sources, were composed and interpreted by male priests or learned laymen. These texts, along with the New Persian *Revāyats* and *Šāhnāme*, echo the *Avesta* in presenting a history of the religion wherein the main protagonists from Zarathustra onward were male. The first convert (Maidiomaṛha), the first patron of the religion (Vīštāspa), and the end-time heroes Pēšyōtan and Wahrām, are all male (Stausberg 2002c: 403), as will be the three posthumously conceived sons of Zarathustra, identified as *saošiiants* (*Yt* 13.128–129). In Avestan mythology, the ancient rulers and heroic warriors who epitomize the “good religion” are male, such as Yima, Əraētaona, and Kərəsāspa.

The only female named in the *Gāthās* is Pouručistā, the youngest daughter of Zarathustra (*Y* 53.3). References to her emphasize the ideal of promoting the religion through the sustenance of Aša and through striving for the “sunlike realm of good thought.” Such dedication on Pouručistā’s part brings rewards for her father, husband,

herdsmen, and family (Y 53.4). In this way, one woman's active devotion is seen to generate an altruistic recompense that extends beyond the individual.

Since the transmission of sacred texts and rituals is male-driven, one has to look carefully to find evidence for women acting in a liturgical capacity. Passages in the *Nērangestān* (N) and *Hērbedestān* (Hēr) suggest that some hieratic ritual functionality did extend to women and children. N 1.22.1–5 states that *any* devout person – man, woman, or child – who is able to recite the liturgy correctly could offer the *āb-zōhr*, although a woman was limited in this action if she were in menses (Kotwal and Kreyenbroek 1995: 19, 121–123). There is debate, however, as to how to read the word *zaoθra* (the act of pouring the libation) in this context: It could mean that a woman or a minor child could hold the office of *zaoθar*, and thus that they are authorized as priests, or it could imply that the *zaoθra* ritual could be performed by anyone, including a lay person who knows the *Yasna* by heart (Kotwal and Kreyenbroek 1995: 121, n. 430). Although the first reading would seem to be more accurate, there is little evidence for the existence of female priests within the history of the faith.

The *Hērbedestān*, however, discusses the circumstances under which men, women, or children may leave home “for the purpose of an activity described as *aθauruna*–” (Hintze 2009b: 172). The term *aθauruna* appears to be connected with teaching the religion. The member of the family with the “highest esteem” for Aša should represent the household, leaving management of the family estate to whoever is more capable (Hintze 2009b: 173–179). A married woman could go, provided she was escorted by a male (Hēr 5.3.), but her husband would go if she had the better management skills (Hēr 5.4). If both are equally competent, either the husband (*nmānō.paiti*) or wife (*nāirikā*) could go (Hēr 5.2). That both men and women were educated in the religion, its texts, and some of its rituals, including taking care of the fire, is implied in various Avestan passages (Y 26.7; compare *Vyt* 64). Such textual references indicate that there was no gender barrier for women, neither in learning nor reciting the *Yasna*, nor performing ritual, except during times of menstruation. In late Sasanian times, a daughter could inherit the family fire from her father, but, if she married, her husband would assume responsibility for the fire (MHD 25.8–9; Macuch 1993: 200, 208). The Middle Persian account of the vision of Ardā Wirāz relates that around his body stood priests and his seven sisters, who “knew the religion by heart,” kept the fire alight, burnt incense, and “recited the *Avesta* and *Zand* of the ritual” (AWN 2.2–3, 32–36).

As lay access to a learned priesthood and to ritual centered on the fire-temple declined in the medieval period, and Zoroastrian laymen began to take more important positions in the caliphate, women became the repository of the religion (Hjerrild 2002: 57). Domestic praxis was not as adversely impacted, and the home – traditionally in the care of women – was maintained as a religious stronghold. Women also often took responsibility for the upkeep of the festival calendar.

Both genders continue to recite prayers on a daily basis, and the ritual of initiation (PGuj. *navjote*, NP *sedre-pūšī*) is the same for both boys and girls. It is recorded as part of ritual praxis for both genders at age fifteen, the age of religious maturity, from early times (Vd 18.54). In the New Persian *Revāyats*, the weaving of the *kostī* is referred to as the occupation of the priests (Dhabhar 1999: 25), but this task was taken on by the Parsi priests' wives in the 19th century, and, in Iran, by a group of laywomen in the

1920s. The thread is still blessed by the priest in both communities, and must be woven when in a state of ritual purity, which effectively means that women weavers are post-menopausal.

In recent years, women have become more engaged in religious activity beyond the domestic arena. Some of the villages in Iran employ post-menopausal women as “guardians” of shrines (Langer 2008: 91). In 2008, the North American councils of both Parsi *mōbeds* and Iranian *mūbads* allowed laywomen to begin to train as *mūbadyārs*, that is, as ‘assistant priests’. Two female *mūbadyārs* were initiated and invested in Ontario, Canada, in early December 2012, having fulfilled the prerequisites stipulated by the North American Mōbeds’ Council. In February 2011, eight Iranian Zoroastrian women were received as *mūbadyārs* in a ceremony held in the hall adjacent to the fire-temple in Tehrān.

While all members of the community may participate in a *jašan* or *gāhānbārs*, some lay rituals belong solely to the domain of women. In Iran, these include *chak-o-dowle* (‘pot of fate’: an observance associated with Tīrgān), most *sofre* rituals, and the *nokhode mošgel-gošā* ceremony (Langer 2008: 107–108). Although a *sofre* is sometimes set out in the name of a male who has paid for the expenses (Kalinock 2004: 540), the fact that most – such as those for *Bībī-sešanbe* (the ‘Tuesday lady’) or Šāh Parī – are performed by women independent of priestly supervision and with no male present, causes tension. In the *Bībī-sešanbe* ritual a *sofre* is set out by women on a Tuesday, and the story is narrated of how a girl overcomes poverty and ill fortune by making a vow at just such a *sofre* (Kalinock 2004: 537–538). The Šāh Parī ritual involves the offering of a black hen, which has given rise to its castigation as superstitious folklore (Kalinock 2004: 546).

Men do observe the *sofre-ye Bahmanrūz*, although it is primarily a women’s ritual (Kalinock 2004: 532, 539), and, in Iran and India, men sometimes sit in on the *nokhode mošgel-gošā/moškel-āsān* ceremony, but do not participate (Russell 1988: 526; Kalinock 2004: 539–540). The name of this last ritual refers to the “resolution of difficulties.” The ceremony itself involves the sorting of chickpeas, while listening to a story about a poor woodcutter and his daughter who overcome hardship. Both men and women can endow a religious or charitable institution, as is celebrated in the *Ātašnu Gīt* or ‘Song of the Fire’, a Parsi Gujarati song composed to commemorate the foundation of an Ātaš Bahrām in India in 1765 by both laymen and women (Stewart 2004: 443). The song has subsequently become part of female devotional life, recited when preparing the hearth fire on the name-day of fire, at weddings, *navjotes*, and as part of a *bāj* ritual (Stewart 2004: 444–446).

Alongside an annual “pilgrimage” cycle for all Zoroastrians in Iran runs a particular round for women, who visit specific shrines (Fischer 1978: 202; Langer 2008: 144–149). Although the rituals at these shrines are women-led and -oriented, those who participate are often accompanied by men both for safety and propriety’s sake (Langer 2008: 288). Zoroastrian girls hoping to marry, and pregnant women, may visit a natural source of water to invoke Anāhitā’s beneficent action by reciting the *Ābān Niyāyeš*. In Iran, India, and occasionally in diaspora, women perform a separate *āb-zōhr* ritual, pouring their libation into streams or the village well. This offering may be undertaken in fulfillment of a vow, or for the welfare of a member of the family. Amongst Parsi

women, this offering to the well, a river, or the sea usually takes place at *Ābān Yazad Jašan*, the “name day” of the waters: that is, on the tenth day (*Ābān*) of the eighth month (*Ābān*).

Although men predominate in the policy-making that – directly or indirectly – affects “mainstream” religious performance, and the inner rituals of the religion are conducted by male priests, there are no “men-only” lay rituals equivalent to the women-only *sofres* or the *nokhod-e mošgel gošā/moškil-āsān*. The male laity goes to the fire-temple or to a shrine to light incense, and offers firewood and prayer, but is less active in daily religious observance, such as performing the *loban* ritual of perfuming the house with incense in the morning or evening (Boyce 1977: 30; Stewart 2004: 458).

Purity, Pollution, and Sexuality

In Zoroastrian textual tradition, male priests, male corpse bearers (*nasāsālārs*), and all women of childbearing age are liminal figures in that they are subject to segregation when their state of purity has been vitiated. The priest must retain his ritual purity in order to engage in the performance of the *Yasna*, and other ceremonies that bring benefit to the community and the cosmos. His ritually pure state – established through the nine nights’ *barašnūm* ritual prior to ordination (and also after marriage) – can be compromised through any contact with ‘dead matter’ (*nasu*), such as a flow of blood from the body or a nocturnal emission (*Vd* 18.46). Whereas most laymen and priests are only infrequently – and temporarily – unclean, *nasāsālārs* are in a constant state of ritual impurity: they are physically segregated at community events and in general social interaction. They do not enter the fire-temple or come close to a fire at any public occasion. Women’s lives have also been constantly circumscribed due to their biological production of “dead matter” through menstruation or childbirth. Within this construct, a woman was considered to be perpetually “clean” only at menopause.

Dead matter itself is said to originate from a female bearer of physical decay, named *Druj Nasu*, who takes the form of a fly with protruding knees (*Vd* 7.1–4, 9.26). The physical corruption inflicted by *Druj Nasu* contrasts with the “wholeness,” healing, and “undyingness” of the female *yazatas* Hauruuataŋ, Druuāspā, and Aməretāt respectively. The main contribution women could make to counter the impact of *Druj Nasu* was through giving birth to many children, particularly sons (de Jong 1995: 22–23). As the bearer of life, however, a pregnant woman was considered particularly vulnerable to assault by *Druj Nasu*, and therefore encouraged to avoid physical contact with any dead or decomposing matter (Modi 1986: 3). Some Parsis still light a protective *divo* (an oil lamp or a candle) at the end of the 5th or 7th month of pregnancy, in keeping with Middle Persian injunctions to keep away the *daēuuas* at this time (Modi 1986). A passage in the *Bundahišn* expresses the notion that women were specifically created for their childbearing ability, although Ohrmazd declares that if he could have found an alternative means to generate men, then he would never have created women (*GBd* 14.1a). Herein lies the ambiguity of female sexuality.

Both men and women are subject to ritual pollution following sexual intercourse, since spent semen is also considered to be “dead matter” (Choksy 1989: 91). According

to the New Persian *Revāyats*, both partners can sanctify the act of sexual intercourse by the recitation of prayers before and after, followed by a ritual washing (Dhabhar 1999: 206). Most discussions of sexuality within a Zoroastrian textual setting concern its relationship with “life” or “not-life”: Does it generate new life, or does it involve the generation of “dead matter”? The ‘wasting of seed’ (MP *toxm wanēnīdan*) was considered a grave sin, which, in the case of female barrenness, could be circumvented when a man married a second wife (Dhabhar 1999: 189). Male homosexuality was cast as an act introduced by Anra Mainiiu (*Vd* 1.11), for a similar reason: It was a union that could never bring children into the world to further the good religion (Skjærvø 2004a: 44). Homosexuality amongst women is not alluded to, although it, too, does not lead to birth.

The sexual activity of a woman in menses is particularly circumscribed in texts, beginning with the *Vīdēvdād*, which devotes much attention to the means for women to contain their pollution, through a series of strictures presumably devised and elaborated by men. One of the greatest sins is for a menstruating woman to have sexual intercourse (*Vd* 15.7, 15.13–16), since not only would she pollute her husband, but would also not reproduce. The pollution of menses and post-parturition bleeding is referred to in terms of an “evil” that has physical repercussions in terms of defiling or harming the elements of creation, including running water, wood, earth, and human beings. A woman’s moral duty, then, was to sequester herself so that her touch or glance would not contaminate (*Vd* 16.1–4). Injunctions for countering such incursions of evil were amplified in the later *Šaddar Naṣr* (*SdN* 3.11) and Persian *Revāyats* (Dhabhar 1999: 211).

How far these strictures were implemented in practice is not known, but in Zoroastrian villages in Iran until the mid-20th century, women in menses would live in an outbuilding away from water or fire (Boyce 1977: 100–101). In India, women were generally sequestered in one part of the house, using metal utensils and wearing old clothes (Modi 1986: 165). Although many Zoroastrians regard such stringent regulations as outdated or “irrational,” others retain the belief that the body is as susceptible to assault as the mind. From this perspective, a woman’s state of impurity at menses relates directly to Avestan mythology concerning Jahī. Some Avestan references to *jahī(ka)* indicate that this term can mean “woman” in a neutral sense (de Jong 1995: 26), but it is also used pejoratively of a woman who behaves improperly, practicing sorcery, or promiscuity, “mixing the seed” of both righteous and unrighteous men (*Vd* 18.62; *Hēr* 12.4). A later listing of the specific evils of women located in hell include many acts relating to the pollution they have brought into the world through profligate sexuality or flouting the stipulation of segregation during menses (compare *AWN* 24, 76). Local folklore at Pīr-e Sabz, located to the north of the city of Yazd, maintains that the waters stop flowing if a woman in menses approaches.

Many women still voluntarily isolate themselves somewhat after the birth of a child or during the time that they are menstruating, taking care to keep their distance from fire, particularly that in the fire-temple or at public ceremonies. Some women on their cycle do not perform any domestic activity that involves fire, such as lighting the lamp for the daily prayers at dawn, and they may avoid touching sacred books or objects (Rose 1989: 24). Younger women who were born or mostly raised in diaspora are less

likely to observe such restrictions or purificatory rituals (Mehta 2007: 211–235). It is still common, however, for both genders to take a ritual bath (NP *sar šostan*, PGuj. *nahn*) before initiation or marriage. Parsi women may also take the *nahn* after menstruation and forty days after childbirth. This length of time is advocated in the Persian *Revāyats*. The presence of a priest to administer *nīrang* and *hōm* after the bath (Rose 1989: 90), or to preside over the *barašnūm* after menopause or the birth of a stillborn child, places the means for a woman's reintegration into the religio-social network within the male hieratic power structure.

At death, the funerary rituals are the same for both men and women, although a priest, because he has had to maintain a particularly high state of ritual purity, is considered as susceptible to the highest degree of pollution by *Druj Nasu* (*Vd* 5.28).

Religio-Social Experience

Language and Imagery in Text and Ideology

The use of gendered language and imagery in reference to the divine and the diabolic both impacts and reflects the ritual and societal status of men and women. From the *Gāthās* onward, the default gender is masculine, in keeping with the older strata of the Indo-European language groups: for example, the application of *nā* – ‘man’ – in the collective reference to “everyman” (*Y* 30.2), or the use of *ašauuan* and *drəguuan̄t*. The subsequent literature concerning cosmology, ethical norms, and jurisprudence is androcentric in language and bias (Stausberg 2002c: 403).

The respective social status of males and females is implicit in the MP mythology of the creation of humans. In the *Bundahišn*, Gayōmard, although androgynous, possessed sperm, which upon his death was preserved by Nēryōsang and Spandārmad, purified by the sun and then fell back to earth, eventually to generate the first human male and female, Mašyā and Mašyānag respectively (*GBd* 14.5–6). This anthropogonic myth moves from the egalitarian birth of the first couple from whom all humanity descends, to their rebellion against Ohrmazd in thought, word, and deed (*GBd* 14.11–21). In this Zoroastrian myth of the fall, Mašyānag performs the first act of false worship by pouring cow's milk in the direction of the north, strengthening the *dēws* who dwell there (*GBd* 14.28–29). That women who are not constantly alert are prone to bring disorder and evil remains an integral focus of gendered discourse within the religion (Choksy 2002: 52–54). The diametric opposition between Spəntā Ārmaiti and Tarōmaiti could be said to reflect this tension in the male perception of women (Choksy 2002: 34–35). Whereas Spəntā Ārmaiti furthers the growth of the religion, Tarōmaiti spreads irreligion (*N* 2.23.1–3). The Middle Persian gloss in the *Nērangestān* reads that the person motivated by ‘arrogance’ (*tarmenišnīh*) says that there is a religion but does not offer gratitude for it (Kotwal and Kreyenbroek 1995: 31). Middle Persian texts expand upon this contrast between pious and sinful behavior that is found in both men and women, but which is particularly insidious in females.

One way for both genders to engage in beneficial behavior was through fulfilling their religious duty to marry, and procreate. The generation of offspring furthers that

which is good. This notion is intimated in Gathic passages where Zarathustra asks for the reward of “a fertile cow and a steer” (Y 46.19) or for “ten mares with a stallion” (Y 44.18). Male progeny were specifically desired, and, in Sasanian times, regulations were instituted amongst the landowning class that “made it virtually impossible for a man to die without a [male] successor” to fulfil familial obligations to the state (Hjerrild 2002: 16, 13 and n. 3). By then, the gender of a child was thought to be determined by whichever parental “seed” predominated: if the male seed prevailed, then a son was conceived; if the female, then a daughter; when both were equal, then twins or triplets resulted (*IBd* 16.2). Conception was thought to occur when the male seed arrived “first,” before the female seed (*IBd* 16.3). That the male seed was thought to originate in the brain, and the female seed in the ribs, supports the construct of a vertical hierarchy, with the male seed as superior (*IBd* 16.4; Lincoln 1988: 357–359). So, *Zādspram* (WZ 30.14–19) encoded a gender hierarchy of bodily humors, in which semen is the king and the four lesser humors are the essential “maternal fluids” (Lincoln 1988: 355).

The responsibility of supporting a pregnant woman until the child was born fell on the father or, if he was unable, on the community of the faithful (*Vd* 15.17–19b). Every pregnant female, whether biped or quadruped, was to be treated with kindness. In contrast, abortion was considered to be murder on the part of both father and mother (*Vd* 15.11–14).

Access to Power Throughout History

The history of the religion contains few texts concerning “ordinary” people, but various sources that illuminate the lives of high-ranking men and women. Greek and Ancient Near Eastern accounts relate that noble Achaemenid women participated in some public ceremonies, were educated, and exercised a degree of political power, as well as independently owned and managed estates throughout the empire (Briant 2002: 277, 285; compare Nashat 2003: 18–26). The Persepolis Fortification Tablets record that estate managers of both genders gave equal rations to male and female workers, with special rations to women who headed work crews, and to new mothers (Briant 2002: 432, 435). That women could manage the family estate is accepted in the *Hērbedestān*, and reiterated in legal decisions concerning Sasanian widows or heiresses (Rose 1998: 35).

Although Achaemenid kings were polygamous and many practiced near-kin marriages, it is not known whether these practices were also widespread amongst the nobility or in the general population. During the Seleucid/Parthian period a few Hellenistic sources attribute both endogamy and polygamy to the *magi* and to Persians in general (de Jong 1997: 424–429; Hjerrild 2002: 169), as do some early Christian writings, such as Bishop Basil of Caesarea’s letter to Epiphanius. Since the case of a man who has two principal wives is often referred to in questions of law from the late Sasanian period, it is known that polygamy was practiced, but not whether it was normative. The Sasanian legal text *Mādayān ī Hazār Dādestān* (*MHD*) does not mention near-kin marriage (*xwēdōdah*), but the practice is endorsed as a meritorious deed in Pahlavi *Revāyats* in the context of a man marrying his mother, sister, or daughter

(Hjerrild 2002: 183–85, 193–197). Again, it is not known how far this “ideal” was realized in practice.

The ancient Iranian notion that the queen was an active participant in the king’s good rule (Y 48.5; compare DB 4.61–67) is reiterated in the Parthian-origin romance *Vīs and Rāmīn*, where the eponymous co-rulers administer a reign of justice and harmony. During the late Sasanian period at least two royal daughters – Bōrān (r. c. 629/630 CE) and Azārmīgduxt (r. 631–632 CE) – succeeded the throne. Both al-Ṭabarī and Ferdowsī refer to the coronation speech of Queen Bōrān, in which she pledged to encourage pious conduct, spreading justice, and helping the poor (Rose 1998: 44). Such evidence of beneficent rule and efficient management often leads to the assumption that a quasi-egalitarian status existed for Zoroastrian women from the Achaemenid period into modern times (compare Stausberg 2002c: 402). The evidence is too sparse to substantiate that claim, particularly during the Parthian period, when Babylonian, Greek, and Roman texts indicate that even noble women were defined through the king and his rule.

The gap in knowledge concerning gender roles in the Sasanian period is adumbrated in some passages of the Babylonian Talmud, and more clearly illuminated in the *Mādayān ī Hazār Dādestān*, collated at the beginning of the 7th century from case histories and legal decisions (both actual and hypothetical) of Sasanian jurists. *Mādayān ī Hazār Dādestān* is a valuable source of information about the legal rights, responsibilities, and status of women in the higher ranks of the Zoroastrian community. This legal domain was influenced by the prevailing religious conviction that the male was privileged over the female in exercising control over matrimonial, educational, and reproductive rights. Despite Zoroastrian teaching that men and women were spiritually equal, in the social context Sasanian women were subordinate to male guardianship – initially a father or brother, later a husband. Men were considered to be responsible for the spiritual wellbeing of their wives and daughters thus legitimating their social control (AWN 68.14–21). Middle Persian texts, the New Persian *Revāyats*, and Parsi Gujarati catechetical texts all emphasize that obedience to the husband is a principal quality of the married woman.

“Righteous women” were those who were acquiescent and conforming, showing “reverence and obedience to their husbands,” and abstaining from sin (AWN 13.1–11). Those women who abused or defied their husbands or who ignored their maternal duty to their children would condemn their own souls to hell (AWN 26, 59). A Persian *Revāyat* places the responsibility for a woman’s behavior squarely with the husband, noting that her wayward actions cause Ohrmazd to be dissatisfied with them both (Stausberg 2002c: 405).

As head of the household (*kadag-xwadāy*), a father or guardian (*sālārīh ī dūdag*) had the religious duty to choose a suitable husband for a girl, when she came of age at fifteen (Bartholomae 1923 V: 10). The daughter could not be compelled to marry, however, and could also choose her own marriage partner (Hjerrild 2002: 27–29; MHD 24.7–10). The principal wife, known as the *zan ī pādixšāyīh*, the ‘wife with authority’, had to obtain the consent to marry from the head of her household. A contract was drawn up specifying the legal and financial rights and obligations of both husband and wife during the marriage and in the case of divorce (Nashat 2003: 29). The economic

rights of women were thus protected. As lady of the house (*kadag-bānūg*), the primary wife had full authority over the internal running of the home, the upbringing of the children, and the organization of other household members, as well as the right to inherit from her husband. Her husband could write a legal document giving her the right to equal use of his capital, or to become his business partner who could negotiate affairs concerning joint property and appear in court (*MHD* 30.10–12; Macuch 1993: 225, 231). Such evidence indicates that a Sasanian woman's education included economic management and intellectual reasoning. The wife's rights could be withdrawn if she was found to be "insubordinate" (*MHD* 5.15–6.1), but any physical maltreatment of women, whether high-ranking or slaves, could result in a fine imposed on the master of the house as well as on the perpetrator of the offence (*MHD* 1.4; Macuch 1993: 24).

Since the purpose of the marriage was to give birth to children within a legalized union, an impotent husband was able to give his wife as an 'ancillary' (*čagar*) wife to another man, without relinquishing his authority over her, so that any children by that second marriage would be recognized as his legal heirs (Hjerrild 2002: 130, 222). He could also appoint her to a *stūrīh* marriage, to provide male progeny for her deceased brother, father, or other male member of her family (*MHD* 36.10–14; Macuch 1993: 269). In this case, the woman's obligation to the male members of her own bloodline superseded her obligation to her husband (Hjerrild 2002: 147). In a similar ancillary role, the daughter or sister of a son-less man could be contracted in an *ayogēnīh* marriage to produce legal heirs on his behalf (Hjerrild 2002: 134, 223).

The father was responsible for the maintenance of sons until they came of age, daughters until they married, and his principal wives until they died. It was the mother's responsibility to raise both male and female children until the formal education of boys began. The Middle Persian text *Khosrow ī Kawādān ud Rēdag-ē* ('King Khosrow and the Page') provides details of the ideal education of aristocratic boys: They were taught how to write, to hunt, and to play polo, chess, music, and games, as well as to know their food, wines, perfumes, and women (Rose 1998: 36). There is not much information about the education of girls beyond that of learning to be a dutiful housewife.

A radical change from the social conditions of the late Sasanian era is found in texts from the Abbasid period, where, in the case of the death or apostasy of the male guardian, a mother could fill the role of guardianship (Hjerrild 2002: 53–55). Apostasy on the part of a Zoroastrian male led to the loss of legal status for a wife, daughter, or sister who did not choose to convert (Choksy 2003b: 57). Once Zoroastrianism became a minority religion in around the 10th century CE, the need to circumscribe women and their reproductive powers is seen in Middle and New Persian texts, where the husband is encouraged not to divorce an "insubordinate" or adulterous wife in order not to diminish the true faith (Hjerrild 1988: 68–69). In the New Persian *Revāyats*, a layman could take another wife if the first wife could not bear children, but he was not allowed to divorce her; nor was male impotence a ground for divorce (Dhabhar 1999: 204). These *Revāyats* imply that by this time the only Zoroastrian grounds for divorce were apostasy and adultery.

Middle Persian texts indicate that a husband could divorce his wife without her consent if she were guilty of sorcery, adultery, or failed to sequester herself during menses

(Safa-Isfahani 1980: 49). In the *Ardā Wirāz-Nāmag*, these sins are attributed to women whose souls are in hell. The only case in which the husband could divorce a guiltless wife against her will was when he offered her in marriage to a co-religionist who was in want of wife and children because of poverty (Bartholomae 1918 I: 29–30, 36–37). Although marriage is a legal contract, until recently in both the Indian and Iranian communities it was considered to be permanent, especially when there were children (Fischer 1978: 213; Billimoria 1991: 240). Zoroastrian divorce is now regulated through the Council of Mūbads in Iran, and through Parsi matrimonial courts in India (Rose 1996: 450). Apostasy on the part of husband or wife is the only specifically religious cause for divorce in both communities. There are now no restrictions on widow remarriage or that of divorcees.

The continued male exercise of religio-social control over women was evidenced in a series of codes of conduct for women passed in 1818 by a Panchayet (a community council) of twelve laymen and six priests in Bombay, following complaints of immoral behavior on the part of some Parsi women. Women were not allowed to go out alone between sunrise and sunset, to attend Hindu or Muslim sacred places, or to engage in any Hindu or Muslim rituals or practices (Fischer 1973: 90). Those who ventured out alone after dark might be caught by the *nasāsālārs* on guard and have their heads shaved.

The social freedoms that came with the Western-type education of Zoroastrians in both India and Iran from the mid- to late 19th century had a significant impact on religious life. Educated women often married late and opted not to be bound by their biology or concepts of ritual purity. They also broke through the male monopoly on religious discourse, sometimes proving themselves better educated than the priests (Stausberg 2002c: 414–415). The possibility of such female assertion led to both lay and priestly resistance to women's schools in both countries. The first female trustee of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet (BPP) was elected in 1939, and the first female president, Lady Hirabai Cowasji Jehangir, from 1974 to 1976 (Stausberg 2002c: 408). Of the seven BPP trustees, only three can be women, however. In Iran in the 1950s, the Zoroastrian women's movement became a forum for discourse and action. Two women were accepted onto the Council of the Anjoman in Tehrān in 1956, once membership had been extended by two seats (Stausberg 2002c: 421).

Final Remarks

Although the majority of Zoroastrians in Iran and India support the patrilineality of the religion, some Parsis reject patrilineage as unconstitutional, particularly insofar as it leads to the exclusion of spouses and children of intermarried Parsi women from both life-cycle rituals and those in the fire-temple. As the number of marriages out of the religion continues to rise, so the Association of Intermarried Zoroastrians (AIMZ) is attempting to create an alternative environment to the BPP-controlled fire-temples in Mumbai, where inter-religious weddings and the *navjotes* of children from such unions can be performed. In Iran, intermarriage and conversion are less of a challenge to the Zoroastrian minority than the desire to preserve the faith whilst conforming to majority

(Shī'ite Muslim) norms. Externally imposed gender boundaries relating to codes of clothing and social interaction are circumvented at private religious events at shrines, the fire-temple, or in the home, where men and women can mingle more freely in a relaxed atmosphere.

The tension that such gender "essentialism" produces is less evident in diaspora, where Zoroastrian communities are small in number and dispersed over wide areas, so that neither the community institution of the *anjoman* nor a ritual life centered on a fire-temple has been able to be exactly replicated. This change in structural support has provided a strong incentive for Zoroastrians outside Iran and India to develop normative practices that best meet their particular situations, including a rethinking of gendered roles. The notion of women becoming *mūbadyārs* is one outgrowth of that process, although it is opposed by "traditionalist" Zoroastrians.

Further Reading

The bibliography below indicates that works concerning the exploration of gender within the Zoroastrian religion have, until now, largely focused on the social and ritual status of women. Gould (1994) distils her own demographic studies of Parsi women (1983, 1988) and places them within a historical discussion of the "theology and practice of female-male relations." Choksy (1988) is a useful source on Zoroastrian mythology concerning the feminine. For a key discussion of the origin and impact of regulations relating to the containment of "dead matter," see Choksy (1989). Of historical interest is Sanjana (1892), which presents a pre-feminist description of the ideal woman as an able housewife and mother. König (2010a) is an extensive treatment of sexual morals and homosexuality in Avestan and Pahlavi sources.

The literary portrayal of women in Ancient Persian times is the focus of Sancisi-Weerdenburg (1993), who considers Greek accounts of Achaemenid queens and princesses from the 5th and 4th centuries BCE in comparison with the sparse contemporary

Persian iconography and inscriptional records. Brosius (1998) explores such external and internal sources in great detail, with a particular focus on the economic and political importance of women, but not much reference to their religious or ritual function.

Phalippou (2003) explores current Zoroastrian women's practices within both Indian and Iranian contexts, especially those involving the narration of a story. Informed by the ethnographic work of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Jean Rouch, Phalippou compares the Parsi and Iranian versions of these narratives as internal text. Phalippou postulates that such female ritual performance of a miraculous story, accompanied by the preparation and eating of certain foods, is a structural equivalent to the inner rituals of the male priesthood.

The *Encyclopædia Iranica* online (www.iranicaonline.org) is always a fruitful source of information on specific topics. See, for instance, the articles relating to Zoroastrianism in the sections on "Bīnamāzī," "Childbirth," "Cleansing," and "Divorce," as well as "Barašnom," and "Pahlavi Marriage Contract."

CHAPTER 17

Law in Pre-Modern Zoroastrianism

Maria Macuch

Reconstructing Zoroastrian Law

The study of Zoroastrian law presents one of the most intriguing challenges to the scholar of Mazdaism (Zoroastrianism). The difficulties of the task are numerous, not only since no legal codex, digest, or systematic work has survived, but also because of the countless problems involved in understanding legal language and institutions. Information on law is scattered throughout the extant Iranian texts, covering a time span of almost 2,000 years, reaching from Old Iranian (Avestan) material to Middle Persian (Pahlavi) and Persian treatises of the Islamic period, but significant lacunae in the transmission of the sources make it impossible to reconstruct legal history from its simple beginnings in a pastoral society in the 1st millennium BCE to its most sophisticated known form in the jurisprudence of the Sasanian state (3rd–7th centuries CE). The exact periodization of many texts is problematic and late compilations of the Islamic age may contain material from an ancient period, whereas original legal documents of the pre-Islamic era could represent a younger phase in the development of law. Numerous historical changes took place across the centuries, Zoroastrian law was influenced by other legal systems of the Near and Middle East and every age (probably even every legal school) added its own individual interpretation to the transmitted texts, relating them to their own time, thereby changing or modifying the exact meanings of technical terms and reshaping inherited norms.

Although we may assume that Zoroastrian law also had an impact on the legal systems of the Iranian empires before the advent of the Sasanians, there is hardly any material to work with. The bulk of legal sources from the Achaemenid period consists of cuneiform tablets written in the Neo-Babylonian dialect of Akkadian, which represent the age-old legal structures of the area rather than Zoroastrian law, and only very few documents have survived from the Parthian age. Surveys of the legal systems of these

empires lie beyond the scope of this study, which will concentrate on the material in the Avestan and Pahlavi texts with the focus on areas characteristically Zoroastrian.

Law and Religion

Zoroastrian law was based on the *Avesta*. As in other pre-modern religious legal systems, such as Talmudic and Islamic law, the fields of theology and jurisprudence remained intertwined to a very large degree, although law developed into an individual discipline by the Sasanian age. Not only were religious experts trained in both fields, but the Prophet Zoroaster himself was represented as the foremost lawgiver (e.g., WZ 26.1–2; Gignoux and Tafazzoli 1993: 87–89; Macuch 2002b: 89–90).

Our sole description of the original corpus of Zoroastrian religious texts, of which only a part has survived to our day, is a summary in the 9th-century Pahlavi *Dēnkard* ‘Acts of the Religion’ (*Dk*). The 8th book of this huge compilation divides texts pertaining to the ‘Mazdayasnian Religion’ (*dēn māzdēsni*; *DkM* 677.11) into twenty-one ‘sections’ (*nasks*), building three categories (*gāhānīg* ‘gathic’, *dādīg* ‘legal’, and *hādamāns-rīg* ‘pertaining to the ritual’) of seven sections each, following the number of words (twenty-one) and verse lines (three) in the holiest prayer of the Zoroastrians, the *Ahuna Vairiia* (*Y* 27.13; see Vevaina 2010a). Of the seven ‘legal’ (*dādīg*) sections only five are actually dedicated to legal matters, but the sequence of the texts given in this context is certainly ancient. Legal material was already divided in the Avestan period into two main groups (Macuch 2007a: 152–155):

1. Regulations treating mainly purity rules and ethical requirements in the section called *Wīdēwdād* (<**vīdaēuuu-* *dāta-* ‘law keeping the demons away’; Cantera 2006: 61–62; misread earlier as *Vendīdād* and conventionally transcribed as *Vīdēvdād*).
2. Sections dealing with jurisprudence proper, i.e., civil and criminal law (four divisions, beginning with *niqādom* ‘the first’ <**nīkātama*, lit. ‘lowest’, and ending with *sagādom* ‘the last’ <**uskātama*, lit. ‘uppermost’; Klingenschmitt 2000: 228–229).

These two categories of legal texts correspond to the designations given in the *Avesta* as *dāta-* *vīdaēuuu-* ‘law keeping the demons away’ (MP *dād ī jud-dēw*) for the former group and *dāta-* *zaraθuštri-* ‘the law of Zoroaster’ (MP *dād ī Zardušt*) for the latter. Both parts together constitute Zoroastrian law, the *dāta-* *vīdaēuuu-* *zaraθuštri* (MP *dād ī jud-dēw ī Zardušt*), which seems to have denoted the legal texts as a whole (Cantera 2006: 62; Macuch 2007a: 154–155). Pahlavi sources transmit a congruent differentiation of offenses into two groups (Macuch 2003a: 172–180):

1. ‘Sins pertaining to the soul’ (*wināh ī ruwānīg*), sins endangering the delinquent’s own soul, committed against religious norms such as violating purity rules or Zoroastrian ethics.
2. ‘Offenses regarding opponents’ (*wināh ī hamēmālān*), comprising all types of delinquencies directed against other members of the Zoroastrian community.

These details indicate that Zoroastrian law comprised in an early period two main fields dealing with impurity and ethical norms on the one hand, and civil and criminal law on the other. These in turn reflect central areas of priestly work, which included two important tasks: averting the assault of the demons by enforcing purity rules and moral behavior as well as supervising the wellbeing of the community by settling disputes and acts of violence among fellow Mazda-worshippers.

In the Sasanian era the sacred Avestan scripture and its Pahlavi version (*Zand*) remained the theoretical foundation of the legal system. The decision of the judge (*dādwār*) had to take three major sources of law into consideration: the *Avesta* (*Abestāg*), its Pahlavi translation and commentaries (*Zand*), and the consensus of the righteous (*ham-dādestānīh ī wehān*) (Macuch 1993: 12 n. 34). But since society had changed considerably since the legal *nasks* of the *Avesta* had been composed, one of the main tasks of Sasanian jurists was to adapt Zoroastrian norms to the requirements of their own time. Famous commentators on the *Avesta*, such as Sōšāns, Mēdōmāh, and Abarag, were also legal authorities, who developed various schools and discussed divergent opinions on legal matters (it is extremely difficult to date these sages exactly; most authors argue in favor of the 5th–6th centuries CE; see Secunda 2012). Their commentaries (called *čāštag* ‘teaching’) became another important guideline to jurisprudence.

Law of Persons and Animals

Iranian legal texts reflect society in completely different stages of its development. The community represented in the *Avesta* is mainly a pastoral one with no discernible state structure, whereas sources of the Sasanian period suggest a highly organized state, divided into four estates, governed by an efficient administration and an advanced legal system.

Corresponding fundamental changes may also be perceived in the law of persons. In the *Old Avesta* men and women seem to have been regarded as equal participants in spiritual and secular life, women even being regarded as qualified to act as patrons and rulers (Schwartz 2003b [2007]: 4). Young Avestan material suggests that men and women had similar rights regarding their responsibilities towards the household (YAv. *nmāna-*), that the most suited member of a household, regardless of sex, could experience religious education and had the obligation to spread Mazda-worship and to perform rituals (Hintze 2009b: 188). Although the information is sparse, these details have been interpreted to indicate gender equality in the Avestan period. There is, however, one major difference between men and women, which doubtlessly marred women’s capability to participate in the daily life of the community in the same manner as men did: the strict rules regulating the seclusion of women during menstruation, keeping them away from fire, water, vegetation, ritual implements, and men during this period, in which no kind of social activity was possible. These rules did not change substantially later, but were even intensified.

Pahlavi texts present a completely different picture of gender issues. Not only did men and women have divergent rights and duties in the Sasanian era, but the status of *all* individuals was exactly defined by their position in society according to birth, rank,

religion, citizenship, gender, and age. Only a freeborn man of age, who was a subject of the King of Kings (*šāhān šāh bandag*) and a citizen of Iran (*Ērānšahr*), confessing Zoroastrianism (*māzdēsn*), and belonging to a noble family was considered as a person having full legal capacity (*tuwānīgīh*). All other persons had only limited legal capacity with varying rights according to their position in society (Macuch 2009a: 273–274, 2010c).

In contrast to the male the female remained under the legal guardianship (*sālārīh*) of a man not only as a minor, but during her whole life. Other persons with limited legal capacity were foreigners (*an-ēr*) and infidels (*ag-dēn*), who were accepted as “subjects of law” when they had concluded a contract with a Zoroastrian or were involved in litigation, but were not conceded the same rights as Mazdeans in the field of family law and succession. Sasanian law also distinguished between freeborn men and slaves. A large number of slaves (*anšahrīg, bandag*) were occupied in the household, in agriculture, and in fire foundations (Macuch 2002a, 2010c: 195–199). They could belong as joint property to different masters as shareholders and be partly or completely manumitted. A slave belonging to a non-Zoroastrian could also acquire freedom by converting to Zoroastrianism. In this case the Mazdean community was obliged to help the slave buy himself free (by a loan or other means). A Zoroastrian, on the other hand, was not allowed to sell his slave to a non-believer: Both the seller and the buyer were treated legally as thieves and punished accordingly.

Rules regarding the treatment of animals belong to the important characteristic features of Zoroastrian law. Beneficent animals living under the guardianship of humans (e.g., cattle, dogs, the cockerel) and certain other wild animals (such as the hedgehog, otter, fox, weasel, water beaver) were protected by regulations belonging to the *ruwānīg* category of law (‘sins pertaining to the soul’). Depriving them of food, afflicting pregnant females, bruising, beating, or mutilating dogs, injuring and slaying small and large cattle and beasts of burden, as well as killing other beneficent animals were subject to harsh corporal punishment in the Young Avestan period, which was replaced in the Sasanian age by fixed fines. Slaying the creatures of the good creation was only allowed in the context of sacrifice (de Jong 2002: 146). All other forms of killing beneficent animals were regarded as unlawful and were punished by a person’s ‘spiritual master’ (*Av. ratu-*, MP *rad*) according to the degree of the offense and the intention of the delinquent. On the other hand, Zoroastrians were obliged to eliminate “noxious” creatures (*Av. xrafstra-*, MP *xrafstar*), such as insects, reptiles, wolves, and other beasts of prey, since these were creatures of the Evil Spirit (Macuch 2003a).

Family Law, Marriage, and Succession

One of the major principles of kinship in the large majority of cultures does not seem to have been valid in Zoroastrian law. The question, whether incest was allowed or, as Pahlavi sources indicate, even praised as one of the most meritorious deeds of a Zoroastrian, has been debated controversially for over a century, but there can be no doubt that by the late Sasanian period next-of-kin marriages, and specifically incest, belonged to the normative legal practice of the Zoroastrians (Macuch 1991, 2003b, 2010b).

This was, however, not necessarily the case in the Avestan period. Although foreign sources (Greek, Armenian, and Syriac) have reported on the custom of marriage between mother and son, father and daughter, as well as siblings continuously from the 5th century BCE onward, Avestan material does not provide any conclusive proof on the matter (Herrenschmidt 1994). The Avestan word *x^vaētuuadaθa-* ‘marriage in the family (*x^vaētū-*)’, from which MP *xwēdōdah* ‘endogamy, incest’ is derived, does not implicitly suggest incest and it is problematic to reach any conclusions on the basis of Pahlavi commentaries, which interpreted Avestan texts according to legal practice in their own time.

By the late Sasanian period, however, both real and “fictive” incestuous marriages had been firmly established as an important ingredient of family law (Macuch 2010b). Three main types of matrimony were distinguished: the marriage with ‘full matrimonial rights’ (*pādixšāy*), the ‘auxiliary marriage’ (*čagar*), and the ‘consensus marriage’ (*xwasrāyēn / gādār*), based on the agreement of the spouses. Both endogamy (including incest) and exogamy were practiced and all three marriage types could also be concluded on a temporary basis (Macuch 2006). The *pādixšāy*-marriage was the regular type of arranged matrimony with precisely defined legal implications (Macuch 2007b). One important obligation of the wife, corresponding to the Zoroastrian concept of life and fertility, was to act as an ‘intermediary successor’ (*ayōgēn*), as a link between the man and his legal successor, in the case that the husband should remain childless, and to bear him children. In order to conceive, she entered an ‘auxiliary marriage’ (*čagar*) with another man inside or outside her lineage. The offspring from this marriage belonged legally to the first *pādixšāy*-husband.

Two other groups of women belonging to the lineage of the deceased could also act as ‘intermediary successors’ (*ayōgēn*), if a man died without leaving male offspring: his unmarried daughters and sisters. In this case the daughter or sister functioned legally as the wife of the father or brother with *pādixšāy*-status and entered a *čagar*-marriage to bear children, who were all considered legitimate sons and daughters of the father or brother with full rights of inheritance and succession (Macuch 2005).

Sasanian jurisprudence also developed another characteristic method of securing the continuity of a man’s lineage if the deceased had no sons, denoted by the technical term *stūrīh* (‘substitute succession’). Both men and women from inside and outside the family could be engaged as ‘substitute successor’ or ‘proxy’ (*stūr*) with the duty to produce a son in an ‘auxiliary marriage’ (*čagar*). A considerable amount of a man’s property could expressly be set aside for this purpose. All these regulations strove to keep the structure of descent groups, the most important political and social units in the Sasanian period, and their property intact (Macuch 1995, 2003b).

Law of Property and Obligations

Although taking care of property (*gaēθā-*) is mentioned as one of the most important tasks of the members of a household in the *Avesta*, equivalent even to pursuing priestly studies, not many details on this branch of law are conveyed (Hintze 2009b: 174). We may, however, assume that the main form of movable property consisted of cattle, not only because of the prominent position of the sheepdog in Zoroastrian law, but also

since the danger of attack by wolves is referred to in this context (Kotwal and Kreyenbroek 1992: 35). In the field of obligations keeping contracts was regarded as one of the most important duties of the Mazdean. A description of agreements (*miθra-*) in *Vd* 4 divides them into six categories, beginning with the two most simple forms (verbal or by handshake) and continuing with a sequence of another four according to the value of security offered as an equivalent (a sheep, an ox, a man, and a piece of land). Each of these contracts was binding, but could be invalidated or confirmed. All agreements, even with foreigners and unbelievers, were to be kept meticulously and breach of contract (*Av. miθrō.druj-*, MP *mihr-družih*) was regarded as one of the most heinous offenses to be atoned for (according to the Pahlavi commentary) not only by the contract-breaker himself, but also by following generations.

By the late Sasanian period both property law and the law of obligations had developed into a far more complex field, retaining the ancient component of *pacta sunt servanda* ('contracts must be kept'). Jurists dealt with matters in this area according to clearly defined concepts of a highly abstract nature. The expression *xwāstag* 'object of value, property' was used in the specific sense of 'thing, legal object' (in contrast to 'legal subject') to denote generally all physical objects, regardless of their specific nature, as well as in an extended sense of 'property', comparable to the Roman *res* (both 'thing' and 'property'). Every "thing" was again divided into two main parts: the 'substance, principal' (*bun*) on the one hand and its 'fruit, increase' (*bar*) on the other. Sasanian jurists also distinguished exactly between 'ownership, *dominium*' (*xwēših*), a person's exclusive right of enjoyment of a thing, and 'possession, *possessio*' (*dārišn*), the de facto control over a certain object which does not necessarily include ownership. The distinction between these different concepts played a very important part in the forming of the Sasanian law of property and inheritance (Macuch 2005, 2009a: 187–191).

A description of the varieties of property and proprietary rights lies beyond the scope of the present contribution (Macuch 2009a: 187–191), but one category, which became important for the stability of the Zoroastrian priesthood, should be mentioned here: property fixed for specific religious purposes, designated 'for the soul' (*pad ruwān*) and 'for charitable purposes' (*pad ahlawdād*). This 'property of the soul' (*xwāstag ī ruwān*) could be set apart according to the will of the founder either for rites and ceremonies after his death or for other charitable acts, such as financing objects of public utility (roads, bridges, irrigation canals) and establishing pious foundations. Especially the latter seem to have been initiated not only for religious purposes, but also in order to ensure an income for the children and descendants of a paterfamilias across several generations, since a part of the profit from these foundations usually went to his heirs. Fire endowments were also established in this manner. These could consist of small fires as well as huge institutions furnished with income-producing property, called *xīr ī ātaxš(ān)* 'property of the fire(s)'. The characteristic feature of this type of property was that the heirs could not alienate the principal (i.e., the substance of the foundation, consisting of land, buildings, the fire itself, slaves, animals, etc.), nor change the dedication established in the will of the founder, but had the right of usufruct. Thus property dedicated "to the soul" could remain in the collective *possession* of a family (without being in its *ownership*) for many generations and at the same time be dedicated to supporting important Zoroastrian institutions (Macuch 1991, 2002a, 2009a: 189, 2009c).

Criminal Law

The Zoroastrian typology of severe crimes and corresponding punishments does not seem to have changed substantially across the centuries, although the terms later became abstract designations. Severe crimes were originally punished according to the *Avesta* by executing corporal punishment with the ‘whip’ (Av. *sraošō.čaranā-*, MP *srōšōčarnām*) or ‘horse whip’ (Av. *aspāhe aštraia*, MP *asp aštar*). The following offenses, leading from the smallest to the most severe delinquencies, denoting various grades of intended assault and bodily injury, were later used as technical terms (Klingenschmitt 1968: numbers 699–709; Kotwal 1969: 68–69):

1. Av. *āgərəpta-*, MP *āgrift*, ‘seizure’ of a weapon with the intention of striking another person; the offense of “threatening” another person with bodily injury.
2. Av. *auuaoirišta-*, MP **ōwirišt/*ōyrišt*, ‘turning down’ or brandishing the weapon with the intention of injuring another person.
3. Av. *arəduš-*, MP *arduš*, a light ‘stroke’ or ‘blow’, touching lightly with a weapon without causing severe bodily harm.
4. Av. *xʷara-*, MP *xwar*, a ‘wound’ which cuts into the flesh to a certain depth (half a finger or one fifth of a short span).
5. Av. *bāzujata-*, MP *bāzā* (< *bāzā-zanišnīh*), ‘striking on the arm’, by which the hand is broken, causing a wound of three finger-breadths.
6. Av. *yāta-*, MP *yāt* (an elliptical expression), injuring the foot (the organ of ‘walking’) by breaking it, causing a wound of three to four finger-breadths.
7. Av. *tanu.pərəθa-*, MP *tanāpuhl*, ‘atoned for with the body’ designates the highest offense.

The system was rather complex, leading from the mere attempt to cause injury, hereby taking the attitude of the delinquent into consideration (in the first two offenses), to concrete acts of assault and bodily harm (offenses three to six) and, finally, the most severe crime, deserving the death penalty. This categorization not only took the degree of the offense into consideration, but also the frequency with which it was committed. Every time an offense was repeated it was regarded as the next higher one, no matter what its nature: A repeated *āgərəpta-* (MP *āgrift*) became an *auuaoirišta-* (MP **ōwirišt/*ōyrišt*), which, when caused again, in its turn became an *arəduš-* (MP *arduš*), etc. In Pahlavi texts the most grievous crime, called *margarzān*, ‘worthy of death’ (missing in the list of terms taken from the *Avesta*), occurred when the highest offense (*tanāpuhl*) was not atoned for in the course of a year (Jany 2007; Macuch 2009a: 191–193).

By the Sasanian period the expressions in the list of delinquencies had become abstract technical terms by which different grades of criminal acts were categorized. These acts did not necessarily involve bodily injury, but could also belong to the category of ‘sins pertaining to the soul’ (*ruwānīg*), such as disregarding Zoroastrian purity rules, sullyng water and fire, having intercourse with a menstruating woman, not feeding beneficent animals, etc. An elaborate system of fines was derived, replacing corporal punishment to a large extent (Tavadia 1930: 28; Kotwal 1969: 115).

Legal Proceedings

The synopsis of the corpus of religious texts in the *Dēnkard* also conveys insight into the beginnings of legal proceedings in the early Zoroastrian communities. Different methods of dealing with disputes are described, which could be either negotiated in the presence of witnesses (*DkM* 693.19: *guḡāyīh*), or of at least three Mazdeans (*weh mard*), or be mediated by an individual's personal religious guide, his 'own spiritual master' (*rad ī xwēš*; Cantera 2003: 28), or be settled by a Zoroastrian judge in a 'judicial dispute' (*pahikār-radīh*; Macuch 2002b).

In the Sasanian period both state officials and religious authorities were engaged in the administration of justice in the courts. The highest religious dignitary, the head of the Zoroastrian church (*mowbedān mowbed*) was at the same time the foremost judicial authority, whose judgment was regarded as infallible and incontestable. Besides four types of judges (*dādwar*) appointed by the state, religious dignitaries, such as the *rad* and the *mowbed*, were also engaged in jurisdiction. Interestingly, the state judges worked in the lower instances, whereas the *rad* and the *mowbed* presided as judges in the courts of appeal up to the highest court, led by the chief *mowbed*, who could only be replaced by the king himself (Macuch 2009a: 193–195).

Zoroastrian Law after the Muslim Conquest

After the Muslim conquest of Iran in the 7th century CE Zoroastrian law remained valid in certain fields that were still under the jurisdiction of the Mazdean communities, especially family law, marriage, inheritance, and simple transactions. Middle Persian sources of the 8th and 9th centuries, especially the Pahlavi *Rivāyats*, give insight into the further development of law. These are treatises written in the form of theological and legal questions put to a religious expert, usually a renowned high priest, whose answers were recorded for the guidance of the community and for posterity (the most important texts are given below under "Further Reading"). They are particularly valuable, since they not only preserve age-old Zoroastrian traditions, but also contain definitions of legal terms and institutions lacking in the older juridical literature (i.e., the Sasanian Lawbook [*Mādayān ī*] *Hazār Dādestān* and Pahlavi commentaries to the *Avesta*, see "Further Reading" below). In comparison to earlier sources *Rivāyat* literature shows three main traits:

1. Religion and law are treated as a unity (whereas in the late Sasanian era theology and jurisprudence had developed into individual disciplines).
2. Both legal terminology and institutions are simplified (in contrast to the rich legal jargon of Sasanian jurisprudence, its precise terminology, and complex institutions).
3. Legal controversies reflecting different schools and individual interpretations of juriconsults are absent or reduced to an absolute minimum (in contrast to the controversial discussions of difficult legal cases in the Sasanian material).

In short, Zoroastrian jurisprudence of the Muslim period was not only reduced to the fields mentioned above, but also underwent changes typical for a legal system which is no longer carried by a state, but has become the law of a religious minority. The main goal of *Rivāyat* literature was to conserve religious and legal traditions and to explain technical terms which were gradually falling into oblivion. Despite the simplifications mentioned above, Zoroastrian priests were still well acquainted with the main features of Sasanian jurisprudence. Most legal institutions of family law and inheritance (including next-of-kin marriage) described above were still known in the 9th century and were not only defined in the *Rivāyats* correctly (i.e., according to Sasanian usage), but also continued to be practiced within the Zoroastrian community. By the 15th century, however, Zoroastrian law seems to have altered considerably. Although the genre of *Rivāyat* literature was continued in New Persian (in the Arabic script; the main treatises are published in Unvala 1922), many definitions given in these texts no longer agree with those in Middle Persian literature. Complex technical terms are not only further simplified but explained differently. For example, the Middle Persian terms *ayōgēn* ('intermediary successor') and *stūr* ('substitute successor') belong to the field of inheritance and designate persons engaged in exactly defined institutions of secondary succession in Sasanian law (see above), whereas the corresponding forms in the New Persian *Revāyats* (*ayūk/ayūkān* and *stor/star* respectively) are explained as two types of wives in variant forms of marriage (Unvala 1922: 180–182; Dhabhar 1932: 195–196; Macuch 1981: 8). The juridical content of these treatises, covering the period from the 15th to 18th centuries, and the changes which took place in legal theory and practice within the Zoroastrian communities, still have to be studied.

Final Remarks

The Iranian legal system in the form it had attained by the Sasanian period left its mark in other contemporary communities. Many parallels and similarities may be found in Jewish law (especially in the Babylonian Talmud which was completed in the 5th century CE under Sasanian rule in Mesopotamia) as well as Nestorian-Christian law. It also had a remarkable impact on the development of Islamic law and institutions, such as the pious foundation (Arab. *waqf*) (Macuch 2009c) and the Shī'ite temporary marriage (Macuch 2006). Thus Zoroastrian law not only determined the social and cultural lives of Iranians for over 1,000 years, but also played an important role in the formation of the most influential legal systems of the Near East.

Further Reading

The most important Young Avestan source, the *Vīdēvdād* 'Law Keeping the Demons away', is only available in by now hopelessly outdated translations, but the foundation for a new critical edition of the whole text has been laid by

Alberto Cantera (www.videvdad.com). A critical edition of the *Pahlavi Vīdēvdād* has recently been published by Moazami (2014). Important details are also contained in the *Hērbedestān* 'Book of Priestly Studies' and *Nērangestān* 'Book

of Ritual Directions' (Kotwal and Kreyenbroek 1992, 1995, 2003, 2009). The most important Pahlavi source for the Sasanian period is a large compilation of case studies called (*Madāyān ī Hazār Dādestān* '(The Book of) One-Thousand Decisions' (Perikhanian 1973, 1997; Macuch 1981, 1993). For a survey of Sasanian law, see Perikhanian (1983) and Macuch (2009a); for its impact on other legal systems: Islamic law (Macuch 1985, 1994, 2009c); Babylonian Talmud (Macuch 1999, 2002a, 2008, 2010a); on Talmudic jurisprudence in comparison to Zoroastrian law, see also Elman (2010a, with further references). Interesting parallels may also be found between Byzantine and Sasanian law (Macuch 2004).

The most important Pahlavi legal sources of the Islamic period are the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 'Religious Judgments' (Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998); *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* (Williams 1990); *Pahlavi Rivāyat of Ādurfarrbay and Farrbay-srōš* (Anklesaria 1969); *Rivāyat ī Ēmēd ī Ašawahištān* (Safa-Isfehāni 1980); *Šāyest-nē-šāyest* 'Valid and Not Valid' (Tavadia 1930), with supplementary texts (Kotwal 1969). Several legal chapters and passages in these late texts and the interaction of post-Sasanian Zoroastrian law with other legal systems have been discussed by Hjerrild (2002, 2003) and Jany (2005). For an overview of the most important sources, see Macuch (2009b: 185–190).

CHAPTER 18

Law and Modern Zoroastrians

Mitra Sharafi

Reinventing Zoroastrian Law

In the modern period, the most extensive and well-documented body of law pertaining to Zoroastrians is the Parsi personal law of India. The term *personal law* describes the bodies of religiously specific law that are applied by state courts to inheritance and marital disputes among Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Zoroastrian, and other communities in South Asia. Zoroastrian personal law was the creation of elite Bombay Parsis living in British India during the last century of colonial rule. It bears little resemblance to the legal traditions described in the first half of this chapter. It also distinguished itself from English law and from Zoroastrian custom in Persia and Gujarat. Since independence in 1947, Zoroastrian law in India and Pakistan has continued in the colonial mold, building upon legislation and case law developed under the Raj. This examination focuses upon the three areas of law that maintain a distinctly Zoroastrian flavor in modern India: 1) inheritance; 2) marriage; and 3) religious trusts. Inheritance and marriage form the core of Parsi personal law. The law of religious trusts sits outside of the personal law, falling within the general field of Indian trust law. However, religious trusts have been the site of major controversies among Zoroastrians, particularly over conversion and the control of religious properties. The chapter ends with a survey of modern Zoroastrians and law outside of India, particularly in Pakistan, Iran, the UK, the USA, Canada, and Australia.

Inheritance

During the early colonial period, a steady flow of Zoroastrian inheritance disputes landed in court in India (*Manikbaee* 1854; *Rustomjee* 1855; *Cowasjee* 1855; *Dhunjeesha* 1856) (Furdoonjee in 1862–1863 Government of India Bill: 11–12; Rana 1934: 156).

(Names in italics refer to cases listed at the end of this chapter.) The most famous was a case in which a Parsi son won all of his deceased father's land by taking advantage of the application of English law to Zoroastrians (Report in 1862–1863 Government of India Bill: 2; Agnes 2001: 130). According to the English principle of primogeniture, the eldest son inherited all of his father's real estate to the exclusion of other sons. Primogeniture did not reflect Parsi customary practice, according to which real estate was divided equally among sons. Community protest led to the Succession to Parsees Immovable Property Act of 1837, also known as the Parsee Chattels Real Act. This Act exempted Zoroastrians from primogeniture, albeit by the circuitous route of declaring Zoroastrian real estate to be treated like chattels under inheritance law (Parsee Chattels Real Act, s.I in Karaka 2002 II: 297). Following the English Statute of Distributions (also known as the Act for the Better Settling of Intestates Estates 1670–1671, s.III; Lely 1892: 244), a widow received one third of an intestate's chattels while his children took the rest. Neither this scheme nor the one it replaced reflected Parsi custom, according to which widows and unmarried daughters received maintenance at very least, and a one eighth share each of the estate, at most (Report in 1862–1863 Government of India Bill: 3). Further community organizing led to the creation of the Parsi Law Association, a body that drafted and lobbied for the passage of the two founding statutes of Zoroastrian personal law: the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act (PMDA) and the Parsi Intestate Succession Act (PISA), both of 1865 (PMDA 1865 and PISA 1865 in Rana 1902, 1934; Irani 1967: 287–288, 295). Together, these Acts created a wholly new regime of substantive personal law for Zoroastrians.

Inheritance law operated along two separate tracks. Where a valid will existed, the law of testamentary disposition (i.e., the law of wills) applied. All other situations were governed by the law of intestacy, a body of default rules for the distribution of property when a person died intestate (i.e., without a valid will). The Parsi Acts on inheritance created a special intestacy regime for Zoroastrians. The PISA of 1865 was intended to create an inheritance scheme that was truer to Parsi custom than had been the 1837 Act. However, the eventual principle enshrined in the 1865 Act was not a reflection of Zoroastrian practice in the *mofussil* or provinces, understood in this context to mean Gujarat. The draftsmen and lobbyists for the Act were elite Bombay Parsis. They created an inheritance scheme that sat partway between English law and *mofussil* tradition. Contrary to the most conservative depictions of *mofussil* custom, women would inherit something (Report in 1862–1863 Government of India Bill: 7). However, a widow received only a half share and a daughter, a quarter share, for every full share inherited by a son (PISA 1865, s.1 in Rana 1902: 5; see also Rana 1934: 130–136). The PISA 1865 was absorbed into the Indian Succession Act of 1925, and then revised in the Indian Succession (Amendment) Act of 1939. The 1939 Act decreased the entitlement of widowers in relation to their children, and increased widows' portion to a full share (like sons), with daughters receiving a half share (IS(A) Act 1939, ss.51–52 in IS(A) Act 1939 Papers). Controversially, it also gave parents a share in inheritance (IS(A) Act 1939, s.51(2) in IS(A) Act 1939 Papers; Opinions 1938–1939: 13–14). Colonial intestacy suits arose most commonly over the entitlement of widows (*Davur* 1877; *Narielwala* 1910; *Pestonji* 1929) and widowers (*Surti* 1887; *Motiwalla* 1906).

Under the law of testamentary disposition, Parsi testators could bequeath their estate to anyone by will, and could disinherit family members (Rana 1934: 156; *Erachshaw* 1880). The validity of Parsi wills was at times challenged on the basis of mental incompetence and undue influence (*Jehangirji* 1909; *Kathoke* 1912). Zoroastrian inheritance suits also targeted executors. Plaintiffs demanded greater transparency and accountability (*Divecha* 1903), questioning executors' competence (*Ginwala* 1913) and accusing them of mismanagement (*Marker* 1908; *Kathoke* 1912). Testators often set aside part of their estate for Zoroastrian religious purposes, usually to fund ceremonies or to support underprivileged co-religionists. Suits disputing the validity of such charitable bequests were typically filed by family members who stood to inherit the portion intended for charity (*Banaji* 1887). The senior appointment of an orthodox Zoroastrian judge led to the increased validation of such charitable bequests. Bombay High Court judge Dinshah D. Davar (Jāgoś 1912; Sharafi 2014) preserved trusts that funded annual *muktad* death commemoration ceremonies and that continued in perpetuity (*Tarachand* 1909, reversing *Banaji* 1887). He also saved at-risk bequests (*Soonawalla* 1907; *Warden* 1908).

Since independence, the Indian Succession (Amendment) Act 1991 has abolished the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children and equalized the entitlements of male and female heirs (Agnes 2009). The spouse and each child of a Parsi intestate now inherit equal shares, while parents receive a half share each (IS(A) Act 1991, s.3, adding new s.51). Mumbai real estate has been at the heart of recent case law (*Gupta* 2003; *Gagrat* 2009), and courts have validated trusts designed to protect minors' entitlements (*Jehangir* 2007).

Marriage

Before 1865, most Zoroastrian matrimonial suits were settled within the community by local Parsi *panchayats* (also *punchayets*, councils of community heads) (Irani 1967: 276–277) or by an authority like the Modi of Surat, who was regarded as the leader of the Surat Parsis (Minute in 1862–1863 Government of India Bill: 9–50; Wadia and Katpitia 1939: iii). Occasionally, a suit arrived in the colonial courts for resolution. The most important of these was *Cursetjee* (1856), a case that was appealed to the apex court in the British Empire, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London. In that case, the court declared that it lacked jurisdiction over Zoroastrian marriages. Some Parsis were accused of profiting from the legal vacuum by taking second spouses during the lifetime of their first (List in 1862–1863 Government of India Bill: 1–3). In response, the Parsi Law Association drafted the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act (PMDA) of 1865. The PMDA made bigamy a criminal offense. It also applied a notably light touch to child marriage, tolerating the practice against the wishes of colonial officials (PMDA 1865, s.37 in Rana 1934: 90–93; Report in 1862–1863 Government of India Bill: 13–14).

The Act created the Parsi matrimonial courts, a network of quasi-community courts. The matrimonial courts were overseen by a judge (often Parsi) from the colonial legal system. They operated with what was effectively a Parsi jury – a group of elite Zoroastrian “delegates” who pre-1947 were almost entirely male. This system made Zoroastrians

the only South Asian community entitled to a jury of co-religionists in marital cases. Four causes of action came to the court: annulment, the restitution of conjugal rights, judicial separation, and divorce. Only wives could sue for judicial separation, which entailed living separately and being supported by their husbands without the right to remarry. Demographic patterns in the early Parsi Chief Matrimonial Court (PCMC) in Bombay were striking: there were two or three female plaintiffs for every male one. A surprising proportion of parties were working class. This pattern differed significantly from the demographic trends in the main colonial civil legal system, where many parties were affluent, particularly in inheritance- and trust-related suits. Colonial PCMC plaintiffs usually won their suits. Because so many plaintiffs were non-elite women, the colonial PCMC essentially functioned as a court for poor wives (Sharafi 2014: 193–236).

In 1936, a revised PMDA made significant changes to Zoroastrian marriage law (Irani 1967: 288–294). The most important among these was the equalization of grounds for divorce between husbands and wives. Under the earlier Act, a husband had to prove one thing: that his wife had committed adultery (PMDA 1865, s.30 in Rana 1934: 45). A wife, by contrast, had to prove that her husband had committed cruelty plus adultery or fornication, adultery plus bigamy or desertion, the rape of another woman, or an unnatural offense, defined by the Indian Penal Code as “carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal” (PMDA 1865, s.30 in Rana 1934: 45–56; Indian Penal Code [IPC] 1860, s.377 in Ranchhoddas and Thakore 1926: 322–323). The 1936 Act also added new grounds for divorce, including non-consummation within one year, mental unsoundness from the time of marriage, premarital pregnancy (of the wife) by a third party, the communication of venereal disease, forced prostitution (of the wife by the husband), desertion or judicial separation for three years, failure to comply with an order of restitution of conjugal rights for a year, and the spouse’s ceasing “to be a Parsi” (PMDA 1936, s.32 in Wadia and Katpitia 1939: 66–69). Parsi critics argued that the Act (particularly its desertion provisions) moved Zoroastrian marriage toward no-fault divorce. They claimed that Zoroastrian marriage was supposed to be a sacrament, not an ordinary contract that could be terminated at will (Opinions in PMDA Papers 1936: I: 3, 32; IV: 74). The new Act abolished the prostitution exception: under the 1865 statute, husbands’ relations with prostitutes had not constituted adultery as a ground for divorce (Mansukh 1888: 72–9; PMDA 1865, s.30 in Rana 1934: 45, 50; PMDA 1936, s.32 in Wadia and Katpitia 1939: 67; Sharafi 2014: 173–178). It also made “grievous hurt” a ground for divorce, but defined the required harm so narrowly that husbands could inflict certain types of injury—including a criminal offense—without creating grounds for divorce (PMDA 1936, s.2(4) in Wadia and Katpitia 1939: 11, 13; Sharafi 2014: 187–191). For instance, putting one’s wife in “severe bodily pain” through injury for at least twenty days or permanently impairing any of her members or joints constituted “grievous hurt” under the Indian Penal Code (IPC 1860, s.320 in Ranchhoddas and Thakore 1926: 283). Neither provided grounds for divorce under the PMDA 1936.

In 1940, a short amending statute enabled courts to vary a divorced woman’s permanent alimony if she had remarried or had “not remained chaste” since the divorce (PMD(A)A 1940, s.2). The Parsi Marriage and Divorce (Amendment) Act 1940 followed upon the controversial *Vachha* case in which a divorced woman’s alimony was not clearly cancelled by her remarriage (*Manekbai* 1936; *Vachha* 1937). The woman’s

second husband earned less than her first, and the first husband's adultery and cruelty had triggered the divorce. A harsher version of the Bombay statute was enacted in Aden. It made the cancellation of alimony mandatory where a woman had remarried or been sexually active since her divorce (Parsi Marriage and Divorce Ordinance 1938).

Since 1947, two important matrimonial cases have featured Iranis, a sub-community of Zoroastrians, who arrived in India from the 18th to the 20th centuries. Reversing *Yezdiar* (1950), *J. A. Irani* (1966) established that the Parsi Acts apply equally to Iranis (and Zoroastrian Iranian citizens), although framed explicitly for Parsis. It provided a historical and ethnographic account of the Irani community, as *D. M. Petit* (1909) had done earlier for the Parsis. In 1988, an amended version of the PMDA revolutionized Zoroastrian law by allowing divorce by mutual consent (PMDA 1988, s.32b in Shabbir and Manchanda 1991: 138–139). The post-1988 reported case law has focused on child custody, a common phenomenon in jurisdictions permitting no-fault divorce (*Kalyanvala* 1973; *Dolikuka* 1984).

Religious Trusts

Some of the most acrimonious Zoroastrian litigation has involved trusts, the legal device that governs religious funds and properties. The lawyers and judges in these cases have often been Parsis themselves, enabling them to shape the legal system's interpretation of Zoroastrian history and theology (Davar in *Tarachand* 1909, *D. M. Petit* 1909; Coyajee in *Yezdiar* 1950; Vachha in *J. A. Irani* 1966). These suits turned upon the conversion debates, power struggles for religious authority and control, and disputes over governance and taxation.

The two leading cases on conversion occurred in the early 20th century. In *Petit and others v Jijibhai and others*, trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet were accused of being improperly appointed following their opposition to the attempted conversion to Zoroastrianism of a French woman (*D. M. Petit* 1909; Sharafi 2007). Suzanne Brière married Ratanji Dadabhai Tata in a Zoroastrian wedding ceremony, having allegedly undergone her initiation into the religion (*navjote*) shortly before. Against the plaintiffs (led by Mr Tata), the trustee-defendants claimed that *juddins* (here understood to mean ethnic outsiders) were ineligible for initiation and could not benefit from Parsi trust funds and properties. After enabling an alternative procedure to rectify the trustees' appointment, the judges discussed conversion (technically *obiter dicta*, or non-binding upon future cases) (Stausberg 2002c: 56–57; Gae and Kanga 2005: 265–271; Sharafi 2007: 176, fn. 2). Unusually, the case was decided by a "special bench" of two judges, namely the senior judge Dinshah Dhanjibhai Davar, who was Parsi, and a blind British judge named Frank Clement Offley Beaman. Both judges favored limited conversion for the first half of the proceedings. Later, they changed their views (Sharafi 2007: 164–170). Both ultimately asserted that the Parsi community had not accepted *juddin* converts to their religion since migrating to India, and that custom trumped scriptural endorsements of conversion. Davar stressed that even if *juddins* could convert, they would become Zoroastrians (a religious label), not Parsis (an ethnic one). On this basis, *juddins* like the French Mrs Tata were excluded from the benefit of trusts created for "Parsis."

The sequel to *Petit v. Jijibhai* was *Saklat and others v. Bella*, a case that arose among the tiny Parsi population of Rangoon in Burma (Sharafi 2006, 2014: 285–289). Bella Captain was allegedly an orphan girl whose birth mother was possibly Parsi and whose father was Goan Christian. Bella was adopted by a Parsi couple. She was raised as a Zoroastrian, had her *navjote* performed, and entered the Rangoon fire-temple. Orthodox trustees of the Rangoon Zoroastrian trust, led by her adoptive uncle, went to court to get an injunction prohibiting Bella's entry. On the basis of *Petit v. Jijibhai*, they argued that Bella could be kept out: The trusts were for the benefit of Parsis, not Zoroastrians. Ironically, it is most likely that Bella's natural father actually was Parsi. Oral history sources and the circumstances surrounding her birth suggest that Bella was not a random orphan, but the extramarital child of her adoptive father's younger brother. This aspect of the case was never officially acknowledged. The technical legal question was whether the trustees were obliged to allow Bella into the temple. The case began at the Chief Court of Lower Burma, involved a commission that collected evidence in Bombay, and was appealed to the Privy Council. In London, the judges ruled that Bella was not entitled by right to enter the temple. However, if the trustees felt that her entry would not cause harm to others, they had the discretionary power to let her in. At the start of the litigation, the sole trustee was the man who was probably Bella's natural father, and who favored her entry. By the final resolution of the case, the composition of trustees had changed. Orthodox Parsis who opposed Bella's entry then dominated. They prohibited her entry on the basis of the Privy Council ruling. Although *Petit v. Jijibhai* is the best known case on *juddin* admission, Bella's case was the more extensive judicial investigation of the question "Who is a Parsi?" That said, the Privy Council judges in Bella's case relied heavily upon Davar's *Petit v. Jijibhai* judgment. Their ruling contributed to the fact that, even a century later, Davar's judgment remains the leading judicial statement on – and against – *juddin* admission.

The second important vein of trust cases reflects power struggles over religious authority between priestly and lay Zoroastrians (see Stausberg and Karanjia, "Rituals," this volume). Two major cases occurred in the colonial period. The first arose between trustees and priests at the most sacred Zoroastrian fire-temple in India, the Irānšāh Ātaš Bahrām in Udwarda, Gujarat (*N. M. Wadia* 1904) (see Choksy, "Religious Sites and Physical Structures," this volume). Trustees began closing and locking an internal door at particular times, claiming they were doing so for security reasons. Temple priests objected: The closure obstructed their ritual duties and worshipers' movement. In the second case, every adult male Parsi in Secunderabad was a party to the suit, itself appealed to the Privy Council (*Jeevanji* 1908). The descendants of the founders of the only Tower of Silence (NP *dakhme*, PGuj. *dokhme*) wanted to block construction of a second tower near the first. The priests and community wanted the new construction. The question in both the Udwarda and Secunderabad cases was the same: Which faction was the rightful controller of religious properties? Priests were generally underprivileged, being employed by and typically answerable to the wealthy lay Parsis who created and managed religious trusts. In the Secunderabad case, the priests lost. In the Udwarda case, the court found in favor of the priests, who were backed by the larger community.

Since the 1930s, power struggles over religious trusts have shifted away from priestly–lay struggles. Legal attention has focused upon accountability and democratic principles in trust governance, particularly in the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP).

In 1936, the Bombay Presidency legislature passed the Parsi Public Trusts Registration Act. By requiring registration, publication, and inspection of audited accounts, the Act aimed to make Parsi trustees more accountable and their purposes better known (PPTR Act Papers 1936). In 2007, a lawsuit challenged the undemocratic basis of the system for electing BPP trustees. Until then, BPP trustees had been elected by a limited body of Parsi voters (many of whom were donors) and through an indirect voting scheme. The court required that a system of universal adult suffrage and direct election be introduced (*Mistree* 2008).

Since independence, most trust-based litigation has been against the state. There was a thriving tradition of Zoroastrian suits against the colonial state, especially regarding licensing (*Banaji* 1882; *R. J. Irani* 1902; *Ginwalla* 1923) and eminent domain (*Trustees* 1909; *Municipal Commissioner* 1912; *H. E. Petit* 1915). Since the 1920s, tax suits have dominated Zoroastrian trust litigation. With a few exceptions (*Trustees* 2002), the courts have sided with Zoroastrian trusts, minimizing the tax payable by them (*Commissioner of Income Tax* 1948; *Commissioner of Wealth Tax* 1965; *Official Trustee* 1969; *Gamadia* 1986; *Trustees* 1996; *Assistant Director* 1998). They have also sided with trustees who have challenged decisions of the charity commission, a government body that regulates charitable trusts in India (*M. H. Irani* 2001).

Intra-community controversies have also been litigated in the post-colonial period. In recent years, debate over the exclusivity of Zoroastrian housing colonies (*Zoroastrian Co-operative Housing Society* 2005; *Bharucha* 2009) has triggered lawsuits, as have power struggles between groups of trustees (*Cooper* 2008). Dismissing a ban by the Parsi Punchayet against two priests who accepted cremation, intermarriage, and the initiation of the children of mixed couples, the Bombay High Court has ruled that Punchayet trustees may not prevent ordained Zoroastrian priests from performing religious ceremonies (*Kanga* 2011). Many Parsis expect constitutional litigation to intensify over intermarriage and patrilinearity (*Gandhi* 2009). The debate over patrilinearity pits gender equality provisions of the Indian constitution (Arts.14–15, 51A) against religious communities' freedom to manage their own affairs (Art.26b). Reformists emphasize the gender inequality of the rule whereby children of intermarried couples may be initiated only if their fathers are Zoroastrian (*D. M. Petit* 1909: 536). Orthodox Parsis counter that membership in the Zoroastrian community has always been patrilineal. There is also controversy over the ruling that a Parsi woman (unlike a Parsi man) who marries a non-Parsi under the Special Marriage Act may be barred from entering fire-temples (*Gupta* 2012).

Beyond India

Most statutes enacted for Parsis in colonial India were retained in independent Pakistan. Property relations and taxation disputes have produced the most litigation involving Pakistani Parsis. Parsi tenants have sued their landlords in order to prevent rent increases, losing against the Karachi city government (*Avari* 1963) but winning against private landlords (*Mehta* 1963). Parsis in Pakistan have also sued to preserve the character of residential areas, successfully preventing the construction of a school

(*Cowasjee v. Nawab* 1993) and high-rise (*Cowasjee v. Multiline* 1993). The largest body of Parsi case law relates to taxation. Parsi plaintiffs have challenged the taxation of Zoroastrian trusts (*Dubash* 1960; *Trustees of Mount Nepean Trust* 1987), inheritance (*Kandawala* 1967), and corporations (*Maneckji* 1979; *Julian* 1981; *Cowasjee* 1985). The state has won in most of these cases. Parsi plaintiffs have been more successful in constitutional suits against the state. In one case, the plaintiffs won the right to increased compensation following the state's taking of their shares (*Kandawala* 1989). In another, the court ruled that Parsis were entitled to produce, sell, and possess alcohol for religious, medicinal, scientific, industrial, "or similar other purpose" (*Pakistan* 1988).

In Iran, the personal law principle theoretically applies to Zoroastrians. Under Islamic law, non-Muslim minorities deemed 'People of the Book' (Arab. *dhimmīs*, NP *ahl-e ketāb*) are entitled to follow their own laws and religious practices, particularly in the areas of marriage and inheritance (An-Na'im 1987: 11–13; Tsadik 2007: 24–25). The Iranian Constitution (Art.13) declares that "within the limits of the law," Zoroastrians shall be "free to carry out their religious rites and practice their religion in personal status and religious education" (Samimi Kia 1995: 14) (see Stausberg, "Zoroastrians in Modern Iran," this volume). Iranian law permits recognized religious minorities (i.e., Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians) to consume alcohol, for instance, and to resolve intra-community disputes through their own semi-autonomous religious authorities (Sanasarian 2000: 74–75, 91). However, legal disabilities also apply. In criminal law, the compensation due for causing the death of a person (Arab. *diyya*, NP *dīye* or *dī'e* 'blood money') was historically half the sum due for a Muslim when the victim was Zoroastrian, Jewish, or Christian (Sanasarian 2000: 133; Afshari 2001: 134). Despite the abolition of differential blood money rates in 2003 (Sanasarian and Davidi 2007: 63–65), Zoroastrians claim that the old rule is still applied (Tait 2006). For centuries, Iranian inheritance law has encouraged conversion to Islam by *dhimmīs*: such converts inherit their fathers' entire estates, to the exclusion of other family members (Amighi 1990: 87; Sanasarian 2000: 131; Choksy 2006b: 164–165; Tait 2006). The poll tax levied on recognized minorities (Arab. *ḍjizya*, NP *jezīye*) was lifted for Zoroastrians in 1882 through Parsi-led trans-imperial lobbying (Karaka 2002 I: 61–82; Stausberg 2002c: 154–64; Choksy 2006b: 143–144; Ringer 2009; Zia-Ebrahimi 2010).

Parsis living in countries like the UK, the USA, Canada, and Australia have been involved in litigation, particularly regarding immigration and religious buildings. As British subjects and commonwealth citizens, Parsis could settle freely in Britain until 1962 (Hansen 1999; Hinnells 2005: 422). It was harder to become an American citizen. In the first half of the 20th century, New York courts held that Parsis were ineligible to become citizens. Parsis were not "white persons" according to "common sense," despite being "probably the purest Aryan type" according to ethnologists of the period (*Balsara* 1909; *R. D. Wadia* 1939). More recently, Parsis have tried unsuccessfully to claim asylum in the USA on the grounds of religious persecution in South Asia. One Pakistani Parsi claimed asylum on the basis that he would be denied the right to hold a government job or political office in Pakistan because of his religion. The court rejected his application: Employment-based discrimination was insufficient to constitute persecution for asylum-related purposes under American law (*Minwalla* 1983). Other Parsis have claimed that they would be persecuted by Hindu extremist organizations

like the Shiv Sena if they returned to India. The courts found the petitioners' fear of persecution unfounded, ruling that Zoroastrians are not generally persecuted on religious grounds in India (*Bhoja* 2004; *Colabewala* 2006).

Asylum cases have also been founded upon claims of conversion to Zoroastrianism. In particular, asylum-seekers of Muslim background from Iran have claimed to be converts to Zoroastrianism. They have asserted that their lives are at risk in Iran, where conversion from Islam to another religion is punishable by death. This argument has been made unsuccessfully in Australia (*Ferhadieh* 2001; *Saadat* 2001; *WADW* 2002) and in the UK (*Gheisari* 2004). Canadian courts have shown greater willingness to grant asylum on the basis of religion to Iranians who convert to Zoroastrianism (*Razm* 1999). Many Iranians born into Zoroastrian families have migrated to Euro-American jurisdictions by successfully claiming asylum (for example, see *Eftekhari* 1998) and with the support of Parsi and Zoroastrian organizations (*Choksy* 2006b: 176–177).

Outside of India, disputes over the management of religious properties have also produced litigation. Zoroastrians from Pakistan and Zanzibar (*Hinnells* 2005: 234, 275–279) to New York (*Rustom Guiv Foundation* 1990) have resolved internal power struggles by going to court. There have also been external disputes. In Ontario and Virginia, Zoroastrian organizations have won the right to establish religious buildings in residential zones where Christian churches were permitted (*Winton* 1978; *Kebaish* 2004).

Transnational cases have also arisen. Zoroastrian testamentary bequests often cross national boundaries (*Framroz* 1969; *Batliwalla* 1999; *Gagrat* 2009), but matrimonial suits are the most common sites for international forum-shopping. Forum-shopping is the attempt to move one's suit into a jurisdiction promising an optimal result where there is ambiguity over the controlling jurisdiction. In the colonial period, suits arose pitting the law of British India against that of England, the princely state of Baroda, and Persia (*E. Wadia* 1914; *Sharafi* 2010). The parties' strategic relocations generally failed, except when fleeing a jurisdiction permanently. More recently, courts facing jurisdictional contests between India and Pakistan (*E. H. Irani* 1964), and between India and New Hampshire (*Vazifdar* 1988) have found in favor of their own jurisdiction, against India.

Final Remarks

Pre-modern Zoroastrian law was an exhaustive legal system covering most areas of social life – from criminal law to the law of property. This was particularly true before the Arab Muslim conquest of Persia. By contrast, the only areas of law in modern South Asia with a distinctly Zoroastrian character are matrimonial, inheritance, and religious trust law. There is little, if any, continuity between pre-modern and modern Zoroastrian law. The latter was something new. It was invented by elite male Parsis of colonial Bombay, who excelled as lobbyists, lawyers, and judges (*Sharafi* 2014: 84–123). Through legislation and litigation, they created a body of law that differed both from English law at critical points, and from the customary Zoroastrian norms of Persia and Gujarat. This reinvention of Zoroastrian law set the foundations for Zoroastrian law in India and Pakistan today. In Western jurisdictions, Zoroastrians appear most frequently in immigration-related

litigation, and in suits about the establishment of religious buildings. In Iran, Zoroastrians have limited legal autonomy over intra-community disputes, but continue to labor under many of the legal disabilities imposed upon the recognized religious minorities.

Abbreviations

IS(A) Act	Indian Succession (Amendment) Act
PISA	Parsi Intestate Succession Act
PMDA	Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act

Further Reading

Phiroze Irani and Flavia Agnes have written studies of Parsi personal law in contemporary South Asia (Irani 1967; Agnes 2001, 2009). Their work focuses on matrimonial and inheritance-related legislation. The most detailed study of early colonial Parsi legal history is by Palsetia (2001). He contextualizes the 1837 and 1865 Acts, along with a number of important cases (Palsetia 2001: 197–276). For a history of colonial Parsi legal culture, including collective lobbying strategies and litigation patterns, Parsi attitudes toward law (legal consciousness), and the Parsi legal profession, see Sharafi (2014). On Parsi women and law in the 19th and 20th centuries, see Gould (1994: 171–178). On the law of Parsi trusts, and *Saklat v. Bella* (1925) in particular, see Sharafi (2006, 2014). On *Petit v. Jijibhai*, see Sharafi (2007), along with Writer (1994: 129–148), Palsetia (2001: 228–251), Stausberg (2002c: 53–57), and Hinnells (2005: 118–120). For the cultural context of the 1865 Acts' drafting and lobbying process,

see Bengalee (1868). For a more technical legal treatment of Parsi legislation, along with relevant case law, see Rana (1902, 1934) on the 1865 matrimonial and inheritance statutes; Balsara (1936) and Wadia and Katpitia (1939) on the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act of 1936; and Shabbir and Manchanda (1991) on the 1988 Parsi matrimonial legislation. Wadia and Katpitia (1939) offer a clear and accessible comparison of the 1865 and 1936 Matrimonial Acts in chart format. Regrettably, the history of the Parsi legal profession in India is beyond the scope of this chapter. On this topic, see Mistry (1911, 1925); Vachha (1962); High Court of Judicature at Bombay (1988); *Bombay Incorporated Law Society Centenary* (1995); Seervai (2000, 2005); Nariman (2010); Chandrachud, Mohta, and Dalvi (2012); and Sharafi (2012, 2014). On law and the recognized religious minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran, see Sanasarian (2000) and Sanasarian and Davidi (2007).

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Part IV

Practices and Sites

CHAPTER 19

Ethics

Alberto Cantera

Since Zoroastrianism became known in European scholarship, it has drawn special attention because of its apparently moral character as opposed to pre-moral attitudes arguably prevalent in other ancient Indo-European cultures. Early Zoroastrianism has been understood for a long time as the reflection of a single powerful mind (Zarathustra) that sought to reverse the established order of gods and demons, of rites and morality, in order to found a new ethical order based on refined abstractions concerning transcendence. With an increased understanding of the pre-historic conditions and the historical evolution of ancient Iranian culture and history this prevailing view is being re-examined. This chapter will try to illustrate the advances in our understanding of the historical evolution of a religion which began as a strictly ritual understanding of the relations between facts on earth and universal destiny, exactly like its Vedic counterpart, and which slowly moved from a morality uniquely concerned with ritual purity and ritual efficacy to more abstract representations, yielding the cosmic and ethical dualism it became famous for.

A modern Western – Kantian – representation of ethics implies “universality,” i.e., the theoretical commitment of thinking about duties not only in the framework of single cultural representations, but beyond all of them. Nothing like that applies to the oldest stages of Zoroastrianism. There is a universal imperative to become Zoroastrian, that is, one who sacrifices to Mazdā in the Zoroastrian way, but most of the subsequent rules are limited to community members. Therefore, the worst sins are forgiven, if the sinner gets converted to Zoroastrianism (*Vd* 3.40, 8.28) (Cantera 2010). Nevertheless, the Sasanian priests were aware of the problem of the universality of their ethical imperatives. Accordingly they argued about the possibility of salvation for members of other faiths and the liability of the Zoroastrian prescriptions for them (see the long Pahlavi commentary to *Vd* 3.42). Furthermore, conversion was not felt to be a direct way to

achieve salvation. Certain conditions were also required: unawareness of the sinful nature of the sins committed before conversion and confession.

The oldest extant collection of texts, the so-called *Old Avesta*, comprises ritual texts in which a ritual morality appears. In the *Young Avesta*, depending on the nature of the different texts, the ritual morality coexists with a morality in a more general sense that determines the human condition in other spheres of life as well. Morality in a general sense gains even more purchase in the Pahlavi literature. Nevertheless, there is a common feature of ethical thought that runs through Zoroastrian history: Human action is conceived as a tool of the final redemption of the individual and of the world. Humans are or have to be supporters of Order (*aša*), the Order of the universe established at the beginning of time by Ahura Mazda and perverted by Angra Mainiu. Thus they will achieve individual eschatological success as well as contribute to the restoration of the universal Order. Humans are therefore compelled to act according to a teleological conception of world history.

The nature of the expected actions depends on the genre of the text in question and on the historical time. The nature of the action fluctuates between two poles on the axis “exclusively ritual action” – “action in everyday life.” The oldest ritual texts focus on ritual action as the only way towards achieving individual and universal redemption. In Pahlavi literature the focus is on regulations for daily living and the fulfillment of established social functions and religious obligations. However, ritual action never lost its importance in the salvific process.

The same movement between two poles for expected human behavior appears in the Vedic tradition. Its oldest ritual texts, the four *Vedas* and the *Brāhmaṇa* literature, attest a conception of proper behavior narrowly attached to ritual success, while in the *Upaniṣads* a certain general morality is developed within the doctrine of *karma*, according to which the kind of rebirth depends on one’s actions in one’s former lives. This change is understood today, not as the result of a “historical” revolution, but as an evolution of the ritual morality in the *Brāhmaṇas* towards a more general morality (Tull 1989). The same might apply to the alleged moral revolution of Zoroastrianism.

The Ritual or “Narrow” Morality

The first approach of Western scholars to the oldest Avestan texts – the *Gāthās* and the *Yasna Haptaṅhāiti* – regarded their contents as the result of Zarathustra’s reformation of the primitive Indo-Iranian religion; of his inversion of the pantheon by rejecting the *daēuvas* (demons or old gods); instituting Ahura Mazda as the only god; and initiating the change from a strictly ritual morality to a general morality presiding over all actions of humans. Hence, a revolution of ethics similar to the anti-ritualistic revolution attributed to the *Upaniṣads* was supposed to have occurred at the very beginnings of Zoroastrianism as a direct result of the activity of its prophetic founder Zarathustra (Haug 1862: 255). The idea of Zarathustra as a strictly moral thinker opposing Vedic pre-moral ritualism has been, for a long time, a well-established *communis opinio* or common opinion and the alleged moral philosophy of Zarathustra plays an important role in the modern self-understanding of Zoroastrian communities. (On modern Zoroastrian views on the *Gāthās*, see Stausberg 2002c: 132–140.)

Nevertheless, new interpretations of the Old Avestan texts (see the chapters by Humbach, Kellens, Schwartz, and Skjærvø in this volume) have resulted in a radical change of perspective: The *Avesta* (especially the *Old Avesta*) reflects the same kind of morality as the Vedic texts, which derives from the belief that ritual preserves the order of the universe by enacting the original cosmogonic sacrifice through which the cosmos was shaped at the beginning. Already in the 19th century James Darmesteter referred to a “moral religieuse et liturgique” in contrast to the “morale humaine” (Darmesteter 1877: 9). With regard to the triad “good thought, good words, good deeds” he stated that “morality in the European sense of the word has nothing to do with this formula” (“la morale au sens européen du mot n’a rien à voir dans cette formule”; 1877: 11).

Not all scholars agree with this new approach, however. Antonio Panaino claims that the important discovery of the ritual dimension of the *Old Avesta* has been used as a pretext for denying its speculative or “para-philosophic” dimensions (Panaino 2004d: 42). According to him, the Avestan ritual is both a re-elaboration of the Indo-Iranian sacrifice and a reaction against it, or against some of its aspects, resulting from further reflection about reality and about the meaning of the ritual. The Avestan ritual is a reformed one following a previous ideological change (Panaino 2004d: 45), and its central concepts and aspects depict a kind of morality pervading all aspects of life: the “ethical dualism.” A similar position, interpreting Zoroastrianism as a moral revolution, is also advocated by Kreyenbroek (1997: 44–46).

The discussion about the ethics of the *Avesta* focuses on three issues traditionally considered as the pillars of Zoroastrian moral thinking:

1. the opposition between *aša* and *druj*;
2. the role of the triad, “good thought, good speech, good action”;
3. an individual eschatology according to which good people are saved and wicked people are punished after death.

The basic opposition in the *Avesta* is that between *aša* ‘order, truth’ and *druj* ‘lie’, whose exact meanings remain controversial (see König 2010a: 9–10; see also Skjærvø, “Early India and Iran,” this volume). Panaino (2004d: 77) rightly underscores the fact that while in the *Avesta* the opposition between *aša* and *druj* is a ubiquitous topos, in the *Rg-Veda* the antagonists of *ṛta* (*anṛta* and *druh*) play only a very limited role. Besides, *anarəta* is attested in the *Avesta* only once (Y 12.4). So, while in Vedic *anṛta* is the ritual fault, *druh* has a more moral content, connected with the lie and darkness instead of with ritual elements or concepts. In the *Avesta* the “election” of *druj* as the contrary of *aša* stresses the ethical connotations this concept had already in Indo-Iranian. Av. *aša* is for Panaino the “right and true order,” and *druj* is the “deceit”: not only in the ritual but also in terms of the ethico-ritual disorder. The pair *aša-druj* is connected with the opposition of life and death. Panaino, like Schlerath (1974) before him, draws far-reaching conclusions. Avestan ideology is, for him, a genuine reversal of the Indo-Iranian tradition, and its emphasis on the dualistic aspects reflects a crisis of the rite and of its old intellectual structure (Panaino 2004d: 94).

But the association of *druh/druj* with darkness and the denial of life could easily be explained in ritual terms too. The function of the *Yasna* sacrifice (and also of the Vedic

one) is to promote life within the alternating cycles of life–death by restoring the original order of the world as established by god through his original *Yasna* (Molé 1963; Skjærvø 2007b: 62). The sacrifice grants that the life-giving cycles (day, summer) follow the death cycles (night, winter), as well as that the full moon comes after the new moon. The most crucial moments are the winter solstice and the rising of the sun every new day. At these moments the rebirth and refertilization of the cosmos takes place through the incestuous sexual union of Ahura Mazdā/Heaven with Ārmaiti/Earth, wife and daughter of Ahura Mazdā (Skjærvø 2002a: 408).

Every sacrifice is a repetition of the first sacrifice performed by Ahura Mazdā through which he exerted his cosmogonic activity: He ordered the world and established the tools for granting light and life after periods of darkness and death (Kellens 1989a). The order of the sacrifice produces and reproduces the order of the universe. The basic elements of the ordered sacrifice and cosmos are the *ratu*, the right combinations of ritual actions at the proper time. The original meaning of this word is ‘articulation’. The result of articulating is *aša/rta* ‘what is articulated rightly, that is, Order’. Every element participating in the sacrifice is *ašahe ratu* ‘articulation of Order’ when used properly and at the right time. The *ratu* as the articulations of Order are the basic items of a series of homologies between ritual, cosmology, and social order (for these homologies, see Vevaina 2010a). The right performance of the ritual actions produces *aša*, that is, the Order of the sacrifice and the right Order of the universe. The ritual, the right articulation of the different ritual elements (thought, word, and action), produces Order and life (Skjærvø 2003a).

This is the basic meaning of the famous triad of “good thought, good speech, good action,” as already noticed by Darmesteter (1877: 10). However, in connection with the supposed reformist character of the *Old Avesta*, the triad has often been interpreted in an ethical sense (Schlerath 1974; Panaino 2004d). The problem of the triad is similar to that of the *karma*-doctrine in India. Vedic *karman* refers originally to the ‘ritual action’, as can still be seen in the first Upaniṣadic versions of the doctrine. Later on its meaning evolved to “every action in life” and was no longer restricted to the ritual (Tull 1989).

With Zoroastrianism it is similar. While in the *Vīdēvdād* and in the later Pahlavi literature the triad is clearly part of a general or “broad” morality, in the Young Avestan parts of the *Yasna* the triad clearly refers to ritual acting, speaking, and thinking, as Kellens (2004) has shown in his interpretation of Y 1.21–22. The triadic formula appears in a preventive rite against errors in the performance of the ritual, and the negative version clearly refers to mistakes concerning the performance of ritual actions, words, or thoughts. As a matter of fact, in the *Old Avesta* each mention of the triad can be understood in the context of the “narrow” (i.e., ritual) morality. The frequent connection of “thoughts, words, and actions” with *ratu* strongly supports this interpretation.

Ratu is significantly connected with *šiiəθana* (‘actions’) in the *Ahuna Vairiia* (Y 27.13) and other passages of the *Old Avesta* (Y 34.10, 14): the *ratu* of the actions is the “right articulation of actions in the ritual.” Within the rites the single ritual actions are often performed while uttering the word *šiiəθananəm* in the third verse-line of the *Ahuna Vairiia*. The ritual words are connected as well with the *ratu* and with *aša*. This becomes evident in the Young Avestan lists (e.g., Y 1, 2) of the *ratu*, where the texts of the sacrifice

are qualified as *aṣahe ratu* (Kellens 1996a). This particular connection appears already in the *Old Avesta*. In Y 43.5–6 the *ratu* for the proper actions and for the ritual words are announced by *Ārmaiti*, and quite appropriately so, since her name etymologically means ‘she whose thought articulates’, that is, she who produces “the right articulations” that build up Order (*aṣa*).

The current ethical interpretation of the triad is partly conditioned by the aprioristic conception of Zoroastrianism as a religious reformation, but it could find some support in the emphasis of the “elective” character of the triad and the consequences of this election in the afterlife. In the *Old Avesta* the positive version of the triad is the result of a choice (Y 35.3, 45.1–2). The question arises whether this choice has to be interpreted in a broadly ethical or in a narrow, merely ritual sense. Mostly it has been thought that in the *Old Avesta* this choice is the exercise of the free will of humans, able to choose between Good and Evil and whose thoughts, words, and actions depend on this choice.

Yet, here again a ritualistic interpretation is possible. There are similar elective processes known in the Vedic ritual. The mentions of the choice refer to a basic act that takes places in the course of the long liturgy: the ritual election of the god to which the sacrifice is addressed and of the way of performing it. It is best represented in the *Yasna* through the *Frauuarānē* prayer (Y 11.16–13.8; see below). This view finds a further support in the relation between the *Frauuarānē* and the *frauuāši*, the election-soul.

The *Frauuarānē* (see Kellens 2007b) is usually considered as the “confession of faith” of the Zoroastrians. However, its position in the long liturgy: after the pressing of the *haoma*, during the recitation of the *Hōm Stōm*, and immediately before the consecration of the priests, places the *Frauuarānē* in a strongly ritual context. Its vocabulary, full of meta-ritual references, and the recurrent presence of *ratu*, unequivocally place the contents of the *Frauuarānē* in the context of the ritual.

The *Frauuarānē* parallels the Vedic *pravara* ceremony (Schlerath 1980) with its three closely related processes:

1. the selection of the gods participating in the ceremony, starting by Agni as *hotar*;
2. the placement of the sacrifice and the sacrificial practice in the series of former sacrificers of the same lineage, in a ceremony similar to the cult to the ancestors (*pitarah*);
3. The selection and consecration of the celebrating priests.

Heesterman (1985, 1993) has shown that the Vedic sacrifice is originally “agonic.” It is a ritual battle with actors battling each other: Different gods struggle for being the beneficiaries of the offering; different priests and priest groups compete to be chosen as mediators between the god and the sponsor/patron of the sacrifice (*yajamāna*), etc. This might shed some light on the agonic character of the *Gāthās* as well, with their recurrent blame of the *daēuuas* and their sacrifice. Accordingly, the *Frauuarānē*, the correct election of the gods, of the way to perform the sacrifice, and of the priests able to do it, is obviously of the utmost importance. The choice is both positive (i.e., choosing the gods worthy of being chosen and the right way to perform the sacrifice) and negative (i.e., rejecting the gods excluded from this sacrifice and the alternative practices used for these gods). Through his election the priest is inserted in the lineage of all previous

sacrificers who have performed the same sacrifice before him, and that is why he is in possession of the ancestral ritual knowledge: He knows the right way to the world of the gods.

The ‘election’ (*frauuāṣi*) has become an ontological part of the person: It is a kind of pre-existing soul, both collective (because all sacrificers making the same choice share it) and individual (because each priest makes his own choice). The ‘elections’ (*frauuāṣi*) are linked with the cult to the ancestors, since the present election is placed within the lineage of the previous ones, and they have an agonistic character (almost as war gods) because each choice takes place in the context of the agonistic sacrifice, where the priest and his mode of performing the sacrifice struggle ritually against other groups of priests and other types of alternative performances (Skjærvø 2001). Only the right ritual “election” grants that the ritual thoughts, words, and actions succeed in getting the power (*xšaθra*) over death: hence its utmost importance.

Through the *Frauarānē*, and assisted by the *frauuāṣis* of former sacrificers, the priest prepares his soul (*uruuan*) which he is going to offer as the sacrificial victim, in order to join ‘the vision(-soul)’ (*daēnā*). Actually, it is an Indo-Iranian conception that through the sacrifice the sacrificer, identified with the victim, visits the realm of the gods and then returns to the world of the living beings. The Vedic sacrifice is explicitly depicted as a journey from the world of the human being into the realm of the gods (*Ṣatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.1.1.4–6; see also Lévi 1898: 88; Gonda 1965; Witzel 1984; Heesterman 1985: 81; Tull 1989: 90), and at the end of the sacrifice the sacrificer must navigate the difficult way back to the world of living beings and to his true human nature. The final bath of the sacrifice is called the *avabhṛta* ‘the bringing back down’ (of the sacrificer from the paradise). Holes bored in three bricks on the first, third, and fifth levels of the fire-altar, representing the three levels of the Indian cosmos – earth, heaven, and atmosphere – allow the sacrificer his symbolic ascent through the cosmos (Tull 1989: 92). This journey of the Vedic sacrificer prepares him for the journey of the soul after death, whose success is secured through the sacrifices performed during life. In fact, only those who have performed the most complex and the highest rites in the hierarchy of rituals may reach the highest levels of the sky in the afterlife (Tull 1989: 107). Similar symbolism is also found in the Zoroastrian ritual (Windfuhr 2004: 30–31; Vevaina 2010c).

Exactly the same premises apply for the individual crossing of the soul in the *Avesta*. In order to promote life the sacrificer shoulders death. With the help of his ‘election-soul’ (*frauuāṣi*), that has experienced former sacrifices, his ‘breath-soul’ (*uruuan-*) would be able to encounter his ‘vision(-soul)’ (*daēnā*) and to attend the expected reward: ‘best life’ (*ahu vahišta*). The sacrifice is thus the model for the well-known and broadly attested travels into the world of the deceased, like the journey to heaven and hell described in the *Ardā Wirāz-Nāmag* or in Kerdīr’s inscriptions (Skjærvø 1983 [1985]). This travel of the sacrificer is clearly underscored in the *Vīsprad* and *Vīdēvdād* ceremonies, in which before Y 53 the *Yasna Haptaḡhāiti* (the proper *Yasna*, where the meat offering is performed) is repeated, and after Y 53 the description of the journey of the soul after death is included (*Vd* 19.28; *Vyt* 8).

The accumulated sacrificial experience ensures the individual success after death. According to *Vd* 19.29, on the journey to paradise, in the Pass of the Layer (*cinuuatō*

pərātu-, often translated into English as ‘Bridge of the Separator’) the soul of the dead is asked for the *yātəm gaēθananəm* ‘the share of the creatures’, while in the later Pahlavi literature it is asked for its ‘merits’ (*kirbag*) and ‘sins’ (*wināh*). There is no consensus among scholars about the sense of the expression in *Vd* 19.29, but if we recall *Y* 36.2, where *yāta-* appears twice, just in the moment in which the meat offering is presented to the fire, then a clear connection between “sacrifice” and “individual eschatology” arises. According to the *Nērangestān* (*N* 47.40), during the recitation of the middle section of the *Yasna Haptañhāiti* (*Y* 36–39) a small piece of meat is held aloft over the fire. After the introductory *Y* 35, *Y* 36.2 invites the fire, which will bring the offering to the gods, to the *yāta* ‘the requested portion’ and to the greatest of the *yāh* ‘the request’ (of the sacrificial offering by the gods). The terms are related etymologically and probably belong to the root *yā* ‘to request’ (Narten 1986: 149; Hintze 2007: 124). In any case, the soul of the deceased is not asked about its good actions in life, but about the same *yāta* to whom the fire is invited during the meat offering in the *Yasna*, presumably some ritual action. So the soul of the dead is asked before being admitted into Paradise for the offerings it made in life. A similar statement is found in the *Hādōxt Nask* (*HN*). Here the triad appears throughout as the granter of ritual success, and *HN* 2.13 explains the contents of the triad, namely to recite the *Gāthās* and to celebrate a sacrifice for water and fire, and giving satisfaction to the gods coming from near or far. In the parallel version in the Pahlavi literature (*Bundahišn* and *Mēnōg ī Xrad*) ritual actions are frequently mentioned as the “good thought, speech, and action” performed by the deceased in life.

In the sacrifice the two poles of the cyclical rhythm of the cosmos are united: The life–death–life cycle of the sacrificer reproduces the life–death cycles of nature and fosters life after death (day after night, summer after winter, etc.) and the final – permanent – victory of life over death. According to a series of homologies, through the offering of his soul the sacrificer successfully assures an individual and universal eschatology and helps life through the successful arrangement of the world. Different ceremonies emphasize one or the other aspect of these homologies without completely excluding the others: So the *Vīdēvdād* emphasizes the salvation process of the world, whereas in the *Yasna* the emphasis lies on the individual eschatology. This is the true nature of the individual and universal eschatology in old Zoroastrianism: The salvation both of the soul and of the world is the result of the right performance of the ritual.

Morality in a General Sense

Throughout the world’s cultures cosmology and the values ruling individual and social behavior are mutually connected and interdependent (Reynolds and Schofer 2004: 122). Thus, different ethical conceptions produce different cosmologies and vice versa. In the *Avesta* the cosmic and social Order were instituted through a sacrifice performed by Ahura Mazdā at the beginning of time and their Order is the sacrificial Order. Accordingly, the members of the community, as supporters of Order (*ašauuan*), have a series of duties beyond the ritual action. Although the ritual texts stress the importance

of ritual for keeping the sacrificially established Order, ritual action is not the only ethical imperative in force. Already in the *Old Avesta* it is stated that we live according to *aša* (Y 31.2), that is, according to the Order established through the sacrifice. Man has a function in the cosmos and has to accomplish it so as to be an *ašauiuan* ‘supporter of Order’. The fulfillment of one’s own (assigned) function/duty in the cosmos (*xwēškārīh*) is a key theme in Pahlavi literature (i.e., MX 31).

Although in the ritual texts we find indications of the existence of a more general ethic that is not restricted to the assessment of ritual actions, the alternative ethical imperatives appear more clearly in non-ritual texts (even if they were used ritually). So, for example, political texts like the Achaemenid inscriptions reflect other models of expected behavior such as the acceptance of the royal power (*xšaθra*). The king appears through the will of Ahura Mazdā as the granter of social order and the giver of the laws that assure it (DSe 30–41). Other Avestan texts like the *Vīdēvdād* present us with a slightly different view than the *Yasna*. The *Vīdēvdād* focuses on purity and the avoidance of death and dead matter and, furthermore, on the preservation of life. The history of the world is presented as the regaining of the original purity and the elimination of the death and impurity brought to the world by Anra Mainiiu. Humans are active agents in this fight and ritual is the main tool for achieving this goal: performing the *baršnum* and other purity rituals as a way for regaining individual purity and the *Vīdēvdād* ceremony as a universal process of purification and of restoration of the cosmogonical order.

But in the *Vīdēvdād* the ritual is no longer the only battlefield between good and bad actions. There is an extension of the ritual language into non-ritual contexts. The ritual language in expressions like ‘actions that do not fit the *ratu*’ (*araθβīia šīiaoθna*; Vd 3.40) is used in a broader sense. The triad is no longer limited to the ritual sphere, and the ways to compensate for faults of thought, word, or action are no longer merely limited to the ritual sphere.

Two are the main duties of human behavior: the avoiding of death and impurity and the preservation of life. Avoidance of death and impurity includes a complex code of conduct regarding the treatment of dead matter that strongly conditions everyday life. The two principal ways of promoting life are agriculture and producing offspring. The latter establishes a model for the sexual behavior of the community: Only sexual practices leading to procreation are allowed and promoted. For a splendid analysis of the sexual morality of Zoroastrianism, see König (2010a).

Acting according to these prescriptions (avoiding death’s impurity and promoting life) contributes to the individual and universal salvation as much as ritual practice. A *mąθra* in Vd 3.33 lists the fulfillment of the ritual duties (*ašaiiā*) together with the practice of agriculture and the wish for offspring: “Nobody from the No-eater is able either to powerful fulfillment of the religious duties, nor to powerful practice of the agriculture, nor to powerful getting of offspring.” Acts in accordance with them are “merits,” but acts violating these prescriptions are “sins.” Accordingly, we already find in the *Vīdēvdād* a complex system of valuating “sins” and “merits” as the basis for eschatological rewards or punishments (Vd 7.51–52 and 13.8).

There are different degrees of sins designating originally different types of physical harm produced towards others (Kotwal 1969: 114), each deserving a specific physical

punishment. In Sasanian times these punishments were commutable for money (Šnš 16). Furthermore, different types of expiation of and compensation for sins had been instituted, thus allowing the sinner to neutralize the social, individual, and universal eschatological effects of a sin. Different concepts (whose exact meanings often escape us) are involved in the atonement of a sin (Vleminck 1987): *ciθā* ‘punishment’ (a ‘fine’ according to the Sasanian exegetes), *āpərəti* ‘compensation’ (a ‘physical penalty’ according to the exegetes), *paītiti* ‘going in to the encounter (of the sin)’ (later understood as ‘confession’) and *uzuuarəšti* ‘reparation’ (Pvd 7.52). Where impurity is concerned, *yaoždāθra* ‘purification’ must be added to the list. These concepts point to different goals for one’s penance: compensation for damages (in Pahlavi literature there is a distinction between *pad ruwān* ‘sins against the soul’ and *pad hamemālān* ‘against third parties’, with the latter requiring compensation for third parties); eliminating the disturbing effects of the transgression on Order; and the cancellation of the eschatological costs for the sinner. The compensation for the disturbed Order is achieved through an equivalent ‘merit’ (*uzuuarəšti*) which also deletes this ‘sin’ from the eschatological account of the sinner (*paītiti*) (Vd 7.51, 13.7).

The transformation of ritual concepts into theological and ethical ones in Pahlavi literature results in a closely related theological and ethical dualism. Since God does not cause any evil (Dk 3.292), the presence of the latter (deception, illness, and death) in the world is seen as the result of an attack by Ahreman which gives rise to the present state of mixture (*gumēzišn*). Viewing God as the principle of Order and immortality leads to several moral imperatives (König 2010a: 155). Humans have to avoid evil and to foster the good, as says the Sasanian religious authority Baxt-Āfrīd (Dk 6.A4): “Ohrmazd has created every single creation to counter one adversary; he created confession of sins to counter every one of the demons (*druz*)” (Shaked 1979: 131).

The general principles for the assessment of human behavior are now the union with Ohrmazd and the destruction of Ahreman: “Ohrmazd the Lord created every creature for these two benefits, in order to destroy the adversary by them and (for them) to serve as His witnesses” (Dk 6.135). Ethics are thus embedded in the teleology of this dualistic view of the world. Every action of daily life can be evaluated in terms of accordance with the teleological plan: if they serve Ohrmazd’s plan, they are ‘merit’ (*kirbag*; see Asmussen 1965: 34), otherwise they are to be considered as ‘sin’ (*wināh*).

The shifting of the center of the salvation process from the ritual to all spheres of human behavior profoundly altered the understanding of *aša* in the Pahlavi writings. It is not by chance that *ahlāyīh*, the Pahlavi translation of *aša*, is a loanword and does not directly continue the Avestan *aša*. Rather, it is a derivate from *ahlāy*, a loanword of *ašauuan* ‘supporter of Order’ and equivalent to *ahlaw*, that is, it is an epithet of the person who is a ‘supporter of Order’. The focus is now on the person that acts rightly, and “righteousness” is the quality of those who do so. The Pahlavi term *ahlāyīh* and its counterpart *druwandīh* are confined in Pahlavi anthropology to the sphere of *kunišn* ‘action’ (besides other elements ascribed to *kunišn* like destiny, nature, substance, and heritage), and thus to the ethical sphere (Dk 6.D1a; Shaked 1979: 279; König 2010a: 80). Already in the Pahlavi translations of the *Avesta* the term *ahlāyīh* is glossed by ‘the fulfillment

of religious duties' (*kār ud kirbag* in *PY* 3.4) and by 'the way of the fulfillment of religious duties' (*rāh ī kār ī kirbag* in *Vd* 5.4). This agrees with the fact that in *Vd* 1.15–16 the translation of *ašauuan* is *kardār* 'active (in the fulfillment of religious duties)', instead of the very frequent translation *ahlaw*. In the Pahlavi writings, *aša* was no longer the Order of the sacrifice and of the universe, but was instead understood as 'righteousness', the quality of acting righteously. In Sasanian times *ahlāyīh* and its antonym *druwandīh* became moral categories to evaluate human action: "Righteousness" is achieved through the absence of sin and through the accruing of merits (*kirbag*) (*Dk* 3.339). Thus the unwavering moral commitment to right action became the leitmotif of (*h*)*andarz* ('wisdom') literature (Asmussen 1965: 31). The "right action" is the engine of the salvation process, and the range of actions leading to the victory of righteousness is continuously increased and differentiated from purely ritual actions.

In accordance with the shift from ritual restoration of Order to the principle of right action, the latter exponentially increases its capacity as granter of success within the rubric of individual eschatology. Since righteousness does not always lead to success in life, the sphere for its reward is limited to the afterlife. Success in life depends on destiny and the reward for the fulfillment of the duties derived from moral imperatives that belong to the spiritual state after death (*PVd* 5.9; *AWN* 105–109; *MX* 51; see Tavadia 1931; Zaehner 1955: 254). The independence of worldly success from the fulfillment of duties and its dependency on destiny was, nevertheless, subject to controversy. Alternative viewpoints are attested: "A man whose action is for the soul, the material world is his and the spiritual is even more his" (*Dk* 6.A2). The intimate link between ethical behavior and eschatological success is, however, ubiquitous.

The Sasanian texts reveal an "arithmetical ethic" where each 'sin' (*wināh*) and 'merit' (*kirbag*) is counted in a personal account. After death sins and merits are weighed on the scales of Rašnu: If the merits weight more than the sins, the soul goes to paradise (*wahišt*), otherwise to hell (*dušox*). If both weight the same, the soul goes to purgatory (*hamestagān*) till the end of time, when only paradise will remain as the abode of all humans. This doctrine appears already in the Pahlavi translations of the *Vīdēvdād* (*PVd* 7.52) and in the Avestan quotations from lost texts adduced here as supporting arguments; it seems that the Avestan passages quoted here were interpreted in this sense in Sasanian times, even if this doctrine was probably not already present in the Avestan texts.

Because of the close connection between "sin" and "merit" and the state of the soul after death, several journeys into the realm of the afterlife, inspired by the journey of the ritual sacrificer to the realm of the gods through the sacrifice, offer authoritative eye witness accounts of the moral consequences of personal actions and, as such, they serve both didactic and dogmatic purposes. The best-known example is *Wirāz's* journey into heaven, hell, and purgatory and his description of the rewards and punishments for given actions that he had witnessed there. The *Ardā Wirāz-Nāmaq* is thus a literary catalogue of the actions considered as *wināh* and their consequences in the afterlife in early Islamic (and Sasanian) times. The sins described cover a wide range (for a list, see Stausberg 2009: 241–242). A millennium

earlier Herodotus had mentioned that the Persians abhorred telling lies and thus there are many liars in hell according to the *Ardā Wirāz-Nāmag*. Many sins depicted there deal with ritual orthopraxy: eating without ritual precautions, walking with one shoe only, illegal (non-ritualized) slaughter of animals, neglecting water and fire, and extinguishing sacred fires. Another main sphere of sin is the violation of the purity prescriptions: neglecting menstrual restrictions such as approaching water and fire during menstruation, preparing and serving food during menstruation or having sexual intercourse while menstruating. Furthermore, eating corpses, polluting water and fire through excrement and carrion, dropping hair into the fire while combing one's hair, washing in (and thereby polluting) lakes or springs, polluting public bathhouses, etc. Great importance is attached to the appropriate sexual practices and other activities menacing the family as the social structure and mechanism for procreation. Condemned sexual practices are mainly sodomy and adultery as well as disrespect towards one's husband. Sins regarding child care are also mentioned frequently: fathers denying their offspring, parents neglecting crying and hungry children, mothers not nursing and thereby killing their children, and mothers selling their milk to others and leaving their own babies hungry. Many sinners are punished because of sins concerning the religion: heresy, the rejection of gods and religion, and religious doubt. Recurrent are sins concerning civil law, especially concerning trade: cheating with measures in commercial transactions, selling items with false weights and measures, withholding wages, the acquisition of wealth by stealing the property of others, false measurements and parceling of land, the removal of boundary stones, and the violation of contracts. There are also sins pertaining to criminal law: homicide and the poisoning of men. In addition, we find several sinners in hell who have abused animals: the maltreatment of dogs, not giving water to farm animals, the overburdening of cattle, and the killing of beavers (on animals as ethical agents, see Shaked 2001).

Parallel to the broadening of actions circumscribed within the ritual to more general actions in everyday life, the ritual election is transformed in the choice between 'righteousness' (*ahlāyīh*) and 'unrighteousness' (*druwandīh*). Humans are free to choose, but the dualistic cosmology presents humanity as having to choose between righteousness and unrighteousness in the midst of a battlefield of dualistic forces, created by Ahura Mazdā and Anra Mainiiu for the promotion of righteousness and unrighteousness respectively. As rightly pointed out by König (2010a: 155), the evil forces appear in the texts with a double nature, fluctuating between two poles: the demonological one, according to which they are demons, i.e., external elements that attack humans; and the psychological one, according to which they are part of demonized humans.

These two forces involved in the struggle are the result of Ohrmazd's cosmogonic act and Ahreman's reaction against it. They reproduce the universal and social Order and share a similar organization. In *Dk* 3.27 the eight forces struggling for the victory of 'goodness' (*wehīh*) or 'evil' (*wadīh*) are organized in four levels (see Cantera 2003: 21–27): 1) Bounteousness (*spennāgīh*) vs. Evil (*gannāgīh*); 2) Cool Air (*wāyīg*) vs. Lust (*waranīg*); 3) Gods (*bayān*) vs. *gt'wyk* (?); 4) Good Disposition (*hunihādīh*) vs. Bad Disposition (*dušnihādīh*). The first three levels correspond to the three social classes: the

priesthood, the warriors, and the agriculturalists and the fourth affects the three together. The different virtues and vices are classified in these sections:

<p><i>spennāgīh</i> ‘Bounteousness’</p> <p><<i>asrōnīh</i>> ‘priesthood’ <i>dēn</i> ‘religion’ <i>dānāgīh</i> ‘knowledge’ <i>ērīh</i> ‘Aryanness’ <i>rāstīh</i> ‘truth’ ... </p>	<p><i>gannāgīh</i> ‘Evil’</p> <p><i>sāstārīh</i> ‘tyranny’ <i>asrōnīh hamēstārīh</i> ‘opposition to the priesthood’ <i>agdēnīg</i> ‘bad religion’</p> <p><i>anērīh</i> ‘UnAryanness’ <i>druzīh</i> ‘lie’ ... </p>
<p><i>wāyīg</i> ‘Cool Air’</p> <p><i>ardēštārīh</i> ‘warrior class’ <i>asrōnīh ayyār</i> ‘assisting the priesthood’ <i>tagīgīh</i> ‘strength’ <i>arwandīh</i> ‘valor’ <i>xwadāyīh</i> ‘sovereignty’ <i>dād</i> ‘law’ ... </p>	<p><i>waranīg</i> ‘Lust’</p> <p><i>xwaddōšaḡīh</i> ‘autonomous decision’ <i>sāstārīh ayyār</i> ‘assisting the tyranny’</p> <p><i>dušdānāgīh</i> ‘bad knowledge’ <i>agdēnīh</i> ‘bad religion’ ... </p>
<p><i>bayān</i> ‘Gods’</p> <p><i>wāstryōšīh</i> ‘husbandry’</p> <p><i>gēhān warzīdārīh</i> ‘farming’ <i>asrōnīh ud ardēštārīh ayyār</i> ‘assisting priesthood and the warrior class’ ... </p>	<p><i>gt’wyk</i></p> <p><i>pad duzīh ud stahmaḡīh warzīdārān gēhān</i> <i>petyārēnīdan</i> ‘opposition toward the farmers through theft and violence’ <i>dām murjēnīdan</i> ‘destruction of the creatures’ <i>wāstryōšīh petyār</i> ‘opposition toward husbandry’ ... </p>
<p><i>hunihādīg</i> ‘Good Disposition’</p> <p><i>hutuxšīh</i> ‘diligence’</p> <p><i>ān sē pēšaḡ ayyār</i> ‘assistance for the three classes’</p> <p><i>humad</i> ‘good thought’ <i>hūxt</i> ‘good speech’ <i>huwaršt</i> ‘good action’ <i>ruwān ahlāyīh</i> ‘righteousness of the soul’</p>	<p><i>dušnihādīg</i> ‘Bad Disposition’</p> <p><i>duštuxšaḡīh</i> ‘bad diligence’</p> <p><i>sē pēšaḡān petyārag</i> ‘opposition toward the three classes’ <i>dušmad</i> ‘evil thought’ <i>dušhūxt</i> ‘evil speech’ <i>dušhuwaršt</i> ‘evil action’ <i>ruwān druwandīh</i> ‘unrighteousness of the soul’</p>

Such lists of ‘virtues’ and ‘vices’ are frequent in Pahlavi literature (e.g., *Dk* 3.310; *Ayādgār ī Wuzurgmīhr*) and appear also in fragments of *andarz* literature in Arabic from putative Pahlavi originals (Shaked 1987d: 228; Zakeri 2007).

Among these opposing forces humans are compelled to make the right decisions and act according to righteousness. One’s main assistance for the right choice is (*āsn-*)*xrad* ‘(innate-) wisdom’, the capacity of distinguishing between good and evil. In the Avestan ritual, *xratu-* (the Av. equivalent of Pahl. *xrad*) is the basis for the knowledge of the right

ratu-, and later it became the basis for the knowledge of the “law”; of allowed and forbidden social and legal behaviors. This “innate wisdom” is put into humans by Ohrmazd and is the most direct way of communication between the two. From *xrad* derives ‘knowledge’ (*dānāgīh*), which is then the basis for the ‘law’ (*dād*). On the other side, ‘concupiscence’ (*waranīgīh*) is the main enemy of right discernment. From it derives ‘bad wisdom’ (*dušdānāgīh*), the basis of ‘violence’ (*must*) and ‘lawlessness’ (*adād*) (see *Dk* 3.192).

Despite the constraints produced by “concupiscence” and other negative forces, humans remain free to choose the good and have the moral imperative to do so. Free will makes humans responsible for their individual and collective afterlife. Although one’s main assistant in the decision is *xrad*, we should not overrate its practical efficacy. It is certainly the basis for the “law,” and mankind has to follow the “law,” the prescriptions of the “religion” (*dēn*). Yet, *dēn* is not just the vision(-soul) that visualizes the afterlife in the frame of the sacrifice, but also the collection of revealed injunctions that guide people’s conduct, since they are revealed in the frame of the sacrificial vision. The close connection between “innate wisdom” and “religion” is a recurrent topos of the third book of the *Dēnkard* (e.g., *Dk* 3.313, 346) where it states that “innate wisdom” is the same as “religion” and vice versa (*Dk* 3.313; see also Vevaina, “Theologies and Hermeneutics,” this volume).

Yet, not every person is endowed with the capacity for individual discrimination between “good” and “evil.” People must keep to prior decisions already sanctified by the authority of the *dēn*. Autonomous decisions regardless of the *dēn* (*xwaddōšagīh*) are considered as the proper essence of “concupiscence” (Cantera 2003). In Islamic times emerges the institution of the ‘spiritual authority’ (*dastwarīh*). Each person has to take a spiritual leader and submit to them all decisions about their actions (Kreyenbroek 1994b). Already in the *Avesta* (*Vd* 16.18) we find the assistance of the priest as a granter of the necessary advice for being a supporter of Order: “Every one who does not respect the teacher, is a follower of the Lie and has the Lie in his body.” The moral imperative has been reduced, in fact, to acting in accordance with the law. And this view is intensified in the Sasanian (and early Islamic) period when priestly authority appears as a continuous line that links the single priest advising individuals to Ahura Mazdā through the different level of the church hierarchy. Zoroastrianism now appears as a complete system of prescriptions concerning all spheres of life, which is also the basis for civil and criminal law, and with a hierarchical structure of legal and ethical authority (Kreyenbroek 1997: 53; see also Vevaina, “Theologies and Hermeneutics,” this volume).

Pahlavi anthropology tries to explain human existence and action through recurrent pentadic structures and concepts (König 2010a: 79–87). The oldest attestation of this anthropology appears already in the Pahlavi commentary of *Vīdēvdād* (*PVd* 5.9; later sources include *Dk* 6.D1a; *PT* 82.9–16; and especially *DD* 70). The five main concepts are:

1. *brēh* or *baxt* ‘destiny’
2. *kunišn* ‘action, praxis’
3. *xōg* ‘nature’
4. *gōhr* ‘substance’
5. *abarmānd* ‘heritage’

The area of ethical thought and reflection is, of course, *kunišn* ‘action’, as the first two elements of its pentadic constituents confirm:

1. *ahlāyīh* ‘righteousness’
2. *druwandīh* ‘unrighteousness’
3. *asrōnīh* ‘priesthood’
4. *artēštārīh* ‘warrior class’
5. *wāstryōšīh* ‘husbandry’

From this categorization of the concepts conditioning one’s tasks it seems clear that the preservation of the social structure is one of the essential elements of Sasanian ethics. This emphasis is not new. As we have already mentioned, social order is a reflex of sacrificial and universal Order. The links between the *ratu* and the social classes go back to Indo-Iranian times: they are obvious in the list of the *ratus* of the long liturgy and also in Vedic texts (Krick 1982: 40). In the *Yasna* the five social classes are linked to the five parts of the day explicitly in the lists of *ratu* (i.e., *Y* 1.3–7). To preserve this social order is as important as the preservation of the right succession of the different parts of the day. Thus, it should not surprise us that from Indo-Iranian times on we find divinities that regulate the relations between men, like *Mitra (Av. *Miθra* and Ved. *Mitra*) ‘contract’ and *Aryaman (Av. *Airiāman* and Ved. *Aryaman*) ‘hospitality’ (Thieme 1957b; Vevaina 2010a: 127–134).

In Sasanian times this topic became central (Kreyenbroek 1997: 52–54). Society was conceived as a hierarchical structure with the king at the top and then organized in social classes. It belongs to one’s proper function (*xwēškārīh*) to remain in one’s own class (*Dk* 3.45). Each class has its own function in society and all together they build a functional structure that is explicitly compared with the human body and its constituent parts: the priesthood is equated to the head, the warrior class to the hands, and the agriculturalists to the stomach (*Dk* 3.42). This structure is hierarchically organized: the priests are at the top, since they know the right action for the other classes; they are the source of ethical knowledge. The importance of the connection between religion and social structure is particularly emphasized in the metaphor of the “religion” as a tree in the *Škand-gumānīg Wizār* (*ŠGW* 1.11) with one stem, two branches, three boughs, four twigs, and five shoots. The stem is a measure (see below); the two branches are performance of merits and the avoidance of sin; the three boughs represent good thoughts, good words, and good deeds; the four twigs symbolize the four social classes: the priesthood, warriorhood, husbandry, and artisanship; and, finally, the five shoots represent the house-ruler, the village-ruler, the tribe-ruler, the province-ruler, and the supreme Zarathustra. On the top of all them is the king of kings, the ruler of the world.

The idea of the community as a human body, that is, as a functional organic unity, strongly conditioned Zoroastrian moral thought. Each member of the community is engaged in the welfare of the community and has not only to do his or her own tasks, but also to assist other members of the community in their needs. Charity among the members of the community is therefore one of the most meritorious actions a Zoroastrian can perform and ‘generosity’ (*rādīh*) is mentioned in the Pahlavi literature

often as the most important good action and virtue, even before truth (Gignoux 2000–2001: 63–69). Already *Vd* 4.44–45 it is stated that if a fellow man comes looking for property, a woman, or religious instruction, their fellow men are compelled to satisfy his wishes. In the *Pursišnīhā* (*P*) 44 it is stated that, if one fulfills one’s religious duties, but does not give anything to the needy, it is not possible to redeem that person’s soul. In Sasanian times charity became the virtue or meritorious action par excellence. When the *Dēnkard* (*Dk* 3.101) lists the virtues because Zarathustra was chosen as the prophet for the religion, the main focus is a description of assistance for the weak and needy: “Powerful and resolute endeavor for the sick, the impoverished, and the needy; granting of legal assistance; care and protection and constant eagerness for bringing support to the poor” (*Dk* 3.102).

Therefore, the pious foundations (*ruwānagān* ‘relating to the soul’) are a well-established institution in Zoroastrianism (de Menasce 1964; Boyce 1968c; Macuch 1992). Originally they were endowments directed to the payment of the performance of the necessary rituals for the care of the soul after death (*ruwān yazišn rāy*). Since not only ritual, but also other pious actions lead to eschatological success, in Sasanian times it was not unusual that such endowments were used for other general purposes that benefited the community: the performance of religious ceremonies for the community, the construction of fire-temples, the payment of religious instruction, assistance to the poor, and the subsidies for other works for the community. In Islamic Iran this institution (known as *waqf* in Arabic) was spread because it allowed for the preserving of the legacy in the hands of family, if one member converted to Islam (for converted members got the complete legacy; see Macuch, “Law in Pre-Modern Zoroastrianism,” this volume). In India the economic success of numerous members of the community has led to an intensification of the charity foundations and further philanthropic activities. In colonial India Parsi charity seems to have been influenced by Christian charity, but it remains still one of the main features of the Parsi self-representation (on modern charity, see Bulsara 1935; Hinnells 1985; Hinnells, Boyce, and Shahrokh 1992; Stausberg 2002b: 45–48; Palsetia 2005).

In contrast with the dualistic ethics where there are pairs of virtues and vices, matching universal positive and negative forces belonging respectively to Ohrmazd and his antagonist, we also find in the Pahlavi writings an alternative doctrine based on the concepts of ‘measure’ (*paymān*), ‘excess’ (*frāybūdīh*), and ‘deficiency’ (*ēbbūdīh*) (de Menasce 1973: 20, 438; Shaked 1987d; Gignoux 2000; Amuzegar 2004; König 2010a: 161). Instead of the static poles of virtue versus vice, here each action falls within a spectrum whose extremes – “excess” and “deficiency” respectively – are seen as vices, virtue lying in the middle. The extremes belong to Ahreman and the middle to Ohrmazd. As it is stated in *PYt* 1.10 regarding eating: “Excess” is gluttony and “deficiency” is hunger (i.e., ascetic renunciation of eating), and virtue consists in eating in the proper measure.

This idea strongly recalls the Aristotelian ethical concept of the mean, as has been rightly pointed out by Shaked (1987d), and it might even be a loan. However, since the concept *paymān* is frequent in other fields like medicine (although there is in this field also a strong Greek influence) and above all since the words used for “excess” and

“deficiency” are probably Avestan calques (Cantera 2004: 190 n. 82), the concept of *paymān* could be Iranian, although deeply influenced by the Aristotelian idea of the mean. In fact, the importance of “excess” and “deficiency” in medical practice, and the close relations in Zoroastrianism between health and virtue and between illness and sin, suggest the possibility that these concepts perhaps entered Zoroastrian ethical reflections from the discourse on medicine.

In this alternative ethical system, measure plays the role attributed to the (innate) wisdom (*xrad*) in the dualist system. It is the basis of the law, which in turn is the foundation for right action. Very instructive in this regard is the image found in the ŠGW (1.11): Measure is the stem of the tree of religion, whose two main branches are ‘action’ (*kunišn*) and ‘avoidance (of sin)’ (*pahrēzišn*), and whose three secondary branches are good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. Wisdom and measure are the basis for right action, the essential tools for fulfilling the Zoroastrian moral imperative. The knowledge of what is the right measure is as difficult to acquire as the knowledge about the right action in the traditional dualistic system. Like innate wisdom, measure seems to belong to human capacities given by god. Whereas Ahreman first had to create “concupiscence” as an antagonist of wisdom in the dualistic system, in the ethics of measure it is enough to take measure away, and “excess” and “deficiency” appear automatically. A mythic passage states that the demons stole the measure and Yima went to hell, discovered their secret there and brought the measure back to humankind (*Dk* 3.286).

The triadic system (deficiency/vice – mean/virtue – excess/vice) of Aristotelian ethics appears, as already mentioned, in the Pahlavi commentary on *Yt* 1.10 and was clearly not alien to Zoroastrian ethical reflections. However, this triadic model (presumably) did not fit in well with the dualistic cosmology and had to be adapted to it. A good example is *Dk* 3.68 (Shaked 1987d) where the triadic (Aristotelian) system has been changed into a tetradic one, according to which two good qualities are in the middle, but they each have an opposite, reworking it into a dualism. There are “forward-inclined” virtues that are appropriate for ascendant time, and “backward-inclined” virtues appropriate for descendant time. Each quality appears in both types of virtues and each virtue has its opposite. In the field of “economics” there are two virtues: “generosity” as a “forward-inclined” virtue and “frugality” as a “backward-inclined” one, but each one has its dualistic opposite (“wastefulness” for “generosity” and “miserliness” for “frugality”). The mean is represented by the two virtues (“generosity” and “frugality”), and excess and deficiency by the two opposites of these virtues (see also Adhami 2002, where the Greek connection is explored in depth).

Final Remarks

From its origins, Zoroastrianism assumed the need for an active participation of human beings in world history and of their collaboration in continually promoting Ahura Mazda’s cosmogonical act. But the collaboration expected from humans did not always remain the same. The history of Zoroastrian moral thinking fluctuates

between two poles: the narrow ritual morality in which human contributions to the cosmogonical process are achieved through successful ritual actions, and a broader morality in a social sense, with a general imperative to fulfil right actions in all spheres of life. The primacy of the narrow or the general type of morality is largely conditioned by the textual genre, but also by a historical process of de-ritualization of the corresponding religious concepts, similar to the Indian development at the time of the *Upaniṣads*. Nevertheless, this broadening of moral thinking did not decrease the importance of the ritual for preserving the world and for obtaining individual and universal salvation.

Early Western studies of Zoroastrianism argued for a moralistic interpretation of the Old Avestan texts attributed to Zarathustra and this interpretation has influenced the modern self-interpretations of Zoroastrian communities in Iran, India, and in diaspora. Nevertheless, the Old Avestan texts are ritual and meta-ritual texts (that is, conceived and performed in the ritual and speaking about the ritual) in which the expected collaboration of men within the unfolding of the history of the world is the performance of the right ritual, just as one finds in the Vedic texts.

In the non-ritual Avestan texts and especially later in Pahlavi literature the progressive transformation of these ritual concepts into theological and ethical ones resulted in a theological and ethical dualism. There is an “ethicalization” of religious thinking. Ethics belongs clearly to the sphere of ‘action’ (*kunišn*) since the theologians of the Sasanian and early Islamic periods ascribe the correspondences of fundamental Avestan concepts such as *aša* ‘order’ and *druj* ‘deception’, that is, Pahlavi *ahlāyīh* ‘righteousness’ and *druwandīh* ‘unrighteousness’, to the sphere of ‘action’ (*kunišn*). The concept of *aša* ‘order’ is transformed into the ethical idea of “righteousness” as the quality of acting rightly. There it developed intense ethical reflections about general principles for the assessment of human behavior: Each action is evaluated according to its adherence to “righteousness.” Actions performed in accordance with “righteousness” are, therefore, the granters of eschatological success, both at the individual and at the universal level.

Among the core ethical concerns of Zoroastrianism such as the preservation and promotion of life and the avoidance of death and impurity, the maintenance and preservation of the (inherited) social order plays a decisive role. The social classes are an essential element of the religious worldview and consequently acting according to the duties of one’s own class was considered one of the fundamental duties. From Indo-Iranian times social order was seen as a reflex of the sacrificial and cosmogonical Order and as important as the succession of day and night or winter and summer. Accordingly, each person must remain in his or her own social class and fulfil his or her own tasks for the sake of both personal salvation and that of the community at large. Although the social structure was clearly hierarchical, there was a profound sense of shared community which was necessary for striving towards the eschatological goal which can only be achieved through collective efforts. Accordingly, from its very beginnings Zoroastrianism has developed an ethical imperative of assistance to the needy members of the community, which, in modern times, has become one of the fundamental elements of their self-perception and social representation.

Further Reading

Kellens (2004) is a sound demonstration of the ritual interpretation of the triad in the ritual portions of the *Young Avesta*. It provides us with a model methodology for discussing ritual or ethical interpretations of key Avestan concepts. König (2010a) is an essential book on moral thinking in Zoroastrianism. Its main focus is on sexual morality and above all on homosexuality. Kreyenbroek (1997) is the only general description of Zoroastrian ethics covering both pre-modern and modern times. It advocates Zarathustra's ethical revolution and does not mention the alternative ritual conception. The translation of the third book of the *Dēnkard* by de Menasce (1973) provides us with the most relevant and deep reflections

and discussions of Zoroastrian moral and ethical thinking in early Islamic times. Shaked (1979) is an edition, translation, and commentary of the sixth book of the *Dēnkard*, a collection of wisdom literature (*andarz*) for priests and cultivated people with regard to religious matters. As such it includes a collection of the significant moral texts from early Islamic times. Furthermore, the introduction contains useful information about further *andarz* literature and about important trends and key topics of moral reasoning in Sasanian and early Islamic times. Panaino (2004d) is a recent attempt to defend the ethical interpretation of the Old Avestan texts despite the current emphasis on the ritual frame of these texts.

CHAPTER 20

Prayer

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Introduction

Contact between god and believer by means of the ‘sacred word’ (*Av. maθra spənta*) plays a central role in Zoroastrianism. However, a complicating factor for the study of the concept of “prayer” in Zoroastrianism is the difference between the character of many sacred texts in the Indo-Iranian tradition and those of the religions with which Westerners are usually most familiar. The sacred texts of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam tend to address mankind (e.g., through divine revelation, or the narratives or songs of the ancients) and the term “prayer” is reserved for human utterances addressing the divine. However, this is not the case in Zoroastrianism, where such core parts of the *Avesta* as the *Gāthās*, the *Yasna Haptañhāiti*, many other parts of the *Yasna* liturgy, and the *Yašt*s are conceived of as human utterances addressing the divine beings. No hard and fast distinction can therefore be drawn between “prayer” and “liturgy” in Zoroastrianism. As will be shown below, moreover, “prayers” in Zoroastrianism can aim to achieve contact between the human and divine spheres by different means, ranging from the inherent power of certain utterances, via the direct appeal of supplicatory prayers by which the individual asks for divine help more or less directly, to prayers that are intended first and foremost to praise the divine beings (*Av. yazata*, MP *yazd* or *yazad*) for their character and functions. Prayers of the latter type – which in a largely oral culture naturally helped to perpetuate the traditional beliefs and imagery connected with the *yazad* in question – are often, but by no means always, combined with petitions for boons.

Some further considerations concerning the history of prayer in early Zoroastrianism should be discussed here. First of all, the language of Zarathustra, now known as “Avestan,” continued to be used as the sacred language of Zoroastrianism even when the center of the religious life of the community shifted to western Iran, where different languages were spoken. The character of the Avestan language, with its wealth of

vowels, presumably made it impossible to represent the Avestan texts in writing in such a way that they could be read by those who did not know the texts by heart, until an adequate alphabet was developed for it in the course of the Sasanian era (226–651 CE). This means that it would not have been possible for someone who did not already know the texts by heart to recite these from a written source, which implies that all priests needed to memorize the Avestan texts. This further implies that the Avestan texts were chiefly transmitted orally for a very long time, first in the community's natural language and later in a foreign tongue that must have seemed increasingly mysterious to believers, particularly since few linguistic aids (such as grammars) appear to have existed that could help one acquire an active command of a dead language. Given the oral character of the early tradition, it is particularly significant to note that some Avestan texts – notably the *Gāthās*, the *Yasna Haptaṅhāiti*, and some short prayers (see below) – have been preserved in an archaic form of Avestan known as “Old Avestan,” which is markedly different from the “Young Avestan” language of the other texts, whose grammar and syntax suggest that their language represents the living Avestan of a much later period – a time that may correspond to the Achaemenid era (559–330 BCE; Kellens 1994a; Kreyenbroek 1996: 221–223).

This strongly suggests that, from a very early stage in the history of Zoroastrianism onwards, the Old Avestan texts had been felt to be so sacred that they were memorized verbatim, and probably syllable by syllable, so as to allow no mistakes to occur in the recitation. Other texts, it seems, continued to be handed down in free transmission, and in the natural language of the community, for several centuries, until the center of religious life shifted to western Iran, where most priests did not have an active command of Avestan. This may have occurred when western Iran became the center of Zoroastrian life under the Achaemenians. Since people lacked the means to acquire an active command of languages that were not spoken in their community, it can be assumed that it was at this time that western Iranian priests gave up attempts to transmit the Young Avestan texts freely, and began to commit them to memory. This implies that, in the course of the Achaemenid period, the leading Zoroastrian priesthood lost the ability to make major changes or add new texts, so that the entire *Avesta* became fixed long before it could be committed to writing. To what extent such processes affected the transmission of individual prayer formulae is of course uncertain, as some of these must have become fixed at an earlier stage. Still, the Achaemenid period can be taken as a *terminus ante quem* for the fixation of the Avestan prayer texts.

As a result of all this, it seems, all Avestan utterances came to be regarded indiscriminately as god's holy word (*maθra spənta*), which had been revealed through the prophet Zarathustra in its entirety. The literal meaning of the texts, it appears, came to seem increasingly mysterious, and in the course of time great powers came to be attributed to all Avestan texts – rather than to the divinities to whom some supplicatory and laudatory prayers were originally addressed – thus perpetuating an ancient belief in the effectiveness of the truly spoken word (see below).

The oral character of the transmission meant that the community's repertory of prayers continued to evolve at least during the earlier stages of the religion. Zarathustra's *Gāthās* were evidently widely known, and felt to be extremely powerful, so that short passages from these texts came to be used, singly or in fixed combinations, as prayer formulas (see below).

Prayer Texts in Avestan

After a brief glance at the conditions of the transmission of the Avestan texts until they were committed to writing, we may now turn to the beliefs and concepts that affected the contents of the prayers. A diachronic analysis of the concept of prayer in Zoroastrianism must begin with the role of human utterance addressing the divine in the *Gāthās*, and with the Indo-Iranian traditions underlying such utterances.

As Thieme (1957a) and Lüders (1951–1959 II) have pointed out, both the *Veda* and certain Avestan texts reflect the belief that an utterance that uncovers a hidden truth and is well formulated (Ved. *mántra*, Av. *mąθra*) has the power to compel divine beings to comply with any requests accompanying it (Ved. *satyákriyā*). As Lüders (1951–1959 II: 509) has shown, clear Avestan parallels to the *satyákriyā* can be found in certain Young Avestan texts such as *Yt* 5.77: “This is true, this is well said, Arəduuī Sūrā Anāhitā, that I have defeated so many *Daēuua*-worshippers as I have hairs on my head. Therefore may you, Arəduuī Sūrā Anāhitā, grant me a dry passage through the good (river) Vītaŋ^hhaiti.”

Lüders (1951–1959 II: 431) has further demonstrated that the discourse in the sources about the phenomenon of *satyákriyā* suggests a particular connection with the *asuras* Mitra and Varuṇa, and that such utterances can be referred to as “paths of Truth” (1951–1959 II: 461) and as “wise sayings (*medhā*) of truth” (1951–1959 II: 343). The Vedic term *mántra* can be thus used in the sense of a ‘hymn’ (e.g., *RV* 2.35.2), and for a priestly ‘spell’ compelling a divine being to come to the ritual (*RV* 10.14.4; MacDonnell 1917: 242, s.v. *mántra*). Here again one observes the close affinity between Indo-Iranian hymns and holy texts, and the concept of a “sacred word,” which has a powerful role to play in the interaction between gods and humans.

In the *Gāthās*, Zarathustra refers to himself as a ‘*mąθra*-maker’ (*mąθran*; *Y* 28.7, 32.13, 50.5–6, 51.8). The link between *mąθra*, truth and creativity is illustrated in *Y* 31.6: *haiθim mąθrəm yim hauruuatātō ašahiiā amərətātascā* ‘the valid utterance of Aša (Truth) regarding Hauruuatātō (Wholeness) and Amərətāt (Immortality)’, i.e., the supernatural concept that brings these into existence. Similarly, in *Y* 29.7 Ahura Mazda is said to have created the ‘*mąθra* of fat’ for the Cow (*təm āzūtōiš ahurō mąθrəm tašat... gauuōi*), which presumably means that he used his power to make the Cow fat.

A striking parallel between Vedic and Gathic discourse on the concept of *mantra*/*mąθra* in connection with “paths” (see above) and the power of the truly spoken word, can be found in *Y* 28.5 (Kreyenbroek 1985: 10–14):

ašā kaθ θβā darəsāni manascā vohū vaēdəmnō
gātūmcā ahurūi səuištāi səraošaṃ mazdāi
anā mąθrā mazištəm vāurōmaidī xrafstrā hizuuā

Righteousness shall I see Thee when I find Good Thought
 And the path to the very strong Lord Wisdom, (which is) the Harkening (to my prayer)
 which is strongest through this *mąθra*. May we turn away the miscreants with the tongue.

Here Ahura Mazda’s greatest ‘Harkening’ (*səraoša*) to Zarathustra is brought about through what is evidently an excellent *mąθra*. The concept of “hearkening (to a compelling

utterance, or to the word of god),” and its divine personification, Sraoša, are referred to a number of times in the *Gāthās* (Kreyenbroek 1985: 7–33), not least in Y 33.14, where Zarathustra announces that he will offer Ahura Mazda and Aša the power of his (ritual) acts (*šīiaoθanahiiā xšaθrəm*) and the compelling quality of his words (*uxdahiiācā sraošəm*).

That the *Gāthās* themselves were perceived as unusually effective *maqθras* and/or extremely sacred prayers is demonstrated by the fact that, in an oral tradition, these texts, together with the *Yasna Haptanhāiti*, were evidently reproduced more or less exactly as they had originally been pronounced (see above, and Kreyenbroek 1996).

Maqθras are generally recited with the aim of obtaining a boon of some kind, and can thus have similar aims as supplicatory prayers. Zarathustra’s aim, it seems, was to enlist the help of the *ahuric* powers (i.e., forces that we might consider to be “abstract,” such as good thought) in his struggle against those who represented *daevis* values. That prayers and rituals were often aimed at obtaining boons is indicated by the fact that in the *Yāsts*, heroes and early mythical figures regularly ask the divinities for boons. The topic occurs so frequently as to make it seem likely that it was a long-established theme, representing pre-Zoroastrian as well as Zoroastrian conditions.

Both in the *Gāthās* and in the *Young Avesta* we find a number of terms for “prayer.” *Av. vahma-* from the root *van-* ‘to wish for’ (Bartholomae 1904: 1353) appears to have strong connotations of supplication or petition, i.e., with prayers for boons. *Av. yasna-*, on the other hand, which often occurs together with *vahma-*, mostly refers to prayers of adoration and worship. The term *nəmah-* can be used in both senses (Y 28.1 *nəmahā rafədrahiiā* ‘with a prayer for help’), though more often as a “prayer of salutation and praise” (Bartholomae 1904: 1069–1070). There is no evidence in the *Avesta* for prayers of contrition, or explicit prayers of thanksgiving (see further below, under *Patēt*).

As a result of people’s acceptance of the teachings and utterances attributed to Zarathustra, a distinct religious community must have come into being. Besides the complex *Gāthās*, such a community evidently used a range of prayer-like texts, and we see that shorter and simpler prayers and solemn pronouncements came into being.

One of the central prayers of Zoroastrianism, the *Yaθā Ahū Vairiiō* (Y 27.13, also known as the *Ahuna Vairiia* or in Middle Persian as *Ahun(a)war*), which in the liturgy introduces the *Gāthās*, is couched in Gathic language and imagery: “As the Lord of Life is to be chosen, so is the (earthly) Leader, according to righteousness ...” This holiest of all prayers continued to be recited in Old Avestan (i.e., its pronunciation was not adapted to the community’s natural language), an indication of the veneration in which it was held from the earliest days of Zoroastrianism. In a later Avestan text, we find the belief in the prayer’s power reflected by the formula *ahunəm vairīm tanūm pāiti*, ‘the *Yaθā Ahū Vairiiō* protects the body’ (Vd 11.3); by the assertion that the *Yaθā Ahū Vairiiō* served Sraoša as a weapon (Y 57.22), and that it is “the most victorious of utterances” (Yt 11.3). Moreover, the prayer became an object of worship in its own right (Y 7.26, 13.8, 61.1, see further Bartholomae 1904: 283 s.v. *ahuna-*). In the Middle Persian *Greater Bundahišn* (GBd 1.21–22) it is said that, at the time of Creation, Ohrmazd repulsed Ahreman by reciting this prayer to him:

Then Ohrmazd recited the *Ahunawar*, *Yaθā Ahū Vairiiō*, once, uttering its twenty-one words. And he showed the Evil Spirit his own eventual triumph and the incapacity of the Evil

Spirit, the annihilation of the demons, the Resurrection, and the creations' halcyon future existence for ever and ever. And the Evil Spirit, who perceived his own incapacity and the annihilation of the demons, became dismayed, and fell back into the gloomy darkness.

Another prayer that is preserved in Old Avestan is the *Ā Ariiōmā Išiiō* or *Airiīaman* (Y 54.1), which in the *Yasna* liturgy is recited at the end of the *Gāthās*. The prayer invokes the aid of the *Yazata* Airiīaman, and alludes to Gathic concepts: "May dear Airiīaman come here, to the aid of the men and women of Zarathustra, to the aid of Good Thought. That worldview/religion which deserves the desirable reward, that I pray for as a reward of Righteousness." It is interesting to note that, while the other great prayers, *Yaθā Ahū Vairiīō* and the *Ašəm Vohū* prayer (see below) appear to be first and foremost truth *maqθras*, this is essentially a supplicatory prayer, asking Airiīaman to come to the aid of those who have made the right choice, presumably in this world.

The *Ašəm Vohū* (Y 27.14) is a very short prayer, repeatedly using the words *aša* 'truth' and *vahišta* 'best', so as to allude both to the concept *aša* and to the Aməša Spənta Aša Vahišta. Like the *Yaθā Ahū Vairiīō*, it may originally have been intended to be a truth-*maqθra* stating significant verities about righteousness.

The formula *Yeŷhē Hātqm* (Y 27.15) is regularly mentioned together with the above prayers, and is generally regarded as a "prayer." It is clearly an adaptation of a Gathic passage (Y 51.22, see Boyce 1992: 71), and is apparently recited to ensure that all *Yazatas* deserving worship receive their due at an act of worship, and none is left out.

These prayers were evidently studied and commented upon as early as Young Avestan times; commentaries on the *Yaθā Ahū Vairiīō*, *Ašəm Vohū* and *Yeŷhē Hātqm* prayers have been preserved as parts of the *Yasna* (Y 19, 20, 21). Specific terms came to be used for some of these prayers: The *Yaθā Ahū Vairiīō* came to be referred to by the words *Ahunā Vairiia*; *Ā Ariiōmā Išiiō* by the simple term *Airiīaman* (Bartholomae 1904: 199); the *Ašəm Vohū* by the word *aša*. All this indicates that these formulae were frequently referred to, and conceived of as short "prayers," rather than merely as parts of the "sacred word" generally.

The 'Confession of Faith' (*Frauarānē*, Y 12) is a relatively lengthy text whose contents and function suggest that it is very old. The text states the reciter's intentions to be a good Zoroastrian, and cannot therefore be regarded as a prayer. However, the Avestan words are no longer widely understood, and it can now be recited in much the same way as prayers. By pronouncing it, the reciter rejects the *daēuuas* and declares him or herself to be a "Mazdā-worshiper, a follower of Zarathustra." This text is now recited separately on such occasions as the initiation ceremony (PGuj; *navjote*; NP *sedre-pušī*).

That the *Gāthās* and the *Yasna Haptanḥāiti* continued to lie at the heart of Zoroastrian religious life in the centuries after Zarathustra, is shown by the fact that certain Gathic texts, or combinations of these, came to be referred to in the *Young Avesta* as standard prayer formulas. Thus we regularly find a fixed combination of the formulae *ahunəm vairīm tanūm pāiti* (Vd 11.3, see above); *kōmnā mazdā* (Y 46.7); and *kō vərəθrəm.jā* (Y 44.16), e.g., in Vd 11.3; in the *Srōš Bāj* (on which, see below); and in the *Hōšbām* prayer, which is recited at dawn. This illustrates the trend to combine Gathic verses with other standard formulae to constitute fixed prayer formulas. The tendency to use passages from the *Gāthās* and the *Yasna Haptanḥāiti* as independent prayers is also reflected by the

11th chapter of the *Vīdēvdād*, which specifies the passages to be recited to purify respectively the house, the waters, the cow, plants, and the righteous man. All the prayers referred to are passages from the *Gāthās* and the *Yasna Haptaṅhāiti*.

As the formula “the *Yaθā Ahū Vairiō* prayer protects the body” (see above) shows, prayers themselves came to be the objects of pious beliefs and theological thought. The concept of prayer has its own text of praise in Y 58. There (Y 58.1–2) prayer is celebrated as a weapon and protection for the faithful. In Y 57.22 various prayers (e.g., the *Yaθā Ahū Vairiō* and the *Yasna Haptaṅhāiti*) are also represented as mighty weapons in the battle against evil. Y 61.1 invokes the *Yaθā Ahū Vairiō*, *Aṣəm Vohū* and *Yejhē Hātəm* prayers, imploring them to play an active role between earth and heaven.

In the course of time we see what appears to have been an increasing tendency to combine the ancient prayers such as *Yaθā Ahū Vairiō*, *Aṣəm Vohū*, and other widely known texts, with standard formulae such as *jasa.mē auuaṅhe mazda* ‘Come to my aid, Mazda’ (Y 72.9), often followed by *mazdiasnō ahmi* ‘I am a Mazda-worshiper’. Thus the prayer for tying the *kostī/kustī* (sacred thread) combines a dedicatory formula with a Gathic passage (Y 50.1), which is followed by *Aṣəm Vohū*: *Yaθā Ahū Vairiō*; *Aṣəm Vohū*; *jasa.mē auuaṅhe mazda*; *mazdaiasnō ahmi* (‘Come to my aid, Mazda’), and the final verses of the *Fauuarānē* or ‘Confession of Faith’ (Y 12.8–9).

Many of these standard prayer formulae are found in the *Srōš Bāj*, a prayer addressed to Sraoša. However, apart from ritual dedications (*xšnūman*, i.e., passages from *Sīroza* I and II, see below), the text contains no special references to Sraoša. It is perhaps to be understood as a particularly potent combination of prayers, dedicated to the Lord of Prayer. This prayer plays a key role in the religious life of Zoroastrians; it was one of the prayers a Zoroastrian child traditionally had to memorize before the initiation ceremony (*navjote*; see Boyce and Kotwal 1971: 307). The *Srōš Bāj* is typically used on occasions connected with death and the disposal of a dead body, but also on other occasions to do with ritual “impurity,” such as cutting hair and nails, and, in the case of very observant priests, when taking a bath (Boyce and Kotwal 1971 II). The *Srōš Bāj* should always be preceded by a ‘Confession of Sins’ (*Patēt*) in Pāzand (see below); by standard prayers (*Yaθā Ahū Vairiō* five times; *Aṣəm Vohū* three times; *Frauuarānē*; for the *Gāh* prayer, see below); and by dedications (*xšnūman*, see below). At the end of the text another Pāzand formula is recited: *Kerfa Mozd* (‘The Reward of Virtue’) expressing the wish that the benefit of all good deeds may be felt throughout the universe. The text ends with the Avestan word: *aθa jamiiāt yaθa āfrināmi*. *Aṣəm vohū* (“May it come as I wish. *Aṣəm Vohū*”).

The *Srōš Bāj* is one of several texts that can be used as a “framing *bāj*,” i.e., a standard sequence of formulae whose initial part is recited before a ritually significant action (such as praying a longer Avestan text, performing a ritual, eating, taking part in a funeral service, and several other occasions), the final part being recited when the action is completed. During the time between these utterances one may not pronounce anything but Avestan in one’s normal voice. A muttering, “suppressed” tone is used when it is necessary to say something in another language. In earlier times Zoroastrians were widely known for this custom, which the Arabs termed *zamzama* ‘muttering’. (For other texts used as framing *bāj*, see Boyce and Kotwal 1971 II; Kanga 1993: 10–12.)

All priestly rituals are dedicated to *Yazad(s)* by means of dedicatory formulas or *xšnūman*, which are also found as standard parts of certain prayers, such as the *Srōš*

Bāj (Kreyenbroek 1985: 145–148) There are two types of *xšnūman*, the “greater” and the “lesser.” The former consists of the name of the *Yazad* in question with a number of standard epithets, in the accusative case followed by the word *yazamaide* ‘we worship’. The lesser *xšnūman* contains the *Yazad*’s name and some epithets in the genitive case, followed by the word *xšnaoθra* ‘with the propitiation (of)’. The two types of *xšnūman* for all the thirty *Yazads* of the calendar are listed in the part of the *Avesta* named the *Sirōza*.

While most of the prayers described so far probably originated and developed in the earliest period of the history of Zoroastrianism, the case of the *Niyāyišn*s is more complicated. The extant *Niyāyišn* prayers are addressed to the Sun and the Moon, to Mithra and Arəduuī Sūrā Anāhitā (and thus to the Waters) and to Fire. Of these, the prayers to the Sun and the Moon contain passages not found elsewhere in the *Avesta* (*Ny* 1.11–14, 3.4–7), which may represent a pre-Zoroastrian core to which well-known texts, notably passages from the *Gāthās* and the *Yasna Haptaŋhāiti*, have been added. Besides standard formulae, the prayers to Mithra and Arəduuī Sūrā Anāhitā contain passages from the *Yāsts* to these divinities. The core of the *Ātaš Niyāyišn* (*Ny* 5.7–16), the ‘Prayer to Fire’, is the same as *Y* 62.1–10. The latter passage forms part of another text called *Niyāyišn*, and is recited in honor of Fire towards the end of the *Yasna* ceremony. This part of both texts is not found elsewhere in the *Avesta*.

On the basis of the extant sources it seems that prayers to the Sun and Moon, and possibly to Fire, may have been used in pre-Zoroastrian times and continued to be recited as part of the Zoroastrian tradition. The prayer to Anāhitā (*Ny* 4), which largely consists of verses from her *Yāšt* (*Yt* 5), may have become part of Zoroastrian observance in western Iran, where Anāhitā was much revered, perhaps in Achaemenid times. Like Anāhitā, Mithra is thought to have been especially popular in western Iran, and the *Niyāyišn* to him also consists chiefly of verses from his *Yāšt*. Both prayers may therefore have come to be used in Achaemenid times, when these divinities were highly venerated (witness their invocation in the inscriptions of Artaxerxes II [r. 404–359], (A₂S)), but the composition of new Avestan texts evidently presented considerable problems (Kreyenbroek 1996).

The many references to beings and concepts related to ritual (such as the various periods of the day, which are invoked as divine beings) in the *Gāh*-prayers, which are recited at the beginning of the five watches (*gāh*) of the day, suggests that they once belonged chiefly to the province of ritual priests but, in the Parsi community at least, they can now be recited by lay people also as part of their prayer routine (Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001: 181, 216). We find references in these texts to the watches themselves, to the divine guardian of each watch, to a (theoretical) hierarchy of priests (“of the house,” “of the region,” “of the province,” etc.), in one case (*G* 3.5) to a list of the various ritual priests who take part in the *Yasna*, and further enumerations of venerable beings (*G* 4.6–7).

The *Āfrīnagān* “prayers” are in fact short Avestan liturgies for the *Āfrīnagān* ceremony (also known as *jašan*, *jašn*). Further texts in Pāzand are now generally added to these liturgies (see further below). The Avestan texts for some of these ceremonies are taken from the *Yasna* (Modi 1922: 362–363), but for certain *jašans* special Avestan texts are recited: in honor of the pious man (*Dahmān*); the *Gāthās*; the *Gāhambār* festivals; and

for Rapiθwin, the natural power which is thought to be above-ground during the months of spring and summer, and to retreat into the earth for the autumn and winter. The first of these (*Āfrīnagān ī Dahmān*) in fact appears to be a prayer for the victory of the righteous (i.e., the one who prays), and the defeat of the wicked. The second venerates the *Gāthās*. The *Āfrīnagān* prayer for Rapiθwin largely consists of apparently original verses in honor of the Lord (*Ratu*) of Rapiθwin. Perhaps the most interesting of these texts is the *Āfrīnagān* for the *Gāhāmbārs*, which contains a long and learned text describing the way these festivals were traditionally celebrated, and the position of the various *Gāhāmbārs* in the year. Content-wise, in other words, some of these texts, such as *Āfrīnagān* 1 have the characteristics of supplicatory prayers, while others, notably the *Āfrīnagān ī Gāhāmbār*, appear to consist largely of learned texts that may have been recited as liturgies in order to prevent this knowledge from disappearing. The striking dissimilarities between the contents of the various *Āfrīnagān* prayers suggests that these texts came to be used as liturgies for the *Āfrīnagān* ceremony relatively late in the history of Zoroastrianism. Parts of the texts, however, clearly go back to earlier prayers or teachings.

Prayers in Languages Other than Avestan

As comprehension of the Avestan language decreased, the need was evidently felt to add prayer formulae in Middle Persian (the natural language of the community from the time of Alexander the Great until the Arab conquest, 4th century BCE–7th century CE). These texts in turn became fixed, and their language may have come to seem unfamiliar in post-Sasanian times. Many such prayers were eventually written down in Pāzand, a late form of the Middle Persian language written in the easily legible Avestan script. In the course of time, passages in New Persian could be added to such texts. Only the most important groups of such texts can be discussed here.

There are a number of relatively short, fixed Pāzand formulae that are recited to repent of all one's sins and misdeeds (these are not specified, and the formula can be recited in public). These prayers are known as *Patēt* (from Av. *paiti.i-* 'to return, turn back'). The language of these texts dates from post-Avestan times, and it could be argued that repentance as such does not appear to be recognized in earlier Zoroastrianism as a way to expiate one's sins. One might therefore speculate that the concept of a "Confession of Sins" entered Zoroastrianism relatively late, perhaps under Manichaean or Christian influence. *Patēt* is recited on a number of occasions, e.g., during the *navjote*, at the time of death, and for purificatory ceremonies. Antia (1909: xii) lists four such *Patēt* formulae, the *Patēt* of Penitence, the *Patēt* for the Soul, the Iranian *Patēt*, and the Personal *Patēt* (*Patēt ī Xud*).

The term *du'ā* is of Arabic origin, but has come to denote a group of Zoroastrian Pāzand prayers. One of these, the *du'ā nām-setāyīšn* is regularly prayed after reciting the *Niyāyīšn* prayers. Another *du'ā* was evidently recited to praise the expected "savior" Bahrām-ī Warzāwand (Antia 1909: 161). Traditional *du'ā* could also be recited for health (*du'ā tandurustī*) or during weddings. In modern Parsi usage, however, the term *du'ā* is often used to refer to informal personal prayers that may accompany formal

prayers (Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001: 295), and the same is probably true in the Iranian Zoroastrian community.

Another type of Zoroastrian prayer is known as *nīrang* or ‘incantation’. This suggests that such prayers were widely thought to have inherent power. Some *nīrangs* consist of Avestan passages with their own “framing *bāj*,” but in their present form most *nīrangs* now consist chiefly of Pāzand texts. *Nīrangs* are used as standard formulas to be uttered on certain occasions, where their associations with protection to modern Westerners at least may seem relatively faint. Thus there is a *nīrang* to be recited on getting up in the morning, which begins with the New Persian phrase *šekaste šekaste šeytān* ‘defeated, defeated is Satan’ (Kanga 1993: 4; Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001: 16); a *nīrang* for sneezing (Antia 1909: 197), for going to the toilet (Antia 1909: 175), and one that is said after killing noxious creatures. Other *nīrangs*, however, were indeed felt to be powerful: some are recited to defeat sorcerers, to remove fear, to restore a peaceful relationship between husband and wife, and for healing a range of ailments. Certain *nīrangs* were written on amulets or on trees that were infested by *daevic* animals (for a list of these *nīrangs*, see Antia 1909: xiii–xiv). The pronunciation of certain *nīrangs* should be accompanied by certain actions or promises (on all aspects of *nīrangs*, see Gheiby 2003; Panaino 2004e). *Nīrangs* appear to have been particularly popular in pre-modern days, but they can still be used and indeed created in modern times.

The *nīrang* in a sense continues the ancient tradition of a *maqθra* being recited for its inherent powers, rather than because its contents reflect what is in the individual’s heart. This latter function is fulfilled by another type of prayer, the *monājāt*. The term derives from an Arabic word meaning, approximately, ‘intimate conversation (with god), prayer’. About the Zoroastrian *monājāt* the Parsi scholar Jivanji Jamshedji Modi (1924: 135) wrote: “It is a prayer in which the person praying holds as it were a converse with his God and pours forth his own inward personal feelings of devotion and expression of humility.” In both the Parsi and Iranian Zoroastrian communities such “prayers” were extremely popular for several centuries until their decline in the course of the 20th century. They were in the spoken language of the believers, New Persian or Gujarati, and might also be sung (Russell 1989). Many of these prayers invoke god’s ineffable qualities, praise the Prophet Zarathustra, thank god, express the individual’s regret for past mistakes or negligence, or ask god’s forgiveness or ask for his help in various ways. Some prayers describe the qualities and functions of the Aməša Spəntas. Others are concerned with the hereafter and the end of time, expressing the hope that the soul shall be rewarded in paradise, or describing believers’ hopes concerning the savior who is expected to come to improve conditions in the world at the end of an era (Schmermbeck 2008: 68–148). As Schmermbeck (2008) has shown, the influence of the piety of surrounding communities, notably mystical Islam, is unmistakable in these prayers. This evidently did not impair the popularity of the genre in traditional Zoroastrian communities, which means that “Zoroastrianism is characterized in praxis by a pluriformity which allowed different religious models to co-exist as equals” (Schmermbeck 2008: 152 [my translation]). In fact, in the 18th and 19th centuries, one sees a highly active production of new *monājāt*. This changed, however, with the advent of the more Western-orientated approach to the religion by Zoroastrian intellectuals in the late 19th and 20th centuries, whose ideal of a “true Zoroastrianism” was

not compatible with a pious popular genre which did not always distinguish sharply between Zoroastrian and other forms of piety. The result was that virtually no new texts were composed, and the recitation of *monājāt* increasingly became the province of the older generation (Schmermbeck 2008: 151–154).

Prayer in Modern Zoroastrianism

In the Zoroastrian culture of modern times (i.e., roughly since the second half of the 19th century), practices and attitudes regarding “prayer” were affected by a number of factors. First of all printed books became available in India and Iran, a development that led to the publication of many prayer books from the mid-19th century onwards. Most of these books were known as *Khorde Avesta* (for a list of these works in Persian, Gujarati, and English, see Schmermbeck 2008: 9–12. Some *Khorde Avestas* give the texts in Avestan script). As a result of this development, believers could recite Avestan and Pāzand texts from books, which broadened the range of prayers that are normally recited. As we have no detailed studies of the prayers that were commonly recited in earlier times we do not know exactly what impact this new factor had, but there can be no doubt that the transition to the use of prayer books must have deeply affected the prayer routines of the communities. Long texts such as *Yašts* came to be widely recited as prayers, particularly on the day of the month devoted to the *Yazad* of the *Yašt* in question, and some Zoroastrians are known to recite the entire contents of the *Khorde Avesta* when they have time, being content at other times with a range of recitations (e.g., *Srōš Bāj*; a *Gāh* prayer; and the *Niyāyišns* to the Sun, Mithra, and Fire; see Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001: 78) that would presumably have been beyond the capacity of those Zoroastrians who could not recite from a written text.

It may be surmised that the availability of such a wealth of prayer texts in languages most believers did not understand weakened any connection in people’s minds between the content of a prayer and the individual’s immediate concerns. Rather, it probably led believers to regard such prayers mainly as *maqθras* whose language gives them an inherent power. The power of a certain prayer or sequence of prayers is often discussed in Parsi discourse. Some people believe it is caused by the “vibrations” of the words. It is common for Parsis to give each other advice regarding the most effective prayers, the best time to recite them, and the right number of repetitions (Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001: 74, 76, 295). Many tales are told about the miraculous efficacy of such prayer routines. They are believed, for instance, to lead to miraculous solutions to problems, to produce effects that cannot be explained by natural means, and indeed to save lives (Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001: 74, 76, 277).

It is also stated sometimes that praying adds to one’s store of merit, which will affect the fate of the soul after death (Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001: 235) and that it gives strength. Other Zoroastrians understand “praying” chiefly as a means to purify one’s mind (Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001: 183), or to bring about a certain state of mind (Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001: 195). Furthermore, some Parsis pray for the (recently) dead, for forgiveness, and to combat evil. Parsis who do not understand Avestan may nevertheless have “favorite” prayers, generally because of the individual’s feelings

about the *Yazad* to whom the prayer is addressed. For many, the fact that they do not understand the meaning of the prayers is not a disadvantage, as one can focus while praying on whatever message one wishes to convey to god. In some cases, discovering the actual meaning of a favorite prayer caused believers to give up praying them (Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001: 242).

Even the recitation of daily prayers has a ritual connotation in Zoroastrianism: One must untie and retie one's *kustī* with the appropriate words, and traditionally one did not pray if one was "impure" (especially during menstruation, but presumably also for other reasons related to personal hygiene and bodily purity). One should face a source of light during prayer: the sun, a little lamp (PGuj. *dīvō*), or a fire kept for this purpose, often in a special room. If one goes to the fire-temple to pray, it is customary to have a bath before setting out, although the pressures of modern life may now make this impossible. It may be because of such ritual connotations, combined with the fact that a prayer sequence may now be as long and complex as a priestly liturgy, that hardly any distinction is made in modern Parsi usage between the concepts of "prayer" and "ritual." "To go to pray" may thus be used for going to a fire-temple to have a ritual performed (Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001: 160, 182). "Prayer," in other words, is often an individual pursuit, but paying a priest to perform a ritual on one's behalf is not regarded as being essentially different. Some Parsi communities hold 'prayer sessions' (PGuj. *hambandagī*) in a fire-temple, in which the whole community recites one or more prayers together, often holding hands (Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001: 51, 212; Stausberg 2004a).

The split between "orthodox" and "modernist" Zoroastrians (Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001) is reflected very clearly in their respective attitudes to prayer. While traditional Zoroastrians, as was shown above, continued to regard prayer largely as a repetition of hallowed words in the sacred language of the community, modernists, in India particularly, thought of prayer in a different way, namely as addresses to the divine beings whose contents are understood by those who pray, and wished to pray in their native language. The modernists, however, are in a minority in India and the more traditional ways mostly prevail. Therefore their views did not lead to a profound alteration of the concept of prayer in Zoroastrianism, however, and prayers continue to be recited in Avestan and Pāzand.

Conclusion

As has been shown above, the Western concept of "prayer" covers a range of Zoroastrian verbal utterances by which humanity may address the *Yazads*. In most cases, it would seem, the ultimate aim is to obtain some object of desire, either by means of supplicatory prayers, prayers recited by priests to accompany ritual actions, or by making use of the supernatural powers inherent in the texts themselves. In Indo-Iranian and early Iranian times such powers were thought to derive from the inherent truth expressed by the utterance. It seems plausible to regard the *Gāthās* themselves as instances of this type of utterance, and besides such great prayers as the *Yaθā Ahū Vairiō*, which is based on Gathic imagery, many Gathic passages came to be used as short individual "prayers."

In the course of time the notion that texts could have powers of their own clearly persisted. As the meaning of Avestan texts became less accessible to those who prayed, such powers apparently came to be associated primarily with the Avestan language, so that the entire *Avesta* came to be regarded as a holy *mąθra*. During or after Sasanian times ‘incantations’ (*nīrang*) were composed that consisted of Middle Persian as well as Avestan formulae, and which were also believed to have inherent powers.

Apart from short supplicatory prayers such as ‘Come to my aid, Mazdā’ (*jasa.mē auuaąj hē mazda*), Zarathustra’s pleas to Ahura Mazdā in the *Gāthās*, and references to the heroes’ prayers for boons in the *Yas̄ts* we have little or no evidence concerning the use of prayers that directly expressed one’s wishes or feelings in early Zoroastrianism. Such prayers did come to be used both in Iran and India in Islamic times, in the form of *monājāt*, devotional texts that could be recited but were more often sung.

Thus we can see how Zoroastrians succeeded in retaining and adapting many of their ancient traditions, while ways were also found to accommodate newer needs felt by the community as a reaction to new social and intellectual conditions.

Further Reading

On the role of Sraoša, and on prayer in earlier Zoroastrianism, see Kreyenbroek (1985). On prayer in Zoroastrian ritual, see Modi (1922). On the “framing *bāj*,” see Boyce and Kotwal (1971). On *monājāt*, see Schmermbeck (2008). On prayer in the modern Parsi community, see Kreyenbroek with Munshi (2001); Choksy and Kotwal (2005).

CHAPTER 21

Purity and Pollution / The Body

Alan V. Williams

Purity reaches to the heights and depths of religious meaning in Zoroastrianism. In his multi-volume study of Zoroastrianism Michael Stausberg begins his chapter “Zoroastrian Purity Rules and Purification Rituals” (2004b: 263) by quoting the remark of the American cultural anthropologist Tanya Luhrmann that, “In some sense Zoroastrianism is no more than a ritualistic commentary upon purity and pollution” (Luhrmann 1996: 101). Stausberg tellingly responds to Luhrmann’s curtly reductionist dismissal of Zoroastrianism: “In fact purity rules are central cognitive patterns of the religious practice of the Religion of Zarathushtra.” It would also be true to say that unless one properly understands such central cognitive patterns in Zoroastrianism, one has little hope of understanding Zoroastrianism. As a general concept, purity may be defined as a state of being free from admixture, and so also in the religious context: Purity is the uncontaminated state. The tautology of this last statement is indicative of the fact that purity and pollution are not capable of definition except as a pair of opposites, whose binary relationship is essential to their meaning. The Zoroastrian understanding of purity is different, however, from that of modern Western culture and is based on the fundamental cosmic and ethical dualism of good and evil, truth and “the lie,” Ohrmazd and Ahreman. The tension between purity and pollution goes back to the origins of this ancient religion and is still a living issue – not to mention sometimes the source of intense controversy – in the modern Zoroastrian communities worldwide. Theory and practice have not remained unchanged, and indeed Iranian and Parsi traditions have come to diverge from one another in certain respects. Moreover, without making any value judgment, one observes that, among modern urban Zoroastrians, often having been displaced over generations from rural and agrarian roots, many of the purity rules and rites of orthodox tradition have fallen into disuse. Similar trends are to be seen in other religious traditions the world over. In many religious communities,

secular scientific thinking, feminist ideas, and other forms of thought have challenged traditional authority structures, and had a severe impact on the practice of rites concerning menstruation and the “purity” of women, for example. With modern knowledge of hygiene, traditional forms of ablution are seen as neither efficacious nor even hygienic. In California for instance, the drinking of freshly squeezed orange juice is seen by some as far purer than the imbibing of traditional ritual substances (see below), however much traditionalists may proclaim the astringent and miraculous powers of what the ancient texts prescribe.

The intricacies of descriptions of purification rituals do not always make for easy reading, yet they are necessary as examples of the main paradigms of Zoroastrian notions of purity. The Zoroastrian tradition espouses noble, moral, philosophical, and theological ideals: some readers will perhaps wonder why such a tradition is concerned with purity rules and bodily “pollutions” at all. Why does it resort to elaborate rituals to mitigate what, from a modern scientific point of view, are merely the processes of organic life? Why does it still perform rituals that require the fastidious administration of material substances (e.g., fire-ash, sand, bull’s urine, water, and the juices of plants) to neutralize such “pollutions” as birth, menstruation, and death – to take three that are considered among the most serious? The simple answer is that the religion of Zarathustra is based upon an ancient vision of the world as a harmony of elements which has been interrupted and *unbalanced* by an invasion of something intrinsically disharmonious. The maintenance of purity is *the symbolic and performative restitution of order in a disorderly world*. The human body, in its cycle of life processes from gestation to decay and death, is the most immediate metaphor of an orderly system under attack. As we shall see in a later section, the Zoroastrian ethos of overcoming evil and disorder, and healing the world in the process of time, can be mapped on to the physical body. The individual, physical body is a model of the communal body, and ultimately of the body of the cosmos itself: minimization of pollution of the body is indicative of minimization of pollution in these other dimensions.

The subject of purity in religious traditions has been the focus of a great deal of attention in recent years, as have also the related themes of the body and ritual pollution. In the last three decades academic fascination has been stimulated, in different but complementary ways, by the groundbreaking work of two British scholars: the social anthropologist Mary Douglas (1921–2007), and the Iranologist and historian of Zoroastrianism, Mary Boyce (1920–2006). Similar in name and origin, they hailed from opposite ends of the academic spectrum: Douglas from the functionalist and symbolist sociological tradition of Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, and Boyce from the philological school of Walter Bruno Henning and Friedrich Carl Andreas. Nearly ninety years ago the Parsi scholar Dr Sir Ervad Jivanji Jamshedji Modi (1854–1933) devoted a central section of his 1922 magnum opus on Zoroastrian ritual practice to the purification ceremonies of *pādyāb*, *nāhn*, *barašnūm*, and *riman* (Pahl. *rēman*), followed by a long section of three more chapters on the consecration ceremonies performed by the temple priest. For more than half a century after Modi, however, Western scholars continued to ignore the subject of purity in their writings about Zoroastrianism – Robert Charles Zaehner (1913–1974), in his 1961 monograph on the history of Zoroastrianism, is merely dismissive when he refers to the *Vīdēvdād*, “with its dreary prescriptions

concerning ritual purity and its listing of impossible punishments for ludicrous crimes" (27). In 1975, however, Mary Boyce devoted a whole chapter to "The Laws of Purity" in the first volume of her *History of Zoroastrianism* (Boyce 1975a). Although the subject of this volume was the prehistory, and earliest observances, of the religion, she thought the "basic usages [i.e., of purity laws] must be primal, originating in paganism and strongly reinforced by Zoroaster's teachings ... even though," as she conceded, "most of the sources are late" (Boyce 1975a: 295). Boyce soon returned to the subject at length when she wrote up her ethnography of the modern Zoroastrians of the Yazdi villages of central Iran (1977: 92–138). A number of learned Parsi priests, following in the erudite tradition of Modi, have also contributed scholarly monographs and editions of texts on purity and pollution, in particular Dastur Firoze M. P. Kotwal (1969). However, in the intervening time, the Western academic world developed a hearty appetite, in contrast to its previous distaste, for everything ritual and purificatory. In many disciplines of the humanities and social sciences the post-modern academy "discovered" the body as a virtually universal symbol of social and psychological cohesion and process. In particular, it had been Mary Douglas, in a series of groundbreaking publications (1966, 1970, 1975), along with anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz, Edmund Leach, Frits Staal, Stanley Tambiah, and Victor Turner, who had persuaded scholars, even in *recherché* orientalist fields such as Iranian studies, to look more closely at *how* purity and pollution rules function and what they symbolize in historical and social contexts. When he wrote his study of purity and pollution in Zoroastrianism, Jamsheed K. Choksy applied some of the analytical theories of Douglas and others to gain insight into Zoroastrian purity and pollution beliefs (Choksy 1989). The title of Choksy's book is highly indicative of his approach, which is as much theological as it is anthropological. However, Albert de Jong, in a nuanced historical study of the long and varied history of the principal Zoroastrian purificatory rite of *barašnūm* (which was also a central subject of Choksy's book), has criticized Choksy for taking a "quintessentially unhistorical" approach to purity rules (de Jong 1999: 307). Choksy is indeed thinking of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1963: 209) when he writes, "The specific pattern described by the purification rituals is timeless, it explains the past and present, as well as the future, providing the rituals with their operational value" (Choksy 1989: 137); but de Jong sees a deeper problem in explaining "every religious act and every religious utterance of a Zoroastrian" as in one way or another "reflecting an identical 'grammar' of that religion, which can best be reconstructed in terms of its views of cosmic history" (de Jong 1999: 307, commenting on Choksy 1989: 111).

Purity and pollution are twin themes which run through almost every aspect of Zoroastrianism: they are present from the cosmogony to the apocalyptic and eschatological conclusion, and in all genres of the religious literature. There are texts, it is true, such as certain books of the compendious Pahlavi *Dēnkard* (3 and 4) that have little to say on material or ritual purity and pollution, but even there the writers are thinking and writing about *theological*, *philosophical*, and *spiritual* consequences of purity and pollution. The key to the pervasiveness of these twin themes is found in two particular Avestan words which orientate the oldest Zoroastrian profession of faith (the *Frauarānē*, Y 12), and which point to the consequent dualistic nature of

Zoroastrian theology: *mazdāiiasna* and *vīdaēuuu*, as in the opening words of the *Frauuarānē* (Y 12.1):

I declare myself a Mazdā-worshiper (*mazdāiiasna*),
a supporter of Zarathustra, hostile to the *daēuuas* (*vīdaēuuu*) ...

The purity rules, pollution taboos, and the general treatment of the body are manifestations of this creedal position, acted out in personal and social behavior.

Zoroastrian fascination with purity harks back to some of the most ancient words of the tradition, in Zarathustra's ancient hymns, the *Gāthās*, *Yasna* 30. There he spoke of the necessity to choose well between two primal spirits: "in thought word and deed they are two: the better and the bad" (Y 30.3), who created "life and not-life" (Y 30.4). Just as the good spirit chose goodness and life, so human beings must choose rightly, says Zarathustra, so that they become those "who shall deliver the Lie into the hands of Truth ... and shall transfigure this world." Zarathustra invokes Mazdā and the other Lords to "be present to me with support and truth so that thoughts may be concentrated where understanding falters..." (Y 30.8–10). In the religious tradition that follows, purification rites and other actions for the purification of the body, souls, and of other physical entities and spaces in priestly and lay life, all follow Zarathustra's instruction to choose well between what is creative of life and goodness and what is inimical to them, although this was interpreted differently in different eras and among different strata of the Zoroastrian tradition. The world is divinely created pure, but has been invaded by impurity: therefore, the highest religious imperative is the re-purification of the world. For thousands of years, Zoroastrians have regulated their personal and social lives by prescriptions that together constitute a system of purity rules and pollution taboos. It is a *system* insofar as 1) it follows a consistent set of explanations of the sources and causes of the emergence of pollution; and 2) it gives an account of the consequences of pollution when it affects beings and inanimate entities (objects, spaces, places, and activities); lastly, 3) it prescribes specific, effective ways of dealing with all known forms of pollution so that the pristine state of purity can be restored. In short, the system of purity rules of the Good Religion derives from three categorical questions:

1. What are the sources of impurity, and how do they contaminate?
2. What are the effects of pollution and how is it transmitted?
3. How is impurity removed?

In this chapter the focus is on the purity rules as they are articulated in the normative, canonical, mythic, theological, and ritual literature, in order to consider why purity, pollution, and the body are considered such important themes in this religion. To build upon and paraphrase a schema of de Jong's (1999: 304–305) about sources for the *barašnūm* ritual, it is suggested that the sources for the general subject of purity fall into seven groups:

1. the *Vīdēvdād*, an undatable text, but certainly not later than 300 BCE, by which time Avestan had become a dead language for the majority of (and possibly all) Zoroastrians (see below);

2. the long gloss to the *PVd* 9.32, reflecting presumably Sasanian tradition;
3. the *Epistles of Manuščihr* and other 9th-century CE Pahlavi texts, including the *Bundahišn* and the *Dēnkard*;
4. 10th-century Pahlavi texts, including the *Šāyest-nē-šāyest* and its supplementary texts, the *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* and of *Ādur-Farnbāg*, the *Rivāyat ī Ēmēd ī Ašawahištān*;
5. 13th–14th-century Persian texts: the *Šaddar-e Našr* and *Šaddar-e Bondaheš*;
6. 15th–18th-century *Persian Revāyats* and *Qešse-ye Sanjān*;
7. 19th and 20th-century texts by Zoroastrian and Western scholars.

The Source of Impurity and the Effects of Pollution

The most articulate Zoroastrian theological texts, written in Pahlavi, define the central challenge of human existence as the need to fight for the good in the battle currently being waged against the forces of evil in the present time of the ‘mixed state’ of existence (Pahl. *gumēzišn*). The opponents at war in the world are personifications of the processes of purification and pollution. The absolute purity of an entity such as the human body and soul, or the element water, is not possible in this *gumēzišn*, and belongs to the time before the great assault (Pahl. *ēbgat[īh]*) upon creation by the Evil Spirit and his forces. Original purity is thus the pristine state of being *un-mixed*. Since the assault, the creations may be returned to a state of purity and rescued from the conditions of the *mixed* state, but only *temporarily*, through ritual practice and other religious action (prayer, devotions). Just as the human soul is being constantly tempted by the demons that prey upon it, so physical pollution constantly finds its way into daily life, in the form of contamination from substances that are regarded as ‘filthy, unclean’ (Pahl. *rēman*) – e.g., blood, excrement, rheum, i.e., watery discharge. The cleansing of personal, domestic, private, and public “pollution,” in other words the business of everyday “purification,” is thus, like moral and spiritual righteousness, a small contribution to an eschatological “fightback” against the Evil Spirit who will one day be vanquished and expelled from the universe. This is the movement towards ‘the Rehabilitation’, *Frašgird*, of the universe.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to turn to the first chapter of the *Greater Bundahišn*, as translated by Mary Boyce (1984b) as the *locus classicus* of the origin of purity and pollution, because it tells in a mythical narrative how evil and pollution first invaded the universe and became the prototypes of all pollutions in the world: It is the fullest religious justification of why purification in this world is always necessary until the end of time.

The account begins:

(1–5) It is thus revealed in the Good Religion that Ohrmazd was on high in omniscience and goodness. For boundless time He was ever in the light. That light is the space and place of Ohrmazd. Some call it Endless Light Ahriman was abased in slowness of knowledge and the lust to smite. The lust to smite was his sheath and darkness his place. Some call it Endless Darkness. And between them was emptiness. (6–10) They both were

limited and limitless: for that which is on high, which is called Endless Light, ... and that which is abased, which is Endless Darkness – those were limitless. (But) at the border both were limited, in that between them was emptiness. There was no connexion between the two. Then both two Spirits were in themselves limited. On account of the omniscience of Ohrmazd, all things were within the knowledge of Ohrmazd, the limited and the limitless; for He knew the measure of what is within the two Spirits. (*GBd* 1.1–10; Boyce 1984b: 45–46)

The Pahlavi word *a-sar*, translated here as ‘endless’ means also ‘beginningless’, i.e., it refers to limitlessness rather than duration, as this is the mythic account of the state of the cosmos “before” the creation of anything, including time. Ohrmazd’s spiritual creation then follows: Having the advantage of omniscient knowledge (*harwis̄p-āgāhīh*) Ohrmazd anticipates that Ahreman would plot evil against him:

(13–14) Ohrmazd by His omniscience knew that the Evil Spirit existed, what he plotted in his enviousness to do, how he would commingle, what the beginning, what the end; what and how many the tools with which He would make an end. And he created in the spirit state the creatures He would need as those tools. For 3,000 years creation remained in the spirit state. (15–17) The Evil Spirit, on account of his slowness of knowledge, was not aware of the existence of Ohrmazd. Then he arose from the deep, and came to the boundary and beheld the light. When he saw the intangible light of Ohrmazd he rushed forward. Because of his lust to smite and his envious nature he attacked to destroy it. Then he saw valour and supremacy greater than his own. He crawled back to darkness and shaped many dev̄s, the destructive creation. And he rose for battle. (*GBd* 1.13–17; Boyce 1984b: 46)

It is important to note the significance of boundaries and limitedness on both sides in this primordial condition. Purity rules in the religious tradition are in essence an attempt to re-establish the primordial separation of good from evil. Ohrmazd creates his spiritual and physical creation and sets a limited time which lasts for 9,000 more years until the defeat of Ahreman. After this ‘the creatures of Ohrmazd will join the limitless, so that they will abide in purity with Ohrmazd for ever’ (*GBd* 1.44; Boyce 1984b: 47). However, in the meantime, Ahreman will make it as difficult as possible for Ohrmazd, and for his spiritual and physical creations, as he *miscreates* (the verb “create” can properly only be used for “Ahuric,” not “Ahremanic,” acts) the anti-creatures; they are of his own devilish making:

(47–9) The Evil Spirit shaped his creation from the substance of darkness, that which was his own self, in the form of a toad, black, ashen worthy of hell, sinful as is the most sinful noxious beast. And first he created the essence of the dev̄s namely wickedness, for he created that creation whereby he made himself worse, since through it he will become powerless. (*GBd* 1.47–49; Boyce 1984b: 47)

What follows in this early part of the *Greater Bundahišn* is the completion of what has been started: The spiritual creation of the seven ‘holy immortals’ (*Av. aməša spənta*, Pahl. *amahraspand*) is matched in the physical creation of the seven material prototypes.

Each holy immortal takes a particular physical creation for his or her own, i.e., pairs up with it: Ohrmazd takes the physical creation of mankind “for his own”; Wahman (‘Good Mind’) takes “all kinds of cattle”; Ardwašīst (‘Best Righteousness’) takes the element of fire; Šahrewar (‘Desirable Dominion’) takes metal; Spandarmad (‘Holy Piety’) takes the earth; Hordād (‘Wholeness’) takes the element of water; and Amurdād (‘Immortality’) takes plants (*GBd* 3.11). *GBd* 4.1 tells of the great disaster that overcame the newly created world when – as Ohrmazd had foreseen in his omniscient knowledge – “the Evil Spirit rose up with the powerful demons to attack the lights.” On the day of Ohrmazd, in the month of Frawardīn (that is, on the first day of the first month) at noon,

Like a fly he rushed upon all creation. And he made the world at midday quite dark, as if it were black night. He made the sky dark below and above the earth (13 ... 28). And he brought a bitter taste to the Water. And he loosed noxious creatures upon the Earth. And he brought poison to the Plant and straightway it withered. And he loosed pain and sickness upon the Bull and Gayomard. Before his coming to the Bull, Ohrmazd gave a narcotic to the Bull to eat, so that its suffering and distress would be less from his blow. Straightway it became weak and ill, and the pain left it, and it died. And the Evil Spirit thought: ‘I have made all the creation of Ohrmazd powerless except Gayomard.’ And he loosed Astvihad upon Gayomard with a thousand death-bringing devs. Then he came to the Fire and mingled with it smoke and darkness. And so he defiled the whole creation. Hell was in the middle of the earth where the Evil Spirit had bored through the earth and rushed in through it. So the things of the material world appeared in duality, turning, opposites, fights, up and down, and mixture. (*GBd* 4.11–28; Boyce 1984b: 50–51)

The poetically phrased ending to this devastating episode of the *Greater Bundahišn* describes not just a primordial, mythic vision, but also the actual, fragile process of birth, decay, and mortality in which life now hangs in the balance of time. This is followed by a matter-of-fact fifth chapter, which records the consequences of the preceding drama, namely “the antagonism of the two spirits,” and portrays in quasi-philosophical language the opposition of every form of existence by a form of anti-existence, e.g.:

... idleness against diligence, sloth against (needful) sleep, vengefulness against peace, pain against pleasure, stench against fragrance, darkness against light ... defilement against cleanness, pollution against purification ... (*GBd* 5.2; Boyce 1984b: 51)

In all the foregoing citations and paraphrases of the cosmogonic myth the source of all pollution in this world is explained as deriving from the primordial metaphysical catastrophe. Ohrmazd manages miraculously to salvage life, beauty, and purity from the devastation wrought by the Evil Spirit. He brings life out of death, as the spilt seed of the dying Gayōmard is purified through the light of the sun, and Mašyā and Mašyānag, the first human couple, grow up out of the earth (*GBd* 14.6). In similar fashion, Ohrmazd retrieves life in multiplicity from the other six prototypical forms: yet, henceforth in the mixed state of 3,000 years, all must suffer the affliction of pollution, decay,

sickness, and death. This is the existential predicament in which humankind finds itself. The *Greater Bundahišn* records:

And the frawahrs of men saw by the wisdom of all knowledge the evil which would come upon them in the world through the Druj and Ahreman; yet for the sake of freedom in the end from the enmity of the Adversary, and restoration, whole and immortal, in the future body for ever and ever, they agreed to go into the world. (*GBd* 3.24; Boyce 1984b: 50–51)

The foregoing mythic narrative gives a metaphysical answer to the question “What are the sources of impurity?” Namely, it is Ahreman and the attack upon the divinely created world. The metaphysical answer is also, in fact, the physical explanation, for in Zoroastrianism there is a *continuity* between the spiritual (*mēnōg*) world and the physical (*gētīg*) world. It thus leads directly to the second part of the original question: *How* do the sources of pollution contaminate? The answer is similar: by the affliction of the demons. Each of the physical creations, metal, earth, water, plant, beneficent animal, righteous humankind, and fire has been created as the embodiment of its corresponding holy immortal (*amahraspand*) and thus each is sacred by nature and to be kept pure. Yet each material creation is very vulnerable to pollution during the ongoing assault of evil on the world in its present state, as each is preyed upon by the demon created by the Evil Spirit in reaction to the divine creation.

The sacred nature of the elemental creations imposes a problem with which Zoroastrians must struggle: water must not be contaminated by the filth of dead matter; fire must not consume the carrion of dead bodies; earth must not absorb them. Again, the beneficent, herbivorous animal may be eaten, but the dead bodies of inedible creatures, such as wild, carnivorous animals, and indeed the human corpse, are intensely polluting, and strong measures are required for the restitution of purity when there have been cases of such contact. The Zoroastrian system has a whole class of demonic ‘noxious creatures’ (Av. *xrafstra-*, Pahl. *xrafstar*) opposed to the beneficent creatures of Ohrmazd. The ‘noxious creatures’ harmful to humans and destructive of their animals and crops are such as snakes, scorpions, locusts, ants, and flies. *GBd* 22 gives details of certain *xrafstars*, such as the silkworm and the honeybee, which ‘Ohrmazd through omniscience diverts to the benefit of creatures’ (my translation), just as he also makes the noxious creatures attack and kill their own species (*GBd* 22.29). The following chapter of the *Greater Bundahišn* details the wolf species, similarly of demonic origin, that includes tigers, lions, panthers, and other predators down to the cat, the owl, and the crab.

There is an extensive demonology comprising arch-devils (the negative forms corresponding to the *amahraspands*), major demons (who are Ahremanic inversions of the Ahuric *yazads* ‘gods’), and many minor fiends. The most important Avestan text on the demons and the rules that must be applied for the maintenance of purity and neutralizing of pollution, is the *Vīdēvdād* (‘The Law against the Demons’), popularly known as the *Vendīdād*. This ancient text, parts of which may predate Zoroastrianism, survives only in a late Avestan recension along with a Pahlavi commentary (on this text, see Skjærvø 2007c). Knowledge of Zoroastrian purity rules is supplemented by an array of Pahlavi books from the Sasanian and early Islamic period down to the 10th century, and also by the Persian *Revāyats* – texts on religious matters sent by priests in Iran to their fellow Zoroastrians in

India from the 15th to 18th centuries. In all these texts many of the “demons” seem, from a modern-day perspective, to be personifications of negative psychological or physiological states, such as Āz ‘lust’, Xēšm ‘wrath’, Nang ‘shame’, Zarwān ‘old age’, and Tab ‘fever’. The demons have a malign influence in effecting the processes of physical, social, and moral disintegration and decay. These influences are literally things that flow into the world, fluid and semi-solid, and out of organic matter. These processes of decomposition are, from the scientific view of a natural ecosystem, necessary for life to continue. However, traditional Zoroastrianism posits a *supernatural* ecosystem, wherein decay is always deemed to be demonic, bringing with it all the physical, moral, and spiritual chaos that originates from Ahreman. Certain pollutions occur vitally as part of the natural processes of life, namely menstruation, sexual activity, emission of semen, conception, gestation, birth, eating, hair and nail growth, urination, and defecation etc. Other pollutions occur as part of the processes of mortality: injury, ageing, sickness, decay, death itself, and decomposition. Both types of pollutions – “lively” and “deadly” – are hedged around with strict rules in ancient, medieval, and pre-modern texts.

Analysis

In this area, of explaining how pollution spreads, and why the maintenance of purity is so important for Zoroastrians, it is useful to have a conceptual map of the Zoroastrian system, in the form of a diagram that accords with the metaphysical / mythological schema outlined above (Figure 21.1). Zoroastrian doctrine exists on the premise that existence is caught in a constant war of opposites. The diagram of this theatre of combat

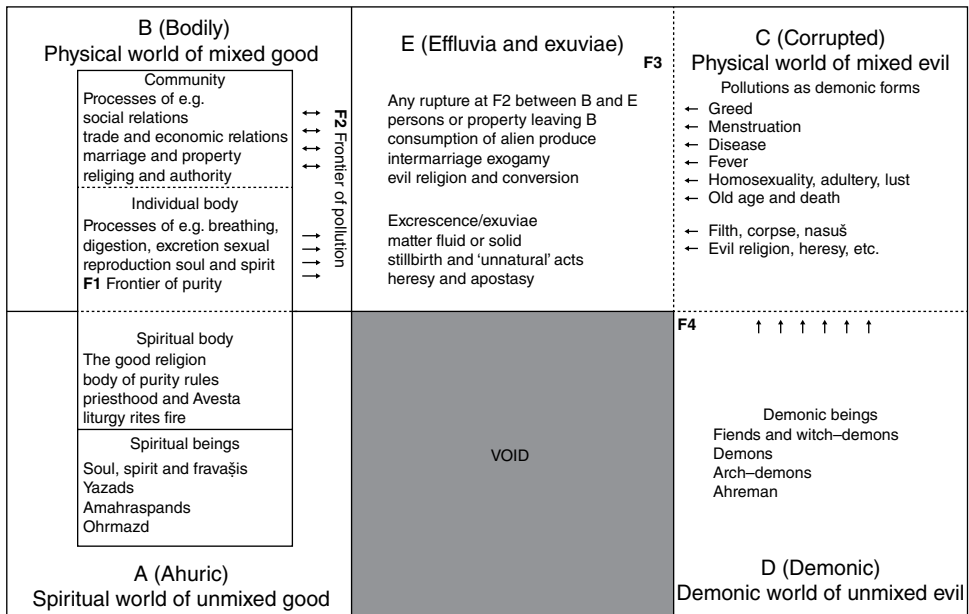


Figure 21.1 A conceptual map of the Zoroastrian purity and pollution system.

is represented as a set of interactions between five domains or territories, which are labeled A–E. Importantly, these domains are separated by four frontiers, denoted F1–F4. The lower half of the diagram is the spiritual state, *mēnōg*, and the upper half the physical state *gētīg*.

In the beginning there was only the realm A (Ahuric), the domain of Ohrmazd, and D (Demonic), the domain of the Evil Spirit, the Lie (*druj*). A and D were separated by emptiness, a void (Pahl. *tuhīgih*): there is no boundary and no meeting between them. In the material manifestation of the world this Void becomes the disputed domain E (see below). Ohrmazd first created his *amahraspands* and the rest of his spiritual creation in A. Ahreman miscreated his broods of demons in D in response.

The domain B (Bodily) is created in the physical state by Ohrmazd – the *gētīg* of mixed good – in which the human being and all the good creations live.

A and B are joined by a frontier F1. The priest may ritually and symbolically cross into A, for which his state of purity must be the highest possible. Similarly in prayer and worship, all Zoroastrians may stand at the threshold of A. F1 is therefore the frontier of purity and holiness, and the entrance to the spiritual world: indeed it is this frontier that the human soul crosses at birth and death. The domain C (Corrupted) is known as the *gētīg* of mixed evil, spawned by Ahreman, which is, conceptually, the origin of all evils that afflict the domain of B. B and C exist in the mixed *gētīg* state for a limited time only.

I have demarcated an intermediate domain E between B and C, opposite and parallel to the no-go area of the Void between A and D. The domain E (Effluvia, i.e., matter that flows out, e.g., discharged blood; and Exuviae, i.e., things that are cast off, e.g., shed skin, hair), however, is the no-man’s-land where the war between purification and pollution is waged. F2 is the frontier of pollution, as it is symbolic of the entrances and exits in the physical body that must be carefully guarded and protected. In the *gētīg* existence the maintenance of the purity of F2 is crucial to the health and survival of the individual and community body in B, and ultimately to the success of Ohrmazd’s creation, because the forces of evil in C rush across F3, having been aborted across F4 from D, unimpeded and attracted, to feed upon all that is discharged into E across F2. So long as Zoroastrians attend scrupulously to the frontiers F1 and F2, then Ohrmazd’s creation in A and B will survive until eschatological victory over Ahreman and the denizens of C and D is won.

One of the things Mary Douglas and other anthropologists have illuminated is the parallelism of notions of the body and its boundaries to those of society. Douglas insisted:

The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system ... We cannot possibly interpret rituals concerning excreta, breast milk, saliva and the rest unless we are prepared to see in the body a symbol of society, and to see the powers and dangers credited to social structure reproduced in small on the human body. (Douglas 1966: 115)

The body in B is not just the physical body, but also the body of the community and society, and therefore F2 is also the frontier across which moral and social pollutions may invade. Prevention of the ingress of pollution into B is thus effected by sealing F2 – religious, sexual, commercial, and other relations were traditionally to be confined

within the boundaries of the community in B. Therefore intermarriage, exogamy, apostasy, conversion into and out of Zoroastrianism were (and sometimes still are) proscribed. The strict maintenance of ritual acts of purification reinforces the fixity of this frontier. However, in organic bodily life, excrescence is a fact of life. It is a Zoroastrian principle that all material that leaves the body is polluted and polluting: Breath, blood, and all other bodily fluids, and solids such as dead skin, nails, and hair, must be carefully disposed of as they leave B across F2. Whole chapters of the *Vendīdād*, and the other texts on purity, are preoccupied with the rite of disposal of the dead and the neutralizing of corpse pollution, as the human corpse is the most polluting of any dead matter, and that of a righteous Zoroastrian priest most of all. The logic for this is that to bring death to such a power for purification requires Ahreman's forces of corruption to come out in full strength. The prayers and actions of the righteous man are the most powerful force of purification in the war against pollution.

The Removal of Pollution

Impurity (Av. *irimant-*, Pahl. *rēmanīh*) is removed by the religious act of purification, by formulae of prayerful words (*nīrang*) and by righteous intention. All three are brought together in the purification rites of Zoroastrianism, of which there are three principal varieties: 1) *Pādyāb*, 2) *Sāde nāhn* and *nāhn-e sī-šūy*, 3) *Barašnūm-ī nō šab* for the removal of increasingly serious pollutions. On all three of these rites readers may consult Stausberg's succinct treatment (2004b: 275–296). Practice of these rites has, however, much decreased in modern times, and in Iran the entire system is no more in place (for brevity's sake I omit discussion of the *rīman* purification rite, which is peculiar to Parsi tradition and was not practiced in Iran, because it does not differ in structure and principle from the rites described).

Pādyāb (lit. 'against water', but meaning 'ritually clean')

Pādyāb is the simplest of all the purification rites to practice, resembling a private ablution. It is also called the *pādyāb-kustī* as part of the rite requires the untying and retying of the sacred girdle, the *kustī* (NP *kos(š)tī*). All Zoroastrians are obliged to wear the *kustī* after their investiture in childhood/adolescence (on Initiation rituals, see Stausberg and Karanjia, "Ritual," this volume). The *kustī* is essential to the *pādyāb*, which is to be performed alone, at specific times of the day, by all Zoroastrians, i.e., upon rising from sleep, after urinating or defecating, before meals, and before each of the five daily prayers. The procedure is as follows:

- (i) A short prayer formula invokes the name of Ahura Mazdā, then the holy prayer of righteousness *Aṣəm Vohū* is recited.
- (ii) The exposed parts of the body, e.g., face, hands, and feet, are washed in water.
- (iii) The *kustī* is untied and ritually retied over the *sedre*, the sacred undershirt, whilst a brief, closing prayer formula is recited.

Sāde nāhn and nāhn-e sī-šūy

Nāhn is a Parsi usage, being Gujarati for ‘bath’, and is a more elaborate rite than *pādyāb*, requiring the administration of a priest, although it usually takes place in the home. In Iran the Persian word for ‘bath’ *ābzan* was replaced by the Arabic–Persian term *ghusl* ‘ablution’ that had come with Islam, but the Zoroastrian practice is altogether different from the Muslim one. Iranian Zoroastrian *ghusl* and Parsi *nāhn* were developed for socio-ritual purificatory purposes (Choksy 1989: 20). The *sāde nāhn* (‘simple’ bath, as distinct from the more complex rite described below) is administered on four main occasions in the human life cycle as a rite of passage purification, necessary to return the individual to a state of ritual purity either before or after major life event:

- (i) to a child before the initiation ritual of putting on the *sedre* and *kustī*;
- (ii) to a bride and groom separately before their marriage ceremony;
- (iii) to a woman forty days after giving birth to a child;
- (iv) to any adult Zoroastrian during the *Frawardīgān* holy days at the end of the year.

The priest in attendance must himself be in a state of high ritual purity, having undergone the purification described under (3) below. He brings to the place of *nāhn* various ritual substances (collectively referred to as *ālāt* ‘instruments, means’ in New Persian) consecrated and unconsecrated bull’s urine (*nīrangdīn* and *gōmēz*), consecrated ash of the sacred fire (PGuj. *hasam*), pomegranate leaves, and other implements (metal bowls and water vessels for pouring water). The latter must be washed and purified with the consecrated ash, water, and *nīrangdīn* before the rite can begin, and a new set of clothes (purified and consecrated by the sprinkling of a little water over them) is placed near the bathing area for the bather to wear after the rite. There are three main stages of the rite which are enclosed by an opening *pādyāb-kustī* and a final retying of the *kustī*, thus:

- (i) *Pādyāb-kustī* is performed by the bather.
- (ii) The bather recites a *bāj*, i.e., an initial framing prayer and is then given to chew a pomegranate leaf (a symbol of fecundity); next he or she performs three times the act of sipping a little *nīrangdīn* (consecrated urine) mixed with a pinch of *hasam* (consecrated ash from a fire at the fire-temple) with a short prayer. The physical consumption of these two most holy substances combined with the mental absorption in the prayer formula is for the physical and spiritual purification of the devotee, who then recites a closing *bāj* prayer and unties and reties the *kustī*.
- (iii) The candidate then says a prayer of confession and repentance, *patēt*.
- (iv) The candidate moves to the bathing area and, after an invocatory prayer, undresses completely, removing also the *sedre* and *kustī*. He or she stands with his or her right hand over the head and recites a series of prayers beginning with the *Srōš Bāj*. Then, according to Modi’s account of the traditional Parsi ritual (Modi 1995 [1922]: 98–101), the ritually purifying agents of the bath are poured by a priest on a long-handled ladle from outside the bathing area.

First the candidate rubs a little *nīrangdīn* over his or her body three times, then does the same three times with a little sand, and finally three times with consecrated water. After the symbolic washing with these three ritual agents, the bath is concluded by the candidate washing from a vessel of water which has been consecrated by the addition of a few drops of *nīrangdīn*.

- (v) The candidate dresses in the new clothes and reties the *kustī* over the *sedre* whilst reciting the necessary prayer formulae.

Jamsheed Choksy (1989) also gives a description of a more elaborate ritual of *nāhn*, called the 'bath of thirty washings' *nāhn-e sī-šūy* in India, and *sī-šūyī* or *sī-šūr* in Iran. The *sī-šūy* was used as a ritual of purification for what were considered the most serious pollutions, such as that suffered by a woman who had given birth to a stillborn child, and was recommended in the Persian *Revāyats* in cases where the *barašnūm* could not be administered (Dhabhar 1932: 234). It is mentioned in the Persian *Revāyats* as a ritual purification for someone who has become *rīman* (Pahl. *rēman* 'filthy, dirty, unclean', cognate with Greek *rheîn* 'to flow' and English 'rheum'). It is used in the Pahlavi and Persian books to describe the state of someone who has been polluted by contact with carrion or bodily refuse (as mentioned above, the term *rīman* was also given by the Parsis to the name of another rite, with a different ritual structure from that of the *sī-šūy*). Boyce has given a brief description of the *sī-šūy* in her accounts of Iranian Zoroastrianism as she found it in "orthodox" Zoroastrian villages in the vicinity of Yazd in the early 1960s, but she adds that by the beginning of the 20th century "among the Parsis ... it was already, it seems, very largely replaced by the *sāde nāhn*" (1977: 313). Choksy gives a full description of the *sī-šūy* in Iranian and Parsi practice, tracing it back to descriptions in the Persian *Revāyats*. Whereas the Iranian *sī-šūy* was undergone at home while the candidate was fasting, among the Parsis "it is usually performed at a desolate spot, such as the premises on which a funerary tower is situated ..." (Choksy 1989: 67). It resembles the ritual form of the *sāde nāhn*, but is more complex: It seems to have been modeled, at least structurally, on the ancient and medieval rite of *barašnūm*, in that it is undergone in an area circumscribed by furrows demarcated to confine the impurity. Here the similarity with the *barašnūm* ends, as the *sī-šūy* is a brief rite, lasting approximately half an hour (whereas the former lasts nine days and nights). The *sī-šūy* has been used to deal with carrion pollutions principally affecting the purity of the laity, and even the serious pollution of contact with a human corpse, as in the Persian *Revāyats* it is reported that corpse bearers would perform this rite of *sī-šūy* in the area designated for *barašnūm* (*barašnūm-gāh*; Dhabhar 1932: 108 and fn. 3). The person undergoing the purification must enter into a ritual space comprising a series of ten furrowed areas. There the candidate must squat naked upon stones placed within each of the furrowed areas, moving forward to the next area after each act of ablution. The candidate must purify him or herself three times with *gōmēz* in each of the first three spaces, with dust in the second three, and with water in the third three (= twenty-seven successive washings). Moving to the tenth and final space, the candidate washes with water three more times and the *sī-šūy* is concluded.

Nowadays the *sī-šūy* is only seldom performed, and as Choksy says, "it is currently administered to extremely orthodox Parsi women on such rare occasions as stillbirth

and miscarriage, because in these cases women are believed to have carried carrion within their bodies” (Choksy 1989: 70). As rigorous and thorough as this ritual of *sī-šūy* may seem to the modern reader, it was not considered as sufficiently effective for priests and others who needed to maintain the highest states of ritual purity for the purposes of performing the religious liturgy and entering the precincts of fire-temples. Priests who had been polluted by carrion and corpses would have to undergo the *barašnūm* rite (see 3 below). Similarly a priest with any bodily injury, i.e., a cut, cannot perform a ritual.

Barašnūm-ī nō šab ('Purification of the Nine Nights')

Here only the briefest account can be given of this immensely complex rite, but it has been amply described elsewhere, especially by Modi (1995 [1922]: 102–153); Boyce (1975a: 313–318; 1977: 111–138); Choksy (1989: 23–53); de Jong (1999: 308–319); Stausberg (2004b: 284–296); see also Hartman (1980: 26–27 and plates XXVIII–XXX). Instructions for the conduct of the *barašnūm* appear first in the *Vīdēvdād*, chapters 8, 9, and 19, and its Pahlavi commentary, throughout certain of the Pahlavi books, and in the Persian *Revāyats*. It has survived to this day in a form that is recognizably similar to the most ancient descriptions. It is known from a series of three letters from a 9th-century CE orthodox high priest, Manuščihr, to his priestly brother, Zādspram, whose attempts to simplify the *barašnūm* ritual were staunchly resisted. Edward W. West, the 19th-century translator of this most difficult of Pahlavi texts, explains the significance of the brothers' dispute (West 1882: xxvi):

The matter in dispute between Zādspram and the orthodox Mazda-worshippers may seem a trivial one to people of other religions, but, inasmuch as the ceremonial uncleanness of a person insufficiently purified after contact with the dead would contaminate every one he associated with, the sufficiency of the mode of purification was quite as important to the community, both priests and laity, as avoidance of breach of caste-rules is to the Hindū, or refraining from sacrifices to heathen gods was to the Jew, the early Christian, or the Muhammadan. And much more important than any disputes about sacraments, infallibility, apostolic succession, ritual, or observance of the Sabbath can possibly be to any modern Romanist or Protestant.

This point of West's corroborates de Jong's argument (1999: 329–330) that the *barašnūm*, in its earliest interpretations, was a ritual of reintegration, and indeed that the later, vicarious *barašnūm*, the main focus of de Jong's study, took place in a society in which individual autonomy was compromised by the links joining parents and children, husbands and wives, laymen and priests and, of course, the living and the dead.

The name *barašnūm* is derived from Av. *barəšnū-* 'top' and refers to the longest, most intricate and exacting of purification rites in the Zoroastrian religious tradition. The primary objective of the rite is to drive out Nasu (Av., Pahl. Nasuš), the corpse demoness, from persons who had suffered grievous pollution, i.e., that caused by contact with a corpse. It has been both, as Choksy puts it (1989: 24), a religio-ritual purification

(i.e., for priests to raise their ritual purity to the level required for their religious duties) and a socio-ritual purification (i.e., for all Zoroastrians to regain the highest state of purity after pollution by contact with carrion). In Iran it had functioned as both, whereas in India only priests now undergo it for religio-ritual purposes. Priests would frequently have to undergo the *barašnūm* in order to purify themselves for the performance of the *Yasna* and other liturgical rites. As its full name *barašnūm-ī nō šab* denotes, it is a prolonged ritual, imposing on the candidate a regime of seclusion within the confines of the ritual precinct *barašnūm-gāh* and a nearby chamber for a period of nine days and nights. The reason for such isolation is that the pollution was considered so severe as to prohibit any contact with any of the terrestrial, physical creations: fire, water, earth, beneficent animal, plant, righteous man, and righteous woman. The sky alone is unaffected by the pollution, and indeed the *barašnūm-gāh* was traditionally a roofless place, remote from human habitation, where nothing living grows and where the sun may quickly desiccate and bleach the human remains. The *barašnūm-gāh* is a walled area (circular in Iran and rectangular in India) and its ritual precincts are drawn out on a north–south axis in Iran, west–east in India, within a series of areas demarcated by furrows (Av. *karša-*, Pahl. *kaš*). North was traditionally considered to be the direction of hell, south heaven – an idea that is perhaps related to the spatial orientation of ritual performance towards the rising sun, hence, north being left (i.e., “sinister”).

The design of the ritual precinct and the number of these areas have changed over time from ancient to modern usage, but the principle seems to be that the *barašnūm-gāh* acts symbolically as a temporary container of the *Nasuš* pollution, from which it could be progressively expelled from the world as the candidate underwent purification and moved forward in the *barašnūm-gāh*. In the most ancient version of the ritual, a pit was dug in each of the areas into which the candidate was obliged to enter. Subsequently these pits were replaced by an arrangement of a series of stones, which were intended to separate the candidate from contact with the element of earth. As Choksy has explained, there is an inverse parallelism between the symmetric, layered, enclosed structure of the *barašnūm-gāh* and the arrangement of liturgical texts in the *Yasna* ‘sacrifice’ ritual (see Choksy 1989: 27, after Windfuhr 1987: 147–149). The ritual differs in form according to ancient, medieval, and modern accounts of it, but, in principle, it can be briefly described as following this general pattern (following Choksy’s account in 1989: 28–29):

- (i) The *rīman* (‘polluted person’) first drank some sips of *nīrang* then
- (ii) naked, entered the enclosure from the north, moved south towards the first area and squatted.
- (iii) The *rīman* was purified by the administration of *gōmēz* poured by a priest standing outside the area, from a long-handled ladle. In a strict, set order the *rīman* washed each part of the body from the head down to the toes, conscious that the corpse demoness (*Nasuš*) was being chased down the body.
- (iv) The *rīman* moved forward into the second area and repeated the ablution with *gōmēz* five more times, each time moving forward.
- (v) The *rīman* next purified his/her body with dust fifteen times and waited till all the *gōmēz* had dried.

- (vi) The *rīman* moved forward to the last three areas and washed with water three times;
- (vii) The *rīman*'s body was, according to the most ancient account, then fumigated with sandalwood, benzoin, aloe and pomegranate and then went into seclusion for the remaining nine nights and days. In ancient and medieval accounts the candidate's body was purified with *gōmēz* and water on the fourth, seventh, and tenth mornings, after which the candidate regained ritual purity and was able to return to the Zoroastrian community and make contact with the natural elements.

An account of the *barašnūm* as practiced in rural 20th-century Iran is given by Boyce (1977: 111–138). Helpfully, in a chapter devoted to the ritual of *barašnūm*, Choksy (1989) describes ancient, medieval, and modern practice, with attention to differences between the Iranian and Parsi rite in the modern period, complete with diagrams, a photograph, a sketch, and information tables.

The first two examples of purification rite in A and B above are different only in intensity and duration, rather than in symbolism and structure.

Pādyāb-kustī = [prayer formula (*bāj*): [ablution (water)]: [untying and retying the *kustī*]: [*bāj*].

Nāhn = [*Pādyāb-kustī*]: [*bāj*]: internal ablution (*nīrangdīn*): *kustī*: *patēt* prayer: *kustī*: *bāj*: external ablution (*gōmēz*, sand, water, *nīrangdīn*) *kustī*, *bāj*.

The common structure is that a pair of *bāj* encloses the whole ritual, and always precedes an act of ablution; untying and retying the *kustī* succeeds ablution, and is followed by *bāj*. This is a familiar procedure in Zoroastrian practice: Sacred words always precede and follow ablution and *kustī*. The exception is found in the paradigm of the *barašnūm* rite, for initially the *rīman* candidate is so polluted that ablution alone is required by him or her, prayers and *kustī* being forbidden. Whereas the administering priest prays for the *rīman*, the *rīman* is preoccupied with the act of ablution only:

Barašnūm = [Internal ablution (*nīrangdīn*): [multiple external ablutions (*gōmēz*): [multiple external ablutions (dust): [multiple external ablutions (water): [fumigation].

Outside the *barašnūm-gāh*, during the remaining nine days and nights, prayers and *kustī* were resumed, in fact were essential for the protection and purification of the *rīman*.

Conclusion

The religio-ritual and socio-ritual rites of purity and the general code of purity behavior in daily life are all consonant with the myth and doctrine of Zoroastrianism's most ancient texts. Modern studies of the structure and symbolism of religious purity codes across the world have shown that they are a rich vein of religious, social, and cultural

expression. Such is the expressive potential of purity rules that we encounter them in the most unexpected contexts. For example in the 16th-century Persian text *Qeṣṣe-ye Sanjān*, which tells the story of the migration of Iranian Zoroastrians to India after the Arab conquest, to become the first “Parsis” in India, it is said that they were first greeted on arrival by a Hindu prince who asked their leader, a Zoroastrian priest, to tell him of the secrets of their religion before he would grant them refuge in his land. In his reply, the priest speaks of the religion for eighteen couplets, of which nine are devoted entirely to the purity of women in menses and stillbirth. Clearly, the probity and rectitude of the whole community and its religion are most fully expressed symbolically in the priest’s nine couplets on the purity rules of women (see Williams 2009: 87–91, 178–180). This example is just one of hundreds that could be brought to show that purity and pollution are not just signifiers of holiness and its opposite but, as Mary Douglas wrote, echoing Durkheim a century ago, “The dangerous powers imputed to the gods are, in actual fact, powers vested in the social structure for defending itself, as a structure, against the deviant behaviour of its members” (Douglas 1975: 54–55). In short, pollution rules maintain order, at every level from the body physical, to the body social and, so Zoroastrians believe, the body cosmic.

Further Reading

Several *Encyclopædia Iranica* articles relate to Zoroastrian purity and pollution. Those in print or online (at www.iranicaonline.org) include: *Pādyāb*, vol. I, fasc. 3: 226; *Bāij*, vol. III, fasc. 5: 531. The chapter “The Laws of Purity” in Boyce (1975a) is essential reading and supplements

Modi (1922). Choksy (1989) is a book-length treatment of the subject, which is qualified by the historical studies of de Jong (1999) and Stausberg (2004b). Most recently, de Jong (2013b) has written a substantial essay on purity and pollution in ancient Zoroastrianism.

CHAPTER 22

Rituals

Michael Stausberg and Ramiyar P. Karanjia

Many intellectuals harbor a long-standing resentment against ritual, which is often perceived as dull, redundant, reactionary, and standing in the way of progress and enlightenment. Since the so-called “performative turn” in the humanities and social sciences in the late 1960s, however, ritual has assumed a key role in analyzing and theorizing culture. In line with this, religions are no longer thought of as belief systems but as more or less coherent assemblages of things to be done materially, as embodied and spatial processes that constitute social reality. Accordingly, in the study of Zoroastrianism ritual has emerged as a prominent topic (e.g., Stausberg 2004d).

For the study of Zoroastrian rituals in pre-modern times, we mainly rely on textual sources, mainly composed and transmitted by priests, but there are also secondary reports by non-Zoroastrian authors that sometimes provide insights into practices not covered by the Zoroastrian sources. For the modern and contemporary period, we can draw on a much richer set of sources such as direct observation and interviews. In this chapter, we combine historical and contemporary perspectives; accordingly, we will address change and variation in the historical development of Zoroastrian rituals. At the same time, we seek to point to some characteristic features of Zoroastrian rituals such as the importance of priests and the significance of text. In addition to the priestly rituals and their prescriptions for the ritual conduct of life the chapter will also survey biographical transition ceremonies (initiations, weddings, funerals).

Terminology

In modern Western languages, “ritual” is a generic term commonly understood to refer to a specific class or type of actions or events. Some typical features include formalism, traditionalism, invariance, rule-governance, and dense symbolism (Bell 1997). Most

Zoroastrians would probably share this understanding. In pre-modern Zoroastrian source languages, however, there is no single term conveying that kind of generic meaning. The Avestan verbal root *yaz-* means lit. ‘offer sacrifice’ or ‘to worship’ (MP *yaštan*); typically, this action is addressed to some deity (in the accusative case) and occurs through some instrument or offering (in the instrumental case). The gerundive of this root, *yazata-* (‘one to be worshiped’; MP *yazd*), refers to the class of beings whose divine status corresponds to being objects of such sacrifice or worship. The Avestan noun *yasna-* (MP *yasn*), derived from the root *yaz-*, is either translated as ‘adoration’, ‘praise’, ‘worship’, or, somewhat more specifically, as ‘sacrifice’. At the same time, the word *yasna-* refers both to a specific ritual and the text recited during its performance. The semantics of the related Middle Persian words *yazišn* (often referring to a sacrificial ritual; Malandra 2010) and *yašt* operate similarly (and the latter often seems to refer to the *Yasna* ritual; Shaked 2004). In addition, there is a series of technical terms for ritual matters, but there is no generic term for “ritual.” In Gujarati, the general term used for Zoroastrian priestly rituals is *kriyā-kām*, which is a compound of *kriyā* ‘act’ and *kām* ‘work’.

Reform and Change

Anti-ritual rhetoric is a recurrent issue in religious reform movements, which often seek to abandon, replace, or reinterpret established ritual practice. The modern history of Zoroastrianism has similarly been deeply affected by such developments. Since the late 19th century, in India so-called “reformists” first sought to simplify life-cycle ceremonies and to make them less of a financial burden. Later on, the meaning of the rituals and their religious significance became fundamentally challenged, in particular by the priest Dr Manekji Nusservanji Dhalla (1875–1956), who proposed to make Zoroastrian rituals more appealing, for example by introducing sermons and using English or Gujarati translations instead of the Avestan texts (incomprehensible to all but scholars and some priests); Dhalla also sought to redefine the role of the priest as a learned educator and pastor (Dhalla 1975). While these initiatives had only limited impact in India, modern Iran has seen profound ritual change, mainly in the form of the abolishment of several rituals, ritual proscriptions and ritual institutions such as the funerary structures and a redefinition of the social role and hierarchical structure of the priesthood (Stausberg 2002c, 2004b, 2012a; Ringer 2011).

Yet, there have been several instances of discussions or even disputes on ritual practice in pre-modern Zoroastrian history, some prominent examples being:

- the violent controversy on the religious calendar (which is instrumental for correct ritual performance) during the 18th and 19th centuries (see Rose, “Festivals and the Calendar,” this volume)
- the numerous ritual instructions on rituals sent by Iranian priests to their Indian counterparts from the late 15th to the late 18th centuries in the *Revāyat* literature in Persian (see Sheffield, “Primary Sources: New Persian,” this volume)
- the attempted reform of the *barašnūm* ritual of purification (see Williams, “Purity and Pollution / The Body,” this volume) intended by the late 9th-century CE priest

Zādspram, the high priest of Sirjān, but resisted by his brother Manuščihr, the high priest of Kermān

- the re-formation of an inherited sacrificial tradition which appears to have been at the very origin of Zoroastrianism (see Cantera, “Ethics,” this volume).

Not all ritual change is well documented, however, and even some of the most dramatic changes are difficult to reconstruct even though they have occurred during the more recent past. Consider the case of animal sacrifice.

Animal Sacrifice

From Indo-Iranian religion Zoroastrianism inherited the practice of animal sacrifice and the *Gāthās* are nowadays by some scholars interpreted as elaborations on sacrificial ideology and poetry (see, e.g., Cantera, “Ethics,” this volume). The practice of animal sacrifice is widely attested in secondary sources on ancient Iranian religion, in particular Greek reports on Persian religion (Herodotus, Strabo), and in older Zoroastrian primary texts (de Jong 2002; Malandra 2010). Sacrifices serve as gifts to the gods, who are pleased or in need of sacrifices, and who return favors to the sacrificers.

Priestly texts such as the *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* and the *Nērangestān* specify which animals are suitable and unsuitable for sacrifice. Dogs and the cockerel (a bird related to the god Sraoša) were excluded, and so were animals classified as *xrafstra* (MP *xrafstar* ‘noxious creatures’, i.e., animals associated with the anti-creation of Ahreman, such as reptiles, insects, and predators like cats and wolves). Young animals such as lambs, young goats (kids), and calves were not admissible. When killing the animal, it was to face the fire and a dedicatory formula was recited in honor of Vohu Manah, the Aməša Spənta linked to cattle. Except in the case of fish and birds, the head of the animal, or parts thereof, in particular the tongue, was consecrated to the deity Haoma. Some of the fat was offered to the fire and the meat was distributed among the priests, the patrons, and the participants. Sacrifice was not an extraordinary ritual, but the only lawful mode of slaughtering animals. The consumption of meat was therefore inseparable from the performance of sacrifice (de Jong 2002).

For as yet unknown reasons (the influence of Indian ideas or the impact of colonialism?), animal sacrifice was abandoned during the 19th and 20th centuries in India. As a result, the consumption of meat was decoupled from its ritual context. Still in the early 20th century, as reported by Ramiyar Karanjia’s grandfather, in rural areas young priests and priest trainees of Gujarat were called to say a ritual formula, a *nīrang* (see Kotwal and Kreyenbroek, “Prayer,” this volume), when people slaughtered chickens; as others reported, small animals and the heads of animals were consecrated in the funerary ceremonies on the morning of the fourth day. In the mid-20th century, the presence of a priest was still required for lay sacrifices performed in Iran (Boyce 1977: 245, 253, 259). In Iran, the sacrificial practice has endured in connection with certain festivals, but the requirement of only eating meat from “lawfully” sacrificed animals has been abandoned. When slaughtering animals in ritual contexts Zoroastrians whom Michael Stausberg talked to at a shrine near Yazd in 2002 made it a point that this

should not be misunderstood as being a sacrifice (where they used the Islamic term *qorbāni*). Nevertheless, the slaughter of animals at shrines often still follows ritual procedure by *nīrang* being pronounced on the animals.

The Art of Words

In the 5th century BCE, Herodotus remarked that it was not the custom of the Persians to perform a ritual without a magus; according to his report, the magus was standing close to the sacrificial setting, all the while singing a “theogony” (*Histories* 1.132). In fact, the ritual art of Zoroastrian priests is primarily a verbal one. For, whatever else they are, Zoroastrian rituals, even those performed by women in Iran (Phalippou 2003; Kalinock 2004) are verbal events, requiring recitation of texts. In the case of Iranian women, these folk or fairy tale-like narrations are recited in the dialect spoken by Iranian Zoroastrians, Dari (not to be confused with Afghan Persian), whereas the rituals administered by the priesthood draw mainly on the priestly texts in Avestan and Middle Persian. Apart from performing rituals on behalf of their patrons (mainly the laity), the priests are also educators; teaching the basic elements of the religion starts with transmitting the basic formulae such as the *Yaθā Ahū Vairiīō* (*Y* 27.13; see also Kotwal and Kreyenbroek, “Prayer,” this volume). These formulas are used throughout the entire register of rituals, from a short private prayer to the most elaborate priestly ceremonies. The more elaborate the rituals, the more texts need to be memorized and recited. While the Avestan texts eventually were written down, the manuscript tradition basically had an auxiliary function, not so much serving as an independent medium of learning and reflection, but as a means of supporting and strengthening the priestly art of words. (In line with the ritual reforms mentioned above, Iranian priests are now mainly reading the texts from books and so do around a third of Parsi priests.) While many of these texts are proclamations of worship, they likewise function as a corpus of revelation, which is not preached but verbally and gesturally executed. Mistakes in the verbal and non-verbal performance undermine the cosmic order and strengthen the evil powers (amounting to “demon-worship”; e.g., *N* 52.18).

In addition to these verbal acts of worship-revelation, priestly rituals also engage non-verbal acts such as gestures and actions and material things such as instruments and substances, which, in ritual practice, are used in coordination with the flow of ritual speech. For example, gestures of veneration of Ahura Mazda or rejection of Ahreman accompany the tying of the cord in the basic *pādyāb-kustī* rite of purification (see Williams, “Purity and Pollution,” this volume) and plants are crushed and mixed with liquids by the officiating priest in the *Yasna* liturgy (see below).

Priesthood and Laity

For active professional priests in India (less so in Iran and not at all so in the overseas communities), rituals are their daily occupation, be it as performers, supervisors, or trainers. Parsi priests spend many hours a day in a temple. Temples are, however, not a

necessary precondition for rituals, since any ritually pure space is considered sufficient, but a pure place is a requirement. "Ritually pure" means that the place is free from ritually polluting objects (dirt and dead matter) and persons (including women during menstruation and non-Zoroastrians) and that it has been ritually purified prior to the performance of the ritual. The preference for temples, instead of priests' homes, is a more recent development as most of the approximately 160 fire-temples in South Asia were erected in the period from 1783 to the beginning of World War II (Giara 2002).

Priests perform rituals as acts of worship on behalf of their patrons or customers. In pre-modern times, astrology and other acts of divination and crisis management (including healing) played a greater role in priestly duties than today. The priest-laity relations can be organized in spatial or personal terms. In Iran, there was, and partly still is, a spatial form of organization where priests were assigned to a certain village or community for a certain number of years; in theory, there were cyclical redistributions of the priests' assignment, but they could also be auctioned off. In India, with the spread of the Parsi communities across Gujarat, the priesthood also adopted a spatial division, into so-called *panths*, where each *panth* would be in charge of one region of Gujarat. Outside of Gujarat, after the further spread of the Parsis to Mumbai and other parts of the subcontinent and the world (see Hinnells, "The Zoroastrian Diaspora," this volume), the division in five *panths* mainly plays a genealogical role. In the smaller settlements, including the diaspora, there is often only one or a handful of priests, who then effectively serve as community priests. In larger settlements such as Mumbai, however, many people have personal affiliations with a certain priest or priestly family and this relationship can endure over several generations. This family priest is called a *panthaki*, but this word is also used to refer to a priest in charge of the priestly duties at a fire-temple. (Most fire-temples are organized as trusts and the *panthaki* is appointed by the trustees who are lay Zoroastrians or non-practicing priests.) In fact, this semantic confluence may be due to the fact that the temple *panthaki* often simultaneously serves many families attending his temple.

The priests make their living through the support they earn from the laity who are expected to make donations, or pay for the performance of rituals. Most of the priestly liturgies are performed in memory of departed persons, be it as part of funerary ceremonies or as memorial services timed in accordance with the dates of death (see below). Some are also held as blessings, but even these are typically held in memory of departed ones. In India, it is part of the duties of the *panthaki* to ensure that these commemorative rituals are performed appropriately.

While there is some evidence from Sasanian times that women could fulfill priestly functions (Elman 2006b), traditionally being ordained a priest is a male privilege. Moreover, the priesthood is a genealogically separate class, i.e., only sons of priests can be ordained as priests and all sons from priestly lineages have the right to become priests, provided they have no bodily impairments and have undergone the necessary training. This practice continues the pre-Islamic Iranian societal structure, which knew several separate classes, among them the priesthood. Marriages with girls from the laity had been discouraged in the past up to the middle of the last century. Commensality with the laity was clearly the exception, but these restrictions are now limited to the ritual sphere only.

One of the worst sins enumerated in various writings is doubt (Pahl. *gumān*) in religious matters; this includes doubts about the efficacy of the priestly rituals; in fact, a skeptical attitude undermines their value for the eschatological reckoning. On the face of it, the polemic against doubts and the ordeals (as reportedly undergone by the 4th-century priest Ādurbād ī Mahraspandān) or travels to the other world (as reportedly undertaken by Ardā Wirāz) attest the existence of such doubt. While people may not always have been convinced by or satisfied with the services provided by Zoroastrian priests, we have no pre-modern sources that would directly articulate such reservations. But in late 19th-century western India some modern intellectuals, trained in Western-style institutions, articulated a sharp critique of the priesthood for their alleged ignorance, superstition, and greed (e.g., Malabari 1889). Dissatisfaction with the priests seems to have been widely spread and the priesthood has bemoaned a loss of its social status. Economic and societal modernization resulted in a sharp decrease in the number of active professional priests both in India and Iran through the 20th century.

While there were religious schools in pre-Islamic Iran, namely the *hērbedestān* (see Kotwal and Kreyenbroek 1992), in pre-modern India and Iran it seems that practicing priests learned their art by apprenticing with elder priests or practicing at specific fire-temples. In the mid-19th century more formal institutions were started in western India to add a further layer of education to their traditional training. The second decade of the 20th century saw the opening of two schools for priests, but nowadays secular education is offered in addition to training in ritual matters. At present, both institutes are run as boarding schools, having fewer than thirty students in total.

The main Avestan word for priest is *āθrauuuan-* (Ved. *átharvan*). *Vd* 10 lists the ten utensils carried by the *āθrauuuan-*, some of which are still used today in priestly rituals (see below). The Avestan *aēθrapaiti-* (MP *hērbed*) was something like a priestly teacher or missionary, but the word came later to be used for a general category of priests (Kreyenbroek 2004). While Greek and Latin texts refer to the Iranian specialists as *magos/magus*, this word is not clearly attested as referring to priests in the Avestan texts. The word appears as *makuš* in the Elamite Persepolis Fortification Tablets, where one also finds the word *šatin* used for priests, and as *magu* in the Old Persian inscription of Darius I (DB), where it does not necessarily indicate priestly functions. The word is also attested in Babylonian and Aramaic sources (Dandamaev 2012). In Parthian, it is rendered as *mgw*. In Pahlavi writings, the word *mowbed* (originally ‘chief of the *magi*’) has become a standard designation for Zoroastrian priests (continued by NP *mūbad*). As witnessed by this semantic development and the emergence of a further category of priests, the *mowbedān mowbed* (‘chief of chiefs of the *magi*’), modeled on the royal title *šāhānšāh* (‘king of kings’), during the Sasanian reign the priesthood underwent a process of hierarchization. In pre-Islamic times, the duties performed by the *magi* and their derivatives were not limited to ritual and theology but covered a variety of civic tasks in education, the judiciary, and politics. A further legal and religious office was that of the *dastwar* (MP ‘authority’, NP *dastūr*). Some texts declare that all Zoroastrians had to elect a *dastwar* as a personal authority and point of spiritual and moral reference, whose guidance they were supposed to follow (Kreyenbroek 1994b). The New Persian sources presuppose a threefold ranking of the *hirbad*, *mūbad*, and *dastūr*, each with specific duties (now all restricted to the religious/ritual sphere). In India, in contemporary

usage, each person who is initiated in the priesthood is referred to as an *ervad*, but only priests regularly practicing rituals in the fire-temple are called *mūbad*. *Dastūr* is a title given to very prominent priests, typically learned priests serving at fire-temples of the highest degree, the *Ātaš Bahrām* (see Choksy, “Religious Sites and Physical Structures,” this volume). The *dastūr* is often invited to perform initiations and weddings (see below) or to preside over other public celebrations, but does not perform any inner liturgies (see below); rather, he functions as a supervisor and manager. The opinion of the learned *dastūrs* is often sought in controversies surrounding the religion, but despite the recent formation of a Council of *Dastūrs* they often do not agree on a common policy even though they tend to agree on most matters.

In Iran, during the second half of the 20th century, these different titles have become obsolete. This reflects the policy of an overarching simplification of the ritual repertoire. The more prestigious priests in Tehrān have redefined their roles primarily as public interpreters of the religion and as guides and teachers. Nowadays, the senior member of the Tehrān Council of Priests (*kankāš-e mūbadān-e Tehrān*) is acknowledged as the most authoritative priest. The abyss separating laity and priesthood in two different classes or “castes” was revoked when, after the Islamic Revolution, persons from non-priestly families were admitted to the priesthood. Formally, these priests are called *mūbadyār*, i.e., ‘assistant priest’, but the distinction from the traditional priests is de facto of little importance. Recently, even women have been admitted as *mūbadyār* (see also Rose, “Gender,” this volume).

The Ritualization of Daily Life

Most contemporary Zoroastrians regard their religion in ethical terms, as a philosophy exhorting them to good thoughts/words/deeds based on individual choice. Priestly writings from pre-modern times, however, especially texts in New Persian such as the *Šaddars* and the *Revāyats*, seek to regulate the conduct of life by prescribing a great number of rituals.

In this way, the daily life of believers becomes ritualized from early morning to late at night: Rising from sleep one should start with a brief ritual of purification and the recitation of several prayers and when going to bed at night one should recite a confession of sins and an *Ašəm Vohū*, which one should also recite each time when turning on the other side at night (see Kotwal and Kreyenbroek, “Prayer,” this volume). The days are divided into five ritual periods (*gāh*), two during the night and three during daytime (with sunrise, noon, and sunset as the main turning points). Each of these five periods is governed by a divine model/ruler (*ratu*) and each of these five units requires the performance of a given set of prayers/rituals centering on the *pādyāb-kustī* ritual of (self-) purification (see Williams, “Purity and Pollution / The Body,” this volume). The consecrated fires must be taken care of in each *gāh* (ritual period of the day) by a specific ritual known as *bōy-dādan* (‘giving fragrance’) in which a priest offers seven to nine sticks of babul wood or, on special occasions or for special fires, sandalwood along with the recitation of the *Ātaš Nīyāyišn* (‘Praise of Fire’), during which bells are rung three or nine times at the words *dušmata*, *dužūxta*, *dužwaršta* (‘bad thoughts, bad words, bad

deeds'). This gesture is believed to dispel evil. In Iran the ringing of the bell is not done, the ritual has been simplified, and it is no longer performed in each of the five *gāh*.

Daily behavior involving some form of pollution, such as going to the toilet, required ritual purification. Even daily meals were ritualized, a practice nowadays only observed by practicing priests under specific obligations. To do this, one uses a ritual technique of framing known as taking/leaving the *bāj* (MP *wāz griftan/be guftan*, NP *bāj gereftan/gozārdan*, PGuj. *bāj levi/mukvi*); here, an action (e.g., a meal) is ritualized by reciting the first part of a formula before it (i.e., one "takes the *bāj*") and the remainder of that formula is recited (i.e., one "leaves the *bāj*") after that action (e.g., when the meal is completed). When the ritual frame is set by "taking the *bāj*" one should refrain from speaking (or only communicate without opening the mouth), so that meals were in practice taken in silence. This ritual technique (discussed extensively by Boyce and Kotwal 1971) is also used as a means of structuring more complex rituals: different parts of the liturgies are framed or packed as different units by being organized in this manner. The difference, here, is that the priests speak inside the frame set by the *bāj*, but in a different language, the exalted status of which is thereby established. So, while the formulae for taking and leaving the *bāj* are in Middle Persian/Pāzand, the ritual recitation is in Avestan, and no other language may be used while the frame is set.

The year is another temporal unit that on the one hand governs the performance of rituals and that on the other hand requires these celebrations and is thereby constructed ritually. On the community level the celebration of the six *gāhānbār* and the interlinked festivals of the souls (*Farvardīgān/Muktād*) and New Year (*Nowrūz/Navroz*) is considered mandatory; the *gāhānbār* play a much greater role in Iran than in India and so do some of the festivals for individual deities (such as *Mehregān* and *Tīrgān* in Iran, while the *Ābāngān*, popularly translated as 'Birthday of the Waters' is more prominent in India); also Zarathustra's birthday is celebrated widely in Iran (see also Rose, "Festivals and the Calendar," this volume). In addition to some public ceremonies such as priestly liturgies, joint sponsored meals, and speeches, all these festivals are mainly celebrated as family events. In addition, each family will celebrate the annual days of their departed members by having some priestly liturgies performed. In contrast, birthdays have less religious significance and are typically celebrated without any priestly participation.

The daily and annual performances occur recurrently. Also crisis-resolving rituals like formulae recited for the recovery of health or liturgical celebrations of happy incidents can be performed repeatedly. In addition, there are non-recurrent/unique life-cycle events marking the biography of a Zoroastrian. Among these life-cycle celebrations birth is celebrated less (but the mother needs to undergo a ritual of purification). On the other side of the lifespan, death and the funerary rituals (see below) are the key axis of ritual activities in Zoroastrianism. Not only is an extensive series of priestly liturgies celebrated during the days and nights after the physical death of a person, male and female alike, but most priestly celebrations are held on annual or monthly days of commemoration and dedicated to the memory of one or several departed and ancestors. Initiations and marriages (see below) fall into another category. In India, they are known as "auspicious occasions." These festivities actively involve the female family

members, who perform some specific rites of transition and enhancement by using a set of specific “auspicious” objects such silver trays with, among other things, coconuts, a metal cone, and a rose water sprinkler; public shared meals are part of these celebrations.

Priestly Liturgies

As stated above, the key element in the priestly rituals is the recitation of Avestan texts, with some passages in Middle Persian (Pahlavi and Pāzand) interspersed. These liturgies are celebrated by priests only; non-priests are permitted to attend but they cannot enter the ritual precinct and play no role in the performance of the acts – they can merely observe and say their own prayers but even this is not mandatory.

All priestly rituals are held in the presence of a fire and the priests also take care of the consecrated fires in the fire-temples. While the procedure has changed over the course of time, the basic pattern is that several times over the day, the fire receives wood (sometimes also fragrance) and verbal praise and worship. In Sasanian and post-Sasanian times fires were categorized into several classes, depending on the mode of consecration; the more elaborate the procedure of consecration, the “higher” its degree, and the more elaborate the required ritual care (see Choksy, “Religious Sites and Physical Structures,” this volume). A consecrated fire is considered a ritual agent in its own right. At present, eight fires of the highest category (*Ātaš Bahrām*) are burning in Indian fire-temples (four in Mumbai, two in Surat, one in Navsari, and one in Udvada). Priests who are in charge of the ritual care of the consecrated fires are subject to stricter purity regulations such as not eating meals prepared by non-Zoroastrians. Neglecting to care for the consecrated fire, for example because of oversleeping, is considered a grave sin. In Iran, the different categories of fires have in practice been leveled and the fires are no longer ritually taken care for as per previous practice, or as done in India. Throughout the 20th century, the modernizing elite has attempted to downplay the importance accorded to fire. In Iran, there are now even established temporary fires fueled by gas rather than wood; these fires are not kept alive but are lit whenever necessary, for example at prayer services held on Fridays, introduced several years ago.

In addition to tending the sacred fires, the priests celebrate liturgies that consecrate eatables and drinkables. They may only be performed by qualified priests wearing proper attire of white color during specific periods of the day (*gāh*) within specific spatial boundaries. These boundaries are one means by which Indian priests have been classifying their liturgies, namely into two categories: those that are performed ‘within the ritual precincts’ (PGuj. *pāw mahal*) and the ordinary ones (PGuj. *hušmordi*); the division is also known as “inner” vs. “outer” liturgies (Modi 1937). In the case of the “inner” liturgies the ritual precinct is demarcated by furrows in the ground; in the case of “outer” rituals the ritual space is demarcated by placing a cloth or a rug on the ground.

The performance of “inner” liturgies requires special priestly qualifications and entails the following characteristics: the recitation of the Avestan *Yasna* (either entirely, or sections thereof, or entirely but with further additions and embedded in other

Avestan texts); the use of specific implements such as the *barsom* (nowadays a bundle of metal rods, but in ancient Iran made of twigs or grass); the marking, consecration, and tasting of a specific type of small flat bread (*drōn*) and the preparation of *haoma*, which is today made out of goat milk, well water, ephedra twigs, and pomegranate twigs, which are blended and pounded in a mortar. The standard “inner” rituals are the *bāj-dharna* or *drōn yašt* (Karanjia 2010), where no *haoma* is being produced, and the *yasna* (Kotwal and Boyd 1991). The former is a relatively short liturgy of 20–30 minutes, which is typically celebrated by one priest alone. It has many varieties, which are adjusted to a wide range of purposes. It is integrated into the *yasna*, which in turn can either be performed independently or as part of a series of longer or more extensive ceremonies such as the *Višprad* and the *Vendīdād* (*Vīdēvdād*).

The *yasna*, which takes several hours to perform, is celebrated only in the early morning; it requires a pair of priests, the celebrant and his assistant. In Iran it is no longer celebrated as a whole and outside India there are neither priests nor ritual spaces for its performance. The *yasna* has been variously interpreted by scholars and some Zoroastrian intellectuals, but for all but a very small section of the Zoroastrian community in India the meaning or theology of any of the priestly liturgies (of all categories) is not an issue at all. At the end of the proceedings, the *haoma*-mixture, which has been prepared and consecrated in the liturgy, is tasted by the priests and the lay participants (if any) and then poured into the temple-well. Among the *yasna*-based “inner” rituals, the most complex one is the *nīrangdīn*, which takes no fewer than eighteen days to conduct, and which is therefore done seldom. The *nīrangdīn* needs to be conducted from time to time in order to produce consecrated water and consecrated bull’s urine (*nīrang*; MP *nērang*), materials that are indispensable for the performance of some rituals of purification. In Iran, *nīrang* is no longer used as a purifying substance and hence the *nīrangdīn* ceremony is no longer required.

In the “outer” liturgies, the performing priest consecrates different sorts of food items such as cooked food (which may include meat), wine (generally discontinued nowadays), dried and fresh fruit (especially pomegranate, bananas or plantains, dates and grapes), milk, water, and lime juice. In Iran, melons are widely used, in India pomegranates and bananas. In Iran, a mixture of several (often seven) types of dried fruits called *lorik* is used in all such rituals. In rural areas of Iran, women also prepare *sīr-o-sedāb*, i.e., garlic and rue with some added herbs, seeds, and spice fried in hot oil and then cooled down by adding vinegar and water, thereby producing steam and smell. In India, the food is placed on the plates before the liturgy starts, whereas in Iran some food items such as the *sīr-o-sedāb* are being prepared while the prayers are going on, so that the inhabitants of the spiritual world (MP *mēnōg*) can rejoice in the smells. In India, flowers are essential for most “outer” liturgies. In contrast to the “inner” liturgies, the texts recited in the “outer” ceremonies are not dependent on the *Yasna*, but on other parts of the Avestan corpus; moreover, Middle Persian texts are added to a greater extent. Most of the “outer” liturgies like the *Āfrīnaḡān*, the *Frarokši*, and the *Stūm* are celebrated as part of the funerary or commemorative rituals. The outer liturgies *Jašan* (a modification of the *Āfrīnaḡān*) and *Faresteh* are essentially performed at times of individual and communal thanksgiving.

Initiations and Weddings

Traditionally, it is only after formally being initiated into the religion that people become accountable for their deeds; before that, all sins and virtues go on the account of the parents (ČAP 34). Such eschatological reasoning, however, is no longer shared knowledge among contemporary Zoroastrians.

An initiation is properly speaking an investiture, as the child is invested with the cord and the shirt (*sedre/sudre*), which all Zoroastrians are supposed to be wearing. Not wearing them is considered a grave sin in pre-modern texts, but in Iran this has been downplayed and the cord is mainly worn in ceremonial contexts. Accordingly, in Iran the ceremony is referred as *sedre-pūšī* ('putting on of the shirt').

The cord and shirt are prepared in a specific manner and especially the cord (*kos(š)tī/kustī*) has been given a series of symbolic interpretations (Stausberg 2004c). The cord, which earlier on was larger and had the shape of a girdle, is untied and tied during the basic ritual of purification, namely the *pādyāb-kostī* (see Williams, "Purity and Pollution / The Body," this volume). The untying and tying is synchronized with the recitation of text and certain gestures of devotion to Ahura Mazdā and a rebuttal of Ahreman. A basic active knowledge of the prayer-texts is a prerequisite for the initiation. The initiation ceremony amounts to the first public performance of the tying of the *kostī*-cord, followed by a priestly blessing and a public meal with the children receiving gifts. Until the early 20th century, the investment with the shirt and cord was a very simple affair, but it has achieved greater prominence in the modern age.

In India the ceremony is referred to as the *navjote*. (The name is probably derived from one of the priestly initiations, i.e., the making of a new [*nou*] priest [*zōt*].) Children are initiated into the religion when they are between seven and ten years old. In Iran, the age of the candidates is somewhat higher. Virtually all Parsi children are invested into the religion, a fact which emphasizes the religious dimension of this religious community. Many so-called orthodox Parsis insist that only children born of Zoroastrian parents must be allowed to undergo the *navjote* ceremony, but a side comment (*obiter dicta*) in a case fought at a colonial court in 1906 is generally understood to provide legitimacy to the practice of also admitting children of a Parsi father; some objections notwithstanding, reflecting an increasing emphasis on gender equality, this patriarchal practice was also extended to children of Parsi mothers. Both types of initiations are still held, but with a drastic increase in the number of mixed marriages during the past fifteen years or so, the so-called orthodox have condemned this practice vigorously and seek to prohibit it. In Iran, mixed marriages are much fewer and the legal system imposed by the Islamic Republic imposes severe restrictions on the initiations of children from all but "purely" Zoroastrian couples. Outside the country, however, an unknown number of Iranians, now also including second-generation migrants, have been initiated into (and thereby "converted" to) Zoroastrianism. This new fold also includes non-ethnic Iranians, including some Swedes, Russians, and Brazilians. All converts have their initiations performed as adults, sometimes rather late in life.

In India, the initiations are preceded by a purification ritual, the *sāde-nāhn*, which is administered by a priest. The same ritual is undergone by the couple before the wedding

ceremony. In addition to administering the purification, the main ritual task of the priest(s) celebrating an initiation or a wedding is the showering of Middle Persian formulae of blessing over the candidate or the couple respectively. In Iran, the priest also gives a short speech in which he exhorts the couple to a moral life. Both in India and Iran, these ritual acts are performed in the presence of close family and friends; both at weddings and initiations the other guests, often numbering several hundreds, only arrive after the religious part of the celebration is over to attend the dinner and the party. (Traditionally, initiations were held in the morning and the reception in the evening.) In India, participants make it a point to put on “traditional” clothes at these parties. In Tehrān, Zoroastrian weddings are shielded from the Muslim population and alcoholic beverages can be served and “Islamic” garb is not required; these events serve as a free zone where the rules of behavior imposed by the Islamic state are relaxed for a few hours.

At both initiations and weddings, women, especially mothers, are important actors. In India, they perform several threshold and protection rites; contrary to the priestly parts, these rites operate in the silent mode, i.e., without the use of words but using coconuts and eggs, which are circled around the body or head of the person. Given that marriages tie two families together in lasting relations of kinship, traditionally weddings were preceded by a long series of negotiations and visits, culminating in several rites held during the four days prior to the wedding proper including the planting of a mango tree (see Munshi *apud* Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001 for a description). Until the 19th century, child marriages were customary among Zoroastrians.

Initiation into the Priesthood

Initiation into the priesthood (*nāwar*) concludes the priestly training and publicly confirms the ability of the candidate. In India, the traditional rule is preserved that boys need to be initiated before the onset of puberty; accordingly, at present the initiation is held between nine and thirteen years of age. Since the ceremony requires the performance of two *barašnūm* rituals of purification lasting for nine nights (see Williams, “Purity and Pollution / The Body,” this volume) and the celebration of inner liturgies during a period of six days, the initiation takes several weeks to undergo. Having successfully celebrated the liturgies (at least one held in honor of the deity of priestly initiation, *mīnō nāwar*), the priestly initiation culminates in the public appointment of the candidate, when the candidate, who has dressed in priestly regalia, makes his appearance in the temple, holding a mace decorated with a bull’s head (called *gurz*) in the right hand. Representing the head of a bull the *gurz* resonates with imagery of sacrifice and is therefore also used in the “enthronement” of newly consecrated fires. At an unknown date, in India a second initiation ceremony (known as *martab*) was established for those priests who will actively pursue the profession of a ritual priest. As mentioned above, in Iran nowadays only adults are initiated into the priesthood. In line with the changes in the duties of modern Iranian priests and the de-emphasis on rituals, the ceremony of priestly initiation was likewise simplified. The emphasis is now on the colorful public display of the candidate who is wearing a cloth mask (*padān*) covering mouth and nose decorated with golden coins called *tāj* (‘crown’).

Funerals and Post-Funerary Services

Funerary ceremonies fall into two main phases. The first period starts from the onset of death, when the corpse-demon *Nasu* takes hold of the body and the soul separates from it; it lasts until the funeral proper, i.e., the disposal of the body in the “Towers of Silence,” its interment in a grave, or cremation (see Choksy, “Physical Sites and Structures,” this volume). During this period the close family members do not consume meat. The second period begins with the funeral and lasts for three days, until, it is believed, the soul, on the morning of the fourth day, departs for the other world. The morning of the fourth day is the first occasion for commemorative ceremonies (see Lüddeckens and Karanjia 2011 for an analysis and description of funerary ceremonies in contemporary Mumbai).

In fully established Zoroastrian communities such as Mumbai the corpse is handled by a particular category of persons, the *khāndias* (from Guj. *khānd* – ‘shoulder’ > ‘[those who] shoulder [corpses]’) or, as they were called in Iran, the *pešgahan* (‘[those who walk] behind the bar’), and the *nasāsālārs* (‘[those who] have command over *Nasu*’ or contagion). While the former only carry the corpse to the funerary precincts, the *nasāsālārs* have a wider spectrum of tasks, in particular the final disposal of the corpse within the tower. (Nowadays both categories have been collapsed into one; in addition there are a third group, the “corpse-washers” but for them there is no necessity for ritual seclusion.) In India, the *nasāsālārs* have traditionally been confined to a secluded life in the vicinity of the towers; only in recent years have they received some public acknowledgment.

Ideally, when death occurs, the body should be disposed of during the same day or the next day. During the first phase, there are several rites that are mainly for protecting the human and non-human environment from the impurity emanating from the corpse. One of the protective measures taken is the making of a ritual connection (*payvand*) between two persons, typically, by holding a piece of cloth between them. Some main events during this first phase (as now practiced in India) include the *sāčkār*, i.e., the washing and dressing of the body (in the religious shirt = *sedre/sudre*, pajamas and long stripes of used white cloth covered with a white shroud); the *sagdīd*, i.e., the viewing of the corpse by a dog; the *sējīdō*, i.e., the viewing of the face of the departed by the bereaved who thereby pay their respects to the departed (the women remain seated in the back while the men queue alongside the corpse); the *gēh-sārīnā*, i.e., the recitation (by two priests) of the *Ahunauvaitī Gāthā*. The participants of the funeral march in procession up to the tower, following the priests and the *nasāsālārs*; once the *nasāsālārs* have disposed the body, cleansed themselves ritually, and recited some specific prayers, the priests keep wood on the fire in an adjoining small fire-temple.

This is the signal for the start of the second phase, which is mainly characterized by the performance of several priestly liturgies in honor of the deity *Sraoša*, believed to be taking care of the soul in the transitional period between death and its final passage to the other world. The family members are expected not only to generously sponsor these liturgies (which one also can have performed in advance of the event, as a kind of safety net), but also to carefully say their daily prayers. In larger communities such as Mumbai, during the first four days the family members may stay in special dwellings called *bunglis* on the premises surrounding the towers. In such a *bungli*, in the afternoon (third ritual period of the day, between 3 pm and sunset) of the third day after death,

family, friends, acquaintances, and colleagues gather to attend a service where priests recite several prayers; non-Parsis are not allowed to attend. In India it is called *ūthamnā* (the etymology of this Gujarati word is unclear), while it is known as *Yašt-e sevvom* ('ritual of the third [day]') in Iran. In India, this service nowadays mainly functions as a condolence meeting; previously, this was the occasion when the will of the deceased was read, charities in the name of the deceased were announced, and, if one died childless, an heir was adopted who would be responsible for the future commemorative services. Another service takes place during the final ritual period (commencing at midnight and ending with dawn) of the third day after death. In Iran this is called *šabgīre* ('[ritual of the] night watch'), while it is again known as *ūthamnā* in India. Given its timings, this service is generally attended by close relatives and friends. Simultaneously, at a fire-temple, four inner liturgies (*Bāj-dharnā*) are held, the final one in honor of all the righteous spirits (*Frauuāšis*), in whose fold the deceased is about to be assumed. At the time around sunrise an outer liturgy (*Āfrīnagān*) in honor of the deity Dahm is held, who assists in the process of the soul's successful transition. Some further rituals, now in honor of the righteous spirits (*Ardāfravaš* 'righteous Frauuāšis'), are performed in the first ritual period (after sunrise) of the fourth day.

With the morning of the fourth day, when several priestly liturgies are performed, the process has reached a new stage, that of the commemorative rituals. Older texts prescribe sacrificing an animal and offering the fat to an *Ātaš Bahrām* or another consecrated fire on the fourth day; this practice has now been discontinued. Further liturgies are held on the tenth day, the thirtieth day, and the day of the first monthly anniversary after death (i.e., day 31). From then onwards, annual anniversaries are held, for as long as the descendants may wish. In addition to the individual memorial days, there are some collective events of commemoration. In India and Iran, many Zoroastrians visit the funeral ground on the nineteenth day of the first month in the Zoroastrian calendar (see Rose, "Festivals and the Calendar," this volume), which is dedicated to the righteous spirits (*Frauuāšis*). In both countries, the funeral grounds are also visited on some other days. The greatest commemorative event is the annual return of the *Frauuāšis* during *Farvardīgān* or *Muktād* (see Rose, "Festivals and the Calendar," this volume).

Burial in a Zoroastrian burial ground (*ārāmgāh* or 'place of rest') is considered as a legitimate option when no towers of silence are available. Cremations are abhorred by many orthodox Zoroastrians, but given the quasi-extinction of vultures an increasing minority in India are now leaning towards this alternative. The trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) have in recent years actively tried to prevent priests in Mumbai from performing the funerary ceremonies for Parsis who have been cremated. In Iran, the disposal of the dead in towers of silence was replaced by burial in Zoroastrian cemeteries, some of which are situated in proximity to the abandoned towers. It has become customary to put flowers and other gifts on the graves. In the Islamic Republic, a cult of Zoroastrian martyrs (who have fallen victim to the war against Iraq) has developed (see Stausberg, "Zoroastrians in Modern Iran," this volume). Just like the initiations and weddings, the Iranian funerals have and had some distinctive characteristics. For the funerary rituals, one was the strong emphasis on merry-making, known as *šād-ravānī* ('[making] the soul happy'), as a means of defying death and bereavement.

Further Reading

Stausberg (2004b) provides a systematic overview over rituals practiced among the Zoroastrian communities of Iran and India, including issues of historical change and interpretation and meaning. The volume contains CDs with pictures and short videos. Stausberg (2004d) assembles studies on a wide

range of rituals by leading scholars. Boyce (1977) portrays the ritual life of a peculiar Iranian village in the early 1960s. See also Cantera, "Ethics," Rose, "Festivals and the Calendar," Choksy, "Religious Sites and Physical Structures," Kotwal and Kreyenbroek, "Prayer," and Williams, "Purity and Pollution / The Body," in the present volume.

CHAPTER 23

Festivals and the Calendar

Jenny Rose

Several types of festival are observed by Zoroastrians today. The two main categories comprise seasonal festivals known as *gāhānbārs*, which appear to derive from an ancient pastoral–agricultural calendar, and festivals celebrating the individual elements of creation and the *yazatas* associated with them, such as the day of praise to the waters *Ābān Yazad Jašan*. *Jašan* or *jašn* (from Av. *yasna-*) is the general term for a celebratory act of communal worship that is observed at festivals as well as at special family occasions, including the birth of a child, or moving into a new home. Other day-specific festivals commemorate events significant to the development of the religion and its institutions, such as the birth and death of Zarathustra, the discovery of fire, or the anniversary of the installation of an *Ātaš Bahrām* (a ‘victory fire’), the highest grade of consecrated fire, housed in a fire-temple of the same name.

This chapter considers the historical development of these diverse festivals, and some of the practices attached to them. The variant calendar systems used by Zoroastrians in different parts of the world are also mentioned in relation to the placement of the festivals.

The Earliest Zoroastrian Festivals

Festivals in the Avesta

Young(er) Avestan texts allude to six seasonal festivals that seem to correlate with an ancient pastoral–agricultural calendar. The Avestan phrase *yāiriia ašahe ratauuō*, meaning ‘the seasonal “right times” [or “models”] of Order’ is used to describe both the festivals and their seasons (Y 6.8). The liturgical text *Āfrīnagān ī Gāhānbār* (AG) lists these festivals in order, beginning with that of mid-spring, *Maidiōi.zarəmaia*

(lit., 'mid-green'). The other five festivals are: *Maidiīōi.šəma* (mid-summer); *Paitiṣhahiia* (fall harvest); *Aiiāθrima* (the 'homecoming' of the herds); *Maidiīāiriia* ('mid-year' or 'mid-season', that is, winter; AG 3.7–13). The last festival of the year, before the spring, was *Hamaspāθ-maēdaiaia*, a name of uncertain meaning.

The earliest source for the festival of *Hamaspāθmaēdaiaia* refers to it as lasting ten days (Yt 13.49). It was dedicated to the collective souls (Av. *frauuašis*) of the faithful who are living, dead, or have yet to be born (Yt 13.21, 51, 58). Welcoming the *frauuašis* with reverence and offerings at this time, and blessing the souls of the living and dead together, was thought to bring benefit to the world (Yt 13.52–55).

At some point, each of the six seasonal festivals became linked with one of the creations associated with the *aməša spəntas*: *Maidiīōi.zarəmaiaia* was connected with the sky, and the subsequent five festivals were correlated with the waters, earth, plants, animals, and humans respectively (GBd 1a 14–21; compare GBd 3.7). Fire, the seventh element of creation in the Zoroastrian cosmology, was liturgically incorporated into the festival of *Nowrūz*, which means 'New Day', implying the first day of the new year. This last festival is thought to have a very ancient origin, although it is not referred to in Avestan texts. As the religion developed, *Nowrūz* became the most significant Zoroastrian festival, celebrating the creative activity of Ahura Mazdā.

Festivals in Ancient Persia

Both Darius I's inscription at Bīsotūn (DB, carved c. 521–519 BCE) and Elamite texts from Persepolis (written between 509 and 458 BCE) inform us that the ancient Persians initially used a lunisolar calendar similar to that of the Babylonians, in which the twelve month-names were related to specific seasonal or religious activities, or referred to the temperature (Krasnowolska 1998: 25). Examples of these names include 'harvesting', 'the worship of fire', and 'the stage of heat' (Kent 1953: 166, 167, 183, 188, 208, 199; Krasnowolska 1998). At this early period the year lasted 360 days, regulated by some system of intercalation. The thirty days of each month were apparently numbered, but not named (Panaino 1990a: 662).

Around the early 5th century BCE, the ancient Persians adapted the Egyptian calendar, and five epagomenal days were added at the end of the year, which kept the beginning of the calendar in the spring and the seasonal festivals at the correct time of year. Greek astronomers cite a Cappadocian calendar that indicates the implementation of a religious calendar based on the *Avesta* during Ancient Persian times (de Blois 1996: 49). This Avestan calendar, which was in place in the Seleucid period, became the model for the modern liturgical calendar. Both the Cappadocian calendar and Elamite inscriptions from Persepolis use the equivalent of an Avestan term for the *frauuašis* of the *ašauuans* (Av. *ašaunām frauuašinām*) and indicate a particular time dedicated to these beings. The calendar includes a month named for the *frauuašis* at the beginning of the year, and the Elamite texts record offerings made to them in the form *Irdanapirrurtiṣ* (Henkelman 2008: 533). The other months of the religious calendar were named after the creator (Av. *daδuuah*) Ahura Mazdā, six *aməša spəntas*, and the *yazatas* Mithra, Tištriā, the waters (*ābān*), and fire (*ātār*).

Not only were months named after these specific *yazatas*, but a day of each month was also dedicated to them. Festivals venerating particular *yazatas* on the specific day and month named for them seem to have been connected originally with a particular time of year in the solar calendar. In the 4th century BCE, Xenophon mentions a Persian sacrifice of horses to the sun (*Cyropaedia* 8.3.12). Strabo (c. 63 BCE–24 CE) later refers to a similar sacrifice of horses taking place at Persepolis on “Mithrakana” (*Geographika* 11.14.9), that is, in honor of Mithra (Miθra), the *yazata* of “alliance” or “contract.” The term Strabo uses appears to be based on an Old Persian form, as is another old reference to “Mithrakana days” found on a 1st-century CE Greek inscription from Phrygia (de Jong 1997: 372).

Zoroastrian Festivals in Sasanian and Early Islamic Iran

There are few contemporary external allusions to Zoroastrian (as “Persian”) festivals from the Seleucid and Parthian periods, apart from Strabo’s reference, although Parthian ostraca from the mid-1st century BCE inform us of the continued use of the Avestan calendar, with Avestan month-names and day-names. Sogdian, Chorasmian, and Old Armenian calendars contain some month- and day-names corresponding to the Avestan calendar (Sachau 1969: 221–25; Russell 1987: 50, 68 n. 98; de Blois 1996: 48), as does the Bactrian calendar of the Kushans (compare Sims-Williams and de Blois 1996 [1998]).

The verse story of *Vīs and Rāmīn*, composed by the Persian poet Gorgānī (d. 1079), but originating in the Parthian period, is thought to refer to the festival of Mithra, known as *Mehragān/Mehr(e)gān* in modern Persian (Minorsky 1943–1946: 747, n. 2). The narrative begins with a springtime feast at the royal court, which is usually taken to refer to the celebration of Nowrūz. Strabo refers to marriages being held at the spring equinox (*Geographia* 15.3.17), a custom that still pertains at the Iranian Nowrūz.

Information concerning the celebration of festivals in the Sasanian era is recorded by non-Zoroastrians in late or post-Sasanian times. Contemporary accounts include the Syriac *Acts of Persian Martyrs*, Armenian ecclesiastical commentaries, and the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds. Later Perso-Arabic histories are also significant sources, such as the writings of al-Ṭabarī (839–923 CE), al-Mas‘ūdī (896–956 CE) and al-Bīrūnī (973–1048 CE). The 11th-century CE New Persian epic, the *Šāhnāme*, which was largely based on earlier Middle Persian texts, includes several references to Nowrūz along with Sade, the festival of fire.

From these accounts and extant Zoroastrian Middle Persian texts, it seems that by the beginning of the Sasanian period the 365-day year instated earlier had caused the liturgical calendar to move out of synchrony with the natural year, so that the month Farvardīn (the month of the *frawuašis*) had receded to the late summer (compare Boyce 2009). Sometime around 500 CE, in order to return the festivals to their original seasonal settings, and to reinstate Nowrūz at the time of the spring equinox, the calendar was again recalibrated. This reform involved placing Nowrūz at the beginning of the ninth month (*Ādar*), with the festival of the *frawuašis* in the previous month, *Ābān* (de Blois 1996: 47; compare Sachau 1969: 210). Some chose to continue to celebrate the New

Year on 1 Farvardīn, however, until further calendrical adjustments were implemented in the 11th century under the Persian Shī'a Buyids (945–1055 CE), and then with the introduction of the so-called Jalāli solar calendar under the Seljuq sultan, Jalal al-Dawla Malik Shah (r. 1072–1092 CE). The festival of the *frauuāšis*, by then known as *Fravardīgān* (now, *Farvardīgān*), was returned to its place at the end of the year in the twelfth month, Spendarmad, and Nowrūz to the beginning of the first month, Farvardīn, which was once again in the spring.

The term *gāhānbār*, meaning either 'time of the *Gāthās*' or 'time of the [appointed] times', appears initially to have referred to the five epagomenal days before Nowrūz, but then became applied to the other six seasonal festivals as well. The *Bundahišn* refers to the practice of celebrating an initial feast day to commemorate the creative work of Ahura Mazdā, followed by five days of rest, which were the *gāhānbār* days (*GBd* 1a.16–22). In the earlier Sasanian period, the Middle Persian term *rad* (from Av. *ratu*) was used for these festivals, referring to the 'right [or "model"] time'. This is the word that the Sasanian priest Kerdīr applies to the feasts that he had financed in one year (*KKZ* 1.15).

The late Avestan *Āfrīnagān ī Gāhānbār*, which was probably composed sometime in the Sasanian period, indicates that all Zoroastrians were expected to participate in the *gāhānbārs* by bringing an offering, or at least a prayer (*AG* 3–6). A Middle Persian gloss in the *Nērangestān* claims that the number of those who attend the *gāhānbārs* is an important aspect of each festival, emphasizing the function of *gāhānbārs* as congregational events (*N* 2.4; compare *PRDD* 16a.1–3). The commentator also remarks that, whether there is only one other person or many, the *gāhānbār* must be celebrated in the same way, since to do otherwise "goes to the Bridge." The phrase "to go to the Bridge" (*MP* *be ō puhl šaw-*) implies that failure to observe a *gāhānbār* counts as a detrimental act for which the soul is accountable at the Bridge of Reckoning. From this perspective, the observance of a *gāhānbār* was evidently considered to have a significant role in terms of individual eschatology (see also *PRDD* 15a.13; *Dk* 8.45.4). In Sasanian times, the first day of every *gāhānbār* included the recitation of the *Vīspərəd*, an extension to the daily *Yasna* (Boyce 1977: 35).

Nowrūz is one of the "Persian feasts" alluded to in the Babylonian Talmud (Taqizadeh 1940: 638). The Armenians transformed this festival, which they knew as the ancient "feast day of Armazd" (*MP* Ohrmazd), into one of the days commemorating St John the Baptist and St Athenogenes (Taqizadeh 1940: 639–640; Russell 1987: 193–194). In fact, many other holy days in the Armenian Christian calendar appear to have their origins in earlier Zoroastrian festivals (Russell 1987: 375–380, 482).

In the *Šāhnāme*, Sasanian monarchs from Ardašīr I onward are said to celebrate both Nowrūz and Sade, and Khosrow II's wife Šīrīn to have donated funds for the New Year's celebration and "summer festivals" (Davis 2009: 564, 829).

The reference to a Persian festival of *Nusardi* in the *Yerushalmi* (Jerusalem Talmud) and the identification of a similarly named festival in the *Bavli* (Babylonian Talmud) contains a form (*nowsard*) that is distinct from "Nowrūz" (Taqizadeh 1940: 637). This name is thought to derive from an Old Iranian phrase along the lines of **nawasarda* meaning "New Year" (Lubotsky 2002: 198). A parallel form appears in Sogdian, Chorasmian, and Armenian calendars as the name of the first month of the year, which was also a festival time (Sachau 1969: 223; Russell 1987: 378–379; Sims-Williams and de Blois 1996 [1998]: 152).

These references denote the existence of at least two New Year celebrations with different names, which were held on different dates. The form *nowsard* appears to refer to the festival celebrated on the sixth day of Farvardīn month, which is the day of Hauruatāt (*Rūz-e Khordād*), now known as *Khordād Sāl* (Taʿāzadeh 1940: 635, 637). It was referred to as the “great” Nowrūz (Sachau 1969: 201), and was preceded by the “Little” Nowrūz on 1 Farvardīn. Following the calendar changes of the late Sasanian period, until the recalibration in the 11th century CE, the religious Nowrūz was celebrated in Iran on 1 Adar, while the civil New Year remained on 1 Farvardīn, thus tripling the festival (de Blois 1996: 47–48).

It seems that during the time of the Sasanian king Hormizd I (r. c. 272–273) both New Year festivals in the month of Farvardīn were connected together to form a six-day celebration (Sachau 1969: 209; Boyce 2003: 59). This tradition of celebrating the festival over six days is recorded by al-Bīrūnī, but in the subsequent calendar reforms the extra day was dropped, so that Nowrūz and five of the *gāhānbārs* came to last only five days (Sachau 1969: 209; compare *SdBd* 50). The exception was Farvardīgān, which by the time the Middle Persian texts were compiled had been firmly established as a ten-day celebration (*PRDD* 1.2; *Dk* 8.7.11–12).

Arabic accounts of the festival of Nowrūz refer to seven kinds of seed or seven grains that were considered to be auspicious at this time of year (Ehrlich 1930: 98; Sachau 1969: 202). The seven elements of the modern-day Iranian *haft-sīn* (‘seven s’s’) table at Nowrūz may derive from these groupings of seven plant items. Traditionally, the seven items have been connected with the *aməša spəntas*, and the table itself considered to represent the world in miniature.

The Babylonian Talmud identifies both Mehragān and Tīrgān as Persian festivals. These both continued into the Islamic period, although there is no reference to the latter in the *Šāhnāme*. The Buyids, who rose to power in Fārs province, supported the continued celebration of local festivals (Frye 1988: 210), and contemporary Islamic historians mentioned the persistence of the Persian festival calendar, including the six seasonal festivals, the New Year, and the midwinter festival of fire. Al-Bīrūnī considered Nowrūz, Mehragān, and Tīrgān to be the most important of the numerous Zoroastrian celebrations that occurred in different places (Sachau 1969: 217).

In his *Chronology of Ancient Nations*, al-Bīrūnī noted that the main Persian festivals were connected to ancient Iranian legends. Stories of the mythical ruler Jamšīd (Av. Yima, MP Jam or Jamšēd) were attached to Nowrūz, including his discovery of sugar on that day (Sachau 1969: 200). Al-Bīrūnī also reported that the Persians splashed each other with water on Nowrūz, which was probably the Great Nowrūz on *Rūz-e Khordād*, named for the *aməša spənta* who protects the waters (Sachau 1969: 203). A 14th-century Persian translation of al-Ṭabarī’s commentary on the *Qur’ān* states that this custom symbolizes good will and the desire for a long life (Shahbazi 2002: 253).

With reference to Mehragān, al-Bīrūnī stated that it was a day on which fairs were held, and that its celebration relates to the story of the hero Fereydūn’s ascent to the throne after the expulsion of the evil king Žaḥāk (Sachau 1969: 207–208; compare *Yt* 19.36–37). Apparently some Persians preferred this day to Nowrūz, just as they

preferred the fall to the spring. al-Bīrūnī noted that Persian theologians interpreted these festivals as two poles in the Zoroastrian world myth: Nowrūz marked the beginning of the world through the creative action of Ahura Mazdā, and Mehragān was “a sign of resurrection” and represented the culmination of that creation (Sachau 1969: 208).

The festival of Tīrgān, dedicated to Tištriia, the *yazata* of the waters and the rains, falls on the day of Tīr in the month Tīr, that is the thirteenth day of the fourth month. Tīrgān is connected with the story of the treaty made between the Iranian king Manuščihr, and Afrāsiyāb, the ruler of Iran’s enemy, the Turanians. Legend tells of an archer who shot an arrow (NP *tīr*) a vast distance to demarcate the border of Iran (Sachau 1969: 205; Dhabhar 1999: 342; compare Yt 8.6). Various rituals relating to water are associated with Tīrgān, including that of *Āb-Rīzan*, ‘the pouring of water’, when both the house and its occupants are generously sprinkled with water (Boyce 1977: 207). This parallels al-Bīrūnī’s description of the Nowrūz custom. That this is an ancient practice may be deduced from the fact that Armenian Christians have retained a tradition of throwing water at each other on the late summer Feast of the Transfiguration, known as *Vardavar*, a name deriving from Parth. *vard*, meaning ‘rose’ (Russell 1987: 380, cf. 378–379). This custom also continued in the Mughal court of India, where Tīrgān had been established as a feast day by Emperor Akbar at the beginning of his reign (Beveridge 1902: 23–24). A Mughal era painting depicts Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–1627) participating in this ‘Festival of Rosewater’ (*Eyd-e Golābī*), which was also known as the ‘Spraying of Water’ (*Āb-Pāši*; Mukherjee 2001: 101).

The Armenian month of Ahekan (‘in honor of fire’, from OP **Athrakana*) includes observances that relate to the Iranian festival of fire, now known as *Sade* (Russell 1987: 482). *Sade* is generally thought to mean the ‘hundredth’, and it came to be celebrated on the hundredth day after the beginning of winter as marked by *Aiiāθrima gāhānbār*. This reckoning places *Sade* on the tenth day (*Ābān*) of the month Bahman, which is also fifty days and nights before Nowrūz. It may be, however, that the festival originally took place around the winter solstice (Krasnowolska 2009).

The festival is not mentioned in any extant ancient Zoroastrian text, but it is associated with warming the underground waters, and so preserving the roots of plants that are protected by the *yazata* of noon and the summer months, named *Rapiθwin* (Boyce 1968d: 201–212). The *Šāhnāme* describes the observance of the feast of *Sade* by Sasanian monarchs, and includes a myth concerning its origins. According to Ferdowsi’s account, a flint rock, hurled by the mythical King Hūšang at a dragon-like beast, struck the stony ground and sparked a flame (Davis 2009: 3–4).

Al-Bīrūnī refers to a “fire festival” (NP *Ādar-jašan*) that was celebrated by Yazdis on the first day of the month Šahrevar (Sachau 1969: 207). On this day, the Persians made great fires in their houses, gave worship and praise to God, and gathered together to eat, have fun, and dispel the cold of winter. This alternate date for a feast of fire indicates that there were two times of celebration, the hundredth day after the start of winter in Kermān, and the hundredth day before Nowrūz in Yazd (Boyce 1354/1976: 28–29).

Festivals in the Modern Period

The Different Calendars

There are currently three different calendars operating within Parsi communities. These mostly affect the date of observance of the New Year and other seasonally linked festivals, particularly Mehragān and Tīrgān. The three calendrical systems are known as *Qadimi* (PGuj. *Kadmi*, meaning ‘old’), *Rasmi* (‘traditional’) or *Šenšai* (a term apparently derived from NP *šāhanšāhī* or ‘imperial’), and *Fasli* (NP *fašlī*, meaning ‘seasonal’). The *Šenšai* calendar months occur a month later than that of the *Qadimi*, due to a one-time intercalation that took place among the Parsis in the early medieval period. This put the Parsi calendar behind that of the Iranians until some Parsi laity began to adopt the Iranian (*Qadimi*) version in the 18th century (Boyce 2005: 22). Although the majority of Parsis retained the *Šenšai* version of the calendar, the dispute concerning the correct version of the calendar was acrimonious (Boyce 2009). In the early 20th century, Zoroastrian reformists in India adopted the *Fasli* calendar, which is based on the *Jalālī* system used in Iran. The *Fasli* calendar locates Nowrūz on the traditional date of the spring equinox (nominally March 21 in the Gregorian calendar), and intercalates one day every four years at the end of the year. The leap day is known as *āvardād-sāl gāh*, which has been translated as ‘time of the abandoned (New) Year’ (Boyce 2005: 20, and 34, n. 109; see also Sheffield, “New Persian,” this volume).

While the majority of Parsis in India follow the *Šenšai* calendar, Zoroastrians in Iran largely keep to the *Bāstāni*, or ‘ancient’, calendar, which is in line with the *Fasli* calendar. They have five official festival holidays: Jašn-e Sade, Khordād Sāl, Mehragān, Dargozašt-e Zartošt, and Farvardīgān (that is, the day of Farvardīn in the month Farvardīn, at the beginning of the year, rather than the ten-day Farvardīgān festival at the end of the year). Although Nowrūz is a national secular holiday in Iran, for many Iranian Zoroastrians it retains its central position as the most important religious festival.

Celebration of the Gāhānbārs and Nowrūz

Among Iranian Zoroastrians

The Zoroastrian *anjomans* in Tehrān, Yazd, Kermān, Eṣfahān, and Šīrāz actively support the celebration of communal *gāhānbārs* and other annual festivals. In Tehrān, as for Iranian Zoroastrians in other countries, the *gāhānbārs* still occur at fixed seasonal times, Nowrūz is at the spring equinox, and the majority celebrate Tīrgān in midsummer and Mehragān in the fall. In many Zoroastrian villages of Yazd, however, the old calendar is retained, and the main Nowrūz observations take place in the summer.

Following the recitation of *gāhānbār* prayers by a *mūbad* (priest) there may be communal feasts on each of the five days. Both activities are often financed by charitable endowments in memory of deceased members of the community. The practice of endowing a ceremony that includes both a religious and social component dates back to Sasanian times (Boyce 1977: 32).

The ritual *sofre* (a large white cloth placed on the ground or over a table) at the *gāhānbār* displays items symbolizing the seven elements of creation. Those present praise Ahura Mazdā and pray for future blessings for the world. The consecrated food (*čāšnī*) shared at the end of a *gāhānbār* includes ritual fare, such as *lork* (a mix of seven different dried fruits and nuts), *sīr-o-sedōw* (a dish containing garlic and rue), and *sīrog* (flat, fried wheat bread).

Iranian Zoroastrians celebrate Farvardīgān on the last ten days of the year, before Nowrōz. This festival is also referred to as the lesser (Dari *kasōg*) and greater (Dari *mas*) *panjī* ('five'), since it is divided into two successive five-day parts. The "greater" *panjī* is the second set of five days, which are also called "Gāthā days," since one of the five *Gāthās* is recited on each consecutive day. Throughout Farvardīgān, *āfrīnagāns* are observed in honor of the souls of the deceased, who are thought to visit the spring-cleaned homes of their descendants (Boyce 1977: 212–226; Yt 13.147).

Before sunrise on the last day of the year, Zoroastrian villagers in Yazd province will climb onto the flat rooftops of their houses to bid farewell to the *frauuāšis*. In front of a small brushwood fire, the older men recite the prayers of the fifth *Gāthā* day, while other family members chop fruit, and arrange freshly cooked food (Stausberg 2004b: 503; Boyce 1977: 224–225). As the dawn breaks, water and marjoram leaves are sprinkled over the roof to welcome the New Day – Nowrūz.

The *haft-sīn* table arranged for Nowrūz by Iranian Zoroastrians is reminiscent of the display of seven propitious items mentioned in Islamic sources (see above). The table may also include a picture of Zarathustra, a mirror, sweets and cookies (a reminder of Jamšīd's discovery of sugar), painted eggs, and a fishbowl containing a goldfish.

On Farvardīn day of this first month (Farvardīn), Iranian Zoroastrians may visit the cemetery, carrying bunches of fresh flowers and foliage to place in vases next to the tombs, and fruit, *lork*, *sīrog*, *sīr-o-sedōw*, and soup to share among themselves (Stausberg 2004b: 533–534). This second celebration of the *frauuāšis* is also known as Farvardīgān, colloquially "*forudōg*," by Iranian Zoroastrians, and was probably originally part of the commemoration of the *frauuāšis* held in the last month of the year (Boyce 1977: 200). The official description of this one-day event is a 'tribute to the dead and the martyrs' (NP *bozorgdāšt-e dargozāštegān-o-šohadā*), which includes the fifteen Zoroastrians who lost their lives in the Iran–Iraq war of the 1980s (Stausberg 2004b: 533). On this name day of the *frauuāšis*, Parsis in Mumbai may commission priests to recite prayers on behalf of the dead at the site of the Doongerwadi *dakhmes*, where a communal *jašan* is also held (Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001: 22).

Among Parsis

In India, Parsis celebrate the festivals relating to the New Year, but do not now generally observe the *gāhānbārs*, except for Farvardīgān in the last month of the year, which they refer to by the Gujarati term 'Muktād'. (For translations of this name, compare Modi 1986: 438–439; Dhabhar 1999: 6). Sources between the 17th and 19th centuries indicate, however, that all the *gāhānbārs* were celebrated regularly in India during that period (Firby 1988: 103, 145; Menant 1994: 388–390; Karaka 1999: 1.146–48).

The time of year for Muktād varies according to which of the three calendars is followed. Some Parsis still extend the festival from ten to eighteen days, as stipulated in the

Persian *Revāyats* (Modi 1986: 440). In a room of the fire-temple, or in the home, Parsi families set up Muktdād tables on which they place silver vases containing fresh flowers. The table also holds a coconut, fresh fruit, and a lit *divo* or small fire in a portable holder (*afargān*). Family members recite prayers at this table each day of the festival, and may choose to wear white at this time. They may also commission a *stūm* (or *satūm*) ritual of praise for the souls of deceased relatives (Kotwal and Choksy 2004: 397–398). At the end of Muktdād, the old foliage is removed from the vases, which are then inverted on the table, to be cleaned and stored for use at the next year's festival.

New Year's Eve in the Šenšai calendar is known as *Pateti* (popularly *Papeti*), or 'repentance'. This is a time for atoning for the bad thoughts, words, and deeds generated during the previous year. On the first day of Farvardīn month, New Year's Day (PGuj. *Naoroj*) is celebrated with an *āfrīnaḡān* ceremony dedicated to Ahura Mazdā and his creation. The ceremony ends with a ritual handshake greeting known as *hamāzor* (Rose 2011a: 145–146). Those Parsis who live in Mumbai may visit one or more of the Ātaš Bahrāms (some visit all four), and many will make donations to charity on this day.

Since the majority of Parsis in India do not keep to the same seasonally linked calendar as their Iranian co-religionists, they currently observe the New Year in the summer, rather than at the vernal equinox: at present, the Qadimi Nowrūz falls in July, and the Šenšai in August. But many Parsis also celebrate *Jamshedi Nowrūz* on March 21, relating the festival to the golden age of King Jamšēd (Yima), who protected and increased Ahura Mazdā's good creations, as recorded in the *Avesta* (compare *Vd* 2.8–19) and the *Šāhnāme*. Jamšēd's role in Middle Persian literature is closely associated with the eschatological dimension of the New Year celebration, which anticipates the future perfection or "making wonderful" of the world. (The assault of the world by evil at noon on 1 Farvardīn, and the ultimate reversal of that event are outlined in *GBd* 4.10–12 and 34.30–32 respectively; see also Boyce 2009.)

At Jamshedi Nowrūz, Parsis may visit a fire-temple, celebrate with a *jašan* at home or at a community venue, or arrange a family outing. New clothes are worn on these occasions. Some Parsis set out special items similar to those on the Iranian *haft-sīn* table, such as the *sabze* (green sprouted grains) and painted eggs. As is customary on all auspicious Parsi occasions, colorful chalk stencil patterns are drawn outside the front door. (Many traditional Parsi households observe this custom on a daily basis.)

In countries outside the two "homelands," communal festival activities scheduled at the time of the spring equinox may incorporate elements of the New Year traditions of both Iranian Zoroastrians and Parsis. A community dinner is usually part of such celebrations. Parsis in diaspora will observe Nowrūz according to the Šenšai or Qadimi calendar, depending on their affiliation.

Days Dedicated to the Yazatas

The annual festivals in honor of the *yazatas* Mithra and Tištriia continue to be celebrated by Iranian Zoroastrians as Mehragān and Tīrgān – or *Jašn-e Mehr Ized*, and *Jašn-e Tīr-o-Teštar* – respectively. (*Teštar* is the Middle Persian name derived from the Avestan *Tištriia*.) These two occasions are not now commonly observed by Parsis, who do, however,

celebrate the “birthdays” of the waters and fire. In Iran, the current form and seasonal placement of Mehragān and Tīrgān has been affected by changes introduced in the mid-20th century by *mūbads* who had received some of their education in Mumbai.

Mehragān

Mehragān is one of the official religious holidays celebrated by Iranian Zoroastrians. It falls on the day Mehr of the month Mehr, that is, the sixteenth day of the seventh month. Although most Zoroastrians in Iran observe the festival according to the Fasli calendar, in which Mehragān occurs in the fall, some Yazdis retain the Qadimi calendar, in which Mehragān is currently much earlier in the year. In Yazd, the *jašan* for Mehragān is part of a broader community event comprising speeches and musical and dramatic performances.

Until the mid-20th century, the communal feast for Mehragān included a whole roasted sheep or lamb that had been ceremonially killed for the occasion (compare Dhabhar 1999: 436). In recent times, however, this practice was criticized by some as being contrary to the perceived tenets of the religion. Because of such scruples, although some families still prepare mutton or lamb for the festival, they will avoid use of the word ‘sacrifice’ (NP *qorbān*).

Tīrgān

The festival of Tīrgān coincides with the middle of the five-day midsummer *gāhānbār* of Maidiīōi.šəma, during which the focus is on the sustained health of the community and its land. In the villages around Yazd, women may meet in small groups to perform the *chak-o-dowleh* (‘pot of fate’) ceremony, which is intended to bring good fortune and increase (Rose 2011a: 166). Until recently, on the thirteenth day (Tīr) of the month of Tīr, children would tie bands of colored ribbons around their wrists. Ten days later, they would throw the ribbons into the waters of a stream, lake, or sea with a wish for “all calamities to sink” to the bottom, and for good health and prosperity to come to them and their families. According to the Persian *Revāyats*, such bands originally contained a prayer, or *nīrang* (Dhabhar 1999: 343).

The Birthdays of the Waters and Fire

The two festivals celebrating the “birthdays” of the waters (*ābān*) and fire (*ātār*) have not been preserved as centrally in the Iranian Zoroastrian context as in that of the Parsis, although al-Bīrūnī was familiar with both (Sachau 1969: 210–211).

The “birthday” of the waters falls on the tenth day (*Ābān*) of the eighth month (*Ābān*). Parsis refer to this day as *Ābān* (or *Āvān*) *Yasad Jašan* or *Āvānu parab*, and it is one of the most popular Zoroastrian festivals in India (Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001: 23). After the priests have celebrated the *āfrīnagān*, lay Parsis will make their way to the sea, a nearby river, or to the well in the grounds of a fire-temple, which may have been decorated with flowers for the day. They prepare a *sēs* (‘ritual tray’) for the occasion, which holds a lit *divo* or *afargān*, a coconut, sugar crystals, rice, flowers, and a pastry made of sweetened lentils called *dal-ni-pori*. After reciting their *kustī* prayers and the ‘hymn to the waters’ (*Ābān Niyāyišn*), celebrants may break the coconut and pour its milk into the water, then scatter the flowers and pieces of the *dal-ni-pori*. Parsis may fill a small bottle

from the flowing water and take it home, to splash on the thresholds of all the rooms to bring strength and wellbeing.

Āvān Yazad Jašan is particularly popular with women due to its association with the beneficent female *yazata* of the waters, Arədui Sūrā Anāhitā. In the Avestan hymn dedicated to Anāhitā, she is praised for bringing increase and wellbeing to those who make offerings to her, and for enabling women to become pregnant, have an easy childbirth, and produce enough milk to feed their children (*Yt* 5.1–2).

In the past few years, it has become increasingly common for Zoroastrians in Iran to celebrate *Ābān Rūz*, the day in each month dedicated to the waters. On this occasion, women may pour a libation into a river or the village well, in an act of offering for the health and good fortune of the family, or to fulfill a vow. It is also a custom for Iranian Zoroastrians to make a “pilgrimage” to Pīr-e Sabz, in the mountains to the northwest of Yazd, towards the end of the month of Khordād, a couple of weeks before Tīrgān (Langer 2008: 342). Visitors will gather for prayer in the grotto where the water drips from the cliff above, and then move outside to share food, music and dance together on the platforms next to the hillside shelters where they will spend the night. Although the shrine is open to everyone throughout the rest of the year, this special time is reserved for Zoroastrians.

The festival day dedicated to fire falls on the tenth day (*Ādar*) of the ninth month (*Ādar*). Parsis celebrate this day as *Ādargān* or *Atašnu Parab*. On the day before *Ādargān*, they will clean the part of the house where the *ařargān* stands (usually the kitchen), and then decorate it with turmeric paste designs and prayers in Gujarati or Avestan. The most common prayer recited on this occasion is the *Ātaš Niyāyišn*, the ‘hymn to the fire’. In older homes where a hearth fire is maintained, the fire may be kept burning with sandalwood throughout the night prior to the name day (Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001: 24). Those Parsis who live in a city may visit a fire-temple and offer sandalwood for the fire there. Some choose this time of year to visit the *Irānšāh* fire in Udwada, Gujarat, and it is considered a favorable day to get married or to be initiated.

Bahman Jašan

The celebration of the name day of Bahman (Av. *Vohu Manah*) falls on the second day (*Bahman*) of the eleventh month (*Bahman*). *Vohu Manah* is the *aməša spənta* connected with the animal kingdom. The day was familiar to al-Bīrūnī, although he does not describe how it was marked (Sachau 1969: 213). It is observed by Parsis as a partial fast day, on which no meat is eaten (Karaka 1999: 1.152; Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001: 24). Some choose to eat no meat on each Bahman day of the twelve months throughout the year, or to hold to a vegetarian diet on the other days of the month associated with *Vohu Manah*: those days are Māh, Gōš (Av. *gəuš uruuan*), and Rām. A similar abstinence is practiced among Iranian Zoroastrians.

Celebration of the Birth and Death of Zarathustra

The birth and death of Zarathustra are events that are commemorated within both Parsi and Iranian Zoroastrian communities.

Khordād Sāl: The birth of Zarathustra is commemorated in the fire-temple on the sixth day (*Khordād*) of the year – that is, on 6 Farvardīn, which is an official religious

holiday for Zoroastrians in Iran. Parsis in India do not hold a public celebration on this day, but may visit their local fire-temple, where images of Zarathustra will be wreathed with garlands of fresh flowers, as in the home.

Zartošt No Diso / Dargozašt-e Ašū Zartošt: The Persian *Revāyats* record that each year the whole community commemorated the anniversary of Zarathustra's death on the eleventh day (*Khoršed*) of the tenth month (*Dae*; Dhabhar 1999: 423). The Parsis refer to the festival as *Zartošt No Diso*, and the Iranian Zoroastrians as *Dargozašt-e Ašū Zartošt*. It is a day for contemplating the life of Zarathustra as a model for the lives of all Zoroastrians. Adherents may attend a *jašan* in a fire-temple. In Iran, Zoroastrians may also attend a ceremony in a local Zoroastrian cemetery.

Other Festivals

Sade, or Jašn-e Sade: This festival, which is particularly celebrated in Kermān, was reintroduced to the Yazd region in the 20th century (Stausberg 2004a: 529). It is commemorated with the building of a large bonfire by the local Zoroastrian community. After the fire is lit, the priests will say prayers facing the fire, including the Avestan 'hymn to fire', the *Ātaš Niyāyišn*.

Sālgīre: In India, the trustees of a fire-temple usually hold a *jašan* on or near the anniversary of the initial enthronement of its fire (Kreyenbroek with Munshi 2001: 27).

Final Remarks

Since the inauguration of the Islamic Republic of Iran, some non-Zoroastrians have sought to participate in what are perceived to be "ancient Iranian" (and therefore pan-Iranian) festivals, particularly *Jašn-e Sade*. The motivation for such interest seems to be the desire to maintain cultural practices that predate the norms of the current regime. Zoroastrian *anjomans* have implemented several strategies to ensure that their own religious praxis is not impeded. Such measures may include: pre-registration for a festival; moving events away from the fire-temple; and employing security police to safeguard Zoroastrian worship at shrines (Langer 2008: 288).

In recent years, Iranians in other countries have coopted several of the festivals from the Zoroastrian calendar. For instance, the Iranian community in Toronto organizes a multi-day "Tīrgān" celebration in late July, which attracts many visitors with its presentations of Iranian art and culture. In other parts of North America, particularly around Los Angeles, large groups of Iranians from different religions gather to celebrate cultural events attached to Mehragān and Nowrūz. There is also a springtime "Persian Parade" in New York, in which several local Zoroastrian groups participate.

Issues relating to calendar coordination continue to bother Parsis in Mumbai, but have become less pressing within the framework of Zoroastrian groups outside India. In London, where the Zoroastrian association has historically had close ties to Parsi communities in India, the expectation that all are familiar with Gujarati terms and Parsi praxes has been modified to incorporate festival celebrations belonging to the Iranian

Zoroastrian calendar. Calendar differences mean that most festivals occur at different times of the year, and these are separately sponsored and attended by either Parsis or Iranian Zoroastrians, but both groups will join together to celebrate (Jamšēdī) Nowrūz at the time of the spring equinox.

Further Reading

Several *Encyclopædia Iranica* articles relate to Zoroastrian festivals. Those in print or online (at www.iranicaonline.org) include Boyce (1999, 2001, 2009) and Krasnowolska (2009). A detailed description of festivals in the early Islamic period is found in al-Bīrūnī's Arabic work *al-Āthār al-Bāqīya – The Chronology of the Ancient Nations* (Sachau 1969). Boyce (1977) provides an in-depth and personal account of the festivals and special days celebrated by Zoroastrians in the area around Yazd in the late 20th century. Kreyenbroek with Munshi (2001), with additional material by Shernaz Cama, offers a similar insight into Parsi festival observances in India. Information concerning celebrations particular to women within both Indian and Iranian contexts is

provided by Phalippou (2003). Stausberg (2004b: 484–558) gives details of the celebratory practices of both traditions through the ages, including mythical stories attached to the festivals.

Technical matters concerning the complicated development of the calendar are tackled by Boyce (1970b) who later amended some of her conclusions (2003, 2005). Boyce (1354/1976) considers the reasons for the variant dates for the festival of fire. A neat summary of the calendars used by different Iranian-speaking peoples prior to the 7th century CE is presented by Panaino (1990a); de Blois (1996) carefully re-examines Muslim and Middle Persian sources from the 10th and 11th centuries.

CHAPTER 24

Religious Sites and Physical Structures

Jamsheed K. Choksy

Ancient Holy Structures

Writing during the 5th century BCE, Herodotus remarked about the ancient Persians' religious practices that:

It is not their custom to make and set up statues, temples, and altars ... They sacrifice on the highest peaks of the mountains; they sacrifice also to the sun, moon, earth, fire, water, and winds ... When about to sacrifice they neither build altars nor kindle fire, they use no libations. (*History* 1.131–132)

Yet, among the earliest surviving religious sites from the Achaemenid empire (550–331 BCE) is the outdoor open-air fire precinct at *Pārsarga or Pasargadae (Stronach 1978: 138–141 with figures 70–71, 74 and plates 103–106; Yamamoto 1979: 28–29), the royal capital of Kūruš or Cyrus II (r. 559–530 BCE). It contains two hollow white limestone plinths aligned north to south, with the southern one having stairs attached. The plinths' function as fire-altars is substantiated by reliefs carved above the rock cliff tombs of seven subsequent Achaemenid rulers, including Dārayavauš or Darius I (r. 522–486 BCE), at Naqš-e Rostam and Persepolis (Schmidt 1970: 80–86, 92, 95–100, 102–107 with plates 19, 22, 40–42a, 48–50, 56–58a, 63, 70, 78). Furthermore, three fragmentary stone fire-altars were found at Pasargadae (Stronach 1978: 141–142 with figure 72 and plate 107). So the king of kings or a priest would have climbed to the top of the southern plinth, faced the northern one, which bore a fire-altar with flame, and performed devotions toward Zoroastrianism's main icon. A holy fire or its embers may have been carried in a brazier – as still occurs in contemporary praxis in Iran and India – to the northern plinth prior to public rites. The complex at

Pasargadae thus functioned as an **ātarš-gāθu* (MP *ātaxšgāh*, NP *ātašgāh*) or ‘(ritual) place/space of the fire, fire precinct’. So Cyrus, Darius, and other Persian kings did worship outdoors. Yet Herodotus did not have all the facts. Indoor worship also took place, perhaps from the very inception of Zoroastrianism.

Scholars of Zoroastrianism had assumed that a temple cult of fire was integral to the faith prior to the 5th century BCE (see Boyce 1975c: 454–455 for a review). This traditional interpretation, followed historically by Zoroastrians themselves, but denied by some modern scholars, in particular Mary Boyce (1975c, 1979, 1982), sees many of Zoroastrianism’s holy rituals performed within ‘fire-temples’ (OP and Av. **ātarš-kata*, MP *ātaxškadag*, *kadag ī ātaxš*, NP *ātaškade* or ‘room of the fire, house of the fire’). The archaeological evidence confirms the traditional interpretation. The Median citadel of Tepe Nuš-e Jān (c. mid-8th century–6th century BCE), south of the north-west Iranian city of Hamadān, contains two precinct rooms having square, raised, mud brick **ātarš-stāna* (later MP *ātaxšdān*, NP *ātašdān*) or ‘place for the fire, fire-altar’ bearing shallow hemispherical fire bowls (Stronach and Roaf 1973 *contra* Boyce 1975c: 457). The altars and the platforms on which they sat were located inside buildings with vents for the smoke (Stronach 1978: 135 fn. 52). One is located in the inner room of the freestanding central temple, entered through an antechamber where ritual ablutions were performed at a wall trough. Similarly, excavations at the Median city of **Hangmatāna* or Hagmatāna (Ecbatana, now Hamadān), from the same period as the site of Tepe Nuš-e Jān, revealed a small open-sided room with four corner columns supporting a domed ceiling attached to adjacent structures that seems to be a precursor of the *čahār tāq* ‘four arches/columns’ style of **ātarš-gāθu* (Choksy 2006a: 236 with figure 2).

Perhaps the Persians, from among whom the Achaemenids arose, initially preferred to worship outdoors while the Medes did so indoors – such a situation would explain Herodotus’ statement. Irrespective of that difference, however, it is clear that fire-temples with precincts and altars played central roles in Zoroastrian religiosity from ancient times, in public and in private, outdoors and indoors, even if not directly attested in the Avestan texts (Choksy 2007b).

Textual evidence from Strabo, writing during the 1st century CE, provides additional but chronologically later support, for he described rituals by priests, referred to in Greek as *pyraithoi* or ‘fire makers’, at *pyraitheia* or ‘fire-temples’ where fires were kept burning constantly on *bōmos* or ‘fire altars’ (*Geography* 15.3.15). Likewise, a major fire-temple dating from the Parthian or Arsacid period (238 BCE–224 CE) served votaries at Kūh-e Kh’āje, southwest of Zābol in Sīstān (Herzfeld 1941: 291–302 with plates 96–98, 100; partially *contra* Schippmann 1971: 57–70 with figures 8–12, who dates its beginnings to the Achaemenid period; Ghanimati 2001). It is located on the eastern shore of Lake Hāmūn, believed in eschatology to hold prophet Zarathustra’s semen so that a woman will get impregnated and bear three *Sōšāns* or ‘saviors’ close to the end of time (*Bd* 33.36–38). A stone, stepped, fire-altar attests to the site’s ritual function (Herzfeld 1941: 301 with plate 99). The basic architecture of the fire precinct there is that of a centralized *čahār-tāq* style with four columns plus a squinch vault and dome surrounded by an ambulatory corridor, a *yazišngāh* or ‘place for rituals of worship’, and storage rooms (Ghanimati 2000: 139, 144 with figure 3 and plates 26 a–c, 29 b–c; Shenkar 2007).

Herodotus is also an important source for early Zoroastrian funeral sites and rites: “The corpses of Persians are not buried until they have been mangled by bird or dog. That this is the way of the magi I know for certain for they do not conceal the practice.” Yet he added: “This too is certain that before the Persians bury the body in the earth they embalm it in wax” (*History* 1.140). Confirmation for the latter statement is found both archaeologically and textually. The royal mausoleum of Cyrus II at Pasargadae survives (Stronach 1978: 24–39 with plates 20–36) as described by classical writers like Arrian (*Anabasis of Alexander* 6.29, written during the 2nd century CE, and based on an account by Aristobulus of Cassandria who supposedly repaired the structure at Alexander the Great’s command) and Strabo (*Geography* 15.3.7, who based his account on information ascribed to Onesicritus who served in Alexander’s entourage). Cyrus’ corpse must have been embalmed, for Aristobulus, according to Arrian, mentioned how it once had rested in a “golden coffin” whose “lid had been torn off and the corpse cast out,” adding that Alexander commissioned him to “restore the tomb, put back in the coffin those parts of the body that were still preserved, put the lid on, and restore the sections of the coffin which had been defaced” (Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* 6.29).

Likewise the tombs cut into the cliff face at Naqš-e Rostam and at Persepolis for Achaemenid monarchs, including Darius I, contain cists cut into the rock, complete with stone covers, for the corpses of the rulers and their family members, especially the queens (Schmidt 1970: 87–90, 93, 95–96, 98, 102, 106 with figure 31B and plates 37–39, 46–47, 54–55, 62, 69, 74). Those sepulchers also have vestibules whose floors were lined with *karša* (MP *kaš*, *kiš*) or ‘separatory furrows’, to create a *pāwī* or ‘pure space’ beyond which lay the rectangular interment cists. The sepulchers suggest that the royals who were laid to rest in them had been embalmed rather than torn apart by wild animals and birds per Herodotus’ first statement or desiccated by wind, sunlight, and heat.

Zoroastrian doctrine holds that as a corpse decays ritual pollution spreads from it, because death and decay are caused by evil. The Ahura Mazdā (‘the Wise Lord’), regarded as the righteous creator, is by definition a perfect, good, rational, and omniscient being who creates light, warmth, good health, happiness, and life. Ahura Mazdā came to be viewed as a deity from whom no evil can proceed because it is believed that a perfect being cannot originate imperfection. As a result, Zoroastrians hold that Ahura Mazdā created the spiritual and material worlds completely pure. A direct consequence is that darkness, cold, disease, pain, sorrow, suffering, decay, and death were attributed to Anra Mainiiu (‘the Angry Spirit’). Consequently, the process of aging and eventually dying came to be regarded as an involuntary yet inevitable succumbing to evil’s onslaught. So Ahura Mazdā’s material creations had to be shielded as best as possible from the pollution generated by the *druxš nasuš* or corpse demoness from decaying bodies (Choksy 1989: 17–19) – hence the placement of Achaemenid royal corpses in stone sarcophagi within stone mausoleums and cliff tombs.

Yet, entombment appears to have been reserved for rulers and their immediate families. The practice of exposing corpses to wild animals and the natural elements prior to gathering and disposal of the bones appears to have been introduced by the ancient priests in order to prevent pollution of the earth, fire, and water. In the early history of Zoroastrianism, human corpses had been buried and entombed, hence its condemnation



Figure 24.1 Corpse exposure areas above Achaemenid tombs, Naqš-e Rostam, Iran.
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in later scriptural accounts (*Vd* 3.8–9, 12–13). Yet, as praxis changed between the 6th and 3rd centuries BCE, the Avestan term *daxma* for ‘grave or tomb’ came to designate a place for exposure of corpses (Hoffmann 1965: 238).

The cliff summits above the royal tombs at Naqš-e Rostam attest to exposure of corpses as well through the presence of smoothed floor areas which served as exposure platforms, some even surrounded by low walls – the precursors of medieval funerary towers – to isolate the pollution (Figure 24.1). While death was not regarded as a product of the creator deity or of devotees’ religiosity but as an attack by the Angry Spirit and his evil minions, it was accepted as central to each Zoroastrian’s life-cycle with prayers necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the soul (Choksy 1998: 253). So Achaemenid funerary sites like Naqš-e Rostam are also replete with the remains of stone fire-altars both for prayer functions and to cast light upon the corpses and thereby ward off evil spirits (Choksy 2007b: 240–243).

Institutions of Late Antiquity

While Zoroastrianism was the state religion of Sasanian Iran (224–651 CE), three *ātaxš wahrām* (OP: **ātar vərəθrayan*, NP *ātaš bahrām*, and PGuj. *āteš behrām*) or ‘victorious fire, fire of Vərəθrayna’ became renowned. Possibly established during Achaemenid times (Yamamoto 1981: 74–75, 84–85), their fire-temples were well staffed and well maintained. Ādur Farrūbay, considered the *ādar warahrān* of clergy and nobility, was

enthroned in Fars probably at the site of Kārīyān. Ādur Gušnasp, the *ādar warahrān* of warriors, seems to have been originally established within a fire-temple in Media (now Kurdestān). Under the early Sasanians, during the 3rd century CE, it was moved to the site of Takht-e Soleymān south-east of Lake Urmia (now in Iranian Āzerbāijān) (van der Osten and Naumann 1961: 54–60). Despite being at least partially razed by the invading Byzantine emperor Heraclius in 623 CE, it burned for at least two hundred years more (WZ 3.85). Ādur Burzēnmihr, regarded as the holy fire of farmers and pastoralists, seems to have burned within a fire-temple on a mountain called Revand north-west of Nīšāpūr in Parthia (now Khorāsān) (WZ 3.85). But that site has not been located, and the site of Kūh-e Tafreš in central Iran has been suggested as another possible locale (Vanden Berghe 1968). Perhaps, as the number of Zoroastrians in Khorāsān declined through conversion to Islam and immigration, to avoid such conversion the fire was transferred from eastern to central Iran sometime after 1300 CE.

The goddess Arəduuī Sūrā Anāhitā had been fully assimilated into Zoroastrian worship by Parthian times as a *yazata* (MP *yazd*, NP *yazad*) or ‘spirit worthy of worship’ subordinate to Ahura Mazdā. Separate temples for that female divinity would not have been incongruous with the faith or its central icon of fire (Azarnoush 1987). Indeed, the central priestly rite of worship or sacrifice, the *Yasna*, involves the preparation of a libation called *haoma* (MP *hōm*) for which plants such as ephedra are pounded and mixed with milk and water in the presence of a fire. Not surprisingly, temples for Anāhitā came to have fire precincts and altars. Likewise ritual precincts dedicated to Anāhitā were present within fire-temples, such as at the fire-temple of Ādur Gušnasp at Takht-e Soleymān (van der Osten and Naumann 1961: 57–60 with figure 23). Even in the temple at Bīšāpūr, under the Sasanians, the main copula may have housed an *ātaxšgāh* whereas the lower level served as an *urwīsgāh* or ‘place for the ritual table’ (Gropp 2002). Such interweaving of the ritual uses of fire and water with its antecedents in the *Yasna* ceremony (Darrow 1988) laid the basis of gradually relocating most major acts of worship – including those for the *yazatas* whose *Yašts* were gradually incorporated into the *Avesta* – within *ātaxškadaq* or fire-temples.

Zoroastrians had also begun using the phrases *dar ī Mihr* (later *dar-e Mehr*) meaning ‘court of Mithra (Miθra)’, to refer to their fire-temples (see further Boyce 1993). Mithra (MP *Mihr*, NP *Mehr*) is the Indo-Iranian and, subsequently, Zoroastrian divinity of contracts and covenants who traverses the sky “in front of the immortal, swift-stallioned sun” with “the radiant fire of liturgical glory before him” (*Yt* 10.13, 10.127). So that spirit’s association, through name and site, with the fires in the presence of which Zoroastrian clergy and laity perform devotions directed at Ahura Mazdā and lesser divine spirits fits well into the faith’s devotional sites.

By the Sasanian period, the basic architecture of fire-temples had been established as had the rites conducted therein. The *čahār tāq* or ‘four arches’ style became the quintessential form for fire precincts. That style is seen in ruins (some restored) at hundreds of locales in Iran (Erdmann 1941; Choksy 2007b). Each precinct’s four columns supported a domed roof, forming a court whose four sides were open to ambulatory corridors and other indoor ritual precincts and congregational halls. Indeed, most *čahār tāq* now seen in solitary ruins, as at Fīrūzābād (Figure 24.2), display evidence of having once been part of larger temple complexes (Stronach 1966: 219–220, 226,



Figure 24.2 Ruins of Sasanian *čahār tāq*, Fīrūzābād, Iran. © Jamsheed K. Choksy (2005).

1985: 623–627). This interpretation is confirmed by a passage in the later *Persian Revāyats* or ‘Treatises’ (see Unvala 1922 II: 18 with illustration) where it was written that within a “*dar-i mehr* there should be a dome over the fire precinct with four portals ... The place of rituals for worship for the priests should be laid out around and close to the fire precinct.”

The ranks of holy fires within fire-temples were standardized during the Sasanian period (Schippmann 1971: 510–513; Vitalone 2004: 425) and are retained by Zoroastrians to the present. Distinction was made between flames of *ātaxš wahrām* or *ādur ī wahrām* rank and a second grade of fires termed *ātaxš ādurān*, mentioned by the 3rd-century CE high priest Kerdīr (KSM 3, 17; KNRm 5, 12, 18, 34, 44; KKZ 2, 5, 6–7, 11, 13, 14, 15; and KNRb 23). A third rank of holy fires was eventually established as well, the *ādurōg ī dādgāh* or ‘small fire in a fixed place’, namely, the hearth fire. Additionally, although classical writers such as Ammianus Marcellinus (c. 325–395 CE) claimed that priests tended ever-burning fires (*History* 23.6.34), in practice only *ātaxš wahrām* had to burn constantly according to religious stipulation. Flames of the *ādarān* and *dādgāh* ritual grades could and would periodically be allowed to burn out (Boyce 1975c: 462–463).

Within the fire precinct, as the later New Persian *Iṭhoter Revāyat* or ‘Treatise of Seventy-Eight Chapters’ sent by learned Iranian Zoroastrians to their Indian co-religionists around the year 1773 CE noted, in a continuation of praxes probably dating to much earlier, at set times a “priest washes the fire precinct around the base of the

throne of the fire (*takht-e ātaš*) as prescribed by the religion” to ensure its purity (IR 30.4). The *Ātaš Niyāyišn* or ‘Invocation of Praise to Fire’ was performed (Choksy and Kotwal 2005). *Ātaš-zōhr* or the ‘ritual offerings for fire’ of animal flesh and fat became an ongoing practice – as noted in Zoroastrian documents from the late 9th and early 10th centuries (for example, *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* or ‘Pahlavi Treatise accompanying the Book of Religious Judgments’, PRDD 58.72). So too did *bōy* or ‘incense’ and wood offerings (Manuščihr, *Nāmagihā* or ‘Epistles’, dating from the 9th century CE, NM 1.3.11, 2.9.3). Expenses for maintenance of the fires and officiating priests were met through pious foundations, state support, and charges from devotees (de Menasce 1964; Boyce 1968b: 56–57). But, not all members of the Zoroastrian community had equal access to those fires, precincts, and temples. Fears of impurity attributed to menstruation and childbirth periodically constrained women’s presence there (in addition to denying them membership in the hereditary clergy) (Choksy 2002: 91).

Textual sources for the 3rd through 7th centuries CE attest that Sasanian kings and queens would arrange for their dead bodies to be placed inside tombs (MP *aspānūr*, *haspānwar*) rather than exposed to animals and the elements (Choksy 2002: 86–87). Interestingly, no Sasanian tombs have been located – perhaps they were looted and demolished during the subsequent Arab invasion and the early caliphate. Commoners had their corpses exposed and the bones then placed in stone *astōdān* or ‘ossuaries’, which were sealed with stone doors and often inscribed in commemoration of the deceased, cut into cliffs at holy sites like Naqš-e Rostam. Initially remote locales such as mountain tops were used for the exposure of corpses. But as the population increased, the *daxmas* developed into walled enclosures or funerary towers. Indeed late Sasanian era texts such as the anonymous *Šāyest-nē-šāyest* or ‘The Proper and the Improper’ (Šnš 2.6b) mention the use of *daxmas* for the disposal of corpses.

Medieval and Pre-Modern Places of Piety

After Arab Muslims conquered Iran in the 7th century, Zoroastrianism began to decline demographically and institutionally. Most urban Zoroastrians adopted Islam between the 8th and 10th centuries CE, and it spread among rural Zoroastrians from the 10th through 13th centuries (Choksy 1997: 106–109). Though some continued to function after the 14th century CE, most Iranian fire-temples were eventually either transformed into mosques, destroyed, or abandoned (Choksy 1997; 2006a). The *čahār tāq* style with its domed roof passed into Muslim religious architecture with domed mosques eventually replacing hypostyle ones. It may also have influenced representations of the Muslim *mehrab* or ‘prayer niche’. When a holy fire died out, its voluntary or involuntary extinguishment was euphemistically referred to as *xuftan* or ‘going to sleep’. In the Wakhan and Pamir regions of north-eastern Afghanistan and Tajikistan, temples for Zoroastrian fire rites persisted until the region came under the control of the emirate of Bukhara in 1898 (Olufsen 1904: 205–206; Scott 1984: 217, 220).

The temple of Ādur Farrōbay was razed during the year 670 CE on the orders of the Umayyad governor of Iraq (Choksy 1997: 97 with references). The flame, however, had been divided by priests into two portions and hidden to safeguard against extinguishment

by Arab Muslims. One part was eventually re-established at Kariyan and the other at Fasa (Ibn al-Faḡh, *Kitāb al-buldān* or 'Book of the Lands'; de Goeje 1885: 246–247). According to tradition, the Zoroastrian *dastur dasturān* or 'high priest of priests' relocated to the central Iranian village of Torkābād north of Yazd in the 12th century and then to Yazd in the 18th century. Ādur Farrōbay and the Sasanian family fire of Ādur Anāhid were transported to the nearby village of Šarīfābād in 1174 CE to burn inconspicuously within a side chamber of a mud brick *ātašgāh*, safe from extinguishment by zealous Muslims (Boyce 1977: 2–6, who dates the relocations to slightly later than local tradition that holds the exact 12th century date as valid). Small fire-temples with *ādarān* and *dādgāh* fires continued to function in Zoroastrian villages around the Yazd plain and the city of Kermān as well. Many of those had rectangular or barrel-vaulted double roofs with small angular smoke holes and pebble-paved floors. Forcible conversion of Zoroastrians to Shī'ism coupled with destruction of their fire-temples and other places of worship was decreed by Solṭān Ḥosayn (r. 1694–1722) the last Safavid king. Yet, even during those harsh years, Zoroastrians were able to construct a *khāne-ye mehr* or 'house of Mithra' (an equivalent designation for *dar-e mehr*) in Kermān (Boyce 1977: 180).

Zoroastrians in Islamic Iran continued to expose their dead within *dakhmes* and to place the bones in *astōdān* just as their ancestors had done. Yet this ritual met with opposition from both Arab Muslims who had settled on the plateau and from former Zoroastrians who had converted to Islam. Both groups of Muslims regarded exposure of corpses as a ritually unclean practice and the places of exposure as being worthy of takeover. So Muslim leaders like Neẓām al-Molk (d. 1092) wrote gleefully about their co-religionists' desecrating such locales by entering and uttering the Islamic call to prayer (*Seyāsāt-nāma* or 'Book of Government', Sn 211; also Choksy 1997: 97). Thereafter, the sites would be razed and the Zoroastrians in the vicinity would be unable to perform their last rites. Perhaps the use of portable ossuaries in the form of bone boxes, like one from 7th-century Samarkand (now in Uzbekistan) which depicts a *čahār tāq*, its pillars, dome, fire-altar, and presiding priests (Grenet 2002c: 93 with figure 4) on the outside, grew in popularity among Zoroastrians as a consequence.

Zoroastrians immigrants who went to India and formed the Parsi community consecrated an Ātaš Bahrām named *Irānšāh* or 'King of Iran' around the year 941 CE in Gujarat. It remained their main holy flame for more than 800 years (according to the *Qeṣṣe-ye Sanjān* or 'Story of Sanjān', a narrative poem in New Persian based upon an older oral tradition, composed in 1600 by Bahman Kaykōbād Sanjāna; see Williams 2009). So most religious rituals were performed using *dādgāh* or hearth flames. As the community prospered and its population increased, some Parsis moved in 1142 to Navsari on the banks of the Varoli river where recent excavations have unearthed the remains of an *ātašdān*. They also spread to the towns of Surat, Anklesar, Cambay, and Broach. Over the centuries, under the direction of priests and lay patrons, they constructed *ātašgāh* at each of those towns. In India too, as in Iran, the earliest holy fires of the Parsis were housed in small mud brick temples while *dādgāh* flames were lighted in open-air fire-altars, as attested by archaeological remains – including altars and images on coins – from Navsari, Sanjan, and Ajmalgadh (Parihar 2003: 32; Rivetna 2003: 30) When, according to Parsi tradition, Sanjan was sacked by the Moẓaffarīd Solṭān Maḥmūd Begath around the year 1465, priests transferred the Irānšāh Ātaš Bahrām to

mountain caves at Bahrot, inland from the coast – keeping it there for twelve years to ensure that it would not be extinguished by Muslims. The holy flame was moved again, first to the town of Bansda and next to the city of Navsari around the year 1479 where it served as the focus of rituals for over three centuries. The old fire-temple at Navsari, the Vadi Dar-e Mehr, dates to before the 16th century with renovations in 1588, 1795, and 1851. After a dispute in 1741 with the Bhagaria priests who controlled religious activities in Navsari, priests of the Sanjānā *panth* or ‘ecclesiastic group’ who were custodians of that Ātaš Bahrām transferred it to the city of Udvada where it still burns inside a fire-temple as the most celebrated holy fire of the Parsis and is the focus of their pilgrimages.

Modern Communities and Their Religious Sites

In addition to the holy fire at Udvada, there are seven other highest level fires, each with its own temple in modern India – the Bhagarsath Anjuman Ātaš Bahrām at Navsari established in 1765, the Seth Dadibhay Noshirwanji Dadyseth Ātaš Bahrām at Mumbai (Bombay) dating to 1783, the Seth Dadibhay Noshirwanji Modi Ātaš Bahrām and the Seth Pestonji Kalabhay Vakil Kadmī Ātaš Bahrām at Surat, both established in 1823, the Seth Hormasji Bahmanji Wadia Ātaš Bahrām at Mumbai dating from 1830, the Seth Cawasji Bahramji Banaji Kadmī Ātaš Bahrām at Mumbai set up in 1845, and the Zarthushti Anjuman Ātaš Bahrām at Mumbai established in 1897 (Boyd and Kotwal 1983: 295–301; Giara 2002: 5–13 with plates; Choksy 2006a: 338–339).

Presently there are more than eighty temples (Giara 2002 with plates) housing *ādarān* flames (pronounced *ādariān* in Parsi Gujarati) for Shenshaīs (Rasimīs) or ‘traditionalists’, Kadmīs or ‘antiquarians’, and one for Faslīs or ‘seasonalists’ – the three major calendars used by Parsis (see Rose, “Festivals and the Calendar,” this volume). Those fire-temples, each often simply referred to as an *agiar*y, are located in various neighborhoods of Mumbai plus in cities like Baruch, Chennai (Madras), Hyderabad, Kolkata (Calcutta), Nagpur, Pune, and Secunderabad (Giara 2002 with plates). Additionally, approximately sixty temples with only *dādḡāh* flames are supported by Zoroastrian communities in Mumbai, and at Ajmer, Bangalore, Bharuch, Indore, New Delhi, and Pune among other cities (Giara 2002 with plates; Choksy 2006a: 339–340). Indian Parsis do not permit non-believers or converts to enter fire-temples. Devotees, who must possess Zoroastrian paternity, are required to don prayer caps or scarves and perform the *pādyāb* and *kustī* rites before worship (Boyd and Kotwal 1983: 301–304; Choksy 1989: 53–61). In India, establishment of holy fires is often celebrated by recitation of the *Ātašnu Git* or ‘song of fire’ (Stewart 2004: 442–445, 453, 458).

Fire-temples are not the only institutional locations of worship for Parsis in Mumbai. Another is the fresh water Bhika Behram Well in Cross Maidan (Giara 2002: 193). It was dug in 1725 by the Parsi merchant Bhikaji Behramji Panday, who also served as a trustee of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, as a token of thanks to Ahura Mazdā for ensuring his exoneration from charges of spying leveled against him a decade earlier by Marathis. The site, intended to serve Parsis and other residents of Mumbai as a place of refreshment from the tropical heat, gradually came to be associated in popular lore with

miraculous cures. As a consequence, Zoroastrians often stop there during their daily activities to light *divōs* or ‘oil lamps’, pray to Ahura Mazdā and Anāhitā, and seek boons from the spiritual realm.

Zoroastrians possibly became best known to Europeans and Americans for their practice of exposing the dead in “Towers of Silence” as *dakhmes* came to be known in the popular parlance of the British Raj from the early 19th century onward. As had occurred in Iran, in India too *nasāsālārs* or ‘corpse bearers’ who have become a de facto subclass in Parsi society, carry the bier to a funerary tower where a final *sagdīd* or being ‘seen by the dog’ rite is performed. The body is then taken into the funerary tower and placed facing east (toward the rising sun with its supposed purificatory powers) within the circular enclosure which is open to the sky. The shroud is ripped to expose the flesh to the elements and to birds of prey, like vultures, which are believed in popular Zoroastrian lore to be capable of digesting the flesh without assimilating the demonic forces believed to dwell in the corpse. *Dakhmes* (PGuj, sg. *dokhma*) in the Gujarat region of western India were reported by European travelers since the early 14th century. Eventually their use spread to all important Parsi settlements in western India – such as Broach, Navsari, Surat, and especially Bombay (now Mumbai). A Parsi at Calcutta (now Kolkata) donated a *dakhme* to that city’s congregation in 1882. But Parsis reside in many cities, towns, and villages of India where there are no funerary towers. At those locales, most of them practice inhumation in *ārāmghāhs* or ‘places of repose’ after purifying the corpse with *gōmēz* or ‘unconsecrated bull’s urine’ and water and wrapping it in a white shroud. Following Hindu praxis, however, some Parsis even opt for cremation. Both burial and cremation are regarded by orthodox Zoroastrians as polluting Ahura Mazdā’s pure earth and fire, but increasingly Parsis are faced with few other options.

Parsis have relocated from India to other parts of Asia and to Europe and North America over the past three centuries seeking economic and educational opportunities. Iranian Zoroastrians have been steadily joining their coreligionists in countries like England, Australia, Canada, and the USA, since the Islamic Revolution of 1979. As in the past many fire-temples in those locales are named after donors whose financial generosity made those religious institutions possible. Yet others were established using voluntary contributions gathered from the community by local or regional associations.

Zoroastrian living in Sri Lanka (Ceylon) have worshiped at an endowed fire-temple, with a fire that is lighted from a *divō*, at the city of Colombo since 1927 (Choksy 2007a: 196–199). There the inner fire precinct is located in the temple’s south-east corner – symbolically directed toward the rising sun and to the direction of heaven. Only individuals born from Zoroastrian fathers are permitted to worship, after covering their heads, purifying their hands and faces, and retying the cord, at the fire-temple. The Parsis of British Ceylon built a *dakhme* in 1847 in a suburb of Colombo. Just fourteen years later, they closed it permanently after local residents complained about the practice of exposure. They then constructed a circular *ārāmghāh*, enclosed by a wall with a gated entrance so that it visually resembled a *dakhme* and with its base lined with granulated rock and topped with six to seven feet of sand (in which the corpses were laid) to prevent ritual pollution. The earliest burial at this *ārāmghāh*, located in Colombo city, took place

in 1894. When the first *ārāmgāh* was full, a rectangular one was erected there (Figure 24.3). A third one is now in use. The funerary grounds at Colombo have the customary *sāgrī* and water well as well (Choksy 2007a: 199–202).

Zoroastrians from India and Ceylon also settled in Burma (now Myanmar) during the British Raj, mainly as traders. They eventually remarried with local Burmese. The Parsi Religious Headquarter (as the fire-temple was called) in Yangon (formerly Rangoon) was demolished by the Myanmar Government during the early 1960s and a bazaar eventually erected there. The *ārāmgāh*, located on one acre of land outside Rangoon in 1858, was nationalized in 1995 – some gravestones were salvaged by a local Zoroastrian family. On paper, however, the Parsi Fire Temple and Burial Ground Trusts still survive in Myanmar, representing perhaps a single family of Zoroastrians (Rivetna 2004: 83).

Iran's modern capital city of Tehrān has the Bhika Behram Ātaškade with its fluted and bull-capitalized veranda columns where an *ādarān* flame burns. It was constructed during the second decade of the 20th century and renovated thereafter (Godard 1938: 16–17 *contra* Boyce 1989a: 5, who believed the flame is of Ātaš Bahrām rank). The suburb of Tehrān Pārs, has two fire-temples, the more traditional Rostam Baug one housing an *ādarān* flame and the contemporary Pestonji Marker one with a *dādgāh* flame (Giara 2002: 169 and 170, respectively with plates). Establishment of fire-temples in Iran's capital city is a recent phenomenon, however, reflecting the relocation of



Figure 24.3 Interior of Second *ārāmgāh*, Colombo, Sri Lanka. © Jamsheed K. Choksy (2008).

Zoroastrians to that national center from rural areas during the 19th and 20th centuries. An *ādarān* fire serves as the focus of Zoroastrian devotions in a modern Assyrian-style winged-bull relief flanked fire-temple at Eṣfahān, another sits within the fire-temple in Šīrāz. Devotees in Kermān can worship before an *ādarān* fire at the Bānū-ye Rostam-Farrokh fire-temple which was built in 1924 or at a contemporary-style 21st-century fire-temple located within the same complex (Choksy 2006a: 336–337 with figures 10–12).

Because the high priest had settled there during the 12th century, Yazd province became the ritual epicenter for Iranian Zoroastrians. The Ādur Farrōbay Ātaš Bahrām now burns in a modern *ātaškade* built in 1940 at the city of Yazd with an entrance façade of Persepolis-like columns and winged figure. The modern structure replaced an older one, donated in 1790 by Nasserwanji Kohyar of Surat and renovated in 1856 by the Parsi emissary Manekji Limji Hataria with funding from Sir Dinshaw Manekji Petit, which housed a flame sent overland from India. On the other hand, the oldest extant fire-temple in Yazd city, known as the *dar-e mehr-e mas* or ‘great court of Mithra’, which dates back to the Safavid period, is now used mainly as a place for ritual mourning (compare Boyce 1977: 73; Green 2000: 117). Ādur Anāhid, the former family fire of the Sasanian dynasty once located at Estakhr, now smolders in an antechamber of the *ātaškade* in Šarīfābād (Choksy 2006a: 334; see also Siroux 1938: 83–87). The town of Taft has two holy fires, one an *ādarān* with its own small contemporary-looking fire-temple and the other a simple *dādghāh* which is lit afresh for ceremonies upon a pillar altar within a contemporary shrine room (Choksy 2006a: 335, figures 6 and 7 respectively). There are several other *ātaškades* in nearby towns and villages like Čam, Naṣrābād, Raḥmatābād, and Mobāraka where *ātaš* are tended by priests (Boyce 1977: 26–27, 69–78; Gotla 1997: 55–70; Green 2000: 117–119; Choksy 2006a: 334, 336). Some of those fire-temples, including those at Kūčē Boyūk, Zaynābād, Moryābād (Maryamābād), Qāsemābād, and Ahrestān have undergone restoration over the past two centuries.

Due to official pressure, as part of secularization under the Pahlavī regime (1925–1979), access to most *ātaškades* in Iran has been open since the 1960s to members of all faiths, who are requested but not required to cover their heads and remove footwear as signs of respect for the fires (see also Stausberg, “Zoroastrians in Modern Iran,” this volume). But this merely formalized a practice noted by Parsi travelers to Iran for at least a century prior and justified on the basis that the non-believers’ ancestors had once been Zoroastrians forced to adopt Islam. Together with open access, yet another change has occurred during the past few decades wherein the *pādyāb* purificatory ritual and *koštī* (*koštī*, *kustī*) or holy cord rite are ever less frequently performed by Iranian Zoroastrians prior to entering the presence of a holy fire. So an attenuation in notions of purity and pollution with regard to fire has taken place in Iran. However Ādur Farrōbay and several other holy fires are still housed in chambers, closed to anyone but priests, and can be viewed through glass windows (Choksy 2006a: 336–338).

Unlike the Parsis of India, the Iranian community’s ritual life also focuses on six major *pīr* or ‘shrine’ sites located within the province of Yazd. Each shrine’s pious historiography links it to the shared sectarian trauma of the Arab Muslim conquest fourteen centuries ago through legends that members of the Sasanian royal family, especially queens and princesses, were protected there by Ahura Mazdā from conversion to Islam.

Dādḡāh flames are the central focus of devotions, with prayers recited for pilgrims especially on auspicious *rūz* or days by priests, at Pīr-e Sabz or Čakčak(ū), Pīr-e Nārakī, Pīr-e Nārestān, Setī Pīr, Pīr-e Herīšt, and Pīr-e Bānū Pārs (Pīr-e Bānū) (Fischer 1973: 210–215; Boyce 1977: 243–270; Giara 2002: 173–178 with plates; Langer 2008). In addition to these well-known *pīr*, the Yazd region is dotted with smaller shrines where fires either burn constantly or are lighted afresh by devotees (Boyce 1977: 82–91; Langer 2004: 573–574, 584–587, 590). One in Yazd city is dedicated to Šāh Bahrām Yazad. Another in Ābšāhī village honors Mithra, now known as Mehr Yazad. Taft also has a shrine, to Bābā Šarafoddīn – shared by Zoroastrians and Shī‘ites (Fischer 1991). Oil lamps, candles, incense sticks, fruits, nuts, and even cash offerings are made by devotees. Prayers and boon-seeking at the shrines are at the discretion of the pilgrims.

The mid-1800s witnessed renovation of older *dakhmes* and the construction of new ones with *sāgrīs* and *bunḡlīs* by the Zoroastrians of Iran under the guidance of the Parsi emissary Hataria and his two successors. The extant *dakhmes* at Yazd, Čam (Figure 24.4), Kermān, and Ray all owe their erection – and in some case renovation from dilapidated structures – at that time with funding from the India-based “Society for the Amelioration of the Conditions of the Zoroastrians in Persia.” But as religious reforms gradually spread from the community in Tehrān to other urban settings such as Kermān and even Yazd, funerary customs began to change just as prayer in fire-temples had (see Stausberg, “Zoroastrians in Modern Iran,” this volume). Burial began to replace exposure when land was purchased in 1935 by Keykhosrow Šāhrokh and other influential members of the Tehrān Zoroastrian Anjoman for a cemetery at the site of Qasr-e Fīrūze near the



Figure 24.4 Interior of *dakhme*, Čam, Iran. © Jamsheed K. Choksy (2003).

Tehrān suburb of Ray (Shahrokh and Writer 1994: 13–16; Stewart 2012). At Keykhosrow Šāhrokh's urging, another elder in the community, Jamšīd Sorūšīyān, purchased land for a cemetery outside the city of Kermān in 1936. Yazd also gained a burial ground for Zoroastrians. During the 1960s and 1970s, funerary towers fell into disuse and were closed. The change in funerary praxis met with approval from the Pahlavī state, which viewed burial as far more socially appropriate. Burial continues as the only funerary praxis among those Zoroastrians who still reside in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The demands of modernity and the dispersion as minorities have brought change to the places where Zoroastrians perform their rituals. Stately temples with ever-burning fires give way to modest prayer halls where flames are lit just before prayer services. Foreboding towers fall into disuse as graveyards and crematoriums become the norm. Yet the basic tenets and practices survive, for they are integrated into the religion as part of Ahura Mazdā's divine plan in which humans are expected to think good thoughts, say good words, and do good deeds as foot soldiers for the divine against the forces of evil. So fire remains the faith's icon for guiding prayer while incarnate in the *gētīg* or corporeal realm and funerals mark each Zoroastrian's return to the *mēnōg* or spiritual realm. Essentially ancient, medieval, pre-modern, and contemporary Zoroastrians still regard their religious institutions as places separated or cut off (MP *tāšīdan* or 'to cut' also meaning 'to complete, make whole, create by putting together different elements', from OP *taxš-* or 'to be active' and Av. *taš-* or 'to cut, fashion, shape', Skr. *tāks-* or 'form by cutting', from IE **teks-* or 'to fabricate by cutting') from surrounding areas to grant sacredness (Choksy 2003a). Those locales reinforce their religion's teaching that "the body is mortal but the soul is immortal" (*Čīdag Andarz ī Pōryōtkēšān* or 'Collected Advice of the Ancient Sages', ČAP 55).

Further Reading

For the places of worship of Zoroastrian communities in Australia, Britain, Hong Kong, North America, and Pakistan, see Hinnells, "The Zoroastrian Diaspora," this volume. Giara (2002) is a popular survey of all contemporary fire-temples, Langer (2008) is a study and catalogue of Iranian shrines,

Stausberg (2004b) is a general study, and Choksy (2006a) is a historically and contemporarily focused study. Other specialist studies are referenced throughout the chapter. See the entries "Ātaš," "Dar-e Mehr," "Corpse," in *Encyclopædia Iranica* (www.iranicaonline.org).

Part V

Intersections

CHAPTER 25

Early India and Iran

Prods Oktor Skjærvø

The Indo-European and Indo-Iranian Heritage of Avestan

The decipherment of the Avestan and Middle Persian (Pahlavi) languages in the West began in the 18th century with the publication of Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron's *Zend-Avesta* (1771), which also contained an essay on the languages. Anquetil's publication of an Avestan–Pahlavi and a Pahlavi–Persian glossary (1771 III: 432–475, 476–526) was to play a crucial role in the decipherment of Avestan and Pahlavi, later also Old Persian, and it changed current ideas about language origins and relationships.

Nathaniel Brassey Halhed (1751–1830), in his *Grammar of the Bengal Language* (1778), was the first to notice similarities between Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Latin, and Greek and proposed that Sanskrit was the parent language “of almost every dialect from the Persian gulph to the China Seas” (1778: iii). William Jones (1746–1794), in his *Sixth Discourse, on the Persians*, delivered on 19 February 1789 (published 1790), announced that the Zend–Pahlavi vocabulary published by Anquetil contained numerous words that were “pure Sanscrit” (1790: 53 = 1799 I: 83) and he, too, concluded that Zend (Avestan) was a dialect of Sanskrit. Eugène Burnouf (1801–1852) then became the first to determine correctly its position among the Indo-Iranian languages (1833: xxvii–xxviii), while Friedrich Spiegel was the first to point out that the geographical horizon of the Avestan texts was eastern Iran (1867 II: 2–3).

Linguistic Similarities between Avestan and Old Indic

As comparative linguistics developed in the 19th century, it was proved that Avestan was a cognate of Old Indic (Vedic) and that the two were descended from a common proto-Indo-Iranian language, which in turn was an eastern branch of the Indo-European (IE)

language family tree, the *satəm* languages, named after Avestan *satəm* ‘100’, contrasting with Latin *centum* (i.e., *kentum*). Their common origin is reflected in the names of their tribes, Indic *ārya-*, Iranian *arya-*.

Among the characteristic features of proto-Indo-Iranian (Iir.), was the development of the original vowels *a*, *e*, *o* and *ā*, *ē*, *ō* (preserved in Latin and Greek) into *a* and *ā*, for instance:

Lat. *equos* ‘horse’ ~ OInd. *aśvas* ~ proto-Ir. *aspah*;

Gk *didōmi* ‘I give’ ~ Iir. *dadāmi*;

Gk *tithēmi* ‘I place’ ~ Iir., OInd. *dadhāmi*, proto-Ir. *dadāmi*.

Characteristic developments of consonants include:

The merger of the aspirated voiced stops *bh*, *dh*, *ǵh/gh* with *b*, *d*, *ǵ/g* (examples above and below);

IE **k̑* > Iir. **ć* > OInd. *ś* ~ Av. *s*, OP *θ* (*śatam* ~ *satəm* ‘100’; Lat. *centum*; *śam̐s-* ~ *saṅh-* ‘announce’, OP *θa^hh-*);

IE **k̑w* > Iir. **ćw* > OInd. *śv* ~ Av. *sp*, OP *s* (*aśva* ~ *aspa* ‘horse’; OP *asa-*, Lat. *equus*; OInd. nom. *śvā* ‘dog’, acc. *śvānam*, *śunas*, proto-Av. *spā*, *spānam*, *sunah*, OP **saka*, NP *sag*, Gk *kūō*, *kunós*; Germanic *hūnd*);

IE **s* > OInd. *s* ~ Av. *h* (*suvar* ~ *huuarə* ‘sun’; Lat., Norwegian *sol*).

Several of these sound changes made it impossible to assume that one was descended from the other, for instance, the development of the palatal and palatalized velars shows that Avestan cannot be derived from Old Indic or vice versa:

IE **eǵ^hom* > Iir. **aǵ^ham* > OInd. *aham*, Av. *azəm*, OP *adam* ‘I’ (but IE **eǵō* > Lat., Gk *egō*);

IE **ǵ^huHeye-* > Iir. **ǵ^huwaya-* > OInd. *hvaya-*, Av. *zbaia-*, Pahl. *zay-* ‘call, invoke’;

IE **e-g^hwent* > Iir. **a-j^hwant* > OInd. *a-han*, Av. *a-jān* ‘he struck down’;

IE **g^wemt* (**g^went*) > Iir. **jan(t)* > OInd. *gan*, Av. *jān* ‘he came’.

The Old Indic and Avestan Literature

The Old Indic and Avestan literary corpora were orally transmitted before they were written down, the *Rigveda* after 1000 CE and the *Avesta* probably after 600 CE; the earliest manuscripts of both the *Rigveda* and the *Avesta* are, however, from the 13th–14th centuries CE.

The extant texts represent the form of the texts at various stages of their oral transmission. Thus, the Avestan texts are in two stages of Avestan language, while the Vedic literature exhibits several linguistic stages; even the language of the *Rigveda* has several chronological layers. The texts must therefore have been linguistically fixed or “crystallized” at various times throughout the transmission, from which point they were no longer linguistically updated.

In India much of the oral tradition survives to this day, while in Iran it was lost, probably during the first centuries after the *Avesta* was written down. There is no surviving oral tradition to speak of.

Time and Place of the Indo-Iranians

It is fairly certain that the proto-Indo-Iranians must have inhabited some area of Central Asia (area of the modern Central Asian republics and Afghanistan), not unlikely the area to the northeast of the Caspian Sea, where the ruins of cities dating to the Bronze Age have been excavated, especially those assigned to the “Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex,” dated to *c.* 2100–1750 BCE. It is reasonable to assume that this was the time and place of the proto-Iranians and proto-Indo-Aryans. The dates of the *Rigveda* and (*Old*) *Avesta* are more difficult to ascertain, but, as iron is not mentioned either in the *Rigveda* or in the *Avesta*, a date before the onset of the Iron Age, that is, before *c.* 1200 BCE, seems likely (Witzel 2005: 342 n. 4 with references). It should be kept in mind, however, that this reflects the date of (oral) composition, not necessarily the date when the poems reached their “crystallized” form.

The date of the migration of the Indo-Aryans, speakers of Old Indic languages, into the subcontinent has often been assigned to the 2nd millennium BCE on the basis of changes in the Indus culture (see, e.g., Basham 1959: 29), but the evidence has been more recently challenged (Kenoyer 2005). When the Persians and Medes began migrating onto the Iranian Plateau about the end of the 2nd millennium BCE, where they are first heard of in the Assyrian annals from the 9th century BCE on, several Iranian-speaking tribes remained in southern Central Asia, where they are found under the Achaemenids and later (Skjærvø 1995a, 2006, section vi(1) with references; Oberlies 2012: 13–16).

The Old Indic and Avestan Poets and Their Poetry

The two peoples originally possessed a shared oral heritage: storytelling, epic poetry, and religious compositions, a heritage that surfaces in literary themes and formulas. What survives is of course far removed from the form it took among proto-Indo-Iranians; the time gap down to the earliest specimens, the *Rigveda* and the *Old Avesta*, is presumably at least 500 years on either side, which means that ideas and literatures perhaps diverged for at least half a millennium each.

One generic term for “poet” was probably OInd. *kavī*, Av. *kauui*. Avestan *kauui* is used in the singular as an epithet of various heroes who sacrificed to various deities in order to be granted the ability to fight evil (Skjærvø 2013a). The original term may have designated the expert and inspired oral poet, as somebody who knows everything and will overcome all his rivals in the poetic competition (the chariot race; Oberlies 2012: 24–26), as does *Kauui Vīštāspa* (*Yt* 5.132; compare Jamison 2007: 124). In the plural, however, the Avestan *kauuis*, like the ancient deities, the *daēuuas* (see below), whose

praise they had presumably once sung, were relegated to the wrong side in the cosmic conflict and became ‘poetasters’ (Skjærvø 2001). Similarly, the Rigvedic inspired poet, ‘shaking’ (*viprá*) with inspiration, apparently became *vaēpiia* ‘shaker’, used together with ‘petty poet’ (*kəuūina*) in a derogatory sense in *Y* 51.12 (compare *RV* 6.11.3 *vēpiṣṭho āngirasām ... vipro ... rebhá* ‘the inspired singer, the most inspired of the Angirases’).

The Rigvedic *kavis* and Iranian *kauuis* both belonged to long lineages (compare *Bd* 25: “the family (descendants) and lineage (*tōhmag ud paywand*) of the *kays*” and *RV* 3.38.2: “So ask the ... births/generations (*jānimā*) of *kavis*. Holding (their) thought(s) (firmly), acting well, they have fashioned the sky”), where we see the *kavis* in their ritual–poetic–cosmogonic functions.

The Avestan *Kauui Usan/Usaḍan* is matched by the Rigvedic *Kāvya Uśanas* (Jamison 2007: 124–131), which shows that he is an Indo-Iranian figure. The interpretation of the *kauuis* as kings in the line of prehistoric kings beginning with *Gayūmarθ*, however, only developed in the national oral epic tradition.

The equation of the Gathic hapax *ərəšiš* (*Y* 31.5) with OInd. *ṛṣi*, a poetic seer (first Humbach 1959 II: 26; then Insler 1975: 37; Kellens and Pirart 1988: 114), is probably not tenable, as it appears to be a female noun (*yaθā mā ərəšiš*, perhaps ‘my wish to obtain’; Bartholomae 1904, col. 356: ‘envy’).

The performances of the poets and sacrificers consist of their thoughts, words, and actions, which in Avestan made up their *daēnās* (trissyllabic < **dayanā*). This word is derived from older *dhay-/dhī-* ‘to see’, which appears to refer, at least in some respects, to their ability to ‘see’ in the beyond, with which compare the Germanic verb **s-keu-* (Norwegian–Danish *skue*, German *schauen*, English *show*), which in turn may underlie *kavi/kauui* (Watkins 1995: 88).

Av. daēnā appears in formulae which in Old Indic feature both *dhī* ‘poetic vision’ and *dhénā* ‘milch cow’ (disyllabic). In *Y* 49.9, the *daēnās* harness (their coursers) in the race for the best fee, with which compare *RV* 1.111.4 (and elsewhere), where the *dhīs* are ‘harnessed’ (*yaug-/yuj-*) by the poets for the race. Compare *Y* 12.9, where the *daēnā*, after her victorious race, casts off her yoke/harness and lays down her weapons (*fraspā-iiioxədrqm niḍā.snaiθišīm*). Note also *Y* 44.11 *yaēibiiō mazdā θβōi vašīietē* (< *vak-/vac-*) *daēnā*, ‘to whom, O *Mazdā* your *daēnā* “bobs” forth’ (on her chariot), with which compare *RV* 7.21.3 *vāvakre* (< *vak-*) *rathyō ná dhénā* ‘ever have the *dhenās* “bobbed” forth like charioteers (*rathī*)’.

There is no reason to assume that Avestan *daēnā* had the modern meaning of “religion,” as is often cited (on the history of the term *religion*, see Nongbri 2013). The *daēnā māzdaiiasni* is the heavenly sacred girdle (*Y* 9.26), probably a constellation, a sister of *Aši*, who prepares the path for *Miθra* (*Yt* 10.68, *Yt* 17.16; Skjærvø 2008a), and, in the Pahlavi texts, *dēn* refers to the sacred oral tradition (Skjærvø 2012b; see also Vevaina 2010a).

Shared Myths: Cosmology

Creation involved ‘fashioning’ (like a carpenter: OInd. *takṣ-*, *Av. taṣ-* and *θβarəs-*); ‘generating, siring’ (OInd. *jan-*, *Av. zan-*); and ‘setting in place’ the products (OInd. *dhā-*, *Av. dā-*). Heaven was ‘stretched out’, presumably ‘woven’ (e.g., *RV* 4.52.7; *Y* 48.7; Skjærvø

2005c). The principle of the cosmic/ritual/poetic order was OInd. *ṛtá*, Av. *aša*, often, but misleadingly, translated as “Truth” (it is never lower-case “truth”; Skjærvø 2003a). Those who supported *ṛtá/aša* were OInd. *ṛtávan*, mostly said of deities and *kavis*, Av. *ašauuan*, said of deities and humans, with fem. *ṛtávarī*, said of deities, heaven and earth, and rivers; *ašāuuairī* (Y 58.4: epithet of *sti* ‘[temporal?] existence’). “Truth” in the sense of agreeing with reality was OInd. *satyá*, Av. *haiθiia* (OP *hašiya*), while “untruth” was what was “crooked.” OInd. *druh*, Av. *drug/druj* (OP *drauga*) was the cosmic deception, i.e., misinterpretation or distortion of what is “true” (Skjærvø 2003a).

Dragon-Killers and Other Myths

In the *Rigveda*, dragon killing is associated with Indra, who smites the *ahi* ‘dragon’ or *Vṛtra* and thereby liberates the waters. In the *Avesta*, the dragon-killer was *Θraētaona*, son of *Āθβiia*, who smote *Aži Dahāka*, the giant (?) dragon, who wished to wreak havoc in the world of humans (Yt 5.29–35). That the Old Indic and Iranian myths are related follows from the name of *Θraētaona*’s father, *Āθβiia*, matching OInd. *āptyā*, an epithet of Indra and his comrade-in-arms *Trita*, Av. *Θrita*, first healer (Vd 20.2), a craft also associated with *Θraētaona* (Yt 13.131), and father of *Kərəsāspa*, another dragon-slayer (Y 9.10).

Several myths are connected with OInd. *Yama*, son of *Vivasvant*, Av. *Yima*, son of *Viuuarj^vhan(t)*. Vd 2 contains the story of *Yima*, first king of men, who built a bunker to save living beings from a flood, while the Vedic *Yama* is king in the realm of the dead and the one who makes men come together (RV 10.14.1 *saṅgámanaṃ jánānāṃ*), which recalls Vd 2.20, where *Yima* calls a meeting (*hanjamana*, NP *anjoman*) of men. The story of *Yama* and his twin sister *Yamī*, who wants her brother to sleep with her, is not in the *Avesta*, but shows up in the later Zoroastrian literature (Skjærvø 2012a: 509b–510a).

Other related myths, some of them of original Indo-Iranian heritage, still others perhaps the result of long inhabiting neighboring areas, are found in the later epic literatures in Iran and India, in the narratives of the *Kayanids* and the *Mahābhārata* (Skjærvø 1998b), but also in the Buddhist narratives of *Aśoka* and his son *Kuṇāla* (Skjærvø 1998a).

Mythical Geography

Faced with the lack of early written sources, scholars have tried to identify the location of the Indo-Iranian and early Iranian and Indian tribes by analyzing geographical names in the Young Avestan and Vedic texts (see also Grenet, “Zarathustra’s Time and Homeland: Geographical Perspectives,” this volume). Among these names, a very few are common heritage, but, although these names were associated with actual places in later times, the texts themselves suggest they referred to mythical entities. For instance, OP *Haraiva*, Av. (acc.) *Harōiium* and OP *Harauvatī*, Av. *Harax^vatī*, both of which in historical times are located in the area of southern Afghanistan, correspond to the two Vedic river names *Sarāyu* and *Sārasvatī*, strongly suggesting a process of post Indo-Iranian mythic relocation.

A much-discussed case is that of OInd. *sapta sindhavaḥ* (*nadyāḥ*) ‘the seven rivers’ (Av. *hapta hiṇḍu/həṇḍu*), which have been identified with actual rivers in the Punjab (Oberlies 2012: 14, 41, 336, n. 3). In the *Avesta*, the *hapta hiṇḍu* are mentioned in *Vd* 1 at the end of a long list of places that Ahura Mazda “set forth” and which, presumably, were meant to include the entire known world, but also the borders of the known world, which in ancient geographies tend to include mythological entities. The “seven rivers” are followed by the specific mention of Raṅhā (OInd. *Rasá*), for which note *Yt* 10.104, where Miθra’s arms are said to reach as far as the eastern and western *hiṇḍus* (Kellens 1979: sunrise and sunset; compare *RV* 3.59.7, where Mitra is said to extend beyond the sky) and the ‘rise’ (*sanaka*) of the Raṅhā and the circumference (? *vīmaidīia*) of the earth.

In the Pahlavi tradition, the Raṅhā, now Arang, is paired with the Weh-rōd as the two world rivers that originate at the northern end of Mount Hariburz, the great mountain range surrounding the world (later identified with the modern Alborz), the Arang flowing westward and the Weh-rōd eastward. The Weh-rōd is presumably identical with the Av. *Vaṇ^hhī dāitiīā*, literally, ‘the good (water? that flows) according to the (cosmic) laws’, the river that flows through Airiiana Vāējah, the mythical homeland of the Iranians.

Yet another river, the Dānu, is mentioned in a formula which implies it is the longest object in the cosmos: *zəm.fraθaṅha dānu.drājaṅha huuarə.barəzaṅha* ‘the width of the earth, the length of the Dānu, the height of the sun’ (*Y* 60.4; *Yt* 13.32; see also *Aog* 77). Bergaigne (1883: 220 n. 2) thought OInd. *Dānu* [f.] in *RV* 1.54.7 was a river that comes from heaven down to earth, but its meaning is today disputed (Kuiper 1975: 132). It is therefore likely that the *hapta hiṇḍu* are the seven mythological world rivers and that the Raṅhā and Dānu are two of them.

The description in *Yt* 19 of the river Haētumaṇt, modern Helmand, and its tributaries, on the other hand, corresponds closely with the modern geography, as do several mountains listed in *Yt* 19 (Gnoli 1987). It is therefore perhaps not quite certain which came first: the mythological rivers or their terrestrial counterparts.

Poetic Formulas

Both the *Old* and *Young Avesta* contain inherited poetic formulas with more or less close parallels in Old Indic; sometimes the precise words are the same, sometimes only the meanings. Following are some representative examples:

Poet as narrator:

Y 45.1 *aṭ frauuaxšiiā nū gūšō.dūm nū sraotā* ‘And so I shall say forth: Now hear, now listen!’
RV 1.32.1 *īndrasya nū vīryāṅi prá vocaṃ* ‘I shall now say forth Indra’s manly deeds’

Poet addressing a divine audience:

Y 28.1 *yāsā nəmaṅhā ustānazastō* ‘I beseech with homage and hands upstretched’
RV 3.14.5 *uttānāhastā nāmasā-upasādya* ‘seating himself near with homage and hands upstretched’

Y 33.11 *yō səuuīštō ahurō mazdāscā ... sraotā mōi mərəždātā mōi* ‘(you), the most endowed with life-giving strength, Lord and all-knowing, (and you others) listen to me, have mercy on me!’

RV 8.66.12 śaviṣṭha śrudhī me hávam '(you) the most endowed with life-giving strength, listen to my call!'

RV 1.25.19 imám me varuṇa śrudhī hávam adyāca mṛṇaya 'O Varuṇa, listen to this my call and have mercy on me today!'

Ritual myth:

Y 29.7 tām ... ahurō maθrəm tašaṭ 'the Lord fashioned that *manthra*'

RV 7.7.6 mántram yé ... náryā átaḥsan 'the men who fashioned the *mantra*'

Y 44.4 yaogaṭ āsū '(who) has yoked the two rapid (coursers)'

RV 3.35.4 yunaḡmi ... āśú 'I am yoking the two rapid (coursers)'

Rewards for poems and ritual:

Y 30.10 aṭ asiṣṭā yaojanṭē ā huṣitōiṣ vaḡhēuš manaḡhō / mazdā aṣaxīiācā yōi zazəṇti vaḡhāu srauuahī 'and so the speediest (coursers) shall now be yoked from the good dwelling of (one) of good thought ..., which shall leave (the others behind = win, be victorious) in (the race for) good fame'

RV 1.91.21 sukṣitīṃsuśrávasam jāyantamtvām ánu madema soma 'may we rejoice for you, O Soma, who give good dwellings and good fame, victorious!'

References to arcane myths:

Y 43.6 ratūš səṅghaitī ārmaitiṣ 'Armaiti announces the *ratus* (models)'

RV 2.38.4 (to Savitar) vī ṛtūṃr adardhar arámatih 'Aramati held out firmly the *ṛtús*'

Y 16.7 xʷanuuaitiṣ aṣahe varəzō yazamaide yāhu iristanəm uruuəṇō śāiianṭe 'we sacrifice (to) the invigorants of Order containing the sun, in which the breath-souls of the departed are in joy'

RV 7.49.4 yásu sómo víśve devá yásu úrjam mādanti '(the heavenly waters) in which Soma (and) All the gods enjoy the invigorant'.

Gods and Demons

The generic word for good deities is Young Avestan *yazata* '(a being) worthy of being sacrificed to (*yaz-*)', which, in the *Old Avesta*, is found once (Y 41.3), applied to Ahura Mazda, probably with its original meaning. The more generic term in Old Avestan appears to be *ahura*, which is found twice (Y 30.9, 31.4) in the plural in the phrase *mazdāscā ahurāḡhō*, probably meaning 'Mazdā and the *ahuras*'.

The reluctance to translate *yazata* as 'god' often seen in literature on Zoroastrianism is due to the idea that Zoroastrianism was a monotheistic religion, which the evidence does not bear out (Boyce 1975a: 195–196, where she makes the case for not translating *yazata* and calls it "a concept unique to this great faith"). The multitude of divine beings in the *Young Avesta* was often explained as a return to a pre-Zoroastrian state of the Iranian belief system.

In the *Rigveda*, *devá* is the generic word for divinity, while the oldest use of *ásura* appears to be as 'lord' (e.g., in RV 7.65.2, Mitra and Varuṇa are *devánām ásurā* 'the lords of *devás*'; Hale 1986: 51–53, 85–86, 179–182). Franciscus B. J. Kuiper (1975: 112–113) developed a theory that the *asuras* and *devas* were originally the gods of the

underworld and upper world, respectively, which would provide a *comparandum* for the Iranian *ahura* ~ *daēuua* contrast. Kuiper's theory was contested by Wash Edward Hale (1986: 2–3, compare 85–86), although a similar scenario is presented more recently by Thomas Oberlies (2012: 29, 94–100, without citing Kuiper).

Av. *daēuua* (OP *daiva*) is the generic term for evil deities, but the Gathic poet appears to have been told that the *daēuuas* were not always bad: In Y 44.20 he asks Ahura Mazdā: *ciθənā mazdā huxšaθrā daēuuā aṅharə* 'What, O Mazdā? Have the *daēuuas* ever had good command?', and, in RV 7.104.14, the poet blames Agni for being angry with him with the same expression of incredulity: *yádi vāhám ánṛtadeva ása* 'if I have ever been somebody with *devas* that did not conform to *ṛtá*' (both with the perfect tense: OInd. *ása*, Av. *aṅharə*). Deities tend to be ambivalent, however, not always benevolent, but sometimes angry and threatening, and it seems likely that it was the evolution of strict dualism in Iran that caused the *daēuuas* to be classified as bad, as expressed in Y 30.6, according to which they became evil because deception came over them as they were deliberating which side in the cosmic conflict to choose. The polarizations of the two groups in the later literatures are therefore probably due to indigenous developments in India and Iran respectively.

The assumption that the *daēuuas* were redefined by Zarathustra in his "reform" (a notion dating from the 1880s or earlier; Gnoli 2004: 97b) is an unnecessary complication, if only in view of the fact that nothing is known about Iranian beliefs before the assumed Zarathustra, so no reform can be defined, let alone "proved." The notion of a reform was a result of the comparison between the Gathic and Old Indic poems and mythology in the 19th century, based on several assumptions and factors (untenable today by modern historiographical principles), among them: The Old Indic poems were more archaic than the Gathic ones, a survival of the idea that Sanskrit was the older language and that any differences between the two texts were therefore due to changes on the Iranian side, that is, to Zarathustra's reform; the Gathic poems were interpreted largely by means of their Pahlavi translation; the Gathic poems did not actually mean what they said, but conveyed a different, (Christian-type) ethical, meaning infused into common words by Zarathustra (see, e.g., Lommel 1955a: 189, 192; Gnoli 2004: 98b–99a; for a critique of these claims, see Skjærvø 2011b).

Ahura Mazdā

The supreme deity is referred to only by his two epithets, and we do not know which older god they refer to, although Heaven has been proposed (Darmesteter 1877: 32; Skjærvø 2002b). Similarly, Rigvedic *ásura* is also occasionally used alone, leaving the god unnamed, and scholars have made various suggestions, among them Heaven as well.

The first epithet, *ahura*, like *asura* probably means '(ruling) lord', Pahl. *xwadāy*. The second, *maz-da*'- is likely to mean literally 'he who places (all things) in his mind' and to refer to the supreme deity's omniscience, Pahl. *harwisp-āgāhīh*. Thus he would be the 'all-knowing lord'. An identity with OInd. *medhā* f. *ā*-stem ('Lord Wisdom') is impossible for phonological and morphological reasons (Kellens 1974: 201–203).

The old connection of Ahura Mazdā with Varuṇa appears to have been based primarily on the early idea that these two were two highly "moral, ethical" deities (e.g.,

Keith 1925 I: 33: “moral grandeur”), which today is largely an untenable assumption, at least without defining “moral, ethical” for this very early literature.

Mitra/Miθra

Both Rigvedic *Mitra* and Av. *Miθra* are associated with the sun. In the *Rigveda*, the sun is the eye of Mitra and Varuṇa, by which they keep an eye on the affairs of men (e.g., RV 7.61.1). In the *Avesta*, when the sun rises, Miθra goes forth over Mount Harā in front of the sun, surveying the world (Yt 10.12–16).

Mitra and Miθra are both concerned with relationships, and, in both traditions, the noun *mitrá/miθra* refers to mutual agreements, which Joel Brereton (1981: 60–62) equates with alliances between allies, but is more likely, perhaps, to refer to the inviolable rules of the guest-friendship. The original function of Mitra/Miθra may thus have been that of overseeing the agreements and treaties regulating the social and political relationships between groups of men and, in the *Rigveda*, also the relationships between men and gods. Thus, Rigvedic Mitra is called ‘he who organizes people’ (*yātayaj-jana*) with the verb *yātaiia-* also used in Yt 10.78: *dañhuuō nipāhi yā hubərəitīm yātaiiei(ṅ)ti* ‘you (Miθra) protect the lands who organize the good treatment (of Miθra)’. This function is particularly prominent in the *Avesta*, where we find Miθra as the guardian of all kinds of agreements and as the friend of the truthful and the sworn enemy of the untruthful who break the agreements. To perform the function of overseer, Miθra never sleeps, has an inordinately large number of eyes (10,000) and spies (Yt 10.7, 45), features associated with Varuṇa in India (RV 7.34.10: “1,000 eyes”; RV 7.87.3: “his spies”).

Vāyu/Vaiiu

Rigvedic *Vāyu*, the divine wind, often associated with Indra, and Av. *Vaiiu* (Pahl. *Wāy*) appear to have little in common. Avestan *Vaiiu* is the space between heaven and earth, through whom the souls of the departed must travel as they journey to paradise or hell, respectively (the good and bad *Wāy* according to the Pahlavi texts). One can speculate whether it was *Vaiiu*’s connection with Indra (see below) that caused part of him to become connected with the lower spheres, while the other part remained “what he has from the life-giving spirit.”

Apām Napāt / Apam Napāt

Rigvedic *Apām Napāt*, Av. *Apam Napāt*, ‘scion of the waters’, may be the deity of the fire in the clouds, although he is not well described in the *Avesta*. In the hymn to Tištriia (Yt 8.34), he is said to distribute the rainwaters over the world of men. He was also a “creator” deity, who sired all beings (RV 2.35.2) and fashioned men (Yt 19.52).

Mary Boyce (details in 1975a: 40–52; see also Gershevitch 1967) developed a theory that the name of this deity was really a designation for Varuṇa and a prehistoric Av. **Vouruṇa*, but her arguments have been contested (Hale 1986: 29–31).

Bhága / Baga (Baya)

The name of this minor Rigvedic deity, one of the Ādityas (Brereton 1981: 300–306), originally meaning ‘apportioner, bestower’, is applied in the *Avesta* to Ahura Mazda (Y 70.1), the moon (Yt 7.5), and Vaiiu (Yt 15.1?) and in the expression *bayō.baxta* ‘apportioned by the apportioner’. In western Iran, *baga* became the term for deity in general, applied by the Achaemenid king Darius I to A^huramazdā and “the other gods” (DB 4.63).

Aryamán / Airiīaman

The much-discussed functions of OInd. *Aryamán* are defined by Brereton (1981: 181–183) as maintenance of prosperity, concern with the life of the household, hence also marriages, and altogether with the order of society.

Av. *Airiīaman* is invoked in Y 54.1, the conclusion of Y 53 (hence also of the *Gāthās*), as the deity bringing peace and harmony to the communities, a function also suggested in Y 32.1 (compare Y 33.4), the syntax of which is ambiguous: *axiiācā x^aaētus̄ yāsas̄ ahiīā varəzənəm maṭ airiīamnā ... ahurahiiā uruuāzəmā mazdā* ‘his, Ahura Mazda’s bliss (*uruuāzəmā*) the family implores, his the community, together with *Airiīaman*’, assuming that ‘with *Airiīaman*’ means “Ahura Mazda together with *Airiīaman*”. In *Vd* 22.7, he is invoked to come “to the house.” As Y 53 appears to feature a wedding ceremony, this trait of the original deity may also be a shared one.

At a time when it was thought that Zarathustra, by elevating Ahura Mazda to be the only god, proscribed all other deities, Y 54.1 was considered not to be the work of Zarathustra (but compare Boyce 1975a: 261, 265, where she suggests Y 54.1 may, after all, have been “composed by the prophet himself”; see also Vevaina 2005 [2009]: 216–217).

Evil Deities

To the Old Indic deities Indra, Śarva, and the two Nāsatyas, there correspond in *Vd* 10.9 the three arch-demons Iṅdra, Sauruua, and Nāṅhaiθiia. No details are given there, but in the Pahlavi texts they are listed as the opponents of three *aməša spəntas*: Ardwaḥišt (Av. *aša vahišta* ‘Best Order’), Šahrīwar (*xšaθra vairiia* ‘Well-deserved Command’), Spandarmad (*spəntā ārmaiti* ‘Life-giving Humility’, the Earth).

Another demon listed with these three in the Pahlavi texts is Waran, commonly thought to personify greed or lust, perhaps connected with the *varəniia daēuua* of the *Avesta* (compare König 2010a: 150–173). Waran can easily be the Iranian version of Varuṇa, however; with Waran’s epithet *a-rāh*, ‘who has no roads’ or ‘whose roads lead nowhere’, contrast Varuṇa’s function of laying out the paths for the sun (*RV* 7.87.1).

Of Indra’s functions, striking the forces of evil is mainly that of Sraoša, Miθra, and Vərəθrayna and that of releasing the waters that of Tištriia. In particular, Indra’s

epithet *vṛtrahan* is Gathic *vərəθrēm.jan*, apparently applied to Sraoša in Y 44.16 (Skjærvø 2004b: 276–277). The substantivized form *Vərəθrayna* ‘victory’ (lit. ‘obstruction-smashing’) became the name of the martial deity (Pahl. *Warahrān*, *Wahrām*, NP *Bahrām*) par excellence.

Ritual

In both the Vedic and Avestan rituals (OInd. *yajña*, Av. *yasna*), the fire (OInd. *agni*, Av. *ātar*) was central. The most important rituals were the OInd. *soma*, Av. *haoma* rituals, which involved seven priests, led by the *hotar/zaotar*, lit. ‘libator’.

The generic word for members of the priestly social group was Av. *āθrauuuan/aθaurun*, which corresponds to OInd. *atharvan*. Like Zarathustra, the first *āθrauuuan* and first human sacrificer and the first to offer libations and spread the *barsom* (Yt 13.89–94), the *atharvans* were the first to perform several of the ritual functions (RV 1.83.5: the first to stretch out the paths by his sacrifices; RV 6.15.17: provided the model for the Masters who rubbed Agni out; RV 9.11.2: mixed the *soma* with milk).

The principal priest was the Indic *hotar*, Av. *zaotar*. The auxiliary priests, seven in the *Avesta*, were the Av. *hāuuuānān*, who ‘pressed the *haoma*’; Av. *ātrəuuaxša* ‘the one who makes the fire blaze’, OInd. *agnīdh* ‘the lighter of the fire’; Av. *frabərətār*, who ‘brings forth’ the *barsom*; Av. *āsnātār* ‘washer’, who washed and filtered the *haomas*, compare the OInd. *potar* ‘purifier’; Av. *raēθβiškara*, who ‘mixed the *haoma* with milk’; and Av. *sraošāuuarəza*, the ‘overseer’, compare the OInd. *praśāstar* ‘director’; Av. *ābərət* who ‘brings the water’, perhaps to be compared with the OInd. *neṣṭar* ‘leader’ (Kotwal and Kreyenbroek 2003: chapters 54–59; and Oldenberg 1917: 383–392). For the latter, compare RV 15.3, where Tvaṣṭar, the divine carpenter, as *neṣṭar* is said to be *gnāvant* ‘having divine spouses’, and YH 38.3, where the heavenly waters are said to be *ahurānīs*, ‘spouses of Ahura Mazdā’, flowing forth by the ‘artistry’ (*hauuapayha*) of their lord.

Several of the ritual ingredients were the same: the ‘strew’ (OInd. *barhīs*, Av. *barəsmān*), which was ‘spread’ out (Iir. *str̥H-*) and various kinds of ‘offerings’: OInd. *íṣ-*, Av. *īš-*, OInd. *īlā*, Av. *īzā-*. Note especially Y 50.8 *maṭ vā padāiš yā frasrūtā īzaiiā pairijasāi* ‘I shall circumambulate you (all) with the footprints renowned as those of *īzā*’, and compare RV 3.29.4 *īlāyās tvā padé vayāṃ* ‘we (place) you in the footprint of *īlā*’.

The priest is supposed to be OInd. *ṛtv-ij*, ‘sacrificing according the *ṛtús*’, where *ṛtú* is often thought to refer to the correct time for the ritual. The corresponding Av. *ratu*, however, refers to the divine prototypes of all things in this world, including times and places, invoked during the *yasna* ritual regenerating the existence (Av. *ahu*, OInd. *ásu*; compare RV 1.113.15, where the ‘living *ásu*’ comes at dawn). The Av. *yasna* begins with a section, in which the sacrifice is introduced (*niuuuāēdaiiemi* ‘I make known, introduce’) to all the *ratus*, which matches the OInd. *nivíd*, a section of the hymn which ‘introduces’ the deity (Kellens 2006a: 11; Oberlies 2012: 248).

Soma / Haoma

One main part of the *yasna* is devoted to the sacred drink *haoma*, OInd. *soma*, its preparation, filtering, and, presumably, consumption. Its deity was OInd. *Soma*, Av. *Haoma*, with the shared epithets OInd. *duroša*, Av. *duraōša* (unknown meaning) and OInd. *hari*, Av. *zairi* ‘tawny’. Both are personifications of an intoxicating (*mad-*) drink pressed (*suno-/hunao-*) from a plant that is pounded with a pestle in a mortar (Av. *hāuuanā* dual), the juice of which is strained (filtered) during the ritual, the verb used being OInd. *srj-*, Av. *harəz-* ‘release’ (like a stallion): Vr 12.2 *hāuuanaiiāasca haomaṃ hunuuaiṅtiā* ‘of the pestle and mortar which press the *haomas*’, compare RV 3.30.1 *sunvānti sōman* ‘they press the *soma*’; Y 27.6 *haoma pairi.harəšiiēnte* ‘the *haomas* will now be filtered/strained’, compare RV 9.62.21 *ā nah sōman pavitra ā srjātā* ‘release the *soma* into the filter/strainer for us!’, Vr 12.1 *haomanamca harəšiiamnanam* ‘of the *haomas* about to be filtered’, compare RV 9.95.1 *hārir ā srjāmānaḥ* ‘the tawny one (neighs) when released’.

Haoma is not mentioned explicitly in the *Gāthās*, only by his epithet *duraōša*, in two contexts which in the 19th and most of the 20th centuries were interpreted as casting aspersion on it, but Y 32.14 is more likely to refer to its improper treatment and Y 48.10 should probably also be interpreted differently (Skjærvø 2004b). The *haoma* appears, however, to be encrypted in Y 29.7, in which the ingredients of the ritual are listed: *āzuti* ‘fat oblation’ (OInd. *āhuti*), *mąθra* ‘sacred utterance’ (OInd. *mantra*), and *xšuuīd* ‘milk’, compare the Young Avestan formula *haoma yō gauua ... mąθraca ... zaoθrābiiasca* ‘I sacrifice with *haoma* (mixed) with milk, with the sacred utterance, and with libations’. In Y 29.7, between *mąθrəm* and *xšuuīdəm* we find the following sequence of syllables (unmatched elsewhere): HAzAOšō MAzdā (i.e., HAOMA). Martin Schwartz (2000 [2003]: 16b) also sees an encrypted *haoma* in Y 32.10 *huuō mā* [< **hau mā*] *nā srauuā mōrəndaṭ* ‘That man/“hero” diverts *my* songs of fame’ (Skjærvø 2001: 358, 367–368; Schwartz’s translation differs), comparing Y 9.1, where Zarathustra asks *Haoma*: *kō narə ahī* ‘What man are you?’

Conclusion

As can be seen above, there are profound similarities between Avestan and Old Indic language, literature, and ritual, but also sharp differences. The linguistic differences prove conclusively that neither language is descended from the other, which means they must have a common ancestor (proto-Indo-Iranian), hence also a common ancestral literature, mythology, and ritual, and neither is descended from the other. As a consequence, to understand the ancient Iranian language, literature, mythology, and ritual, comparison with the related Old Indic counterparts is inevitable. The great differences between the two, however, due to the long time of separation, must also be taken into account; in fact, attempts to reconstruct entire Indo-Iranian myths are not likely to prove productive, as shown by Émile Benveniste and Louis Renou in their comparative–contrastive study of OInd. *Vṛtra* and Av. *Vərəθraγna* (1934). At most, we can detect inherited pieces of myths, although the contexts in which they appear are no

longer the same; the mythology of the *Avesta* is thus to a fairly large extent still unexplored territory. The mythological framework of the *Old Avesta*, for instance, has mostly remained unheeded.

The importance of comparison with Old Indic should not, however, lead us to disregard the post-Avestan literature, which is, after all, the result of a centuries-long unbroken indigenous exegetical tradition. It is true that the Pahlavi translation and commentary on the *Old Avesta* is “modernized” and appears to have little to offer for linguistic analysis, but the entire Pahlavi literature is to a greater or lesser extent based on the old tradition and contains interesting variant exegeses of Old Avestan passages (Skjærvø 2012b). Even the *Pahlavi Yasna* contains what are arguably very old traditions, for instance, the rendering of OAv. *išud* as *abām* ‘debt’, which provides what appears to be the exact meaning of the Old Avestan term (Skjærvø 2008c).

As the 19th- and early 20th-century presuppositions about the *Avesta* are increasingly seen to be untenable, the two methodologies – comparison with the Old Indic and study of the Pahlavi tradition – which were once regarded as mutually exclusive, can now be seen to be complementary and together provide the foundations for a reinvigorated study.

Further Reading

For Indo-European, see Watkins (1995), Fortson (2004), and West (2008). For the question of orality in Indic and Iranian, see Kellens (1987 and 1998), Oberlies (2012: 35–40), and Skjærvø (2003–2004 and 2005–2006 [2007]). For the dragon-slaying myth, see Dumézil (1986); Watkins (1995), and West (2008). For mythical geography, see Skjærvø (1995a) and Oberlies (2012: 79–82). For poetic formulae, see Oberlies (2012: 41–46) and Watkins (1995); and, for further Indo-European connections, see Schmitt (1967). For rituals, see Oberlies (2012: 83–86).

CHAPTER 26

Judaism

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In the field of comparative religion, the relationship between Zoroastrianism and Judaism has occupied a special pride of place. Largely for theological reasons, early modern Western scholars devoted much attention to Zoroastrianism. Due to a growing interest in the Orient and access to Zoroastrian primary sources in translation, 17th- and 18th-century scholars attempted to locate Zoroastrianism within the sacred history of Christianity by employing various comparative approaches (Stausberg 1998a; Stroumsa 2002). Even when the initial theological impulse dissipated, the topic remained relevant as a model for studying interaction and influence between different religious communities. In recent years scholars have focused on Zoroastrian and Jewish interaction during late antiquity, when both religions passed through critical periods of spiritual ferment and intellectual development. This recent endeavor has provided new answers to old questions about why these two religions evolved in the ways that they did. Contact during later medieval and modern times was more limited and largely localized to Persian Jewry. Since the study of Zoroastrian–Jewish interaction in late antiquity is the site of the most recent and groundbreaking research, this chapter will focus on that period.

Early Encounters: The Achaemenid Conquest of the Near East

Israelites and adherents of Zoroastrianism in their ancient forms would have first encountered each other in the wake of Cyrus' conquests of Judea and Mesopotamia – where the Israelites exiled from Judea had been living since the beginning of the 6th century BCE. The nature of Achaemenid religious practice and belief as well as that of their western Iranian subjects remains largely obscure, making it difficult to analyze the

kind of religious encounters which occurred between Jews and Iranian peoples at this early date. But what we may surmise is that the so-called Persian period of ancient Jewish history was an important time in the formation of Judaism. Under Persian rule, groups of Babylonian exiles returned to Jerusalem, the Second Temple was built, and bitter sectarian battles regarding central religious questions were fought and decided. Perhaps most significantly, as some scholars maintain, it was during this period that the Torah was established as the official code of religious law in Yehud – or Judah (Grabbe 1992: 94–98, 119–137).

In other words, it is quite possible that early forms of Zoroastrianism did intersect with and influence these Jews in profound ways; however, the historical record provides us with no certain answers. The encounters between Achaemenid rulers and Judean leaders as described in the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemia do not tell us much about actual religious encounters. There is virtually no hint of the religious outlook of the Achaemenids in either Ezra or Nehemia, nor in the petitions to Bagoas, the Persian governor of Yehud, preserved in the Elephantine papyri – a cache of 5th-century BCE Aramaic documents and letters from a Jewish military garrison in the upper Nile (Porton 1992). Some of the other biblical books dated to the Persian period (e.g., Haggai, Zekharia, and the post-exilic sections of Isaiah) reflect novel religious conceptions, yet there is as of yet little clear evidence of Zoroastrian influence on these works. Claims by some scholars that Israelite monotheism derived from Zoroastrianism (Lang 1983: 13–59; Choksy 2003a) are unconvincing.

This does not mean that Jews were unaware of Iranian religion. Critical references to cultic fire-rituals seem to merit mention in Isaiah 44:14–20 and 50:11, and a possible reference to the Zoroastrian *barašnūm* ceremony might be found in Isaiah 66:17 (Winston 1966: 187–188). Nevertheless, perhaps the only vestige of religious interaction during this period appears in Isaiah 40–48. There, the prophet addresses Cyrus as god's "anointed one," who will exact vengeance from the Babylonian conquerors of Judea. The prophet also launches into a lesson about the Jewish god's cosmic powers. A couple of decades after the discovery of the Cyrus cylinder, Second Isaiah's "Cyrus Oracle" was profitably compared with the text of the Cylinder (Kittel 1898). Over half a century later, Morton Smith (1963) suggested that both the Cylinder and Oracle were based on an attempt of Persian propagandists to convince Babylonian Marduk worshippers and Judeans of the divine sanction of Cyrus' conquests. Smith further suggested a relationship between the language, style, and tone of this section of Isaiah and a number of strophes in the *Gāthās*, in particular *Yasna* 44. Smith's parallels are too many to consider here, but one noteworthy verse that may have addressed Iranian dualism is Isaiah 45:7: "I form light and create darkness. I make weal and create woe – I Yahweh do all these things" (Smith 1963: 419–420, *contra* Weinfeld 1968: 120–126). Given the provenance, dating, and nature of the *Gāthās* and Second Isaiah, an organic link between these two works is out of the question. Still, it may be possible to think of Isaiah 45 as a kind of early Jewish intersection with and reaction to Achaemenid Zoroastrianism concerning the powers of Yahweh versus Zoroastrian dualism. As we shall see, Jewish–Zoroastrian intersection regarding dualism continued into later periods as well.

Intersections with Zoroastrianism in Second Temple Times

The so-called Persian period in Jewish history concludes with Alexander the Great's conquest of the Near East. Interestingly, many of the ancient Jewish tropes that bear the greatest correspondence to Zoroastrianism begin to appear only in writings composed during the Hellenistic period. Parallels include religiously significant loanwords, borrowed motifs, and broader concepts as well. A few examples will have to suffice. Asmodaios, the name of the demon in the apocryphal Book of Tobit – a work originally composed in Hebrew or Aramaic set in Iran and composed around 200 BCE – has been shown to bear a close, if complex, relationship to Zoroastrian demonology and to derive from an Iranian compound – perhaps Parthian *išm(a)dēw (Sundermann 2008: 155–160). A common motif in Second Temple literature – the idea that treasures are stored up in heaven as reward for good deeds performed on earth – can be traced as far back as the *Gāthās* which describe the piling up of ritual offerings and poetic praises in the “House of Welcome / Song” (Hintze 2008) – though again, as with Isaiah 45, we need not conceive of a direct relationship between the *Avesta* and Second Temple literature. Other notions of personal eschatology such as the personification of deeds that precede the deceased and the fate of the soul immediately after death seem to have developed in conversation with Zoroastrianism (Shaked 1998). The same claim might be made regarding a number of elements of universal eschatology, including the contours of Jewish messianism (Hultgård 1979) and the belief in bodily resurrection (Shaked 1998).

If we then return to our earlier question of why influence is only manifest from the Hellenistic period onward, one possible answer is that in some instances, in order for one religion to so deeply affect another significant amount of time is necessary for ideas and practices to intermingle and fully “ripen.” It also is important to remember that Second Temple Judaism developed within the distinct cultural sphere of Hellenistic Judaism. Some of the most striking and novel ideas of this time period bear the markings of Greek influence, and this is particularly the case regarding philosophical speculation about the nature of the soul and its eternity. James Barr (1985: 218–220) has suggested that the complex dynamics of Hellenism played an intermediary role in the transmission of ancient Iranian ideas. After all, the Greeks expressed an abiding interest in all things Persian and some expressed profound respect for the Magi – which we find in late Second Temple writers like Philo and Flavius Josephus as well (Bohak 2008: 79–80, 84). There is evidence that Hellenistic Jewish authors identified Ezekiel, and perhaps other Jewish prophets, with Zoroaster – ideas that were later repeated by 17th- and 18th-century European scholars (Winston 1966: 183–185, 213–216). In short, there is some evidence that interaction between Jews and Iranians in Mesopotamia during the Achaemenid period, along with the intermingling of Judaism and “Persian-inflected” Greek thought in Palestine during the Hellenistic period engendered a Judaism that, as it entered late antiquity, was receptive to intercourse with Zoroastrianism precisely because it had already seen key elements of Iranian religion in centuries past.

Intersections during Late Antiquity: The Talmud and Zoroastrianism

Arguably, the central canonical text in Judaism from the Middle Ages until today is actually not the Hebrew Bible, but the Babylonian Talmud (*Bavli*), a monumental work more or less completed in Mesopotamia in the 6th century CE. Again, Jews had been living in Mesopotamia since the early 6th century BCE, yet aside from a few scattered references in the works of Flavius Josephus and in tannaitic (early rabbinic) literature, until the 3rd century CE we know very little about the Babylonian Jews. The curtain lifts in the form of rabbinic citations preserved in the Talmud, where intricate talmudic discussions reflect the existence, in early Sasanian times, of a robust community of scholars engaged in the study of the Bible and early rabbinic legal, theological, homiletical, and exegetical traditions (Gafni 2002: 225–228).

The Jewish “scholastic” tradition did not emerge suddenly in Babylonia, or even with the publication of the first rabbinic compilation, the Mishnah (compiled and “published” orally in Palestine by the patriarch Rabbi Judah the Prince at the beginning of the 3rd century CE). For one, the earliest major scholars cited in the Mishnah lived in the 1st century CE. More importantly, rabbinic law and its exegetical modes can be traced back at the very least to the fragments found near the Dead Sea, famously known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were composed by sectarians living in Qumran some time before the Common Era (Shemesh 2009). A number of scholars have noted similarities between Zoroastrianism, especially Iranian dualism, and some of the theological preoccupations of the scrolls. David Winston (1966: 200) has noted the use of the rare term *el ha-de’ot* (‘Lord Wisdom’) in one important Dead Sea text, the Community Rule, and its similarity to the Zoroastrian deity, Ahura Mazda. Shaked (1972) has drawn attention to the warring spirits of good and evil placed in man – a popular idea in Second Temple literature, which achieves a formulation in the Community Rule that is reminiscent of a number of passages in the *Avesta*, particularly the description of the two spirits in *Yasna* 30. Likewise, he has written that the Community Rule and other scrolls refer to an eschatological end not unlike a scheme found in late Pahlavi works like the *Greater Bundahišn* (*GBd*) that may reflect authentic Avestan material. Still, it remains to be seen whether parallels between the scrolls and Zoroastrian texts reflect actual contact or simply the embattled “Manichaean” mentality typical of sectarians (Elman 2010b). By the same token, though there are some interesting similarities to be found between Zoroastrian legal texts, such as the *Vīdēvdād*, and the legal portions of the Dead Sea Scrolls and early rabbinic literature, it is difficult to say whether these parallels betray Zoroastrian influence, internal Jewish development, or a combination of factors. Significantly, both the scrolls and early rabbinic works were produced in Palestine, making direct contact – at least during this period – unlikely. It is possible that Jewish travel between Mesopotamia and Palestine during Parthian times could have brought Zoroastrian concepts westward to Palestine, but, as before, we can only speculate. Thus, in light of the relatively small number of Iranian loanwords it is difficult to see within Palestinian sectarian and rabbinic texts a profound historical encounter between Zoroastrianism and Judaism, at least for the Parthian period. But the parallels between sectarian and rabbinic theology and *halakhah* (Jewish legal praxis), however they came to be, become a significant factor when Jews and Zoroastrians met in Sasanian Mesopotamia.

According to inscriptions commissioned by the powerful 3rd-century CE Zoroastrian priest, Kerdīr, the Sasanian empire housed “orthodox” and “heterodox” Zoroastrians, Jews, Baptists (probably Mandaean), Manichaeans, indigenous and Greek-speaking Christian communities, Hindus, and Buddhists. We know from the archaeological record and from references scattered across Middle Persian, Syriac, Arabic, and rabbinic literature that Sasanian Mesopotamia was on the whole religiously and ethnically mixed. True, there were areas of concentration, with Christians in the north, Mandaeans in the south, and Jewish majorities evidenced in certain Babylonian towns in the south. Zoroastrians seem to have been far more prevalent in the Iranian highlands than in Babylonia, where they formed a ruling minority. Nevertheless, there was definitely a discernible Persian presence in Jewish Mesopotamia, and some Persians even resided in overwhelmingly Jewish neighborhoods – like a certain Wahman ī Ristag (Babylonian Talmud, Eruvin 68a). Clay sealings and Syriac literary sources help identify a number of official Zoroastrian positions located throughout Babylonia, including “Jewish” areas like Babil (Bavel), Hira (Nahar Panya), Hōsrōi-Šād-Kawād / Wēh Kawād / Weh Ardaxšīr (Mahozā), Pērōz Šāpūr (Pum bedita), and Bei Lapat (Morony 2005: 282). Given Babylonia’s important status and the fact that the winter capital, Ctesiphon, was located on the east bank of the Tigris, Zoroastrian officials are actually to be expected in the vicinity. Evidence for Jewish settlement comes overwhelmingly from the *Bavli* (Oppenheimer 1983), yet further indications might also be sought from Aramaic incantation bowls written in Babylonian Jewish Aramaic of known provenance (Franco 1978–1979; Segal 2000: 45, 54–60).

Jews and Zoroastrians interacted in Mesopotamia in a variety of ways, including everyday encounters in residential areas and public places such as marketplaces – including different levels of economic collaboration (Gafni 2002: 240–241). There also is some evidence of intermarriage, and conversion of non-Jews, perhaps Zoroastrians, to Judaism. Some rabbinic figures are referred to explicitly as converts, while in other sources certain rabbis complain that their town saw no converts (Elman 2005b [2008]). Other more significant portals for exchange consisted of intellectual “venues” like the cross-religious transmission of oral texts (Secunda 2005 [2009]) and possibly, the translation and distribution of written works. Religious disputations constituted another important site (Secunda 2011, 2014: 37–63).

These physical interactions would have allowed for exchanges that could have influenced the shape of the rabbis’ religious world, though this would require a means of communication, and more specifically, a common language. There were essentially two or perhaps three major languages in use in Sasanian Mesopotamia that were further subdivided into a variety of dialects. The Jewish community spoke an eastern dialect of Middle Aramaic now commonly referred to as Babylonian Jewish Aramaic (Breuer 2006). Babylonian Jewish Aramaic is essentially the language of the *Bavli* and many of the Aramaic incantation bowls (Juusola 1999). Presumably, Babylonian Jews would have, with moderate effort, been able to converse with non-Jewish speakers of related Aramaic dialects, such as Mandaic used by Mandaeans and Syriac used by Eastern Christians. On the other hand, Middle Persian – the language spoken by the ruling Persians – might have represented a not insignificant linguistic hurdle for many Babylonian Jews. Aside from Pahlavi and Babylonian Jewish Aramaic simply constituting

different languages, we might also point out that Aramaic is a Semitic language, while Persian is a member of the Indo-European family. Nevertheless, there are indications that some rabbis and Babylonian Jews were able to understand and even speak Persian, and among these were very influential authorities (Elman 2005a).

In this context it is worth noting that despite the relatively low number of Persian loanwords in the *Bavli* (Shaked 1987b) there still is an interesting variety of Iranian elements that Babylonian Jewish Aramaic did absorb (Shaked 1987b; Ciancaglini 2008). These include not only the anticipated bureaucratic terms, or clothing and food items, but a number of prepositions, calques of Middle Persian legal and theological concepts (Elman 2004a: 43–52), syntactic structures, and the use of Middle Persian literary *topoi* and words that occasionally replace deeply entrenched Biblical and Middle Hebrew terms like *korban tamid* ('daily sacrifice'; MP *pādrōz*) and *niddah* ('menstruation'; MP *daštān*). These and other phenomena demonstrate rabbinic familiarity and comfort with Middle Persian in spite of a thriving, Aramaic-speaking population in Babylonia, and, significantly, the deep roots of (Imperial) Aramaic in the region.

It is therefore hardly surprising that the *Bavli* contains the imprint of rabbinic reactions to some of the burning interdenominational debates that were taking place in Mesopotamia. Theodicy, the central theological issue of late antiquity, involved all religious groups. The issue of *unde malum*, 'from whence evil', in Augustine's terms, animated nearly all theological thought in the empire, and stood at the heart of "Gnostic" religions (Christian "Gnostic" sects, Mandaeism, etc.), dualistic religions such as Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism, and, in their own ways, Hinduism and Buddhism. The result was a wide-ranging discussion of the ways and means by which the righteous may suffer (Elman 1991, 1993a, 2004a). Rava, a major Mahozan authority (d. 352/353 CE) took a large part in this debate, quoting, inter alia, a relatively ubiquitous Zoroastrian saying regarding the division between fate and works (*PVd* 5.38; *DD* 70 and the like): "Material things are through fate, spiritual through action. There are those who say that wife, offspring, authority and property and life are through fate, the others through action." But he was not alone in this. In the generation before, Rav Joseph of Pumbedita, despite his distance from the capital and presumably cosmopolitan life, took an active role in addressing this question, and developed his own unique doctrine of divine anger, influenced to a marked degree by Zoroastrian concepts (Elman 2006a). But even earlier authorities also addressed this issue. The sage, Rav (d. 247), from the first generation of rabbis known as Amoraim, also mirrors part of that Zoroastrian theological saying as does his son-in-law (Elman 2004a).

As noted above, Isaiah 45 may have represented an early site of Zoroastrian–Jewish intersection. Interestingly, even later in Jewish history the verse remained central in debates concerning dualism. Thus, according to Tertullian, Marcion – a 2nd-century Christian dualist – used Isaiah 45:7 to prove that the god of the Hebrew Bible was the demiurge – for it was he who created "darkness and woe." It is possible that this claim led some, first evinced in the early 3rd-century Palestinian rabbinic *midrash* (rabbinic exegetical work), Sifra, to alter the verse from "I form light and create darkness. I make weal and create woe" to "... I make weal and create *everything*" (Kister 2006: 549–552, our emphasis). Interestingly, later in Jewish history when the Talmud discusses this verse and its dualistic implications in the form of a blessing recited by Jews each morning

(Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 11a), it wonders why the reference to darkness was not altered in the same way that “woe” became “everything.” The response is that, in prayer, one must mention the “qualities of the day during the night and the qualities of the night during the day.” It is possible that this obligation derives from the importance of maintaining god’s connection to both light and darkness in spite of Sasanian Zoroastrianism which completely separates Ohrmazd from darkness (Y 44.5 which attributes the arrangement of light and darkness to Ahura Mazdā; Panaino 2007a).

A type of anatomical dualism is the subject of a debate between a 5th-century CE Babylonian rabbi, Amemar, and an unnamed “magus” who claims that the body can be divided into two regions. The territory or “district” above the waist is associated with Ohrmazd while from the waist down is Ahreman’s regime. Amemar responds that urination, which in the rabbinic conception simply consisted of drinking water (i.e., above the waist) and expelling it (below the waist), testifies to the unity of these allegedly separate districts (*Bavli Sanhedrin* 37a). There is a close parallel between this talmudic passage and the final question in the early 9th-century debate between the Zoroastrian priest Ādurfarnbag and a Zoroastrian convert to Islam, Abāliš, recorded in a short Pahlavi treatise called *Gizistag Abāliš* (“The Accursed Abāliš”). There, Ādurfarnbag justifies the importance of the Zoroastrian girdle (*kustīg*) by showing how the body is divided into two districts (*kust*). The presence of the bladder and excretory processes below the waist demonstrates that this is Ahrimen’s region, as does the very process of urination. The similarity between the two Aramaic and Pahlavi texts shows that, despite the intervening centuries, the basic contours of the debate about dualism between monotheists and Zoroastrians remained the same, even retaining similar vocabulary (“districts”) and emphasis (urination) (Secunda 2010). It should be pointed out that there are similarly striking examples of Babylonian rabbinic texts interacting with Zoroastrian religious works, such as a sequence of talmudic “tall tales” attributed to Rabbah bar bar Hanna that describe encounters with Iranian mythological creatures in virtually the same order as they appear at *GBd* 24, including: a frog, a giant “Kar[a]”-Fish, and a Three-Legged Ass, to name a few (Kiperwasser and Shapira 2008).

Except for dualism, the rabbis would have made common cause with the Zoroastrian debaters. Like them, they valorized oral transmission and eschewed Gnostic views of the body and so (unlike the Aristotelian Jewish philosopher Maimonides eight centuries later) saw no scandal in the continued existence of the body after resurrection. Unlike the Christians, they agreed with Zoroastrians that the messiah had not yet come; of course, in this case, the Christians themselves had to look for a Second Coming in this unredeemed world. This comfort with Zoroastrianism would have extended to other matters as well. Again, they both agreed on matters of eschatology: on the existence of two future worlds, when humans would be judged both after death and at the end of the world, when death would be destroyed and the righteous dead resurrected. Even the relatively insular Pumbeditan Abaye held that the world would exist for three periods of 2,000 years each (*Bavli Sanhedrin* 97a), similar to the Zoroastrian belief in three periods of “mixture” of 3,000 years each.

In certain respects, Jewish and Zoroastrian commonality extended to precisely those areas in which rabbinic Judaism *differed* from Christianity: its valorization of what we may call “nomism,” a legalistic approach to life and religious questions. The

fact that Zoroastrians were just as preoccupied with ritual laws as their rabbinic neighbors seems at the same time to have led to certain tensions in the empire. The Talmud preserves evidence of persecutions, another example of the so-called “narcissism of small differences.” As the Talmud puts it, “[The magi] decreed against three things on account of three things. They decreed against meat because of the [Jewish priestly] gifts, they decreed against the bathhouses because of the [requirements of] ritual immersion. They dig up corpses because [Jews were] rejoicing on the day(s) of their festivals” (*Bavli Yevamot* 63b). The logic of the list works according to the principle of *talion* or “measure-for-measure” divine punishment. But, as a matter of fact, all of these acts would have irked Zoroastrian ritual beliefs: Jewish slaughter forbids strangulation and instead draws blood which is then covered by earth – clearly different from the Zoroastrian technique of strangulation which avoids the spilling of blood on the ground. Jewish women immerse in a ritual bath without having first purified themselves with *gōmēz* – a Zoroastrian requirement that spares the water from having to come into direct contact with the impurity of a woman who recently menstruated. Finally, Jewish corpses, like Christian corpses, are buried in the ground, which from a Zoroastrian perspective would disturb *Spənta Ārmaiti* (‘Life-giving Humility’), the *Aməša Spənta* associated with the earth. Other passages elaborate on the challenges posed by Zoroastrian priests who, following the dictates of the *Vīdēvdād*, went around exhuming corpses (Herman 2010), while the celebration of the Jewish festival of Hanukah was made difficult since Zoroastrian priests sometimes had the habit of confiscating fires maintained by non-Zoroastrians (Kalmin 2006: 132–138). Nevertheless, Kerdīr’s 3rd-century CE boast notwithstanding, the Jews were treated rather well in the Sasanian Empire – certainly when compared with Christians from the mid-4th century and Jewish co-religionists living in Roman Palestine (Brody 1990).

Apart from possible tensions regarding Jewish immersions, similarities between Jewish and Zoroastrian menstrual laws created a fascinating dynamic. For one, both religions forbade intercourse with menstruants. In the Jewish case, that meant all forms of intimacy were out of the question. Ideally, Zoroastrian law requires menstruants to remain sequestered in a *daštānistān*, or place of menstruation, though this may have been observed primarily in breach (Elman 2006b: 166–167). The proximity between the two systems seems to have caused discomfort among some rabbis. As a kind of counterattack, the 5th-century CE rabbi, Rav Ashi, endeavored to derive the Persian word for menstruation from the Bible (Secunda 2008: 29–32). Elsewhere, a talmudic storyteller imagined Šāpūr II’s (r. 309–379 CE) mother sending samples of vaginal discharges to the 4th-century sage, Rava for typical rabbinic analysis. There is evidence that the reluctance of later rabbis to engage in these examinations was influenced by Zoroastrian refusal to differentiate between genital discharges (Secunda 2009). It is also possible that the development in the Jewish law of seven “clean days” – that is, a required waiting period following the cessation of menstrual flow – took its cue from the *Vīdēvdād*’s single “clean day” and constituted a form of one-upmanship (Elman 2004a: 34; Secunda 2008: 153–218). On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the rabbis made clear their opposition to completely isolating menstruants from their husbands, even recording a debate between a rabbi named Rav Kahana and a “heretic” who espoused a

Zoroastrian view on the topic (Secunda 2009). Other important areas of Zoroastrian ritual almost certainly interacted with Judaism. These include the *wāḥ* (Herman 2012) and various stances and articles employed during prayer (Elman 2004a: 34; Herman forthcoming).

Beyond these kinds of intersections, it is most significant that surviving Pahlavi literature shows that rabbinic Jews and Zoroastrian priests shared a common universe of discourse. It should be acknowledged from the outset that our sources are chronologically asymmetric. That is, the *Bavli* was more or less closed by the year 530 CE, before the coming of the Black Plague to the Middle East (Elman 2003a), while the Pahlavi compilations that demonstrate this common universe of discourse – the *Hērbedestān*, *Nērangestān*, *Pahlavi Vīdēvdād*, the recently “rediscovered” *Zand ī Fragard ī Juddēwdād* (ZFJ), *Mādayān ī Hazār Dādestān*, the *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, and *Šāyest-nē-šāyest* – were mostly edited somewhat later, sometimes much later in the early Islamic era (see Andrés-Toledo, “Primary Sources: Avestan and Pahlavi,” this volume). Still, cultural change is usually glacial, at least in terms of approach and outlook, and certainly in the area of law and ritual. Perhaps, more importantly, numerous striking similarities definitely exist, regardless of their cause.

This begins in theology, as we saw above. When a dead person is judged, his or her sins and good deeds (MP *wināh*=Hebr. *averah*; MP *kirbag*=Hebr. *mitzvah* respectively) are weighed against each other, and the dead person’s destination is determined by the sum. It should occasion no surprise that both religions were occupied with weighing and defining levels and boundaries of sin. It should also occasion no surprise that the real weighing and creation of subtle gradations, as in Šnš 1, or some of the Jewish parallels in Gaonic times (from the 7th to the 10th centuries CE) and Maimonides (1135–1204 CE), were medieval developments. Still, their roots are definitely to be located in late antiquity.

The resemblance between rabbinic and Zoroastrian discourses goes much further, but to understand it, we must first examine one of the great theological principles shared by the two religions in regard to their vision of sacred scripture. Some thirty years ago, James Kugel (1981: 103–104) noted a fundamental principle of the rabbinic approach to scripture, which he named “omnisignificance,” that is, the idea that scripture, and in particular the Pentateuch, was formulated in an exceedingly exact manner and for very specific purposes, so that there was not an excess verse, phrase, or even letter that did not hold, at least theoretically, either moral, theological, or legalistic lessons for the attentive exegete – and the rabbis were certainly attentive. In a series of studies beginning in 1993, Elman (1993b, 2003b, 2004b) applied this insight and traced the history of the use of omnisignificant biblical interpretation in rabbinic thought throughout the centuries. Ten years later, he pointed out that the same approach to the *Avesta* could be discerned in Zoroastrian texts (Elman 2006b). Subsequent work by Vevaina and Secunda in their respective dissertations demonstrated this in great detail, both in legal (*halakhic*) and non-legal (*aggadic*) texts (Vevaina 2007; Secunda 2008; see also Vevaina 2012).

Vd 6.1–6.9 will serve as an example of the often-overlooked Sasanian Zoroastrian “midrashic” (exegetical) approach. This section outlines the proper procedure regarding agricultural work on a field in which dogs or men have died. In *Vd* 6.1–2, Ohrmazd himself specifies that the field may not be plowed nor irrigated during the first season, and

doing either carries a penalty of a *tanāpuhl* (a degree of mortal sin) penalty. Verses 3–5 provide the *Avesta*'s usual harsh penalty for transgression of these prohibitions, that is, if one plows or irrigates, one is liable to 200 blows with a horsewhip or a bastinado for each. But then verse 6 adds another agricultural labor: digging out, along with the plowing. Here, instead of a penalty clause, Ohrmazd proffers advice on how to proceed lawfully, that is, by searching the earth for any remains of the dead body. No answer is provided for the question of what penalty accrues to someone who digs out the earth without proper searching. Moreover, when the penalty clause does appear in verse 9, it provides the same 200 strokes as for plowing and irrigating. Why not more, if there is another action, that of digging? Why not a total of 600 strokes of the horsewhip or bastinado? Furthermore, what is the rule when one performs other agricultural work on that field in the specified time?

The *Zand* (i.e., the Middle Persian translation cum commentary) on *PVd* 6.5 provides an answer:

If it is dug and plowed, it is a *tanāpuhl* sin; when one lets the water run over it, it is a *tanāpuhl* sin; and if they do all three, it is two *tanāpuhl* sins. If a tree grows over it and it is dug and plowed, it should not be covered and one should not tread over it. If one covers or treads over it, no sin is committed.

Note, only those actions for which Ohrmazd levies a *tanāpuhl* sin are considered liable to 200 strokes. If one digs, no additional penalty is levied, though one may presume that digging, unlike covering or treading, is sinful because it is mentioned along with plowing in *Vd* 6.6, while the digger incurs no additional penalty. But when one covers or treads on it, “no sin is committed” – because Ohrmazd does not mention these agricultural labors at all! It is clear that one incurs a sin only for a scriptural prohibition for which a penalty is specified, just as we find in rabbinic literature, where explicitly Biblical (*de-oraita*) and derivatively rabbinic (*derabbanan*) principles are differentiated along similar lines.

The similarities between Sasanian Zoroastrian and rabbinic approaches to scripture show up in related issues. Thus, in *ZFJ* (folio 587), the three schools of Mēdyōmāh, Abarg, and Pēšag-Sar differ over whether the purification rite for a woman whose flow has ceased must be carried out exactly as prescribed in the *Avesta*, or whether a more pliant approach to scripture can form the basis of the ritual. The question of the status of the plain meaning of scripture (known in Jewish literature as *peshat*), as opposed to its “midrashic,” non-plain sense, continues to agitate rabbinic thought to this day.

This brings us to perhaps the most potentially fruitful area of research, which remains a desideratum: a detailed comparison of the rabbinic and Zoroastrian systems of purities. The two systems operate with similar basic concepts: human corpses (Hebr. *tum'at met*), dead animals (Hebr. *tum'at nevelah*, both *nasā* in MP parlance), and a menstruating woman (Hebr. *niddah*, MP *zan ī daštān*). Since the basic biological processes that both systems must deal with are identical, though their construction of impurity may be different, the resulting systems will be sufficiently close to warrant extended comparative work. This is particularly important because the Zoroastrian system, while described in the same allusive and elusive, elliptical language of the rabbinic texts, lacks

the medieval commentarial and comprehensive works available for rabbinic halakhah; nevertheless, a start has been made (Secunda 2008).

Both systems struggled with the problem of defining the onset and limiting the extent to which impurity may be said to exist. Impurity held much weightier consequences for the Zoroastrians, since impurity was a weapon of the Evil One. Thus, Zoroastrian authorities rejected extensions of impurity in directions that rabbinic authorities allow. This may have been supported by Ohrmazd's rejection of ascribing sinfulness to inadvertence, as when a bird deposits dead matter that had already been eaten or digested, vomited out, or defecated, and then deposited on a tree that was being used for firewood,

for if these corpses, namely, dog-borne, bird-borne, wolf-borne, wind-borne, and fly-borne, were to make a man guilty, right away my entire material existence ... every soul would be shuddering (in anger and fear), every body would be forfeit, by the large amount of these corpses which lie dead upon this earth. (*Vd* 5.4)

While many rules are common to both systems, the concept of retrospective impurity (Hebr. *tum'ah lemafre'a*), that is the notion that the discovery of some impurity renders objects impure back in time, is rejected in regard to the impurity caused by dead matter, but not that caused by menstruation (*PVd* 16.2). On the other hand, other important rabbinic rules or concepts relating to ritual impurity do have parallels in Middle Persian sources. The list includes: 1) Rabbinic *aposhei tum'ah la mapshinan*, or "we do not expand the range of impurity" (*Bavli Bezah* 7a; *Šnš* 2.72); 2) Rabbinic *sefeq tum'ah bi-rshut ha-yahid / rabbim*, or the question of doubtful impurity in private versus public spaces (*Pesahim* 19b et al.; *Šnš* 2:74); 3) *tum'ah be-hibburin*, impurity conveyed through touching one of three objects that are in contact with one another (*PVd* 5.27–28). The Babylonian Talmud has three extended discussions on this matter (*Haggigah* 24a; *Nazir* 4:2a; *Avodah Zarah* 37b), in particular in regard to the question of how far this principle extends. It is worth noting that here too the Palestinian Talmud, composed beyond the Sasanian Empire, does not take up the issue. On the Zoroastrian side, *PVd* 5.33 and *Šnš* 2.59 provide us with the terms *hamreh* and *padreh*, which Tavadia (1930) rendered as "directly infected" and "indirectly infected."

Recent research has revealed the conceptual gap between the *Pahlavi Vīdēvdād* and *ZFJ*; where the *Pahlavi Vīdēvdād* conceives the transmission of pollution as a linear, two-dimensional process, *ZFJ* 667.14–15 considers that volume of the house in which a dog or man has died as polluted, and not just the walls. This may be related to the theological view regarding the irruption of the Evil One into Ohrmazd's space (Choksy, personal communication). The question of whether the earth, or, for that matter, house walls which are in contact with the earth, can be polluted is also of importance, inasmuch as the rabbis denied that house walls can be polluted by a corpse or carcass inside the house, though the walls could be polluted by the various molds known in Leviticus 14 as *tzara'at*. In this respect, Vered Noam's recent observation is illuminating for our understanding of Zoroastrian concepts of pollution. She writes of the fundamental and ancient legal distinction between the natural world, which is not susceptible to defilement, and the creations of human civilization, which are subject to impurity (Noam

2009: 4 n. 11). Seen in this context, the differing views of the two religions on the pollution of water, earth, fire, and sky are eminently understandable, since pollution is a creation of Ahreman, and thus we see that Ohrmazd's creation is susceptible to pollution. Thus, despite their similarities in many matters, the Zoroastrian view of nature differs radically from the Jewish one. Likewise, Israelite and Jewish values to some extent reflect Semitic values, as in Judaism's valorization of the necessity for a central temple while Zoroastrianism attaches no such spiritual significance to the existence of such a temple (Elman 2010b).

After the Conquest: Medieval Intersections between Jews and Zoroastrians

With the Arab conquest of Mesopotamia in the 7th century, Zoroastrianism was soon displaced from its status as a "state" religion of the ruling classes. The rabbinic literature of the Gaonic period in Jewish history (7th to the 11th century) reflects this. Zoroastrianism comes up only infrequently in Gaonic legal responsa. In one responsum, Islamic wine is forbidden even though Muslims did not practice libations to the gods since "many Zoroastrians who lived at that time [i.e., 760 CE] and converted to Islam ... their heart was not free of Zoroastrianism, that they make libations of wine" (Brody 1999: 180–181). Some of the Gaonic material demonstrates familiarity with Zoroastrian practices while other sources betray striking ignorance – perhaps evidence of Zoroastrianism's declining place in the landscape of Jewish Babylonia in the early Middle Ages (Brody 1999: 182–186). Zoroastrianism still piqued the interest of some Gaonim, like the great 10th-century theological and Bible scholar Sa'adya Gaon who discussed "next-of-kin" marriages (Brody 1999: 179 fn. 2) and the Iranian dualism at the root of Isaiah 45.7 (Kister 2006: 550 fn. 2), but, for the most part, encounters between Jews and non-Jews in post-Sasanian Mesopotamia meant Islamic–Jewish interactions.

Still, there were polemics. The apologetic Middle Persian work, *Škand-gumānīg Wizār*, was composed during the 10th century and devoted two detailed chapters to Judaism (Thrope 2012). It is possible that the author of the work, Mardānfarrox ī Ohmazddād, had some access to the Hebrew Bible and Jewish interpretive traditions (Shapira 2001). Even if the material stemmed from the Sasanian era, it is significant that Judaism remained a target of Zoroastrian polemics in *Škand-gumānīg Wizār* and in the *Dēnkard* as well (Shaked 1990). Significantly, Mardānfarrox's philosophical approach is reminiscent of some of Sa'adya Gaon's works, as Samuel Thrope's recent (currently unpublished) research indicates. Indeed, Sa'adya is the most well-known critic of the Karaite, or anti-Rabbanite scriptural movement, that sprang up in 9th-century Iran. Steven Wasserstrom (1995: 148) has argued that one early critic of Rabbanism, the 9th-century Khorasanian scholar Hiwi Balki, brought Jews, Muslims, and Zoroastrians into interreligious debate.

Towards the end of the Gaonic period, a large portion of the Jewish Diaspora emigrated from Iran and Iraq to North Africa, Western Europe, and beyond. At this point, Jewish intersections with Zoroastrianism, to the extent that they can be demonstrated,

remained largely the heritage of the distinct Persian Jewish community, which again was at some variance with the rabbinic communities that grew up across the Diaspora (see Choksy 2010 on this period). It still could be argued that by incorporating the Iranian epic tradition (Moreen 1996), Persian Jewry's greatest cultural monument – Judeo-Persian poetry – bears the indirect imprint of Zoroastrian tradition.

Conclusion

Jews and Zoroastrians first encountered each other in the 6th century BCE. Interaction during subsequent centuries set the stage for a deep and protracted engagement during late antiquity. The universe of discourse shared by Sasanian Jews and Zoroastrians, and the give and take of theological, ritual, and legal exchanges during the so-called Talmudic Period impacted the contours and content of the Babylonian Talmud – the textual nerve center of Judaism from the Middle Ages until today. Despite great advances, research of Jewish–Zoroastrian interaction in late antique Mesopotamia remains a topic worthy of further exploration. The coming years promise exciting and significant findings.

Further Reading

In general the reader is referred to relevant entries in the *Encyclopædia Iranica* (www.iranicaonline.org) and *Encyclopaedia Judaica* and Choksy (2007a). For early intersections, readers should consult Winston (1966) and the relevant bibliographic essays in Grabbe (1992). For the Hellenistic and Roman periods, see Shaked (1984). For late antiquity, see Elman (2007) and Secunda (2014). For more recent times (not covered in this chapter), see Choksy (2013).

CHAPTER 27

The Classical World

Martin L. West

Shortly after 550 BCE Cyrus the Great extended his new Persian Empire to the shores of the Aegean, taking in a number of Greek cities. From then till the end of antiquity Persia enjoyed recognition in the Greco-Roman world as one of the great barbarian civilizations. From at least the time of Darius I its dominant religion was Zoroastrianism. Greeks were able to observe Zoroastrian cult practices in Asia Minor, and from occasional personal contacts with Magoi they learned something of Zoroastrian theology. For them it was not “Zoroastrianism” but the religion of the Persians, or the teaching of the Magoi, though they knew the name of Zoroaster as the most ancient of Magoi, the one who had first propagated these teachings.

If Xerxes I (486–465 BCE) had succeeded in his attempt to bring Greece into his empire, Zoroastrianism might well have taken root there as it did in much of Asia Minor, with incalculable consequences for the later development of Western civilization. In the event the influence of Zoroastrian doctrines on Classical thought was small, though not insignificant for the history of philosophy. There was never a clash of religions: Zoroastrian kings and priests never had the ambition to spread their faith beyond the imperial frontiers, and to the Greeks and Romans Persian belief and usage appeared not as a threat to their own systems but as an interesting ethnic peculiarity.

Early Greek Cosmologists: 540–450 BCE

The Greeks would have heard of the Medes before they ever heard of the Persians. They may have become aware of them first in 612 BCE, as a distant Asiatic people who had assisted the Babylonians to overthrow the might of Assyria. Half a century later they will have received reports of them harrying the eastern frontier of Lydia, the Anatolian

kingdom to which the Ionian Greeks were subject at that time. Then Cyrus and his Persians appeared, swiftly conquering both Media and Lydia. His soldiers, officials, and priests (Magoi) soon arrived in the Ionian cities, establishing a presence that was to remain for generations.

It is uncertain how early and how fully the Persian or Median priests were Zoroastrianized; even under Darius I (522–486 BCE) their religion, while nominally Mazdayasnian (Mazdean), may have been rather different from his. But in the speculative systems of Greek cosmologists we very soon detect elements that seem to be of Iranian or specifically Zoroastrian provenance. They appear already in Anaximander, one of the earliest known Greek prose writers, who lived in one of the principal Ionian cities, Miletus. The Hellenistic chronographer Apollodorus (c. 180–110 BCE) stated that Anaximander was sixty-four years old (perhaps the age at which he published his book) in 547/546 BCE, but in default of documentary evidence he arrived at that date by rough and ready reckoning, and for all we know it could be twenty or thirty years too high.

As with the other cosmologies here considered, the author's original work is lost and his system has to be reconstructed from a limited number of quotations and reports by later writers. Anaximander held that our universe exists in a space hollowed out from the surrounding Boundless and that it will last for a fixed period, at the end of which it will dissolve back into the Boundless. It is not unique, as countless other universes develop in different regions of the Boundless at different times. The earth is drum-shaped and hangs in the middle of the space. Between it and the outer boundary there lie concentric rings made of fire but enclosed in misty air that hides the fire from view except where it shines through certain holes, appearing to us as the sun, moon, and stars. The rings are spaced at equal distances, at three different levels from the earth. That of the stars is the nearest to the earth, being nine earth-diameters across; that of the moon is next, measuring eighteen earth-diameters; that of the sun is the highest, at twenty-seven diameters. Presumably the edge of the Boundless is reached at thirty-six diameters.

The number thirty-six assigned to the firmament, and the attachment of the heavenly bodies to wheel-shaped structures, perhaps derive from Babylonian astronomy (West 1971: 88–89, 92). But the sequence earth – stars – moon – sun is not Babylonian, so far as we know; nor is it Greek. It is distinctively Iranian: perhaps not originally Zoroastrian (though the sun is already “the highest of the high” in *YH* 36.4), but certainly established Zoroastrian doctrine in the *Young Avesta* (*Yt* 12.25–34; *Vd* 7.52, 11.1–2, and other passages), and it remains so in the Pahlavi books. It is not founded on any observational considerations but on a religious concept of gradations of fiery purity. These are the stations of the soul's journey when it leaves the body. It goes first to the nearest earthly fire, and from there to the stars, the moon, the sun, and finally to the Beginningless Light which is the abode of Ohrmazd (*Dāmdād Nask* in *Šnš* 12.5). As in Anaximander, the distances between each stage are equal. And there is a striking analogy between Anaximander's Boundless at the furthest limit of the universe and the Beginningless Light that is the Zoroastrian soul's final goal (Burkert 1963: 103–120 = 2003: 197–211; West 1971: 89–91).

Anaximander wrote (fragment 1 Diels [Diels-Kranz 1964]) that all things perish into what they came from, as they have to atone for their “injustice,” the imbalance they

have made in the cosmos, and this atonement is made “in accordance with the ordinance of Time (*Chronos*).” A deified Time had appeared half a century earlier in the poetry of Solon (fragment 36.3 West [1972]), in the role of a judge who eventually finds out the truth of everything. Anaximander’s Time, however, ordains things in advance, prescribing a fixed term during which each constituent of our world may assert itself. Here we think of the Zoroastrian myth of Zurwān, ‘Time’, who set a 9,000-year limit on Ahreman’s prevalence in the world (Armenian and Syriac sources in Bidez and Cumont 1938 II: 91; Zaehner 1955: 426–427; see also Panaino, “Cosmologies and Astrology,” this volume).

The Zurwān myth is not attested in the extant *Avesta*, but the evidence of Eudemus and Theopompus (see below) proves it to have been current at least by the second half of the 4th century BCE. The role of Chronos in Anaximander’s cosmology suggests that it already existed 200 years before that. The inference receives some support from certain elements in the systems of three other pre-Socratic philosophers who in other respects have little in common with Anaximander or with each other: Pherecydes of Syros, Heraclitus of Ephesus, and Empedocles of Acragas.

In Pherecydes, who seems to have been more or less contemporary with Anaximander, Chronos appeared as one of three deities who always existed. All we know of his role is that he created fire, wind, and water out of his own seed, and that from them other gods developed. This recalls the version of the Zurwān myth in which Zurwān produced the twin brothers Ohrmazd and Ahreman out of himself (Armenian sources in Zaehner 1955: 62–63). However, the idea of Time as a self-fertilizing progenitor is not peculiar to these two traditions; it can also be found in the *Atharvaveda* and by Eudemus’ time in Phoenician cosmogonies, and it may perhaps be traced back to an Egyptian model (West 1971: 28–36, 1983: 103–106).

In the verse cosmology of Empedocles, dating from perhaps 470–450 BCE, the universe was portrayed as alternating eternally between total separation and total blending of the four elements, earth, water, air, and fire. This happens as the balance of power oscillates between the two opposed deities Love and Strife. The alternation is controlled by a treaty that the two have sealed with one another (fragment 30 Diels), and we learn from a recent discovery that Empedocles assigned a fixed period to each phase of the cycle: 4,000 years each for the states of absolute homogeneity and absolute separation, and 6,000 years for each of the intermediate transitional periods (Primavesi 2006). Empedocles characterizes his Love and Strife as respectively good and bad deities, and this dualistic theology, with supremacy alternating between the two rivals over predetermined periods of time lasting many thousands of years, strongly recalls Zoroastrianism, especially accounts in which Ohrmazd and Ahreman make a pact to determine the duration of their conflict (*GBd* 1.26–27; *MX* 8.11–12). Yet there is a characteristic difference in the Greek system. Instead of a non-recurring sequence beginning with the beginning and ending with the end of finite time, Empedocles makes it an endlessly repeating cycle. Greek thinkers, from at least the time of Anaximander, sought to explain the world’s workings in terms of universal processes that would operate forever.

Heraclitus, a generation or so before Empedocles, seems already to have conceived of a great aeon, lasting 10,800 years, characterized by alternation between two extremes,

a high summer in which souls are drier and wiser and a winter in which they are damper and stupider; he may possibly have seen it as a standing conflict between Zeus and Hades (West 1971: 154–158, 188–190). This already looks like a Greek adaptation of the Zoroastrian myth: Zeus and Hades appear elsewhere as the two gods with whom the Greeks equated Ohrmazd and Ahreman.

There are other things in Heraclitus that have aroused suspicions of Persian influence. He spoke of a divine Wisdom, unitary, apart from everything else, possessed of the insight that steers everything through the world, and to some degree equatable with the Greeks' highest divinity, Zeus (fragments 32, 41, 50, 108 Diels). We think inevitably of Zoroaster's Mindful Lord, Ahura Mazdā, except that Heraclitus makes his Wisdom neuter, not masculine, an explicitly impersonal principle. Xenophanes of Colophon (c. 565–470 BCE), perhaps a little earlier, portrayed the highest god as moving everything by the power of his mind without moving himself (fragments 25–26 Diels), and from this time on the untraditional idea that the world is shaped and governed by a supreme intelligence was taken up by many Greek philosophers.

The importance attached to fire in Heraclitus' cosmology has long been seen as a pointer to Zoroastrian influence. He wrote that the world is an ever-living fire, not all parts of which are alight at once; the parts that are not alight exist as other things (fragments 30, 90 Diels), all interconnected by the vital forward flow which we see in fire and which continues invisibly throughout everything. This goes beyond anything in Zoroastrian thought, but in the Pahlavi books, at least, we find the doctrine that there is fire in whatever exhibits warmth, brightness, and growth: in sky and earth, water and plants, cattle and humankind. It can even be struck out of rock. If Heraclitus encountered such thinking, it might have prompted him to frame his more comprehensive theory, which was later to be the main inspiration for Stoic cosmology. The idea of the soul's journey via the earthly fire to the celestial fires and so to the Beginningless Light might also have nudged him towards the vision that united all those fires as parts of a single system.

Greek Historians of the East: 450–370 BCE

A clear sign of Persian religion impinging on the Greeks' consciousness is given by their adoption of the word *magos*, not just as the proper term for the Iranian priests but also as a contemptuous designation of any pretenders to expertise in religious practice such as itinerant seers or quack healers using spells. This usage was established by the second half of the 5th century (Nock 1933: 165–166 = 1972: 309–310). (A passage of Clement appears to impute it to Heraclitus, probably wrongly.) Later we find the derived words *mageiā* and *magikē* meaning the art of the *magos*, that is, 'magic' or 'wizardry'.

Herodotus (c. 485–425 BCE) in his *Histories* (1.131–140; 3.16) gives us the first direct reports of Persian religious belief and practice, based on what he observed or was told in Asia Minor. His account, though clearly inaccurate in some ways, contains some recognizably Zoroastrian features. He says that the Persians sacrifice to Zeus, who for them is the whole sky, and to the sun and moon, fire, water, and winds. This "Zeus" is presumably Ahura Mazdā. He mentions that they venerate rivers and take care not to

pollute them, and likewise that fire is a god for them and so they refuse to defile it by cremating the dead. He says nothing of Arjra Mainiiu, but he does note that the Magoi, whom he portrays as being in charge of all religious matters, make a great point of killing noxious creatures such as ants, reptiles, and birds – anything in fact except humans and dogs. He has heard the name *Mitra* as that of a deity who has been added to the pantheon, but he mistakenly takes it to belong to an Aphrodite imported from Assyria; she probably represents Anāhitā. He describes animal sacrifices at which the boiled meat was spread on a bed of clover and a Magos chanted an incantation over it, a “theogony”: scholars have taken this to be a *yašt* of some kind (Benveniste 1929: 31), though it is not really what “theogony” suggests. A dead Persian, Herodotus reports, is not buried until the corpse has been savaged by a bird or a dog. This custom, he says, is not spoken of openly, but he knows for certain that the Magoi practice it.

Émile Benveniste (1929: 25–34) argued that what Herodotus describes was not Zoroastrianism but a native cult consisting largely of traditional, pre-Zoroastrian elements. But such elements had increasingly been absorbed into Zoroastrianism since the prophet’s time. It is hardly likely that in the reign of Artaxerxes I (465–424 BCE), when Herodotus wrote, public cult was not ostensibly Zoroastrian, and there are enough indications in his account to support the presumption.

Another historian writing in the same period, or not much later, puts it beyond question. This was Xanthus of Sardis, half Greek, half Lydian, who wrote a history of Lydia, unfortunately known only from fragments and derivative accounts. He actually referred to Zarathustra, perhaps using what remained the usual Greek form of the name, *Zōroastrēs*, which may be based on an Old Persian form **Zarāh.uštra*, assimilated to two Greek words, *zōro-* ‘undiluted’ and *astron* or *astēr* ‘star’. Xanthus wrote (Jacoby 1930: 765 F 32) that Zoroaster lived 6,000 years before Xerxes I crossed the Hellespont to invade Greece (480 BCE), an impossibly early dating that was taken over by various later Greek writers but has no counterpart in Zoroastrian sources. However, as cosmic periods reckoned in multiples of 3,000 years were essential to Zoroastrian theology, at any rate by the late 4th century BCE, it is assumed that Xanthus’ reckoning is somehow connected with that system, though he may have misunderstood what he heard of it (Jackson 1899: 152). As we can see from Herodotus’ history of Egypt, Greeks were easily disposed to accept that barbarian cultures reached back many thousands of years before their own.

Xanthus apparently wrote at some length about the Magoi, including the information that they regarded it as proper to have intercourse with their mothers, daughters, and sisters (Jacoby 1930: F 31). This greatly struck the Greeks, and many authors repeat it throughout antiquity. Zoroaster appears again in the story of Cyrus’ capture of Sardis as related by a later historian, Nicolaus of Damascus (b. c. 64 BCE), who for Lydian matters largely drew on Xanthus, so this too may come from him. Nicolaus tells (Jacoby 1930: 90 F 68.11–12) that when the defeated king Croesus, set on the pyre, prayed to Apollo and was saved from burning by a sudden thunderstorm, people recalled “the Sibyl’s oracles and Zoroaster’s *logia*” (sayings, mantras), and from then on the Persians accepted Zoroaster’s injunction not to burn bodies or otherwise pollute a fire. The story implies awareness of Zoroastrian (oral) texts concerned with the purity of fire.

Early in the 4th century BCE a massive history of Persia, in no less than twenty-three books, appeared from the pen of Ctesias of Cnidus. He had some qualifications for the task, as he spent seventeen years as a doctor at the court of Artaxerxes II (r. 404–358 BCE) and claimed to have drawn on the ancient records preserved in the royal archives. His work, however, was full of unreliable stories and romantic tales, and its fragments do not yield the insights on the court's Zoroastrianism that we might have hoped for. His only relevance in the present context is that he is suspected of being the original source of a pseudohistorical narrative involving Zoroaster that surfaces in later writers. Here Zoroaster is not put six millennia in the past but only four centuries: he is king of Bactria, defeated and killed by the Assyrian queen Semiramis with her husband Ninus. But while Ctesias certainly described the Assyrian incursion, it is not certain that he identified the Bactrian king as Zoroaster; that may be a later modification (Jackson 1899: 154–157).

In recent years a new Greek text referring to Magoi has come to light. This is the Derveni Papyrus, a carbonized book roll recovered from northern Greece and containing an elaborate text concerned with speculative interpretation of religious texts and rituals (Kouremenos, Parássoglou, and Tsantsanoglou 2006). The composition dates from the first half of the 4th century BCE. In a passage in column VI the unidentified author draws parallels between ritual practices of the Magoi and those of a certain Greek cult society. The Magoi, by means of incantation, are able to shift obstructive *daimones*, who are probably identified as souls. They make cake offerings as if in atonement, and pour libations of water and milk, as if to the dead; the cakes have many knobs, because the souls are numerous. It seems to be argued that the Eumenides to whom the initiates in the Greek cult make offerings are also souls. In an earlier column the writer has referred to Heraclitus' doctrine of Erinyes, agents of cosmic justice, who monitor the regularity of the sun's movements, and he may have compared them to those *daimones* who according to the Magoi serve the gods and guard their privileges. The obstructive *daimones* who have to be shifted sound like *daēuuas*, but the others sound more like *frauuuāšis* (Kouremenos, Parássoglou, and Tsantsanoglou 2006: 167). When he refers to food offerings made to them, the author may perhaps have the *Hamaspáθmaēdaiia* festival in view (Yt 13.49–52). What is significant, in any case, is that he treats the religion of the Magoi not as an alien curiosity but as being of equal validity with Greek practice and a parallel response to the same underlying theological truths.

Plato and the Academy: 370–300 BCE

The first writer to present a Greek readership with a clear statement of Zoroastrian dualism, of the fundamental opposition between Ohrmazd and Ahreman, may have been Eudoxus of Cnidus (c. 390–340 BCE), a famous mathematician and geographer who was a contemporary and friend of Plato's. At any rate Aristotle in his lost treatise *On Philosophy* (fragment 6 Rose [1886]) reported that according to the Magoi there were two essential principles, a good and an evil divinity, one named Zeus or Oromasdes, the other Hades or Areimanios, and we are told that Eudoxus had said the same in his

Circuit of the Earth (fragment 341 Lasserre [1966]). We cannot be sure from this whether Eudoxus gave the Persian names and the Greek equivalences. Another testimony records that he dated Zoroaster 6,000 years before the death of Plato (347 BCE) (fragment 342 Lasserre). He evidently took over Xanthus' dating but replaced Xerxes' crossing with Plato's death as the epochal event. This is a very remarkable move. It implies not only that Plato's death – or the return of his soul to where it came from – marked a cardinal epoch in world history, but also that Plato was in some sense a successor to Zoroaster, or his reincarnation (Benveniste 1929: 14–21).

There seems to have been more to the linkage than an eccentric fancy of Eudoxus'. There are credible reports that certain Persian Magoi came to Athens in Plato's old age (at Eudoxus' invitation?) to learn and discuss philosophy with him; that when he died on his eighty-first birthday, they made offerings to his spirit, considering him to have attained a more than mortal lot; that a "Chaldaean" had been staying with him on the last night of his life; and that a Persian named Mithradates had a portrait statue of him set up in the Academy (Kingsley 1995: 196–200). In two of Plato's late works we find tentative consideration given to the wholly un-Greek idea that both a good and a bad divinity or world-soul play a role in the workings of the cosmos (*Politicus* 270a; *Laws* 896e–898c). It is entirely plausible that he had recently been introduced to this Zoroastrian concept and found it suggestive (for Plato and Iranian influences see Horkey 2009).

There is much evidence of a lively interest in Zoroaster and his dualist doctrine among Plato's immediate followers. In the spurious Platonic dialogue *Alcibiades* (122a) it is asserted that a Persian prince is educated from the age of fourteen in the *mageiā* of Zoroaster the son of Oromasdes, and it is added for clarification that this *mageiā* is not wizardry but worship of the gods. Heraclides Ponticus (c. 390–320 BCE) wrote a book entitled *Zoroaster*, probably a philosophical dialogue in which the prophet played a part (Bidez and Cumont 1938 I: 81–84). Xenocrates, who became head of the Academy in 339 (defeating Heraclides), did not so far as is known refer to Zoroaster or to Magoi, but he held that between man and god there was an intermediate class of *daimones*, some of whom were evil.

Hermodorus of Syracuse, writing after Alexander's conquest of Persia in 330 BCE, gave an account of the principal Magoi down to that time, beginning with Zoroaster (whose dating he reformulated as "5,000 years before the Trojan War") and naming various others such as Ostanēs, Astrampsychus, Gobryas, and Pazates (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 1.2). These may have been real persons who made themselves known in Greek circles; Ostanēs is said to have come in Xerxes' entourage in 480 BCE (Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 30.8), and so is Gobryas (pseudo-Plato, *Axiochus* 371a). The names look Persian except for Astrampsychus, which is possibly a Persian name assimilated to Greek words in the same way as Zarathushtra-Zoroastres.

Aristotle (see above) followed Eudoxus in an account that he gave of the dualistic theology of the Magoi, and also in dating Zoroaster 6,000 years before Plato's death (fragment 34 Rose). In his *Metaphysics* (1091b10) he brackets the Magoi with Pherecydes and some other Greek philosophers who identified the first generative principle as the supreme power in the world. In the case of Pherecydes he was probably thinking of Chronos, Time (see above), and it is likely that for the Magoi he was thinking

of that version of the Zoroastrian cosmogony in which Zurwān was the father of Ohrmazd and Ahreman and remained from one point of view the highest divinity, presiding over his sons' long struggle through finite time. Certainly his friend and pupil Eudemus knew some such version: in a wide-ranging survey of Greek and barbarian cosmologies (fragment 150 Wehrli [1969]) he wrote that the Magoi, and the whole Aryan nation, posited Space or Time – some said the one, some said the other – as the initial unity, from which were differentiated either a good and an evil spirit or, as some said, light and darkness before these; and then there were opposing groups of good and bad powers, led respectively by Oromasdes and Areimanios. In another place (fragment 89 Wehrli) Eudemus referred to a Magian teaching that men and women would be restored to life and become immortal, and all beings would then remain unchanging under their own names. (This reading has been questioned, but Y 51.22 supports it). This again is a genuine Zoroastrian doctrine, one that Hellenistic Jews could adapt to their own hopes and ideals; Greeks, being dedicated to never-ending cyclical processes, had no use for it.

Aristotle's pupil Aristoxenus of Tarentum, who had also had a Pythagorean teacher, drew on some different source, as appears from the fact that he spoke not of 'Zoroastres' but of 'Zaratas the Chaldaean' (fragment 13 Wehrli), apparently after a later Persian form of the name. And instead of putting him thousands of years in the past, he represented him as an older contemporary of Pythagoras, who had journeyed to Babylon to learn from him. Zaratas had taught Pythagoras a dualistic cosmology in which light and darkness were the father and mother of everything; there was a heavenly divinity associated with fire and an earthly one associated with water and plant growth. This is a very distorted version of Zoroastrian doctrine, but Aristoxenus was trying to harmonize it with a Pythagorean system that he knew.

Awareness of Zoroastrian theology was by now spreading beyond Athenian philosophical circles. The prolific historian Theopompus of Chios, writing around 320 BCE, recorded the timescale given by the Magoi for Oromasdes' conflict with Areimanios (Jacoby 1930: 115 F 65): each of the two prevails for 3,000 years, they battle on equal terms for a further 3,000, and in the end Areimanios will be destroyed and mankind will be beatified, casting no shadow and needing no food. The testimony is of great importance as proving beyond peradventure what was strongly suggested by Xanthus' dating of Zoroaster: the antiquity of the 9,000-year or 12,000-year scheme of cosmic history documented in the much later Armenian, Syriac, and Pahlavi sources.

The Hellenistic Period: 300–30 BCE

From the second half of the 4th century onwards an increasing quantity of Greek literature was produced under false names. Hundreds of writers were competing for attention, and one way to catch it was to pretend that one's book was the work of a famous or legendary person. For several generations people had produced poems under the names of mythical poets and seers such as Orpheus, Musaeus, Bakis, Epimenides, the Sibyl; ascription to such figures lent especial credit to oracles, magic spells, revelation of divine truths, and the like.

Foreign sages and holy men such as Persian or Chaldaean Magoi, and presently Egyptian priests and Indian Brahmans and Gymnosophists, fascinated the Greeks as they read reports of their peculiar beliefs and lifestyles and the immense antiquity claimed for their traditions. Such men surely possessed funds of recondite learning unknown to Greeks. Books that made such learning available would readily attract curious readers and fetch a healthy price. From the 3rd century BCE, if not before, works under the names of such barbarian authorities began to appear. None of them survives complete, but there are many quotations and allusions, extending through the Roman and Byzantine periods (see Bidez and Cumont 1938; Beck 1991). Their content in nearly all cases had nothing to do with Zoroastrianism. Their currency merely testifies to the romantic interest aroused by those exotic personalities.

A number of works were attributed to Zoroaster himself. In one of the principal ones, *On Nature*, he addressed Cyrus, so dating himself in the 6th century BCE. The work began: "This was composed by Zoroaster the son of Armenius, a Pamphylian, after I died in battle and went to Hades; it contains all I learned there from the gods" (Bidez and Cumont 1938 II: 158). This Zoroaster is assuming the identity of the Pamphylian Er, son of Armenius, who featured in the myth of Plato's *Republic* (614b–621b); he too died in battle but came back to life after twelve days and related all that he saw of the other world. The link between Zoroaster and Plato was thus reinforced by means of the claim that it was actually Zoroaster's story that Plato was telling, a story now presented more fully and accurately in Zoroaster's own words.

The pseudo-Zoroastrian literature covered topics such as biology, astrology, magic, and the properties of various herbs and gems. The unreliable biographer and bibliographer Hermippus of Smyrna, around 200 BCE, is reported to have edited writings of Zoroaster amounting to 2 million lines (fragment 2 Wehrli) – certainly not translations from the *Avesta*, but Greek pseudepigrapha bearing Zoroaster's name, though it is hard to credit that such an enormous quantity of them (the equivalent of about 800 book rolls) ever existed.

Other works were attributed to the less ancient Magos Ostanos (Bidez and Cumont 1938 I: 167–207, II: 267–356). They covered a similar range of subject matter to those of pseudo-Zoroaster, extending also to theology and demonology, divination, necromancy, and alchemy.

Meanwhile Plato's successors in Athens and Alexandria were slowly digesting his legacy. There is no evidence of further input from Magoi, but the seeds already planted did not find the soil altogether barren. The idea persisted among the Platonists that there are some supernatural powers, even if not on the level of the gods themselves, that are intrinsically malicious. Of the other philosophical schools, Stoicism deserves a mention, again not because of any direct influence from Zoroastrianism but because its physical theory took fire from a fuse laid long before, in this case by Heraclitus. The Stoics' conception of a supreme cosmic intelligence (*Zeus*) allied with a fire that streams through all things, metamorphosing through a cycle of elements, was a development of Heraclitus' ideas, and these, as we have seen, may have had Zoroastrian inspiration.

Alexander's conquests in the East resulted in the foundation of numerous Greek cities in the newly won territories and large influxes of Greek officials and settlers to occupy them. All of these countries had previously been part of the Persian Empire, and

Zoroastrian worship in one form or another must have been practiced in all of them under the leadership of Magoi. The new Greek authorities did not persecute or molest them. Greek observers were able to obtain more extensive acquaintance with their beliefs and practices, and a certain amount of mutual interaction was facilitated.

A striking example is provided by the individualistic religious syncretism of Antiochus I, king of Commagene from 70 to 38 BCE. This kingdom in what is now south-eastern Turkey had been part of the Seleucid Empire; it had become independent in about 162, but remained Hellenized. Antiochus was the son of a Greek mother and a Zoroastrian father of Armenian descent. He brought Greek and Persian deities together in one pantheon, represented in the colossal effigies on Mount Nemrut (Nemrud Dağı). In his great inscription there (Dittenberger 1986: 383) he identifies them as Zeus-Oromasdes, Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes, Artagnes-Heracles-Ares (Artagnes = *Vərəθraϥna*), and Commagene herself. He says he has maintained the traditional Persian and Greek forms of their worship, and devised new ones in addition; the priests are to wear Persian dress. He claims that his pious soul has gone to the heavenly thrones of Zeus Oromasdes, while his body will lie there for ever on the mountain-top, as close as possible to those heavenly thrones.

The historian Diodorus Siculus, writing at the same period, mentions that “Zathraustes” gave laws to his people, claiming to have received them from “the Good Spirit” (1.94.3). The name of the people is given in different manuscripts as *Arianoi* or *Arimaspoi*, but the true reading is probably *Ariaspai* (Gnoli 1980: 143–144), which places Zoroaster in Sīstān. This is interesting as giving a more precise location for his homeland than any earlier Classical source (if we discount the Bactrian romance), and at the same time a form of his name that is closer to the Avestan than the *Zoroastres* or *Zaratas* previously encountered. Here is a further sign of new contacts between Greeks and Zoroastrian informants.

The Roman and Early Byzantine Periods: 30 BCE–600 CE

Over the following centuries many Greek and Roman writers mention Zoroaster or the religion of the Persians or Magoi. Often they are merely repeating commonplace items of information picked up from earlier literature, such as that the Magoi worship fire, expose dead bodies to the attentions of birds and dogs, or have intercourse with their mothers, daughters, and sisters. Some authors, however, display a deeper knowledge, and in several cases it is clearly based on first-hand observation. The geographer Strabo (c. 64 BCE to after 21 CE), for example, came from the province of Pontus in northern Asia Minor and will have been in a position to see Zoroastrian cult as still practiced, if not in Pontus, at any rate in Cappadocia to the east, where he records that there were many Magoi. In the section of his work concerned with India and Persia he devotes a couple of pages to Persian religion and customs (15.3.13–17). At first sight it looks as if he is copying from Herodotus, but he is better informed than Herodotus, avoids his mistakes, and gives much fuller details of cult practice. He mentions the maintenance of an ever-burning fire, before which the Magoi perform a daily recitation lasting about an hour, and the worship of Anāitis and “Ōmanos,” that is, the Aməša Spənta Vohu Manah (‘Good Mind’).

Another who drew on his own observation was Pausanias, who compiled his guide to Greece in the third quarter of the 2nd century. At Hierocaesarea and Hypaepa in Lydia he saw shrines containing fire-altars, which were covered with a strangely colored ash. A Magos would go in, place dry wood on the altar, don a tiara, and chant an invocation in an unintelligible barbarian language, which he read from a book; thereupon the flames would spring up (5.27.5). The passage gives a fascinating glimpse of Zoroastrian ritual, and is especially notable for the mention of a written text. One would dearly like to know what script it was written in, and how widespread was the use of such aids among the western Magoi.

Much interest has been provoked by a passage in the itinerant orator and popular philosopher Dio Chrysostom (c. 45–115 CE). He purports to relate a myth recited by Magoi in secret rites (*Orations* 36.39–40); they learned it from Zoroaster, who once went away and lived by himself on a mountain-top. A great fire descended on him, from which he emerged unscathed, telling the people that god had come to the place, and they must perform certain sacrifices. (This must be adapted from Moses on Sinai.) The myth is an allegory of the cosmos. The celestial ether, the lower air, the sea and the earth are each represented by a horse and chariot, belonging respectively to Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, and Hestia. Hestia's horse stays unmoving in the middle, while the others course round it. Occasionally, at long intervals, the hot breath of Zeus' horse scorches the whole world, or the immoderate sweat of Poseidon's drenches it. These episodes correspond to the standard Stoic doctrine of the periodic destruction of the world by conflagration and flood, and the concentric regions of earth, water, air, and fire are also Stoic, while the horses and chariots are very much in the spirit of Platonic myth. None of this has anything to do with Zoroaster or the Magoi. Dio has attached their names simply to lend his invention an aura of exotic wisdom.

The Platonists for their part welcomed support for their philosophy from barbarian thinkers. Dio's contemporary Plutarch, in *On the Failure of Oracles* (415a), makes a character in the dialogue approve the theory of *daimones* between the gods and mankind, "whether this account belongs to Zoroaster's Magoi, or is Thracian from Orpheus, or Egyptian." Numenius half a century later was ready to call in aid the teachings and rites of respectable foreign peoples – Brahmans, Jews, Magoi, or Egyptians – that appeared to agree with Plato (fragment 1 des Places [1973]). The documentary evidence that the Er of Plato's myth was none other than Zoroaster was exciting; some even replaced Er's name with Zoroaster's in the text of Plato. But it was also perplexing, as the other-world experiences described by "Zoroaster" in *On Nature* did not have much in common with those that Plato had attributed to Er. Numenius' associate Cronius attempted to deal with the problem by saying that Er and Zoroaster were two different men, teacher and pupil (Proclus, in *Rempublicam* II 109; Kroll 1899–1901).

Plutarch shows in other writings that he knew a good deal about Zoroastrianism. In his late work *On Isis and Osiris* (369d–370c) he gives the most detailed statement of Zoroastrian theology to be found in any Classical author. He describes Ohrmazd and Ahreman as resembling light and darkness, the one the creator of good, the other of evil, each with their own sets of plants and animals. Each created six subordinate gods, Ohrmazd's six including Goodwill, Truth, Wisdom, and so on – a version of the Aməša Spəntas. Increasing

his own size in three stages, Ohrmazd adorned the sky with stars, making Sirius their leader (compare *Yt* 8.44). Between him and Ahreman, Mithras (no doubt identified with the sun) exists as mediator. At an appointed time in the future, after the two antagonists have each in turn enjoyed trimillennia of dominance, Ahreman will bring plague and famine and himself be destroyed by them.

This cannot be taken as a snapshot of Zoroastrian doctrine in the early 2nd century CE, as Plutarch is drawing most or all of his material from older writers. He quotes Theopompus as his source for the chronology of the cosmic conflict and its happy outcome, while his dating of Zoroaster to 5,000 years before the Trojan War is repeated from Hermodorus. It looks as if he has also used Eudoxus. Nevertheless, the passage shows how much information was available to an interested, cultured Greek with a good library at his disposal.

The production of literature ascribed to past sages continued. Astrampsyclus, one of the Magoi in Hermodorus' list, appears as the author of a book of look-up-your-own oracles, though he is here represented as an Egyptian of the time of Ptolemy I (r. 305–282 BCE). He is also associated with love charms, a book of veterinary medicine, and another in verse on the interpretation of dreams. It is doubtful how much of this pseudepigraphic literature contained material genuinely derived from Iranian, Babylonian, or other Magoi. There does, however, seem to have been a real Iranian element in the *Oracles of Hystaspes*, an apocalyptic poem in the manner of the extant *Sibylline Oracles* (Bidez and Cumont 1938 I: 215–222, II: 359–376). It foretold the end of the Roman Empire and of a world to be destroyed and purified by Zeus with fire, bringing 6,000 years of history to a conclusion. Apart from the fact that it said “Zeus” and not god, and from its failing to mention Christ, Christian authors such as Lactantius found it all very acceptable. The prophecy was actually presented as an inspired boy's interpretation of a symbolic dream dreamed by Hystaspes. It may have been a variant on the dreams of Zoroaster (*ZWY* 1.2–5; *Dk* 9.1.7) and Nebuchadnezzar (*Dn* 2.31–45), in which successive world ages were manifested in symbols.

With the advent of the Sasanian dynasty in Persia an effort was made to set Zoroastrianism on a new footing by bringing together all the scattered texts and traditions that might be relevant to it, sifting them, and establishing an orthodoxy to be supported from the centre. Šāpūr I (r. 240–272 CE) ordered Zoroastrian and other learned writings to be collected from all quarters, including the Byzantine domains: not only sacred texts, but works of medicine, astronomy, and other useful disciplines (*DkM* 413). The harvest may well have included Greek pseudepigrapha bearing the names of Zoroaster, Ostanes, and Hystaspes (Bidez and Cumont 1938 II: 138; Zaehner 1955: 37), with the consequence that these figures took on in the Pahlavi tradition characteristics that they had hitherto possessed only in the Greco-Roman. In that age of multiculturalism, with various religious currents – Jewish, Christian, Gnostic, Platonist, Mithraist – roiling together like the rivers of the Underworld, it was hardly possible to maintain clear boundaries. We have seen Antiochus of Commagene deliberately combining Greek with Zoroastrian worship. In Šāpūr's time a yet more radical syncretist, Mani of Edessa, created a new faith from a blend of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Babylonian Christianity, with some elements deriving from Greek philosophical thought.

Christian writers naturally denounced the absurdities and depravities of other religions. In eastern Anatolia as late as the 4th century they found themselves preaching in lands that still harboured many Zoroastrian communities, which they could observe directly. Basilius, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia from 370 to 379 CE, noted that they kept themselves to themselves and handed on their “impiety” from father to son, having no books (*Epistle* 258.4). Theodorus, bishop of Mopsuestia in Cilicia from 392 to 428 CE, wrote at length on the Persian Magoi, as Photius records (*Bibliotheca* cod. 81). He named the founder of their “foul dogma” as *Zarades* (a form that suggests Syriac mediation) and the first principle of their cosmogony as *Zurwam* (= MP *Zurwān*). He related the myth of how Zurwam made libation in the hope of having a son, and how this led to the birth of both “Ormizdas” and Satan.

The historian Agathias (c. 532–580 CE), working in Constantinople, also had much to say about the Persians and their religion, but in a less polemical spirit than the bishops (*Histories* 2.23–26, 31). He again shows direct acquaintance with Zoroastrian practice, and provides new information on some aspects of ritual. More than any other Classical writer, he makes a scholarly attempt to place Zoroastrianism in a historical context, distinguishing Zoroaster’s innovations from what Agathias takes to have been the older Persian religion. On the question of the prophet’s date, he notes that the Persians say he appeared in the time of Hystaspes, but that they do not make it clear whether this was Hystaspes the father of Darius or some other. It is heartening to see the Hellenic tradition of critical inquiry asserting itself at such a late date.

Final Remarks

As a religion, Zoroastrianism made no such inroads into the Greco-Roman world as did some other oriental faiths such as the cults of Cybele and Isis, Mithraism, Christianity. Yet no other barbarian religion exercised such an intellectual fascination, with its singular doctrines of a good creator in cosmic conflict with a bad one, a vast but fixed timescale on which the struggle was to be played out, and a paradise of endless light beyond the sun and the stars to which a pure soul might make its way after death. It was this cosmic vision, rather than the ethical message of good thought, good speech, and good action, that caught the Greeks’ attention. We have seen how it contributed fertilizing impulses to pre-Socratic and Platonic philosophy. At a lower intellectual level, people were intrigued by the notion of Zoroaster and other Magoi as masters of esoteric knowledge and skills, and by such eyebrow-raising aspects of Zoroastrian custom as excarnation and consanguineous marriage.

Zoroastrians for their part clung to their traditions: they were not looking for stimulation from abroad. But they could not remain altogether untouched by the wave of Hellenism that washed around them after Alexander. The Sasanian kings put up their inscriptions in Middle Persian, Parthian, and Greek, and were happy to accept “Zeus” as the Greek for Ohrmazd. They appreciated the value of Greek scientific literature, if nothing else, and the influence of Aristotelian philosophy makes itself perceptible in the Pahlavi books.

“East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet”: Kipling was wrong about that. Zoroastrianism and the Classical world did not marry, but they certainly met.

Further Reading

Clemen (1920) collected the references to Persian religion in classical sources and comments on them in a parallel volume. Benveniste (1929) provides an attractive short survey focusing on Herodotus, Strabo, and Theopompus/Plutarch and discussing their reports in the light of Iranian evidence. Bidez and Cumont (1938) is the classic study of the Greek traditions about Zoroaster, Ostanes, and Hystaspes and the apocryphal literature created in their names, with a collection of the texts (see also Beck 1991 for a critical study); see also now Vasunia (2007). Momigliano (1975), in a book concerned more

widely with Greek perceptions of other cultures in the classical and Hellenistic periods, devotes a chapter to Iran; he writes as a classical historian, without direct engagement with the Iranian sources, but identifies the main relevant issues. In a more comprehensive study de Jong (1997) follows Benveniste's example in taking a series of Greek authors and analyzing their accounts, but he follows this up with a systematic survey of what the classical writers say about the Persian pantheon, the person of Zoroaster, theology, cult, the priesthood, and social and ethical codes.

CHAPTER 28

From Miθra to Roman Mithras

Richard L. Gordon

From Tróia on the coast of Lusitania to Dura-Europos on the Euphrates, from Inveresk on the Firth of Forth to Lambaesis in Numidia, there is no lack of archaeological remains of the Roman cult of the Indo-Iranian god Mithras. Nearly 500 images of the god subduing and killing a bull survive (Vermaseren 1956–1960). New finds accrue with some regularity: Some thirty-eight temples have been discovered (or re-excavated) since 1960, together with rather more than one hundred inscriptions. These remains, however, have the usual disadvantage of archaeological evidence: As repetitive non-discursive assemblages, they tell us a good deal about what we think we already know, too little about what we do not. Above all, at any rate in the context of the aims of this *Companion*, the archaeology provides no clear documentation of the cult's expansion into the western Mediterranean from the east. In that respect, however, it resembles both the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus, the high god of Doliche in Commagene, and Christianity – if we did not know from other evidence that both spread west from specific points in the eastern Mediterranean, we would not be able to infer it from the surviving archaeological remains.

Some localized cults of Iranian Miθra (Mithra) certainly survived the collapse of the Achaemenid Empire in Anatolia: 1) a bilingual text in Greek and Aramaic, inscribed on a rock-face near Ariaramneia in ancient Cappadocia (Faraša, east-central Turkey), records the performance of a special “magian” sacrifice ἐμάγευσε – that is, the animal was beaten to death with a club – to Mithrês (note the Hellenized form, the same as that used by Strabo, *Geographika* 15.3.13) by an important district official (Grégoire 1908; Boyce and Grenet 1991: 272–273; de Jong 1997: 146–147; probably 3rd century BCE, at any rate Hellenistic); 2) not far from Ariaramneia, a now lost inscription in Greek from Tyana (Kilisse Hisar, near modern Bor, Turkey), of unknown date and recorded only once, in the 1850s, was dedicated to “Mithras the just god” (Berger and Nollé 2000

I: 211–212 n. 34 = Chaniotis et al. 2000: 1366 = Vermaseren 1956–1960: 18) – an epithet appropriate to Mithra as divine judge, as well as to a solar deity capable of spying out injustice (Cumont 1923; Björck 1938: 72), but which never occurs in the western evidence; 3) at Sarñhüyük (ancient Aspona, district of Ankara, Turkey) on the border between Cappadocia and Galatia, an unfortunately very fragmentary stele relating to temple funds mentions Mithrês (this form again) in connection with the Magoi (*káta mágous*) (Mitchell 1982: 306 n. 404; 1st century CE); 4) a Phrygian named Midon dedicated an altar to Helios Mithras (Mithras the Sun) at Savcılar on Lake Simav (northern Phrygia) in 77/78 CE or 131/132 CE (Cox et al. 1993: 147 n. 449, correcting Vermaseren 1956–1960: 23); 5) a group of rock-cut texts with framed images outside the walls of Oenoanda in Lycia (south-west Turkey), probably connected with a necropolis, likewise includes Helios Mithras, shown without a Phrygian cap but with nine solar rays, alongside the Dioscuri, “ancestral” Hermes and Zeus Soter (Chaniotis et al. 1994: 1204; 2nd/3rd century CE); 6) according (probably) to the Stoic philosopher and polymath Posidonius (c. 135–151 BCE), several private rituals (Gk. *teletai*) to various deities, including Mithrês, were performed on the lower slopes of Mount Olympus on the coast of Lycia-Pamphylia (near modern Kemer, Turkey), whose ever-burning naphtha fields – easily visible from the sea, and still active – were evidently taken to be natural fire-altars (Plutarch, *Life of Pompey* 24.7). Granted that we know virtually nothing in detail about them, none seems to bear much resemblance to the Roman cult as attested by the relevant archaeology, and no pre-Roman temple resembling the characteristic aisled dining-room of the Roman cult has certainly been identified there (Witschel forthcoming). Evidence for the cult of Mithras simply appears at the turn of the 1st and 2nd century CE at a number of widely scattered points in the Roman Empire: at Rome, Frankfurt/Heddernheim in Germania Superior (Vermaseren 1956–1960: 1098), Carnuntum on the Middle Danube, near the border between modern Austria and Hungary (Vermaseren 1956–1960: 1718, possibly 1671), Novae on the Lower Danube (modern Svishtov in Bulgaria). Some of this evidence consists of votive inscriptions, the generic rules for which precluded the provision of any but the most basic information, such as the names of the deity and the dedicator, but it happens also to include the earliest datable image of Mithras killing the bull (Vermaseren 1956–1960: 510, Rome) and of the torchbearers Cautes and Cautopates as an oppositional pair (Vermaseren 1956–1960: 2268, Novae).

There have been two ways of dealing with this archaeological gap. One is to ignore it, on the grounds that, as a mere argument from silence, it proves nothing. What counts is the evidence of the earliest literary text to mention the Roman cult (Statius, *Thebais* 1.719–720), written at Rome around 90 CE: *seu Persei sub rupibus antri| indignata sequi torquentem cornua Mithram* “[or named] Mithras, who twists the reluctant horns [of a bull] in a Persian rock-cave.” Three notable features of the archaeological–epigraphic evidence are consistent with Statius: the god’s “oriental” clothing, whose elaborate embroidery is best rendered in the frescos of the temples at Capua Vetere near Naples (Vermaseren 1971), Marino in the Alban Hills (Vermaseren 1982) and Dura-Europos on the Euphrates (Rostovtzeff, Brown, and Welles 1939: 62–134); the name of the third highest grade, *Perses* = Persian; and the Old Persian apostrophe *nama*, ‘hail!’, which occurs frequently in the graffiti at Dura-Europos and of the Santa Prisca temple on the

Aventine Hill at Rome (Vermaseren and Van Essen 1965: 148–172), both dated to the first half of the 3rd century CE. The obscure epithet *nabarze* may also be a Hellenization of an Old Persian word, compare the name Nabarzanes (Quintus Curtius Rufus, *Historiae Alexandri Magni* 3.7.12, 6.4.8, etc.). Moreover, some of the cult's characteristic terms, for example the word for members, *syndexioi/syndexi*, 'hand-shakers', or the grade-name *nymphus*, 'male bride', are Greek and remained untranslated, thus implying an origin in the eastern Mediterranean. This "Iranian scenario" has traditionally been the preferred option, and therefore comes in a variety of different forms, "strong" and "weak," on which more below.

On the other hand, for about thirty years now, a number of influential voices (MacMullen 1981: 203 n. 34; Merkelbach 1984: 75–77, 160–161; Jacobs 1994: 27–33; Clauss 2000: 7–8) have been arguing that the Roman cult of Mithras has no substantial connection with Iran (though Merkelbach allowed that the founder must have had a fair knowledge of Iranian religion), and that the few ostensibly Iranian elements are merely a form of "orientalism" or window-dressing to align the cult with its supposed competitors in the Roman market of religious ideas, Phrygian Cybele and Egyptian Isis. This position has been reinforced by the other significant hermeneutic tack of the same period, the idea that the bull-killing image is "really" a cryptic stellar map (Beck 2004: 235–291), a view that reached its apogee in the claim that the cult's "mystery" consisted in a revelation concerning the precession of the equinoxes (Ulansey 1989). Since such a map only makes sense within a Greco-Roman context, any Iranian input must be insignificant.

This skeptical position has currently acquired the status of an orthodoxy among historians of imperial Roman religion. Nevertheless, it comes at a price, namely the marginalization of inconvenient evidence pointing in the other direction. True, we must reject "strong" Iranian theories, of which two may be mentioned here: The doyen of Mithraic studies, the Franco-Belgian scholar Franz Cumont (1868–1947), under the impact of the translations of the Avestan and Pahlavi texts (1877–1897) included in Friedrich Max Müller's *Sacred Books of the East*, tried to show that almost all the figures that populate Mithraic iconography are merely Greco-Roman guises for Iranian ("Mazdayasnian" but in fact mainly Zoroastrian) deities and principles (Cumont 1903; Gordon 1975). Leroy A. Campbell, a former pupil of Mikhail Rostovtzeff at Yale University, proposed an even more radical thesis, according to which the Roman iconography was to be understood in terms of the tension between the two opposing modes of being formalized in the Sasanian period as *mēnōg* and *gētīg* (Campbell 1968). Later suggestions by Iranists, however, aware of the difficulties faced by such theories, count as "weak," since they have allowed for a much greater degree of adaptation in the course of the transition during the Hellenistic and Roman periods between the Iranian cults practiced in the relatively small number of Achaemenid "colonies" in Anatolia, including that to Miθra, and the Roman cult – a period, after all, of four centuries (e.g., Hinnells 1975: 290–312; Boyce and Grenet 1991: 468–490).

Current accounts of pre-Islamic Zoroastrianism view it as a loose congeries of religious traditions based on differing interpretations of the cosmogonic myth and developed through the *Zand*, the diverse interpretations of and commentaries upon memorized sacred texts. Most of these interpretations failed to be re-copied in the

Sasanian period and are irremediably lost, but the religio-political importance of the Mithrakana, the festival of the autumn equinox, in Achaemenid practice (Duris of Samos, Jacoby 1926: 76F 5 with Ctesias; Jacoby 1958: 688F 50; Strabo, *Geographika* 11.14.9; Boyce 1982: 34) suggests that it might well have been a node for such commentary – there is late evidence for cosmogonic speculation in this connection (de Jong 1997: 296, 371–377). The special relation of Mithras-Apollo to Mithradates I and Antiochus I of Commagene, and the Armenian cult of Mihr, though not directly relevant to the Roman cult, are suggestive of the imaginative impact of the deity (Russell 1987, 1994; Waldmann 1991: 154–156, 174–177, 182–184); and a Mithrakana was still celebrated in the 1st century CE at Amorium (Hisarköy, near Emirdağ, Turkey), one of the larger cities of the western part of the Roman province of Phrygia (Vermaseren 1956–1960: 22; Boyce and Grenet 1991: 259–261). The Indo-Iranian emphasis upon the central role of sacrifice in sustaining the cosmic order offers a plausible context for linking Miθra with a creative sacrifice – a motif quite unknown in the Greco-Roman world. Four major themes of the Avestan hymn to Miθra, the *Mihr Yašt* (*Yt* 10), 1) the intimate relation between social and cosmic order, 2) the god’s maintenance of fertility and water sources, 3) his close association – but not identification – with the Sun, and 4) the ethical requirements laid upon worshipers, all appear in a different but recognizable form in the Roman cult (Gershevitch 1959: 61–72). In Iranian tradition, too, Miθra regularly occurs in association with pairs of helpers, including Sraoša and Rašnu (*Yt* 10.41, 100), recalling Roman Mithras’ assistants, Cautes and Cautopates. These and other features indicate that the Iranian contribution to the Roman cult, mediated through narrative and attendant commentary, was central to its cosmogonic scenario, and extended to aspects of its cosmology and its ethics. What became the Roman form of the cult may have been created almost anywhere in Hellenized Asia Minor. As already mentioned, “independent” cults of Miθra/Mithras/Mithres are attested in Lycia-Pamphylia, Phrygia, Galatia, Cappadocia, Pontus, Commagene, and Armenia well into the Roman period, and were probably more common than the epigraphic and numismatic evidence suggests, since the god was almost never appropriated by local elites into the civic pantheon. The one major exception is the series minted over a period of 150 years (c. 100–250 CE) by the city of Trapezus in Pontus (now Trabzon on the Black Sea coast), showing Mithras as an Anatolian rider-god, i.e., as a local protective deity (Ehling 2001). No grand temple to the god survived the Achaemenid Empire. The major question – unresolved and, in the absence of further evidence, unresolvable – remains: How should we envisage the transition – linguistic, cultural, institutional – between the type of more or less authentic Zoroastrian–Iranian rites actually witnessed in Cappadocia by Strabo in the late 1st century BCE (de Jong 1997: 121–156), and a largely Hellenized cult of Mithras developed around a significant core of Iranian themes?

The situation however was undoubtedly more complex than this. Not only was the cult of Mithras largely assimilated to Greco-Roman cultural and calendrical norms, but, as Martin West emphasizes in relation to Plutarch’s account of Iranian religion, by the Hellenistic and Roman periods a certain amount of relatively accurate information about Iranian religious matters was available in the Mediterranean world, beginning with Eudoxus (Lassere 1966: fragment 341) and Theopompus (Jacoby 1930: F 64) in the 4th century BCE. It seems probable that, even after its reception in the Empire, the

Roman cult continued to be embellished by appeal to such mediated material. It seems likely, for example, that the (rare) motif of Mithras as hunter (Vermaseren 1956–1960: 52; 1083B; 1137B; 1289; 1292.5; Hawarte: Gawlikowski 2007: 358–60 nos. 17–18) was taken over from such accounts – hunting plays an important role in Zoroastrian mythology (Gignoux 1983) – unless it attests to a fusion already in the period of pre-formation in Anatolia between Vərəθraγna and Miθra (compare Tacitus, *Annals* 12.13); the motif is at any rate quite different from that of the rider-god at Trapezus. It also seems likely that the introduction of the god Arimanius – a Latin transliteration of Ἀρειμάνιος, a Hellenistic Greek version of Pahl. Ahreman (attested in Vermaseren 1956–1960: 222, 369, 1773, 1775, probably 834 = Collingwood, Wright, and Tomlin 1965: 641), was due to a secondary development of this type. The name Mithras by contrast goes back to the Achaemenid form of the name, the Pahlavi (MP) form being *Mihr*. The significant place of astronomical-astrological lore must have been inspired by the association between Persia and Chaldaeia-Babylon (Bidez and Cumont 1938 II: 207–242 fragments O 76–97; *contra* Beck 2004: 31–44). Unless they are actually the “missing link” we have always been looking for, which given their date is unlikely, some of the coins from Trapezus suggest that the opposite process, the “interference” of the Roman cult into an indigenous Anatolian one, might also have taken place: for on some types minted under Severus Alexander and Gordian III (say, second quarter of the 3rd century CE), we find two smaller figures with lighted torches, who must be Cautes and Cautopates, on either side of the mounted god, a flying bird – presumably the Mithraic raven – and a snake (Waddington, Babelon, and Reinach 1925: 154 n. 39, 155 n. 50). Something similar may be implied by the Mithraic relief offered by M. Lucius Crispus, most unusually for this private cult, in aid of the Council and People of Perge in Pamphylia near modern Aksu, south-west Turkey (Şahin 1999–2004: 278–280 n. 248, second half of 2nd century CE). Moreover, the graffito at Dura-Europos (240–256 CE) that mentions the teaching of the Magoi regarding “a fiery breath (*pyrōton asthma*), a baptism for the holy” (Vermaseren 1956–1960: 68 = Bidez and Cumont 1938 II: 155 fragment O 9e, reading ἦ for ῆ), as well as the two enthroned Magoi on the jambs of the cult-niche at Dura-Europos (Vermaseren 1956–1960: 44), and the mention of a position or role of Magos there (Vermaseren 1956–1960: 61), both unique to this site, all suggest that here, on the Euphrates, awareness of the cult’s Iranian heritage may have been particularly intense. It has even been suggested that one or two features of the recently discovered late 4th-century wall-paintings in the mithraeum at Hawarte near Apamea, Syria, may reflect Manichaean teaching (according to an unpublished communication shared by Linda Dirven in 2010); this is rather far-fetched, but, since Manichaean texts and teachings had no difficulty passing across the frontier between the empires, it is by no means impossible that some knowledge of *Yt* 10 or of other now lost Iranian texts regarding Miθra should have been mediated to late antique Syria. The existence of two Middle Persian graffiti in the synagogue at Dura-Europos proves that visitors from the Iranian cultural area did on occasion cross the Euphrates in the period before the destruction of the city in the mid-3rd century CE, even if we cannot gauge the extent of the mutual contacts. The process of cultural appropriation is ceaseless: The complement to the “Romanization” of Miθra was the “Persification,” perhaps even on occasion the “re-Iranization,” of Mithras.

CHAPTER 29

Christianity

Marco Frenschkowski

The Wise Men from the East

The Biblical story of the wise men from the east (*magoi apo anatolon*, Mt 2.1–12) who honored the messianic child of Bethlehem with their visit by presenting gold, frankincense, and myrrh is the most explicit reference to an “Iranian connection” in early Christianity. Though the term “magic” both in Greek and Latin had come to mean sorcery or wizardry, it was still well known that it originally stood for Persian religious observances, and “magoi” in many Greek traditions were still seen as “Persian philosophers,” comparable to Indian gymnosophists, Gallic druids, Egyptian priests, Jewish or other “wise men.” Given the ambivalence of the term it is unclear whether the magi in the Gospel were more specifically meant as Chaldaean astrologers, or perhaps even as Zoroastrian priests (Frenschkowski 2010). Yet, in a Jewish and Christian reference frame we encounter a tradition that sees Eastern magi as positive figures that were in direct contact with supernatural secrets. In the Gospel context this reference can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of paganism and its assumed desire for redemption. It is not necessary to assume that the evangelist had any clear ideas, for example, about Iranian messianic figures such as the Saošiiant. However, the legend may contain an allusion to a historical fact: In 66 CE, Tiridates (Armenian Trdat) I, the Arsacid king of Armenia, traveled by land to Nero in Rome to lay down his crown and receive it back from the emperor, whom he supposedly later introduced to Magian secret rites (Frenschkowski 1998). The long voyage of the king and his large retinue to honor Nero quickly became a subject of popular imagination. The Christian story written a few years later might thus represent Jesus as worthy of higher honors than those the emperor had received. Later embellishments of the Gospel legend made the magi into kings (of varying number), but the Iranian connection remained still visible in many

hagiographic and iconographic details well into the Middle Ages, as when the kings wear Persian dress (breeches, capes, Phrygian caps, etc. in a 6th-century CE mosaic from Ravenna). The story has kept alive a reminiscence that Christianity and Zoroastrianism share common religious ground, and a number of Syriac versions particularly emphasize such an Iranian connection (Widengren 1965; Witakowski 2009). The 6th-century Nestorian traveler Cosmas Indicopleustes (2, 76; *Sources Chretiennes* 141, 390–393; Wolska-Conus 1968) thus used in *Mt* 2 to prove the legitimacy of the Sasanian Empire.

A late outcome of the story of the wise magi is the equally fictitious tradition that a number of Sasanian kings had become Christians before their death. This is reported about Khosrow Anūšīrwān (Pahl. Anōšagruwān, r. 531–579 CE) (John of Nikiu chron. 95, late 7th century CE), Khosrow II Parvīz (Pahl. Abarwēz, r. 590, 591–628 CE), and in later Arabic sources even about Ardašīr (r. 224–242 CE), the founder of the Sasanian dynasty. This tradition may relate to the idea, first expressed by disciples of the 6th-century catholicos Mār Abā, that the Sasanian kings were descendants of the magi of the gospel (Schilling 2008; also Cosmas Indicopleustes 2, 76). Mār Abā in 540 CE even called Khosrow Anūšīrwān a “second Cyros (Cyrus)” (Schilling 2008: 186). In the West a story about the alleged baptism of a Persian “imperator Anaulf” was already known in the late 7th-century *Chronicle of Fredegar* (Kusternig and Haupt 1982).

Zoroastrian Elements in Early Christianity

Having emerged slowly out of Judaism, Christianity from its beginnings incorporated structural elements with an Iranian and particularly Zoroastrian background. These had reached it mostly through Judaism, though direct contact in some cases is also possible. Iranian themes like the resurrection of the dead (Theopompus, Jacoby 1930: 115 F 64s.), a succession of world ages (reinterpreted as a succession of empires) and other mythologized timelines, an interest in savior figures, revelation scenes, and certain patterns of dualism (light and darkness as both cosmic realities and ethical metaphors), angelology, and demonology are the most obvious spheres of interaction. It should not be overlooked, however, that less obvious lines of overlapping traditions and dependencies exist in Judaism as well, such as in legal and narrative materials (e.g., strict menstrual taboos). Some of these Jewish traditions became marginalized in Christianity (especially ritual ones), but others were reinforced by the successes of the Christian mission. With the further emergence of a Christian priesthood and episcopate, rituals like baptism and the confession of sins, a calendar of ritual events, and a strong political theology supporting a world empire (Eusebius, *Vita* and *Laus Constantini*), such interconnections became more complex in the 4th and 5th century CE. It is disputed, however, whether one can speak of a Zoroastrian “state church” in Sasanian Iran, and to what degree “kingship” and “religion” were really seen as “twins,” as in the pseudographical *Testament of Ardašīr* (Pourshariati 2008: 324–325, 337). Still some kind of interactive parallel development in the state-church structure of both empires cannot be denied. A conceptual notion of “religion” (Pahl. *dēn*) that made it easier to compare Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and others – something far from self-evident in ancient

languages – grew, both in Iranian languages and in Latin, much more than in Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic.

Perhaps the most interesting case of a direct interaction with Zoroastrian ideas in New Testament literature can be seen in the Revelation of John, written in western Asia Minor around 95 CE (Frenschkowski 2004). The military strength of the Parthian kingdom in the east was never forgotten. In Chapters 4–5 god is imagined as a cosmic monarch. The throne hall imagery suggests an oriental, especially Persian, emperor rather than a Roman one. Yet the world east of the Euphrates, the traditional frontier between the Roman and the Parthian Empire, is presented as a place of demonic forces (Revelation 9, 13–19; 16, 12), just like the world west of it is in the Iranian apocalyptic tradition (Frenschkowski 2004: 36–39), thus attesting to the idea of a “force in the east” in a Christian book. Fear of Parthian invasion, the legend of a “Nero redivivus” and the destruction of Rome become an apocalyptic scenario that reinterprets older Jewish imagery with 1st-century allusions. The mythology of a satanic serpent bound for 1,000 years, then coming free again and being defeated in a military effort which includes many barbarian armies (Revelation 20), of frogs as symbols of evil, and other parts of the imaginary world of Revelation match the Avestan mythology of the dragon Aži Dahāka as an arch-enemy.

Religious subcultures of a similar character tend to interact: hence, apocalyptically minded Christians read books like the *Chrēseis Hystaspu* (‘Oracles of Hystaspes’), an apocalyptic writing in the form of a dream revelation of King Hystaspes interpreted by a miraculous boy, who foretells the imminent decline and downfall of the Roman Empire, the extermination of the corrupt by fire, the return of world rule to the people of the East and the coming of a heavenly savior figure (*rex magnus de caelo*; see Bidez and Cumont 1938, 2: 361–376, also 1: 217–222; see also Flusser 1982). The righteous are first vanquished by a powerful king from the north, who establishes a reign of tyranny, accompanied by earthquakes, floods, famines, plagues, poor harvests, and other natural disasters. A great prophet successfully warns humanity, but another evil king from Syria kills the prophet, who, however, rises on the third day and ascends to heaven. The new king turns out to be a false messiah demanding divine adoration and the destruction of the temple of god. The righteous are persecuted, but escape to a mountain, where they are imprisoned. In answer to their prayer god sends them a “Great King” from heaven (whom Lactantius apparently saw as Christ) who brings liberation for the righteous and destruction by fire to their persecutors. This pseudepigraphon was known to Christians like Justin, Clement of Alexandria (who quotes it allegedly from a Pauline pseudepigraphon), Ioannes Lydus, and the 5th-century collection of oracles *Theosophia Tubingensis*, but particularly to Lactantius, whose *Divinae institutiones* 7, 15–19 provide a detailed Latin summary. The Median king Hystaspes (Vīštāspa in the *Avesta*) here is turned into a recipient of revelation, comparable to the pagan (and Jewish) sibyls. It is not quite clear to what degree the Oracles of Hystaspes might have gone through a Jewish redaction before being read (and perhaps edited) by Christians or even may have been written by a Jew as some scholars thought. But god is called Iuppiter, something very uncommon in Jewish or Christian texts. An authorship by Iranian magi whose teachings may have to some degree differed from later Zoroastrian tradition is favored by some scholars and also by the present writer. They probably wrote

in Asia Minor at a time when an anti-Seleucid bias evolved into an anti-Roman one (1st century BCE, perhaps during the war of Mithridates VI Eupator of Pontus against Rome). But the Iranian background can hardly be doubted, as rightly pointed out by Émile Benveniste (1932: 380) and Geo Widengren (1965: 199–207). The title “Great King” for a messianic figure is also used in the *Book of Elchasaï*, in the *Pseudo-Clementines*, in the *Manichaean Sermon of the Great War* (Polotsky 1934: 321. 20), and in an apocryphal Syriac *Revelation of Zoroaster* preserved by Theodore bar Kōnai (Kewānī; *Liber scholiorum* 7, 21). The boy who interpreted Hystaspes’ dream is probably not Zarathustra but rather the young Jāmāsp, who, according to the *Jāmāsp-Nāmag*, as a priestly successor to the prophet predicted to the king certain historical (the battle against the Chionites: *Ayādqār ī Zarērān*) and eschatological events (*Ayādqār ī Jāmāspīg*) (Sundermann 2004b).

The names of Zoroaster, Ostanēs, and Hystaspēs were well known in Christian literature, but the Greek and Latin Christian theologians only rarely show a serious awareness of Zoroastrian religion, and mostly rely on older Greek and Latin literary sources. No Western Christian shows as detailed an interest in Iranian religion as, for example, the earlier Plutarch (*De Iside et Osiride*) did.

Zoroaster and Iranian Religion in the Church Fathers and Gnostic Literature

It was generally known that the Magians had elaborate eschatological ideas. (For pre-Christian sources, see Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 46–47 and Nigidius Figulus; Swoboda 1964: fragment 67.) Christians knew Magians as priests at fire-shrines teaching a complex demonology (e.g., Minucius Felix 26 from an *Ostanēs pseudepigraphon*) and certain kinds of dualism, which they understood in very different ways, however, according to their respective sources (e.g., Hippolytus, *Refutatio* 1, 2, 12–13). The title “king of kings” (which has a long oriental and Biblical history) in Christianity came to be used for Christ, though Christians in Sasanian Iran had no qualms addressing the Persian king with this official title as well. Much of this was common knowledge for educated Christians. In some cases it is not quite clear to what degree later Western texts might be influenced by specific Iranian motifs. Is, for example, the other-worldly bridge over a fiery river first described by Gregory of Tours (*Historia Francorum* 4, 34), and then quite common in Merovingian visionary literature, such a case of influence from the idea of the Činwad Bridge where the souls of the deceased are judged?

The Greek and Latin Fathers never demonstrate a detailed knowledge of Zoroastrianism. The gods of paganism were predominantly seen as demons, and this prevented a more detailed interest in pagan theologies. Discussions of mythologies and rituals concentrated on Greek and Roman (and to a lesser degree, Egyptian) traditions known to the authors from their basic educational background. Western writers also traditionally participated in hostile ideas about Persia, ultimately derived from the Greco-Persian confrontation in Achaemenid times.

Zoroaster was mainly known as the alleged founder of magic (as in Pliny the Elder and Apuleius; Frenschkowski 2010), as an astrologer and diviner, more rarely as a major religious figure. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215 CE), a theologian of great

erudition conversant with most classical Greek authors, identified Zoroaster with the Platonic Er the Pamphylian, son of Armenius (Plato resp. 10, 614B–621D), who was said to have journeyed to the underworld, but could return to earth to tell his tale (*Stromata* 5, 14, 103, 2). Clement took from the *Symbola pythagorica* of Alexander Polyhistor the idea that Pythagoras had adopted the doctrines of the “Assyrian Zaratos” – Zoroaster (*Stromata* 1, 15, 69, 6–70, 1). Like Plotinus or the Gnostics he knew apocrypha using the name Zoroaster (l.c.; compare also *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions*. 4, 27). Clement writes also about Persian customs like consanguineous marriage (*Stromata* 3, 2, 11, 1; from the 5th-century BCE Xanthos of Lydia) and fire worship, quoting from Diogenes’ *Persica* and from Dinon’s work by the same title, according to which Persians performed sacrifices in the open air, recognizing only fire and water as manifestations of deities (*Protrepticus* 4, 65, 1–2). He preserves the interesting tradition that according to Berossus, Artaxerxes II Memnon (405–359 BCE) had introduced into Persia the use of anthropomorphic idols, allowing statues of Anaitis (Pahl. Anāhīd) to be erected in the principal cities of his empire (*Protrepticus* 4, 65, 3). Like the Jewish philosopher Philo before him, he spoke with much respect about magians, Brahmans, druids, and other “philosophers” of traditional cultures (Frenschkowski 2010). He was quite familiar with certain facts of Achaemenid history, crediting the Persians with a number of inventions, and even gave a (somewhat faulty) list of the Achaemenid kings (*Stromata* 1, 21, 128, 1–2). This is just an example of what an educated Christian could know about Iranian culture. For Parthian matters Josephus (much read by Christians) would have been a good source. Information was available, though its dissemination should not be overstated. John Chrysostom in his *De sancto Babyla contra Iulianum et Gentiles* writes in late 4th century CE Antioch that most people had not even heard the name of Zoroaster.

In the educated Roman world Zoroaster, Hystaspes, Ostanes, and Astrampsychos had become figures of “alien wisdom” only slightly in touch with genuine Iranian traditions. In the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* (8, 10–23) Zoroaster is identified with the Biblical city founder Nimrod, who as an evil magician had tried to gain world domination, but was killed by a heavenly fire he wanted to conjure (Bousset 1907: 369–378). This fiery death – inverted from an older tradition of magical mastery over fire, known, for example, to Dio Chrysostom, *Orat.* 36, 40 – became a central motif in the cultural image of the evil magus. It is attributed to Zoroaster himself by many Byzantine chronicles, such as the *Chronicon Paschale* (*Migne Patrologia Graeca* 92, 149A). Later adherents of Zoroaster, one is told, had started to worship their master and the fire, which they mistakenly venerated as a means of apotheosis. Even more critical of Zoroaster is the account in the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* 1, 27–33; 4, 9–13 where Zoroaster is seen as Mizraim, forefather of the Egyptians, and an example of misguided occult, astrological, and magic enterprises. Eusebius, the first historian of the Christian church, in his *Chronicle* (second version of 311 CE at the latest) makes Zoroaster a Bactrian (as did Ctesias, Pompeius Trogus, Aelius Theon, Philo of Byblus, and the like before him, and also many Christians from Epiphanius and Arnobius to Isidore of Seville). As king of his people he had fought against Ninus (legendary founder of Niniveh), and had been a contemporary of Abraham. “King of Bactrians” and “founder of magic” who “fought against Ninus” from Jerome’s Latin version of Eusebius’ *Chronicle* became the three

most common stereotypes about Zoroaster in the Western Middle Ages, whereas “wise man” and “prophet” was an image only slowly rediscovered in the Renaissance (Stausberg 1998a). For Augustine, Zoroaster’s lost war against Ninus was a proof of the inefficiency of magic (*De civitate dei* 21, 14).

The fascination with Zoroaster as an Eastern sage and recipient of revelations is more evident in Gnostic literature. Porphyrios already had challenged the attribution of pseudepigrapha using the names of Zoroastres and Zostrianos in Gnostic congregations (*Vita Plotini* 16), and the large 4th-century collection of Gnostic writings found at Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt contained a non-Christian book called *Apocalypse of Zostrianós* or *Words of Truth of Zostrianós. God of Truth. Words of Zoroastres* (crypto-Greek colophon of *Nag Hammadi Codex VIII*, 1). Zostrianos is a grandnephew or grandchild of Zoroastres (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 5, 103, 2–4; Arnobius, *Adversus nationes* 1, 52). It is a text from Sethian Gnosticism (with some middle Platonic elements) detailing a heavenly voyage of Zostrianos, during which he has to undergo numerous baptismal rituals before reaching the ultimate deity (probably written in the 2nd century CE). Plotinus critically discussed ideas from this treatise in his “Against the Gnostics” (*Enneads* 2, 9). Zoroaster is also mentioned in the 2nd-century *Apocryphon of John* known in four different versions, and in other Gnostic texts.

Of course Roman–Iranian political and military relations are discussed by Christian writers as well. Eusebius quotes a long and famous letter of Constantine to Šāpūr II dealing with the fate of Christians in Persia (*Vita Constantini* 4, 8–13) and writes also on the campaign in Armenia started by the Roman emperor Maximinus Daia in 312 reacting to the introduction of Christianity by Tiridates III a few years earlier (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 9, 8, 2–4). Byzantine historians discuss Iranian fire worship (Procopius, *Bella Persica* 2, 24), ceremonies concerning dead bodies (1, 12, 4; Agathias 2, 22–24), and Persian military matters (Mauricius, *Strategikon* 11, 2), but never became deeply interested in Zoroastrian theology (Agathias being the best source on religious practice).

Armenian and Syriac writers were somewhat more analytical about Zoroastrianism than western ones. Eznik of Kolb (*De deo*, c. 440 CE) gives a detailed account of a “Zurvanite” variant of Zoroastrianism and is major evidence for the theory that there existed a separate definable Zurvanism (Schmid 1900). Like other Christians he argues against the idea that god and satan could be seen as brothers (Mār Abā in Braun 1900: 143–144). Elišē Vardapet (d. 480 CE) quotes what purports to be a Zurvanite manifesto attributed to one Mihrnerseh, *marzpān* of Armenia (*On Vardan and the Armenian Wars* 2; perhaps a 7th-century pseudepigraphon). Many 6th–9th-century Armenian historians mention Zoroastrian fire-temples and cult paraphernalia, and of course also Zoroastrian deities and Zoroaster himself (Armenian *Zradešt*), who is sometimes connected with the Semiramis legend (Jackson 1899: 274–278).

The Syriac *Acts of Martyrs* mostly represent Zoroastrianism as veneration of the sun (Syr. *šemsā*, called ‘judge of the earth’), the fire (Syr. *nūrā*), the waters (Syr. *mayyā*), i.e., the Amahraspands as elemental powers (Nöldeke 1893), and they polemize against consanguineous marriage (much less against dualism) and against the divine nature of the king. In Syriac literature we even find detailed etiologies about the origins of Persian fire-shrines, consanguineous marriage, and astrology, as in the 4th–6th-century *Cave of Treasures* (27; Ri 1987). Matthew’s magi are here Persian kings who interestingly learn

the messianic prophecy from Persian books. Byzantine Greek etiologies of fire-worship exist as well (Ioan Malalas, *Chronographia*: 38 D). The quite considerable number of Syriac references to the *Avesta* and its *nasks* or divisions (often called 'books') has not found the attention it might deserve in the discussion about the complicated process of scribal fixation of the *Avesta* (*Historia Sancti Mar Pethion* 26, 7; see Corluy 1888; *Acta martyrum*; see Bedjan 1890–1897: 2, 576, 12 and the like; Ciancaglini 2008: 98.217 and on the *Yašts* l.c. 188; also Panaino 2006).

A number of Syriac and Arabic sources such as the late Sasanian tract *On the Error of the Magians*, Theodore bar Kōnai (who saw Zoroaster as a Jew), Bar Bahlūl, and al-Nadīm speak of different languages in which Zoroaster had written the *Avesta*: Greek, Syriac, Hebrew, Persian, the languages of Hyrcania, Merv, Zarnak, and Sagastan. This strange, ahistorical, idea may have been directed against a Manichaean argument that Mani had written books whereas Jesus and Zarathustra had not done so (see also Hutter, "Manichaeism in Iran," this volume). Legends trying to prove religious superiority tell stories such as how the catholicos Mār Abā proved the power of the Cross by walking crosswise and unscathed through a large fire (Schilling 2008: 154).

An entirely imaginary Persia is the arena of an inter-religious discussion in the apocryphal *Narratio in Perside* (Bratke 1899), which may be an early 6th-century book written by a Byzantine (Chalcedonian) Christian. It contains the remarkable assumption that "Christ first became known in Persia" and then elaborates on the legend of Mt 2 (Heyden 2009), telling, inter alia, a story of how the wise men came to know of Christ in Persia. The work has been interpreted as a kind of utopian or ideal dialogue, and relies heavily on the lost history of Philip of Side. Some of the many Syriac passages on Zoroastrianism may also point back to the important, but unfortunately lost work by Theodore of Mopsuestia against the Magians (known from Photius, bibl. 81 and some Syriac quotations). Zarathustra (Syr. Zardušt) is mentioned quite often in eastern Syriac sources. Sometimes he is identified with the Biblical scribe Baruch, as in the celebrated *Book of the Bee* by Šlēmūn of Basra (d. 1240), which also quotes a "Prophecy of Zardušt concerning our Lord" (chapter 37) making Christ a descendant of the Iranian prophet and in a mystical way even identifying them: "I am he and he is I" (a variant version is already quoted by Theodore bar Kōnai 7, 21). The identification with Baruch is also mentioned in Bar Bahlūl, and by other Syriac and a few Arabic writers. More often Zoroaster and the magi are connected with Balaam and his messianic prophecy in the Book of Numbers 24.17 (as suggested e.g., by Origen, Basil, Chrysostom, Eusebius, Nicephorus, and perhaps also in the *Cave of Treasures*). Theodore bar Kōnai calls Zoroaster a "second Balaam." He is always an exponent of astral lore. Sometimes Zoroaster is Nemrud (Bousset 1907: 369–378), Ezechiel, Ham, or more rarely Seth (Bidez and Cumont 1938 I: 41–50). As both Jews and Greeks encountered Zoroastrianism, especially in Mesopotamia, they tended to make Zoroaster a Chaldaean and the father of (Babylonian) astrology. Astrological writings were attributed to him already in Hellenistic times, with titles such as *Apotelesmatika* ('[horoscopol] Outcomes') or *Asteroskopika* ('Star Watchings'), or simply *Peri physeos* ('On Nature'); still the Arabs had pseudo-Zoroastrian Books of Nativities (Ullmann 1972: 294s.). The forms of his name (Zoroastres, Zaratus, Zares, Zoromasdres, and some others) and the various traditions about him are often very confused. Some Christian texts (*Opus imperfectum* in

Matthaeum, 5th century; *Chronicle of Zuqnān*, 8th century; *Cave of Treasures* and other sources; Widengren 1960: 62–86) combine a retelling of Mt 2 with clearly Iranian motifs taken from the Zarathustra legend, making Zoroaster a prophet of Christ (as in the 5th–6th-century Arabic *Infancy Gospel*), thus assimilating him into a Biblical reference frame of salvation history. When Jerome calls the heretic Priscillian “very devoted to the magians of Zoroaster” (*Epistolae* 133, 4) he means simply an infatuation with astrology. Islamic writers were often better informed on genuine Zoroastrian traditions, though many thought Zoroaster a disciple of a Jewish prophet or himself a Jew (e.g., *Ta’rīkh al-Ṭabarī* I: 681; see Gottheil 1894).

Christians in Arsacid and Sasanian Iran

Christianity quickly spread to the East. *Acts* 2, 9 mention Jews from Parthia, Media, and Elam as hearers of the gospel. Tertullian adds Armenia in his list of countries where the gospel has been preached (*Judaeos* 7), and the 4th-century (?) Syriac (Peshitta) translation of the *Acts* even adds the Alans. Augustine’s *Commentary on 1 John* has the Johannine letters written “to the Parthians.” The Syriac *Chronicle of Arbela* (6th century CE?; authenticity disputed by some scholars) describes the early days of Christianity in the upper Tigris region, where the ruling Parthian dynasty had converted to Judaism around 50 CE and the Jewish element was very strong. The Adiabene had a Christian majority already around 350 CE (Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2, 12, 4). In Edessa, according to local legend Christianity even goes back to the 1st century. Around 200 CE it was supported by King Abgar VIII the Great (r. 177–212 CE), who started introducing Christian laws, as we know from Bardaisan (early 3rd century CE). Even a Christian church building seems to have existed already in 201 CE, as is mentioned in the famous account of the Great Flood (*Chronicle of Edessa*; Guidi 1903), and in Dura-Europos a *Domus ecclesiae* existed not much later near a *mithraeum*. Otherwise early material remains are scarce. In Iraq some traces of Christian basilical churches survive from the later Sasanian period, from which we also have many engraved stone seals (Gignoux 1980).

Bardaisan refers to Christians in Parthia, Media, Kāšān, and Pārs. From the mid-3rd century CE about sixty Christian tombs have been identified on Khārg Island in the Persian Gulf. One Joannes of Persis is recorded as a bishop at the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE (*Patrum Nicaenorum Nomina*; Gelzer, Hilgenfeld, and Cuntz 1995). Christianity spread easily along the great trade routes, and Aramaic as the old lingua franca of the Achaemenid Empire contributed much, though dialects had become rather divergent. Early legend has the apostles Thomas and Thaddaeus preaching the gospel in the east (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3, 1), particularly in Edessa (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1, 13; 2, 1, 7), but also in Parthian Iran. Other figures of missionary legend are Addai (variant name of Thaddaeus, *Doctrina Addai*, 4th century) and his disciple Mār Mārī the Apostle, who allegedly introduced Christianity in Babylonia and became the hero of a 6th-century religious novel with many stories about Christian–Zoroastrian encounters (Harrak 2005). Edessa for a long time remained a center of missionary activities in the East, and ancient Christianity both in Iran and even in India mostly

used Edessene Syriac as the language of the liturgy, more than Persian or Parthian (the late 4th-century Antiochene preacher John Chrysostom knew these as different languages). In Edessa – which had vainly tried to keep some independence between Rome and Parthia/Persia – Syriac literature had its first center. Iranian Christianity essentially is a product of this thriving Syriac church, which from the beginning had a strong ascetic character, and which quickly became involved in the monastic movements from Egypt, Palestine, and western Syria (Theodoret, *Historia religiosa*; Aphrahat, *Demonstrations* 6) that attempted to transform human life into an angelic mode of existence and, to some degree, imitated the martyrs.

Thus Christianity already in the 4th century had reached many regions, both in the countryside and in the cities, and was found at all social levels, though only as a minority religion. Bishoprics, however, in Iran are not well documented for the pre-Nicaean era (i.e., before 325 CE). The Chronicle of Arbela mentions for c. 225 CE about seventeen bishoprics for Mesopotamia, Iran, and eastern Arabia; a number of others came into existence in the 3rd and more in the 4th century, especially Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the winter residence of the Arsacids. In Pārs the first Christians may have been prisoners of war settled there after Valerian's disastrous campaigns in 257–260 CE. For 4th- and 5th-century Iran our knowledge is on safer ground, mainly due to the *Acts of the Persian Martyrs* and some collections of canons.

In 410 CE the title of “catholicos” was introduced at the first general synod of Iranian bishops in Seleucia-Ctesiphon presided by Mār Ishāq (Braun 1900: 5–35), Nicean orthodoxy (not yet clearly visible e.g., in Aphrahat) was widely accepted, and six church provinces with a metropolitan as leader were established, much to the dismay of the Zoroastrian clergy (Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 7, 8). In 424 CE the head of the Iranian Christians was first called “patriarch” at the synod of Dādhīšō', which meant he was no longer dependent on the patriarch of Antioch and the western church, and Christians could no longer appeal to a church institution outside of Iran. This finalized the autonomy of Iranian Christians and secured survival of what was to become the autocephalous “Apostolic church of the East.” It never called itself the “Nestorian church,” though this is the label most used by European theologians, and in the 7th century sometimes even by Persian kings. The number of bishoprics now exceeded thirty. Of course a smaller number of monophysite and Chalcedonian (Byzantine) Christians also lived in the Sasanian Empire. But only the church of the East adopted a clearly Persian profile, taking over principles of Sasanian hierarchy and Sasanian-style titles, e.g., the patriarch as “father of fathers.” The system of catholicos, metropolitan, bishop, chorepiscopus, inspector, priest, and deacon and its *cursum honorum* took some time to develop, and was finally regularized by the mid-6th century. From the 5th century onward the seat of the Nestorian catholicos was based in Seleucia-Ctesiphon, only to be moved to Baghdad in 775 CE. Before the end of the 5th century Nestorian bishoprics existed as far as Merv and Herat, and in late Sasanian times must have reached China. From the point of view of the Sasanian state, this Nestorian hierarchy was held responsible for the political loyalty of the Christians, and the church leaders very much tried to acquiesce any uncertainties that might arise.

Unlike the situation in North Africa, Syria, or Armenia, in Iran Christianity never gained mass conversions, though in later Sasanian times conversions to Christianity

became a major issue even in the upper classes. In Iraq the situation was quite different, since a considerable part of the population adhered to pagan polytheist traditions about which we still hear frequently in early Islamic sources (a large percentage in some regions also was Jewish). In these arenas, there was some degree of competition between Christianity and Zoroastrianism, but the latter never clearly defined a missionary agenda, which made Christianity generally more successful with the Aramaic-speaking population and, as it seems, also with the Kurds. From the 5th century on we increasingly hear of Christians with Persian names.

Major obstacles for Zoroastrians to become Christians were the, at least initially, strong ascetic elements in eastern Christianity, its esteem of virginity, abnegation of wealth, the abstention from the begetting of children by ascetics (contrast *Šnš* 10.22), the absence of a pronounced cult of the sun, the water, the fire and other elemental powers, the completely different system of ritual purity and impurity, and its “Western” origin (Vööbus 1958: 254–256). Female ascetics (virgins) in particular became victims of extreme stigmatization. Christian burial also was abhorrent to Zoroastrians, and Bahrām V (r. 420–438 CE) even had corpses disinterred (Bedjan 1890–1897: 4, 254). Zoroastrian and Christian clergy clearly to some degree competed for popular support, and violence against churches and congregations was quite common, though small church buildings could quickly be rebuilt after such destructive acts. In a few cases we hear also of provocative acts of Christians against fire-temples and Zoroastrian shrines (Theodoret 5, 31, 1). The martyr’s acts show that Zoroastrian clergy worked even in small towns, and had a very active interest in keeping the population in the Zoroastrian faith.

The church of the East occasionally tried to minimize irritations by reducing its ascetic elements, abolishing obligatory celibacy of priests in 484/486 CE (a rule revoked in the 6th century CE), and discouraging monasteries. But this was only partially successful, as popular piety supported the coenobitic lifestyle. Generally speaking, the ascetic element in Christianity impeded successful acculturation when facing a Zoroastrian majority. The pre-monastic unorganized asceticism (Syr. *bənaṣ qəyāmā* ‘sons of the (baptismal) covenant’) was suppressed, but never completely vanished. Clear social identity markers such as marriage, property, and inheritance laws, the calendar of feasts, and also some eating rules defined Nestorians as much as they did other religious groups in Iraq and Iran. Like in Judaism, the rules applied to the laity. The synod of 585/586 CE (canon 25) forbade Christians any participation in the festivities of other religions. Settlements often had a large majority of only one religious group, with only a few families from other groups. The Nestorian priest performed the same services for his community (e.g., as an ecclesiastical judge) as the rabbi and the mowbed did for the Jewish and Zoroastrian communities respectively.

The non-Nestorian, non-Chalcedonian groups in Syriac Christianity were reorganized by Jacob Baradaï (c. 490–578 CE) into a separate Monophysite church (which seems to have converted a rather large number of Zoroastrians in Iraq). Under Khosrow II Parvīz (Abarwēz), after the fall of Edessa in 610 CE, the Sasanian court for a short time favored Monophysites in an attempt to attract the population from the occupied territories, but they never really became influential in Iran. The church of the East, on the other side, had learned to coexist with non-Christian majorities in Iran. When Islam became dominant, it was well prepared for coexistence as an organized hierarchical minority religion.

Of particular interest for inter-religious questions are a number of “magians” who became Christians in spite of being threatened with the death penalty. Mār Abā, a 6th-century convert, held a high position at the court of Khosrow I. After his conversion (about 520/525 CE) he pursued theological studies and served as catholicos (540–552 CE), reorganizing his church. In 543/544 CE he reinforced compulsory celibacy for clerics, propagated the avoidance of consanguineous marriages, and acted against Zoroastrian customs in Christian families. Mār Abā was well educated in Persian books (Braun 1915: 188) and successful in winning over Zoroastrians to the church of the East, perhaps because of his insistence on clearly defined religious boundaries. He became a leading figure in Nestorian canonical law and his canons are already quoted in the 7th-century Middle Persian Psalter from Bulayiq (Andreas and Barr 1933). He is thus a good example of the ongoing interaction between the two religions (Hutter 2003).

Christians in Iran always had to avoid any suspicion of collaboration with the Roman Empire, and prayer for the welfare of the šāh was part of the Christian liturgy (Synod of 576 CE, canon 14). Disciples of the famous theological School of Nisibis were not allowed to cross to the Roman side without special permission (*The Statutes of the School of Nisibis*; Vööbus 1961: 75–78). They also had to wear dignified clothing and tonsure to be recognizable (Vööbus 1961: 99–100).

In Middle Persian three terms for Christians are known: *klystyd'n* (Syr. *kristyānē*), *n'cl'y* (Syr. *našrāyē* ‘Nazarenes’, sometimes also ‘ascetics’) – both already occur in the inscription on the Ka'ba-ye Zardošt by the 3rd-century Zoroastrian high priest Kerdir – and later *tarsāg*, NP *tarsā* ‘(god-)fearer’ (Psalm 135, 20). The two earlier terms for Christians may reflect a division between the Greek-speaking Christian communities (to some degree deportees from the West), and the Syriac- and Iranian-speaking indigenous communities. *Kristyānē* is the term Christians came to use when referring to themselves (it was also used by the small Marcionite churches), whereas Zoroastrians preferred *našrāyē* (Brock 2008: 65–66). In the *Pahlavi Psalter* unbelievers are called *na-tarsāgān* “unfearing ones” (Andreas and Barr 1933: 62). “Messianist,” in many oriental languages a regular word of Christians (Syr. *mšīhāyē*, as e.g., used by Aphrahat; Arab. *masīhī*), seems only rarely to have been employed in ancient Iran (the Marcionites called thus the Nestorians); for Syr. *mešīhā* ‘Messiah’ we find the literal translation *'nwtky* (pronounced **ammūdag*) ‘anointed one’.

We know very little about Persian or other Iranian translations of New Testament books for the earlier centuries, though we have fragments of a 6th-century Psalm translation from the Syriac (Nestorian?). The Manichaeans used Christian gospels and other texts, and some Sogdian and Sogdian–Syriac bilingual texts may go back to originals of the 5th–6th century. Mani’s *Šābuhragān* quoted Mt 25, 31ss. in Persian (M 475 and 477). Generally Iranian Christians mostly read Syriac versions of Biblical texts, but the use of Persian slowly increased (Brock 1982: 17). Though Maimonides asserts a pre-Islamic Jewish–Persian translation of the Torah (also b. Meg. 18a: Iranian version of Esther), and Theodoret (*Graecarum affectionum curatio* 9, 936) and John Chrysostom (*Homily on Gospel of John*, *Migne Patrologia Graeca* 59, 32) speak about Persian translations of Biblical texts, no remnants are known (concerning Middle Persian quotations in Zoroastrian books, see below). Eastern Syriac Christianity long used Tatian’s

Diatessaron (e.g., the 4th-century theologian Ephraem whom all Syriac churches revere), but the *Persian Diatessaron* we have is a 13th-century version harmonized with the canonical gospels (Messina 1951). The Middle Persian Turfan fragment M 97 is an abbreviated version of Pastor Hermae, sim. 9 (a 2nd-century Christian text from Rome), reworked as a Manichaean parable (Burtea 1995–1996 [2002]).

Interestingly, the number of Marcionites in Iran seems to have been quite high (Epiphanius, *Panarion* 42, 1; *Acts of Mar Simon and Companions*), and they are still mentioned as an active group in Arabian Abbasid sources. In regions speaking Iranian languages outside the Sasanian Empire Christian communities existed as well, notably on the Sogdian trade routes, which have left a relatively large body of translation literature from Syriac.

The persecutions of Christians did not diminish their cultural impact. As later in Abbasid society, many physicians were Nestorians. In 497 CE Narsai re-founded the “Persian School” in Nisibis, which had existed in Edessa and Nisibis as long as these cities were part of the Roman Empire, and which flourished even more under Persian rule as a center of Nestorian scholarship (both in theology and secular sciences), though Zoroastrianism was also strong in the city (Vööbus 1965). This school was seen as an example of erudition even to Western authors like Pope Agapetus I (d. 536 CE) and Cassiodorus (d. c. 580 CE), whose Vivarium (monastery) was inspired by it. The even greater medical school at Gondīšāpūr flourished under Khosrow Anūšīrwān, and survived well into Islamic times (the teaching language was Syriac). Many Greek scientific works were translated into Syriac (and to a smaller degree into Middle Persian) as later into Arabic. Not all of these scholars were Nestorians (who were qualified for such tasks by their polyglottism); Sergios Sebokht, for example, who around 650 CE wrote commentaries on Aristotle and first mentions Hindu numerals outside of India, was a Monophysite. In some cases we do not know whether a scholar writing in Syriac was a Christian or a Zoroastrian. Paulus the Persian, who dedicated a summary of Aristotelian logic to Khosrow Anūšīrwān asserting the superiority of science over faith and later much influencing Islamic Aristotelianism, had allegedly converted from Christianity to Zoroastrianism (*Chronicle of Se'ert* 24). Christians contributed to the reception of Greek science in Iran by translating medical, agricultural, astronomical, and astrological texts (as Vettius Valens and Teukros the Babylonian) and some military handbooks into Middle Persian, some of which subsequently were translated from Persian into Arabic. Greek medical treatises were used by Iranian scholars at the famous academy of Gondīšāpūr (Agathias 2, 28–32; Bailey 1971: 80–119).

Christians encountered Zoroastrians also outside of Iran. In 377 CE Basil of Caesarea wrote to Epiphanius about a *magusaion ethnos*, a ‘people of the magians’ that lived in Cappadocia and practiced a fire cult and unlawful consanguineous marriages (*xwēdōdah* in Pahlavi literature, a word also known in Syriac), passing down their traditions from father to son without written books (but contrast Pausanias 5, 27, 6 which is evidence for written Zoroastrian ritual books already in the 2nd century CE). They traced their ancestry to one Zar(n)ouas (*Epistle* 258), which is a possible indicator of a theology of Zurwān (Zaehner 1955: 113, 449). Personal names like Arsakes and Iranian theophorics like Mithrabandakes (‘bondsmen/slave of Mithra’), Bagoas, Spendates, even Srousus (from Sraoša) in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt (especially the Faiyum) show a certain

minority of Iranian immigrant families (also Bardaisan in Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 6, 10, 16; *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* 9, 21). Apparently, there were Zoroastrians not only in what is today eastern Turkey, but also in other parts of the Roman Empire.

The Iranian influence on religious vocabulary used by Christian communities, clearly visible in Syriac, is nevertheless most remarkable in Armenian, where this part of the language is almost entirely Iranian and reminiscent of many Zoroastrian ideas, religious institutions, and details of the cult (see also de Jong, "Armenian and Georgian Zoroastrianism," this volume). In Armenia Christianity had become the state religion already in 301 CE but took over elements from Zoroastrian tradition (Russell 1987: 515–539). In Armenian Christian literature even the disciples of Christ and the angels were designated by Iranian words (MP *ašakert* and *hreštak*, for which Man. Parth. *fryštg* 'apostle, angel', NP *ferēšta* 'angel'). Of course Iranian gods are well known in Armenian literature: Aramazd (beside the rarer Ormizd), Anahit (MP *Anāhīd*), Mihr (Av. *Miθra*, Parth., MP *Mihr*), Spandaramet (MP *Spandarmad*), Vahagn (Av. *Vərəθrayna*, MP *Wahrām*), and the like. Religious and ritual matters visible in Armenian Christian words include *mazdezn* 'worshiping Mazda'; *barsman-* 'bundle of twigs'; *gomēz* 'bovine water'; *patgamauor* 'messenger, prophet' (MP *paygāambar*); *anoušak* 'immortal' (MP *anōšag*); *tačar* 'temple' (OP *tacara-*); *boz-payit*, *baz-payit* 'confession of sin' (MP *bazag*, Man. Parth. *bzjg*); *mog*, *mogpet*, *mog-petan*, *mog-pet*, *movan-pet* 'magus, magian, chief magian'; *hešmaka-pašt* 'serving demons' (Av. *aēšma-*, MP *xēšm*, NP *khešm*, with *pašt* from **pari-štā-* 'to stand around', MP *parist-* 'to serve'); *vardapet* 'teacher' (Inscr. MP, Parth. *wrdpt* etc.); *drapet* 'chief scribe' (Inscr. MP *dipīvar*, Pahl. *dipīr*, NP *dabīr*, OInd. *divirapati-*); *taxt* 'seat, throne'; *drauš* 'banner' (Av. *drafša-*) etc.

An important sphere of interaction between Jewish, Iranian, Mandaic, and, to a lesser degree, Christian ideas is magic, known particularly from Aramaic incantation bowls (6th to 8th century mostly from Iraqi sites) written by religious minorities as Jews and Mandaeans (mainly protective spells), often clearly for Zoroastrian and Muslim clients. Persian personal names abound, but Zoroastrian elements are rarer. In a similar vein medicine, astrology, and the sciences were spheres of interaction, with characteristic differences. In the *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad*, for example, the signs of the Zodiac are agents of Ohrmazd, whereas the planets with irregular orbits are agents of Ahreman, a system very different from Western astrology, and the broad and divergent discussion about astrology and fatalism used similar objections against it in Nestorian Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and later Islam.

Persecutions of Christians in Sasanian Iran

The massive persecutions of Christians in Sasanian Iran are the direct outcome of a number of factors. Like Islam, Zoroastrianism from a not specifiable time on regarded conversion of Zoroastrians to another religion as apostasy deserving the death penalty (Morony 2005: 282; Nöldeke 1879: 287–288). This was also noted by Greek authors like Theophylact Simocatta (hist. 5, 12, 5). Even more significantly, the Roman–Persian wars made Christians in Iran suspect of high treason, especially after the Roman Empire had become Christian. The number of Christians had much increased since Šāpūr (Šābuhr)

I (240–270 CE) had deported Christians from Antioch and other Syriac cities into Pārs and places like Ardašīr-Xwarrah, the residence of his father. Aphrahat (*Homily 5*), written under the impression of the military preparations of Šāpūr II in 337 (after the death of Constantine), shows indeed a strong Syriac sympathy for the Roman side of the Roman–Persian wars looming ahead (also *mart. Simeonis bar Sabba'e 12*; *Narratio de beato Simeone Bar Sabba'e 4.18*), though many Persian Christians in court proceedings clearly expressed their loyalty to the Sasanian kings. The slowly emerging church of the East with its complete organizational and theological independence from Western churches led to better terms with the Sasanian rulers.

It is difficult to evaluate the ratio of political and religious factors in the persecutions. Though many Christians died, Christianity was never formally outlawed and could develop quite freely to some degree even in times of severe adversity in other regions. Christians fought in the Iranian army side by side with Zoroastrians, even in higher ranks, as did Jews (Hoffmann 1880: 80; Morony 2005: 317). One gets the impression that the driving force was in fact more religious than political, and the suspicion of treason was often used as an easy argument by the Zoroastrian clergy which, according to all available sources, initiated and supported most cases of persecution, sometimes against the will of the king. On the other side there is an obvious direct relation between the Roman–Persian wars and high tides of adversity against Christianity. Of course, the ratio of factors will have changed during the four centuries of Sasanian rule. Khosrow II, for example, due to his personal friendship with the Byzantine emperor Maurice (r. 582–602 CE), permitted Christians to build new churches, sound their wooden gongs, and even to convert Zoroastrians. This short period of tolerance changed in the 620s CE when war broke out once again. According to official Sasanian ideology, Ērānšahr and Rūm (the Byzantine Empire) were by divine plan the two centers of civilization, guardians of order in the world (“the rising sun” and “the setting moon” in the words of Kawād I: Ioan Malalas, *Chronographia* 449 D). In diplomatic intercourse the šāh and the emperor called each other “brother” (and their queens called each other “sister”), even during periods of war. It has been a matter of much controversy to what degree the Byzantine court ceremonial has been influenced by its magnificent Persian counterpart (already Eutropius 9, 26; Aurelius Victor 39, 2–4; Ammianus Marcellinus 15, 5, 18).

Persecutions of Christians (of which almost nothing is heard in Arsacid times) started only slowly under Šāpūr I. For some time he favored Mani, perhaps because he was impressed by his syncretistic approach and his ideas about a succession of divine messengers. But beginning in the late 3rd century Zoroastrianism persecuted Manichaeism strongly and drove it eastward, though its followers never completely vanished. Some persecutions of Christians also took place under Bahrām I (r. 273–276 CE), more so under Bahrām II (r. 276–293 CE), but particularly under Šāpūr II (r. 309–379 CE), who detested the Christians (*Chronicle of Se'ert*). This forty-year high tide of extremely violent persecutions was directed particularly against leading figures of the church (Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2, 12, 4). Mar Simeon bar Sabba'e, catholicos in Seleucia-Ctesiphon, for instance, was accused of maintaining a secret correspondence with the Roman emperor and was executed in 339 CE after his refusal to worship the sun. But there is no evidence of any real political disloyalty by the church. For example, Goštāzād, who died under Šāpūr II, even pleaded that after his execution it should be

made known that he had died because of his faith, not on account of political disloyalty. A few years later, Šāpūr III (r. 383–388 CE) again freed many Christians from prison because their crafts and taxes were needed, against strong opposition from the Zoroastrian clergy. It should be mentioned that other Sasanians such as Narseh I (r. 293–302 CE) and Hormizd II (r. 302–309 CE) also tolerated Christians.

A leading 3rd-century figure of Zoroastrian oppression of other faiths is the high priest Kerdīr. His inscription at the Ka'ba-ye Zardošt lists religions against which he fought: Jews (*yḥwdy*), Buddhists (*šmny*), adherents of Hinduism (*blmny*), Nazoreans (*n'cl'y*; meaning not quite clear), Christians (*klstydn*), Baptists (*mktky*; 'Proto-Mandaeans' or 'Elchesaites?') and Manichaeans (*zndyky*) (KKZ 9s. and par.), perhaps enumerated in an order of ascending evilness. The well-informed Sozomen gives the number of documented Christians executed already in the first wave as 16,000 (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 2, 14, 4). al-Mas'ūdī later even speaks of 200,000. Nevertheless Christianity always recovered quickly, though never gaining majority support. Official policy also used other ways to control minorities. We have some evidence that Christians from frontier regions were deported to more central areas, to be kept under surveillance, mainly under Šāpūr II, but also again during the wars 591–628 CE, and we also hear about special taxes. As accusers we find mostly Zoroastrian priests, though Jews who had gained some privileges also played a part (Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2, 9, 1).

In some cases the king only reluctantly gave way to accusations against court officials. Yazdgird I (r. 399–421 CE) started a serious struggle against the Zoroastrian clergy to prevent them from becoming ever more powerful (Ammianus Marcellinus 23, 35). This brought a long-desired respite for Christians, which however did not even last till the end of his reign. His successor Bahrām V (r. 420–438 CE) again encouraged persecutions, as did Yazdgird II (r. 438–457 CE) who even tried forcibly to convert Armenia and Georgia to Zoroastrianism (also forbidding the observance of the Jewish Sabbath). Then once again more peaceful times followed. The struggle was also for cultural supremacy. Walāš (r. 484–488 CE), for example, was overthrown as a king by the clergy and nobility when he introduced Roman baths in Iran (Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, *Chronicle* 12–13; Wright 1882). Khosrow I, Hormizd IV, and Khosrow II, representing the last era of Sasanian splendor, seem to have followed more clearly a political agenda in alternately persecuting or favoring Christians as they deemed it prudent. The Persian war against the Byzantines culminating in the capture of Jerusalem and the Holy Cross in 614 CE and the destruction of numerous churches led to the six campaigns of Heraclius against the Persians that can be seen as a first crusade. Yet, in 628 CE, under Kawād II Šērōy's short reign (628–629 CE), Christians again were tolerated.

Sasanian legal proceedings against Christians differed markedly from those in the Roman Empire. The accused Christians often spent much more time in prison (months, sometimes years), as the *magūšayē* (priests) tried to convert them to Zoroastrianism, often using grisly ways of torture. When a formal sentence was pronounced, the penalties like flaying, the cutting off of limbs, and beating to death often exhibit a quite bizarre and extremely sadistic behavior. Being bound and fed to rats, for example, might be interpreted as being delivered into the realm of *xrafstras*. In some cases we can clearly see that the punishment itself had a religious meaning, as when the Christian woman Tarbo is accused of sorcery against the queen, causing her illness, and the execution is

connected with ritual acts to guarantee the queen's recovery (Bedjan 1890–1897: 2, 254–260). In later Sasanian times male apostates from Zoroastrianism were sometimes crucified (Morony 2005: 300).

The “Persian martyrs,” especially those under Šāpūr II, became the subject of many acts written in Syriac which give a vivid and often very realistic picture of inter-religious conflicts (see Hoffmann 1880; Bedjan 1890–1897; Braun 1915; Brock 2008). Some acts were translated into Greek, and church historians summarized the earlier persecutions (Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2, 9–14; Theodoret 5, 39; also in the synaxaria, i.e., compilations of hagiographies in the Eastern churches roughly corresponding to Western martyrologies). Other minorities periodically shared this fate. Jews, originally a favored group, from the late 5th century onward became subject to severe oppression (in 589 CE the exilarch was killed), and Manichaeans were regarded as arch-heretics by the Zoroastrian clergy. Radical Christian groups like the antinomian *məṣallyānē* (Messalians) further complicated relations, especially in the 6th century (Vööbus 1960: 132–138). Some martyrs also became famous in the West, such as Golinduch (Golāndokht) who died in 591 CE, a Zoroastrian woman of noble birth converted by Christian prisoners of war, taking the name of Maryam. Repeated attempts to convert her back to Zoroastrianism failed, and though condemned to death and heavily tortured she was (miraculously, as her *Vita* says) released from prison after eighteen years and fled to Roman territory. An original *Vita*, written in Syriac shortly after her death by Stephan, bishop of Hierapolis, is lost, but forms the basis of a Georgian Passio (Garitte 1956). Many later writers tell her story (Eustratios of Constantinople, John of Nikiu, Theophylact Simocatta, and Nikephoros Kallistos). Recently she has tentatively been identified with Maryam, a figure in the famous Persian love story of Khosrow (Anūšīrwān) and Šīrīn (Baum 2004).

Another exemplary figure in the conflicts shaping Iranian Christianity is the catholicos Bābōē (d. 481/484 CE). Like Mār Abā originally a Zoroastrian, he was converted to the Christian faith by a monk. During the persecution of Christians under Pērōz I (r. 459–484 CE), he was imprisoned and not released until peace was made between the king and the Roman emperor (464 CE). After his release, the School of Nisibis had become the spiritual center of the church, and violent struggles arose with Barṣaumā, bishop of Nisibis and leading theologian of the school, who favored a more pro-Iranian approach, allowing, for example, marriages of priests. Barṣaumā perhaps even helped in the handing over to King Pērōz I of a letter Bābōē had sent to the Byzantine emperor Zenon, requesting help on behalf of the endangered orthodoxy. Bābōē was imprisoned and beaten to death. For Monophysites, Barṣaumā thus became a central symbol of a “heretical” Iranian Nestorianism, his name being written upside down, as Ahreman's name is often written in Pahlavi manuscripts.

Zoroastrian Polemics against Christianity

Extensive discussions of Christianity in Zoroastrian literature are only known from post-Sasanian texts. We nevertheless get a rather clear-cut and plausible picture from earlier Christian sources describing Zoroastrian objections against the Christian minority. The Zoroastrian treatise *Škand-gumānīg Wizār* (final redaction in the 10th

century CE) combines a sophisticated apology of Zoroastrianism (1–10) with a polemic against the Muslim (11–12), Jewish (13–14), Christian (*tarsā*, 15), and Manichaean (16) religions, even quoting many Old Testament (mostly Genesis) and New Testament passages (from the Gospels and the Pauline letters), which may be derived from Middle Iranian translations and certainly show a good knowledge of Christianity (Shapira 2001). *Dēnkard* Book 3 also has similar passages dealing with “good” and “evil” religion (*weh-dēn(īh)* and *ag-dēn(īh)*), the primary way Zoroastrianism defined boundary maintenance (“inside” and “outside” religion). Biblical stories are here integrated into an Iranian mythological frame of reference. In the Pahlavi *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* (going back to a Parthian original) Abraham is made a courtier of Wištāsp; in medieval Zoroastrian and Muslim literature he is sometimes identified with Zoroaster, but in earlier Pahlavi literature Abraham is seen in the blackest light, even identified with Ažī Dahāg (Russell 2004: 223). Discussion of Judaism and Christianity thus is always strictly polemical, directed particularly against ideas of only one creator (How could a good god have created the evil serpent in Paradise or other Ahremanian creatures?), also, against incarnation, the trinity, and asceticism. *Dk* 3.40 calls the idea of a “father” and “son” in god “absurd” (*wahār*). *Dēnkard* Book 5 (Amouzgar and Tafazzoli 2000) contains many questions asked by a Christian Bōxt-Mārē, on matters of theology and ritual: animal sacrifice, washing hands with cow urine, menstrual laws, and showing corpses to a dog. Zoroastrian revelation is explicitly seen as being sent to all humans, not just Iranians, and as prospering and spreading (the tradition is clearly pre-Muslim) (*Dk* 5.31.14). The *Škand-gumānīg Wizār* moreover argues that the New Testament stories themselves require the existence of two principles (though the strict dualism of Mani is attacked even more vigorously). Christianity is the religion of the Romans (= Byzantines; cf. the religious geography of *Dk* 3.29). Other passages mention Christianity only incidentally (e.g., one is forbidden to buy wine from Christians). The theory that MP *abestāg* ‘Avesta’ might have originally meant ‘Testament’ (Sundermann 2002), and the codification of Avestan texts may have been inspired by the Christian canon of scriptures, seems rather hypothetical, though the presence of easily available written scriptures certainly was a challenge to the traditional – primarily oral – modes of learning in Sasanian Zoroastrianism (see Braun 1915: 204, 223, and 94–95 on the recital of Avestan texts at the Sasanian court even by children). Christian scriptures were sometimes defamed as magical artefacts by the Zoroastrian priests (Bedjan 1890–1897: 2, 351–352; Braun 1915: 116). Christians were regularly suspected of using evil sorcery, a stereotype in oppressing minority religions.

The Sasanian need to redefine Zoroastrianism as a kind of state religion seems not to have been influenced too much by developments in the Roman Empire. The hierarchical structure of the Zoroastrian priesthood is accompanied by a basic cultic need and worldview that necessitated frequent and elaborate rituals, and as such is not completely comparable to the structure of the Christian clergy. Nevertheless as Zoroastrianism was already on its way to a more clear-cut monotheism the Christian presence served as a kind of catalyst (see *Acts of Peroz*; Braun 1915: 168). The many similarities between Zoroastrianism and Christianity (as the interest in eschatology, redemption, and an organized clergy) did not lead to any kind of rapprochement, and later their status as minorities in Islamic society made them more competitors than friends.

Early Islamic Times

Tradition has it the last Sasanian king Yazdgird III (r. 632–651 CE) was buried by the bishop of Merv in 651 CE where he had fled from the Arabian armies (Tha'ālibī, *Ġurar*; Zotenberg 1900: 748). The military successes of Muslims and the quick spread of Islam changed religious life in Iran and Iraq. Already Thomas of Margha (9th century) describes the ruins of a fire-temple infested by devils in the form of black ravens near Margha (*The Book of Governors* 1, 344; 2, 599; Budge 1893). It is difficult to ascertain how quickly the majority of the Iranian population became Muslim (Stausberg 2002b: 272), and the treatment of Zoroastrians in early Islamic times differed widely. Zoroastrian imperial ideology survived to some degree in Abbasid political ideas, and Zoroastrianism itself never vanished completely. The Iranian epic tradition became an integral part of Islamic Persian historiography. Christian traditions could not compete with this cultural impact, though Iranian Islamic mysticism was quite fascinated by the figure of Jesus, reinterpreted as a perfect ascetic (e.g., al-Ghazālī has the largest number of apocryphal sayings of Jesus by an Islamic author; Khalidi 2001: 42). In rare cases a Christian figure such as Queen Šīrīn (wife of Khosrow II), who discreetly supported the Nestorians and later the Monophysites, became part of the epic cycle (Baum 2004). Interestingly, Ferdowsī (c. 940–1020 CE), whose native city of Tūs had a special street for Christians (*kūy-ye tarsāyān*), often speaks quite critically of Jesus in the *Šāhnāme*, e.g., deriding Jesus' teaching of non-resistance (Bertel's, Nushin, and Azer 1960–1971 IX: 95–96 vv. 460–464) and even calling him the deceiving (*farībānda*) Messiah (Bertel's, Nushin, and Azer 1960–1971 VIII: 105 vv. 894–896 vv. 1474–1475).

The church of the East – though it could do no missionary work in Islamic territories – flourished in spite of Islam and only after the Mongol invasion seriously lost its impact on Near Eastern peoples. Monasteries were raided during early Islam, but could later be rebuilt. The seat of the catholicos under Hnanīšō' II in 775 CE changed to Baghdad, and under his successor Timothy I (780–823 CE), who due to his scholarship was much honored by the caliphs, a significant expansion of the church took place. Missionaries were sent to Turkish areas and even to Tibet (*Epistles* 41 and 47). In the meantime, the religious discussion with Zoroastrianism became part of the heritage of Syriac and Persian Christianity, and, as Islamic Iran, in marked contrast to Arabia, kept alive its pre-Islamic epic traditions, so also the church of the East kept alive, to some degree, its turbulent history with Sasanian Zoroastrianism. The anonymous Nestorian *Chronicle of Se'ert* (9th century CE or later) celebrates the triumph of the Muslim conquerors in the 7th century as a liberation from Zoroastrian oppression, and Theodore bar Kōnai, a contemporary of Timothy I (some scholars want to place him a century later) in his Scholia on the Old and New Testament discusses Zoroastrianism at some length (11, 13, also 8, 21; 3, 35). Ongoing interaction between Christians and Zoroastrians is especially well known from Armenia, where the majority of the population had long been Monophysite, but where traces of Zoroastrianism also survived well into modern times.

Gregory Bar Hebraeus (1226–1286 CE), greatest of all medieval writers of the (Monophysite) Orthodox Syriac church, in his *Chronography* still saw the magi of the gospel as Persians (Budge 1932: 2, 47). He knows of Magian uprisings against the

Muslims in 769 CE (Budge 1932: 114) and, interestingly, still for his own lifetime speaks of Kurdish tribes that had adopted “magianism” (Budge 1932: 362). Though the Acts of the Persian Martyrs had long become part of Syriac devotional literature, the name of Zoroaster was kept in memory not only as a religious adversary and founder of magic, but time and again as a kind of pre-Christian prophet and wise man.

Further Reading

Good general overviews on Christianity in pre-Islamic Iran are Asmussen (1983) and Hage (2007). For the persecutions of Christians, see Hoffmann (1880), Braun (1915) (sources), Brock (1982 and 2008). The classic work on the image of “Zoroaster” in the west with collection of pseudepigraphic texts (all fragmentary) using names as Zoroaster, Ostanes, and Hystaspes is Bidez and Cumont (1938); see also Vasunia (2007). Ciancaglini (2008) is much more than a linguistic collection of Iranian words in Syriac: it shows the cultural

impact Iran had on Eastern Christianity. Nöldeke (1893), Gignoux (1999b), Jullien and Jullien (2002), Hutter (2003), de Jong (2003), Frenschkowski (2004) discuss aspects of Zoroastrian and Christian interaction, all with observations not found elsewhere. Frenschkowski (2010) is an overview on magic in antiquity, discussing at some length its “Iranian connection” (to be published as a book in 2015). For Christians in Iran, see Williams (1996), Gyselen (2006), and Arafa, Tubach, and Vashalomidze (2007).

CHAPTER 30

Manichaeism in Iran

Manfred Hutter

Manichaeism is a Gnostic religion originating in the middle of the 3rd century CE. Mani propagated this religion due to his belief that he had received divine revelations which encouraged him to preach a strict dualism, based on both Judeo-Christian and Zoroastrian concepts. During the early Sasanian Empire (224–651 CE), Manichaeism began rivalling Zoroastrianism as the leading religion in Iran, but due to persecutions during the late 3rd and early 4th centuries CE, Manichaeans either left for the Roman Empire or moved to the eastern provinces of Iran spreading along the Silk Road. From the discoveries of Manichaean literature in the Turfan oasis in Chinese Turkestan during the early years of the 20th century it has become obvious that the Middle Persian language remained – even in Central Asia – the ritual language for Manichaeans. For example, there are passages in Middle Persian inserted in liturgical texts in either the Parthian or Sogdian language showing that the origin of Manichaeism in the core area of the early Sasanian Empire was remembered for a long while. There, Mani (216–277 CE), the founder of Manichaeism, had preached a dualistic belief system and adapted and absorbed Zoroastrian elements and terminology into his own teaching, resulting in similarities but also conflicts between the two religious traditions. Nevertheless, Manichaean thought left its impact not only on Zoroastrianism, but to a minor extent also on Muslim mysticism and the symbolism of light.

Manichaeans in Sasanian Iran

Mani was born in southern Babylonia into a Parthian family and, at the age of four, his father Patik took him to the religious community of the Elkasaites, as we learn from the *Cologne Mani Codex* (Koenen and Römer 1988). This community had a Judeo-Christian

background, focusing on baptism, fasting, and the strict observance of some Jewish religious laws. But as Mani was also well acquainted with Iranian – Zoroastrian – traditions, he broke with this community at the age of twenty-four and started preaching his own message. In 241/242 CE, after Šābuhr (Šāpūr) I (r. 240–270 CE) had gained power as the Sasanian king, Mani began to spread his teaching within the Sasanian court (Hutter 1993: 5–6; Stausberg 2002b: 220–222; Skjærvø 1997a: 327–331). The central themes in his message were the “two principles of light and darkness” and the “three times” – both ideas having their roots in Zoroastrian cosmology. Šābuhr, who was interested in acquiring and introducing new knowledge into his kingdom, lent his ear to Mani, because Mani presented his religion as a kind of “reform” of Zarathustra’s ancient teachings. But there was another reason as well: According to Mani’s teachings all former religions had been included in his new religion. That seemed most fitting for Šābuhr who was establishing a large empire with different peoples and different creeds. Therefore, Manichaeism was a suitable syncretistic yet Iranian religion potentially serving as a common bond for all people in the emerging empire. That is, for Christians in the West, thanks to the Gnostic tradition picked up by Manichaeism, for Zoroastrians, thanks to Mani’s attempt to present himself as a “new Zoroaster,” and even for Buddhists in eastern Iran. Thus, Manichaeism flourished for thirty years within the Sasanian Empire. Mani himself stayed in Persis (Pars province) and western Iran, where he did a good deal of his missionary work and developed his church organization. This situation changed after Šābuhr’s death. Although Hormizd I (r. 270/272–273 CE) still favored Mani, the religio-political career of the Zoroastrian priest Kerdīr started at the same time. During the reign of Wahrām I (r. 273–276 CE), Kerdīr managed to influence the new king to strengthen Zoroastrianism and thus to weaken Manichaeism. Kerdīr’s religious efforts are well illustrated by his own inscriptions (see below; Gignoux 1991; Hutter 1993: 7–10; Huyse 1998: 117–118; Stausberg 2002b: 222–226; Skjærvø 1997a: 317–318). In the due course of time, Mani was summoned to the court at Bēt Lāpāt (Gundēšābuhr) by Wahrām I and interrogated about his religion. At the end of this summons, Wahrām put him in prison, probably in order to settle Zoroastrian accusations against Mani, perhaps raised by Kerdīr himself. Mani died on February 26, 277 CE in prison.

In the years after Mani’s death members of his church were persecuted. This coincided with the career of the Zoroastrian priest Kerdīr and his promotion of Zoroastrianism as the only legitimate religion in the Sasanian Empire, leading to the persecution of other religions, as stated in Kerdīr’s inscription from Naqsh-e Rostam (Boyce 1984b: 112):

And the creed of Ahriman and the dēws was driven out of the land and deprived of credence. (7) And Jews and Buddhists and Brahmins and Aramaic and Greek-speaking Christians and Baptisers and Manichaeans were assailed in the land. And images were overthrown, and the dens of demons were (thus) destroyed, and the places and abodes of the yazads [i.e., fire-temples] were established...

We can deduce from Kerdīr’s relation to other religions that he was convinced of the truth of his Zoroastrian religion and that he favored an idea of Iran which was founded in a political programme in which there can be only one religion to uphold the strength

of the state, as it is mentioned in the so called *Testament of Ardašīr* (quoted by Gnoli 1989: 170):

Know that kingship and religion are twin brothers, no one of which can be maintained without the other. For religion is the foundation of kingship, and kingship is the guardian of religion. ... Know that there can never be in one kingdom both a secret chief in religion and a manifest chief in kingship without the chief in religion snatching away that which is in the hands of the chief in kingship. For religion is the foundation and kingship is the pillar, and the possessor of the foundation has more claim to the whole building than the possessor of the pillar.

In this ideological program (see also Boyce 1984b: 109 for a similar idea expressed in the “Letter of Tansar”; further Stausberg 2002b: 233–235), there was no place for Manichaeism. Therefore, persecutions of Manichaeans in Iran led to an exodus of adherents of Manichaeism mainly to Mesopotamia and the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. Only during the reign of Narseh (r. 293–302 CE) did the suppression of Manichaeans stop for political reasons. The Roman emperor Diocletian had issued an edict against the Manichaeans in 297 CE, so Narseh hoped to gain support from the Manichaeans for his military agitations against the Roman Empire by stopping his persecutions (Lieu 1992: 122–124; Skjærvø 1997a: 342; Stausberg 2002b: 237–238). So, for some years the Manichaeans managed to live calmly, but during the reign of Narseh’s successor Hormizd II (r. 303–309 CE) the Zoroastrian priests again worked for the extirpation of the Manichaean “heresy.” Besides Manichaeans fleeing to the west, others sought refuge in eastern Iran, opening the way for the spreading of Manichaeism along the Silk Road as far as Central Asia in the following centuries. In eastern Iran (present-day Turkmenistan), Manichaeism had already been known since the middle of the 3rd century due to the missionary efforts of Mār Ammō; therefore refugees could find shelter there in the early 4th century (Lieu 1992: 106–107; Hutter 2002: 21–25). As a result, Iranian Manichaeism also came into contact with the westward-spreading Buddhism from the Kushan Empire. In the 6th century Manichaeism reached its climax in eastern Iran, with Samarkand as the religious and administrative center, independent from the Manichaean west. Šād-Ohrmezd was the most prominent east Iranian leader of the community of the Dēnāwars, who gave themselves this term, literally meaning “having religion,” to bring to mind that they attempted to preserve the religion in “pure” form. Besides Parthian missionaries, Sogdians began to play an important role in transmitting Iranian religious ideas further to the east, where Manichaeism became accepted from the end of the 6th century along with Christianity and Buddhism (Tremblay 2006a: 228–230).

In the core Iranian area, where Mani had spent most of his lifetime working to establish his religion, Manichaeism lost its importance from the 4th to the 7th centuries. As a result, there are relatively few extant Manichaean sources from the center of the Sasanian Empire. We know about further persecutions of the Manichaeans during the reign of Šābuhr II (r. 309–379 CE), but these persecutions seem to have been less fierce than those of the Christians. Zoroastrians tried to reconvert Manichaeans to the Good Religion (Hutter 2000a: 311–313). One Syriac text tells us about a Manichaean who is

forced to kill an ant to prove that he does not accept the prohibition of killing animals, and his willingness to break with his former religious practice, but to act according to Zoroastrian patterns. For Zoroastrians, killing ants and other *xrafstra*-creatures of this kind, who are part of Ahreman's creation bringing evil to the world, amounts to partaking in the cosmic battle against the evil creation. Apparently, therefore, during the 4th century Zoroastrians tried to win back some Manichaeans to their religion. Maybe the Zoroastrian priesthood also had to react against Manichaeans in some other way. It has been suggested that the appreciation Manichaeans gave to their canonical "holy books" led to the invention of a written *Avesta* by the Zoroastrian priesthood during the 4th century by producing a book able to compete with the Manichaean scriptures (Hutter 2000a: 313–314 with further references). In theological disputes, Zoroastrians from then on no longer had to rely solely on the oral tradition, but also had a book of their own, showing that it was not Zoroastrianism that had failed but that Mani had falsified the teaching of Zoroaster. In the early 5th century, during the reign of Yazdgird I (r. 399–421 CE), the persecutions of Manichaeans started again. From the compilation of legal cases, the *Mādayān ī Hazār Dādestān* ('Book of a Thousand Judgments'), we learn that the property of heretics should be confiscated; heretics (*zandīq*) in this passage obviously refers to Manichaeans (Perikhanian 1997: 316–319). The Zoroastrian arch-heretic Mazdak's movement during the reign of Kawād I (r. 488–496 and 499–531 CE) cannot always be exactly distinguished from Manichaeism. Mazdak had a pessimistic point of view about the world, but he believed in a good god. He also strongly opposed social injustices and tried to overcome social differences between the rich and the poor. Despite the scarcity of information one can conclude that Mazdak's movement in general cannot be related to Manichaeism although he shared Mani's negative position about the visible world (Shaked 1994a: 124–131). During the reign of Khosrow I Anūšīrwān (r. 531–579 CE) some Manichaeans still lived in the area of present-day Iran. Despite persecutions, these Manichaeans formed a part of the religious plurality within the Sasanian Empire. After the victory of the Arabs over the Persians in 637 CE, the initial tolerance of the Arabs even re-established Manichaeism in Iran for a short period, with some Manichaeans returning from Khorāsān and eastern Iran to western Iran (Lieu 1992: 112–113). But this was only a short interlude before the ultimate decline of Manichaeism in western Iran. Among eastern Iranians like the Sogdians Manichaeism survived beside Nestorian Christianity and Buddhism as one of the living religions along the Silk Road until the beginning of the 2nd millennium.

Zoroastrian Topics and Elements in Manichaeism

When Mani presented his teachings at Šābuhr's court and in the Sasanian Empire, he made strong use of Zoroastrian religious thought and combined it with his own Gnostic teachings to provide an Iranian garb for his cosmogonical and eschatological myth, which was structured in a dualistic manner. The basic "canonical" source for Mani's teaching is the Middle Persian book, arranged for and dedicated to Šābuhr, known as the *Šābuhragān* (MacKenzie 1979; Hutter 1992; Klimkeit 1993: 225–249). Thus one can take the *Šābuhragān* as "Mani's own words." In its latter part, Mani described his

eschatological teachings, but because Manichaean eschatology does not work without cosmogony and anthropogony, certain Middle Persian fragments from the Turfan collection which give a full account of these topics can be added to the eschatological portions of the book on account of linguistic and stylistic arguments (Sundermann 1981: 91–94; Hutter 1992: 124–134).

The central theme in the *Šābuhragān* is the “two principles” of light and darkness and the “three times”: the original time when the realms of light and darkness existed side by side, with equal strength but separated by a boundary; the time of mixture after the combat between light and darkness; and finally the time of the renewed separation of the two principles. This structure can be seen both in the cosmological and eschatological part of the *Šābuhragān* and in other texts, but also in the section about the creation of mankind. For this mythological concept, Mani largely depends on Zoroastrian religious thought (see Hutter 1989; Rudolph 1991; Sundermann 1997). However, there are also some remarkable divergences between the two religions, because Mani’s dualism stems from the Christian idea that Jesus was killed by god’s earthly enemies (Sundermann 1997). This basic Christian doctrine was elaborated by Gnostic cosmic speculation and by the introduction of the idea that god has an eternal adversary who is at constant war with the divine realm. Thus Mani’s dualism is not simply a rewriting of Zoroastrian dualism, but a developed form of a new doctrine that also makes extensive use of the Zoroastrian imaginary, mainly in its theological and cosmological outlook.

In Mani’s doctrine it is everybody’s responsibility to remember the “two principles” and the “three times” and to remember that one has one’s own roots in the principle of light. Being aware of this, humans have *gnosis* and because of this *gnosis* everybody is obliged to fight against the principle of darkness during his whole life, with Mani’s ethical commandments serving as a suitable guide for this fight. In general, Mani’s dualism closely corresponds to Zoroastrian dualism, but checking the details one easily becomes aware of two main differences. Unlike Zoroastrianism, Mani elaborates dualism into a strict system of good and evil, combining it also with the systematic dualism of light and darkness; therefore, he also reinterprets the character of the *gētīg* and *mēnōg*, the material and the spiritual world. While in Zoroastrianism good and evil both exist in the material and spiritual world, for Mani the material world, i.e., the realm of Ahreman as king of darkness, is only matter (Gk. *hylē*) and therefore identical with the negative principle, while the spiritual realm, the realm of the “Father of Greatness” (Zurwān) and of the gods of light, is identical with the good and positive principle. From this novel perspective Mani modified Zoroastrian dualism. At the same time, however, this dualism of light and darkness was commonplace in gnostic thought and teaching. From this starting point, Mani reworked Zoroastrian mythology in his own cosmogonical and eschatological myth. A strong dualism is well known from Pahlavi sources and the best “parallel” account to Mani’s cosmogonical teaching can be found in the (*Greater*) *Bundahišn* (Hutter 1989: 166–188). In the first and third chapter of this Zoroastrian Pahlavi text, which can be assigned to the late Sasanian period but certainly contains older materials, we read about the primordial fight between Ohrmazd and Ahreman and the creation of the material world (Boyce 1984b: 45–51; Cereti and MacKenzie 2003; Cereti 2007a). Since this fight good and evil have been intermingled in the world. For every good creation that Ohrmazd had brought forth Ahreman, the Evil Spirit,

made an evil counter-creation to disturb the world of light and goodness. Mani selected several of these ideas and motifs, but there is also another important characteristic in Mani's Iranian version of his teachings, namely a special Iranian vocabulary as can be seen from the names of the Manichaean gods. In an important study Werner Sundermann has shown that all Manichaean gods bear names which show an identification with gods of the Zoroastrian pantheon, even in those cases where Mani incorporates divine beings from a non-Iranian tradition (Sundermann 1979; Colditz 2005: 20–21). Jesus, Adam, and Eve are called Xradešahr(yazd), Gēhmurd, and Murdiyānag respectively. The supreme deity of the Manichaean pantheon, the "Father of Greatness" or the "Father of Light" is called Zurwān in Middle Iranian terminology, the "First Man" is called Ohrmizd(bay), and some Middle Persian texts refer to his five sons – the elements: ether, wind, light, water, and fire – as Amahraspandān. The "Living Spirit" is labelled as Mihr Yazd. Also among the gods of the third creation, several can be easily identified by names borrowed from Zoroastrianism. "The Third Messenger," who plays a crucial role in the creation of mankind, is known as Narisah Yazd, the "Column of Glory" is referred to as Srōš-ahrāy, and for the "Great Nous," Manichaean Middle Persian texts use the name Wahman. The use of these divine names of the Zoroastrian tradition deviates from mainstream Zoroastrianism in the Sasanian period, but it is probable that Mani took these identifications from the Zurvanite speculations within Zoroastrianism (Colditz 2005: 21). Nevertheless, due to the use of this terminology Mani was able to avoid the impression of being alien to the Sasanian Empire and presented his doctrine as a form of "reformed" Zoroastrianism so that his teaching could be better understood and accepted by a wide range of followers of different Zoroastrian traditions (Sundermann 1979: 106).

The negative stance of Manichaeism against the material world also becomes evident during the course of the creation of man. Although some portion of the divine light is incarcerated into man as his soul, his creation was brought forth by the demoness Āz (Schmidt 2000), who in Manichaeism is mainly connected with sexuality and desire, while the Zoroastrian tradition also includes the idea that Āz brings forgetfulness to man in order to lead him astray so that he becomes sinful (*WZ* 34.36). Manichaeans strongly focus on Āz's negative notions connected with sexuality, suitable to the Manichaeans' avoidance of fertility and preference for asceticism. As the "mother of all demons" (*m'd 'y wyisp'n dyw'n*), Āz is a central figure in Manichaean myth, which is characterized by a more misogynic worldview in Manichaeism than Zoroastrianism, because the first woman gets clad in more negative attire than the first man (Hutter 1989: 182–183). While the Manichaean myth of the creation of the first human couple again refers to Zoroastrian elements, it is noteworthy that Mani reformulated the earlier tradition. The most striking difference relates to the names. Mani calls the first human couple Gēhmurd and Murdiyānag, while the first couple is called Mašyā and Mašyānag in the Zoroastrian myth (e.g., in the *GBd* 14). Gēhmurd corresponds to the name Gayōmard in Zoroastrian texts, but Gayōmard is the name of the primeval man – killed by the forces of darkness. In the Manichaean system the primeval man is called Ohrmizd, who is the son of Zurwān, the Father of Greatness. The names chosen by the Manichaeans again reflect Zurvanite speculations that the eternal and inseparable time (*zurwān*) pre-dates Ohrmazd, the supreme deity; therefore Mani adopted this terminology

and rearranged the names of the first human couple. But despite this difference Mani's anthropogonic myth resembles the Zoroastrian story about the creation of Mašyā and Mašyānag, because both share the common motifs that human creation started with the ejaculation of sperm which led first to the growth of plants that later led to the creation of mankind. So, we can, perhaps, take it for granted that Mani used such Zoroastrian elements when he compiled his anthropogonic myth to present it to an Iranian audience.

Despite Mani's negative appropriation of some Zoroastrian elements in his anthropogonic myth, man bears a divine element within himself, and has to contribute to the salvation of the divine light from its pollution through matter which requires ethical precepts. In the field of ethics we can again find some interactions between Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism. Consider the Zoroastrian formula relating to "good thinking," "good speech," and "good work," which already occurs in the *Avesta* (Schlerath 1974; Hutter 1998: 24–27). While a positive expression is dominant in Zoroastrian texts, one sometimes also finds the formula in a negative form, e.g., in the Middle Persian *Pandnāmag ī Zardu(x)št* (Jamasp-Asana 1897–1913 I). This didactic text advises the righteous to keep bad thinking away from one's mind, bad words from one's speech, and bad action from one's work to avoid one's soul going down to hell (*PZ 29: mēnišn az dušmat ud gōwišn az dušhūxt ud kunišn az dušwaršt*). Mani also knew this formula; he twice refers to it in the *Šābuhragān*: Man has to "keep afar from lust and sexual intercourse, from bad thoughts, bad speech and bad actions. And he has to keep away his hand from robbery and harm, from atrocity and unmercifulness" (M 49 I V; Sundermann 1981: 93 and Hutter 1998: 28). In the eschatological part at the end of the *Šābuhragān*, Mani refers again to the divine light, "which Āz and greed have bound into the bones, nerves, flesh, veins and skin, and which they [have seduced] through lust and sexual intercourse, through bad thoughts, bad speech and bad actions" (M 8256: 'y pđ' stg py pyt rg crm "z 'wd' wrz w g bst 'wš pđ' wzm' h mrzyšn w dwšmtyh dwšxwbyth w dwšxw'styh ...; MacKenzie 1980: 301). There can be no doubt that Mani adapted this threefold ethic from Zoroastrianism and he also makes use of it in texts referring to man's sinfulness (Hutter 1998: 28–31). The main difference between the Zoroastrian and Manichaean use of the formula is the positive notion in Zoroastrianism and the negative connotation in Manichaeism, which can be explained by Mani's negative view of the material and bodily world. Manichaean ethics can be characterized by a focus on abstinence and avoidance of any actions which can prolong the bondage of the divine light inside the material world. Ethical texts therefore several times not only refer to the five precepts (Sims-Williams 1985; Hutter 1989: 201–210), but also to the three seals (*sh mwłhr*) of the hand, the mouth, and the thoughts (*dst rwmb 'wd' ndyšyšn*). In my opinion, one cannot separate Mani's concept of the three seals from the threefold ethical formula of (good) thinking, (good) speaking, and (good) actions in Zoroastrianism. At least in the Iranian and eastern form of Manichaeism, its ethics thus depends on Zoroastrian ideas and this formula in particular. Manichaeans writing in Latin also used the formula of the three seals, but there a change occurs: the seal of the hand refers to all actions, the seal of the mouth refers to speaking and thinking, but the third seal is a western innovation in Manichaean thought, as the seal of the womb refers to any kind of sexual avoidance. In this way "western" Manichaean ethics deviate from its "Iranian-based" eastern counterpart.

Any ethical behavior is part of everybody's struggle to redeem the divine light from its material bond, but since the final separation of light and darkness will only take place during the third period the eschatological part of the Manichaean myth refers to the end of time. Until that final period, evil will remain in the good creation. Only then will the demons' strength fade away and the final redemption be reached through the "Great War." Mani's imagery of a Great War – besides resting on Judeo-Christian traditions – again is taken from apocalyptic ideas that can be found in a number of Zoroastrian texts (Hutter 1989: 218–221; Colditz 2005: 20). The Great War is a central topic in the apocalyptic part of Zādspram's text (WZ 34), mentioning that three months before Frašgird a Great War (*ardīg / kārezār ī wuzurg*) will occur just as at the beginning the good creation was at war with the world of the lie (*drō*). At the end of time, the vitality of Āz will decline and sexuality will stop, people will abstain from killing animals and hurting the living creation, and everything will return again to its primeval status. In Manichaean eschatology, the divine light which was spread throughout the material world now can return to the eternal light and unite again with its origin. The material world will then be burnt with fire and so totally destroyed in order to remove any material traits from the spiritual world of the divine light. This again marks a difference between the Manichaean and the Zoroastrian motif, where the fire at the end of the "Great War" has a purifying quality in order to make the material world – not just the spiritual world – new once again. But despite this difference, one has to concede that the overall presentation of Mani's myth in the *Šābuhragān* cannot be separated from these Zoroastrian elements, which made a deep impact on Mani's creation of the Iranian version of his doctrine. Mani, who understood his religion as a combination of earlier teachings (M 5794), used a number of Zoroastrian elements for this purpose. As a result, he could find followers in the early Sasanian Empire, but he also faced rejection and condemnation by Zoroastrian priestly authorities.

The Manichaean "Worldview" in Zoroastrianism and in Later Iranian Traditions

While Mani incorporated many Zoroastrian elements in order to present his doctrine in an Iranian garb, Manichaeism also left its impact on Zoroastrianism. Thus, interactions between Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism did not only occur in a one-sided way; even if Manichaeism was persecuted in Sasanian Iran from the last quarter of the 3rd century and many Manichaeans had left the central areas of the Sasanian Empire but, also in Iran proper, Manichaean thought lived on. The Zoroastrian priest Ādurbād ī Māraspandān opposed Manichaeism in the 4th century, emphasizing a positive Zoroastrian stance toward the material world against the pessimistic and negative tendencies of the Manichaeans (see below). On the other hand, the "heretical" Zurvanite interpretation of Zoroastrianism, seeing the material world in a negative light and as Ahreman's work, is comparable to the Manichaean worldview. Such ascetic aspects in parts of the Zoroastrian religion which try to avoid contact with the material world (e.g., *DkM* 515.3 = *Dk* 6.199; *MX* 2.65), are perhaps the result of Manichaean and

Zoroastrian interactions. Another aspect worth mentioning is the Manichaean symbolism of the divine light. The Column of Light/Glory (*bāmistūn*) and the Maiden of Light (*kanīgrōšn*) are also adapted within Zoroastrianism, and through this intermediary they are also echoed partly in Sufism and even in the recent Bahā'ī Faith. Mani's concept of the heavenly twin (*yamag*) may also have had some impact on Sufi mystics (Sundermann 1992; Ekbal 1997: 132–151). One further idea – not originally Mani's thought but taken over by him from a Jewish–Christian background during his stay with the Elkasaites – is the succession of prophets, sent by god to different peoples at different times, but bringing essentially the same revelation. Mani put this idea forward to prove his claim to be god's last prophet for mankind, an idea taken up in Islamic thought and transferred to Muḥammad (Colpe 1990), and in the middle of the 19th century – through Islamic intermediation – again taken as the cornerstone of Bahā'ī theology, whose founder Bahā'u'llāh saw himself as the one who was sent in a line of subsequent messengers continuing God's revelation (see Momen, “The Bahā'ī Faith,” this volume). It is difficult always to judge in a precise way if elements which can be found both in Iranian Manichaean texts from Central Asia and in late Middle Persian Zoroastrian texts are the result of a borrowing from one to the other, due to many chronological uncertainties on our part. Some possibilities of such mutual contacts and refutations will be discussed in the following section.

Pahlavi Texts against Manichaeans and Anti-Zoroastrica Written by Manichaeans

From the *Dēnkard* we learn that during the reign of Šābuhr II (r. 309–379 CE), the Zoroastrian priest Ādurbād ī Māraspandān was as influential at the royal court as his predecessors a century earlier – Tansar with Ardašīr or Kerdīr with both Wahrāms or even Mani with Šābuhr I. The memory of this priest has been held in high esteem within the Zoroastrian community as the defender of the faith who proved his righteousness and orthodoxy by undergoing an ordeal. We should mention the many writings attributed to him (Tafazzoli 1985; Hutter 2009: 125) praise his faith and emphasize the remembrance that the Good Religion flourished in his days. So there can be little doubt that Ādurbād was the main adversary of Manichaeism during the fourth century. The 3rd book of the *Dēnkard* brings to light Ādurbād's refutation of Mani's doctrine, opening with the line (Olsson 1991: 282; also Shaked 2001: 583): “Ten injunctions which the crippled demon Mani clamoured against those of the restorer of righteousness, Ādurbād ī Māraspandān.” The previous and the next chapters of the *Dēnkard* each show ten paragraphs, too, thus the number ten seems to represent a stereotyped pattern, because Mani in one text also mentions ten reasons, why his religion is superior to other faiths. In detail, Ādurbād lists twelve good things of the Zoroastrian religion in opposition to Mani's doctrine (Olsson 1991: 282–283; Stausberg 2002b: 336): 1) not to keep vengeance in one's thought; 2) not to hoard things greedily; 3) to receive the good as guests; 4) to take a wife from one's own family; 5) to conduct correct prosecution and defence in lawsuit; 6) to abstain from unlawful killing of cattle; 7) to consider the material world as a basic cosmic principle; 8) to leave the things of the material world to

the gods; 9) to seek things of the spiritual world by oneself; 10) to chase the demons out from the body; 11) to make the gods guests in the body; 12) to make the world perfect. These refutations show not only some basic differences between Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism, but the list also makes clear that the Zoroastrian world view is much more in agreement with the cosmos and not as anti-cosmic as Manichaeism. So we can conclude that these twelve theses of Ādurbād favor orthodox and environmentally friendly Zoroastrianism more than an ascetic point of view within that religion. Ādurbād, the upholder of the Good Religion, has to act against the Manichaeans although the historical connection given by the *Dēnkard* between Mani and Ādurbād is not correct in chronological terms since they were not historical contemporaries. But the text certainly gives an ideological justification for the persecution of Mani's religion so that we may even assume that the text faintly reflects the actual involvement of Ādurbād in the persecution of Manichaeans during the middle of the 4th century. The opposition of Zoroastrian authors against Mani is further reflected by a text from the 5th book of the *Dēnkard*, which refers to the ups and downs of the Zoroastrian faith and its fiends; this passage mentions the following destroyers and reformers of the Good Religion (Molé 1967: 110–113; Amouzgar and Tafazzoli 2000: 32–33): “Devastators such as Alexander ... heretics and (wrong) reformers such as the Messiah, Mani, and others; periods such as the steel age, that mingled with iron and others; and restorers, organizers, and introducers of religion, such as Ardašir, Ādurbād, Khosrow ... and others.” Although the passage does not give direct proof that Ādurbād can be held responsible for the persecution of Manichaeans in the 4th century it nevertheless shows that Mani was an arch-fiend of the Good Religion while Ādurbād was viewed as its restorer.

Another well-known Zoroastrian treatise against Manichaeans is the *Škand-gumānīg Wizār*, composed by Mardān-Farrox ī Ohrmazd-dād (ŠGW 16; further 10.58–60; de Menasce 1945: 226–261; Sundermann 2001; Stausberg 2002b: 343–345). Mardān-Farrox perhaps composed his text in the 10th century CE (Thrope 2012); the treatise describes in detail and with good knowledge the central aspects of Manichaean cosmology in the first part and refutes it from his Zoroastrian point of view in the second part of the chapter. Manichaeism in this text is treated as a mythological system and Mardān-Farrox is well versed in Manichaeism and the Manichaean thought of the macrocosm and the microcosm (Sundermann 2001: 327–332). While the description of the mythological system goes into details, its refutation is less based on arguments, but generally only reiterates well-known Manichaean ideas and says that these ideas are wrong in order to claim that Zoroastrianism is the superior religion. Even if the refutation lacks arguments, one has to concede that Mardān-Farrox has a great familiarity with Manichaeism, so one can say that this familiarity either results from the existence of a still important number of Manichaeans during Mardān-Farrox's life or that he maybe even had been attracted by this religion at some period of his life, before he (re-)converted to Zoroastrianism and then sharply refuted that faith, as Carlo G. Cereti (2005b) has suggested recently.

Another Middle Persian Zoroastrian text, with possible aims to counteract Manichaeism, is the short treatise *Gizistag Abāliš* (Chacha 1936; Stausberg 2002b: 348–351). It is a fictitious dispute between a heretic (*zandīk*) Abāliš and a mowbed

Ādurfarnbag ī Farroxzādān at the court of the Muslim caliph al-Ma'mūn (r. 813–833 CE). Whether Abāliš really was a late Manichaean or Ādurfarnbag had only a general notion of a heretic in mind to prove the superiority of the Good Religion in front of Ma'mūn, cannot be established with any certainty. The whole text focuses on seven questions – put forth by Abāliš and answered successfully by Ādurfarnbag, thus establishing Zoroastrianism as an acceptable religion in the Islamic society of the Abbasid era, which leads to the condemnation of Abāliš as a heretic. The topics of the seven questions are as follows: 1) creation of water and fire; 2) pollution of fire through water or through a corpse; 3) bodily punishment for sinners; 4) purification from the pollution inflicted by the nightly demon; 5) sceptical thoughts about the veneration of fire; 6) individual eschatology; 7) the relevance of wearing the *kustīg*, the sacred girdle for Zoroastrians, in order to reach salvation. Though it is not impossible that some famous Manichaeans – like Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq (Lieu 1992: 113–114) – were still active during the Abbasid period in Iran, the number of adherents of the Manichaean faith surely was not too high. Thus it is more probable that Ādurfarnbag's dispute with Abāliš is a literary fiction which primarily tells us more about Zoroastrianism as an acceptable religion during the Abbasid period than about "living" Manichaeism in the 9th century in Iran. This also becomes evident from the fact that some questions and answers do not refer to Manichaean thought in particular, but relate more generally to some kind of (Gnostic or mystical) "free-thinking." This also fits the characterization of Abāliš as *zandīk*. Even if Abāliš was no Manichaean in the strict sense, this short text is important, because it shows that thoughts related to "Gnostic–Manichaean esotericism" were still attractive for some Zoroastrians in early Islamic times, because they opposed the more ritualistic way of religious behavior that was favored by Zoroastrian priests as specialists in performing rituals. Thus Abāliš can be seen as a symbolic figure who reminds us that Manichaean thoughts and speculation still prevailed for a long time in Iranian history, even when Manichaeans who could practice their religion in relative freedom had lost ground over several centuries.

Besides these anti-Manichaean texts some other Zoroastrian textual sources also reflect Manichaean (or sometimes more generally, Gnostic) thoughts. The so-called *Pandnāmaq ī Zardu(x)št* (*PZ*) discusses some topics which can be interpreted as references to Manichaeism (Hutter 2009: 125–129). The author of the *PZ*, which was perhaps composed only after the fall of the Sasanian Empire, tends to stress Zoroastrian topics explicitly against the "Manichaean heresy" which often presented itself as a form of Zoroastrianism. Therefore he explicitly mentions that man was created by the gods (*MP yazdān*) and not by the demons; the author's favoring of marriage and offspring, and also his acceptance that good actions bring benefit for the soul, also indicate his "orthodox" Zoroastrian position against the heretical thinking of the Manichaeans. Another indication that Manichaean thought is not totally unknown even in early Islamic times in Iran, can be deduced from the disagreements between the Zoroastrian high priest brothers, Zādspram and Manuščīhr. Zādspram had come in contact with the Toquz-Oguz, a Turkic Manichaean ethnic group in approximately 881 CE, and some of his positions, like his skepticism about the relevance of rituals of purification, which mark a point of dissent with his older brother Manuščīhr, might indicate that Zādspram was also inclined to some Manichaean ideas.

Manichaean texts that have explicitly anti-Zoroastrian contents are less frequent because Manichaeism made use of Zoroastrian thought to present its own doctrine as a reform of Zoroastrianism, and so a total refutation of Zoroastrianism was not possible. One might say that Manichaeans tried to overcome Zoroastrianism more by borrowing than by refuting. But at least some texts have anti-Zoroastrian tenets. One of the most detailed texts in this regard is the Middle Persian fragment M 28 which contains several polemical hymns (Skjærvø 1995b [1997]: 243–245) among which we find some references against Zoroastrianism. One argument which the Manichaeans put forward against Zoroastrianism is their supposed belief that Ohrmazd and Ahreman are brothers and the claim that Zoroastrians destroy both the creatures of Ohrmazd and Ahreman, thus being enemies of both good and evil. In this way, Zoroastrians become deceived by following their religion. Another aspect which is criticized in this hymn, tells of the concept that a demon called Mahmī told Ohrmazd to create the world. The Manichaean critique of the idea that Ohrmazd and Ahreman can be considered as brothers, or of a common origin, is referred to in several other texts. So, for example, in a biographical account of Mani's life where he teaches his disciples (M 454 + M 881 V), and also in a confessional text (Sundermann 1991: 1136 with references). Also some Coptic psalms oppose the ritual practices of the Magi as such practices lead straight to hell (Skjærvø 1995b [1997]: 243 with literature). From such examples we can deduce that Manichaeans were well aware of their debt to Zoroastrianism and they appreciated Zoroaster as a “Manichaean before Mani's coming” (Sundermann 2004c: 525), as several texts about Zoroaster indicate. But they also clearly expressed their opposition to contemporary Zoroastrianism.

Conclusion

Mani knew Christian Gnosticism, Zoroastrianism, and also a little of Buddhism, which enabled him to use different items from these religions for his preaching and his interpretation of the former religions. The Parthian Manichaean M 38 text puts it like this: “Great noble Maitreya, messenger of the gods, grea[rest] among the interpreters of Religion, Jesus – Maiden of Light, Mār Mani, have mercy on me.” The epithets given to Mani in this text clearly relate to Buddhism (*mytr'*), Zoroastrianism (*yzd'n*), and Syrian Christianity (*yyšw'*). The apostle of Light, Mani, is the interpreter of the previous religions (*dyn 'y pyšyng'n*) and he himself brings the best religion to the world, because – as is mentioned in the Middle Persian text M 5794 –

the former religions (existed) as long as they had pure leaders, but when the leaders had been led upwards (i.e., had died), then their religions fell into disorder and became negligent in commandments and works... This revelation of mine of the two principles and my living books, my wisdom and knowledge are above and better than those of the previous religions.

So Mani finally brought to perfection what all other religious leaders before him had started; the teachings of Zarathustra, Buddha, Jesus, and the other prophets were in imperfect order, but they all had some kernels of truth.

In the Iranian context, Mani tried to use his radical dualism – taken over from Gnosticism – to present his doctrine in a way that sounded familiar to Zoroastrians. This “Iranization” of Manichaeism was taken one step further by using names from Zoroastrian mythology to identify these Zoroastrian gods with the deities of the Manichaean pantheon. But also the way in which Mani told his cosmological, anthropogenic, and eschatological myth to his listeners often resembled Zoroastrian mythological traditions concerning the beginning of the world, the time of the battle between Ohrmazd and Ahreman, and the final renovation of the world at Frašgird, as is known from Zoroastrian Middle Persian texts like the *Bundahišn*, the *Zand ī Wahman Yašt*, or the *Selections of Zādspram* (see Cereti, “Myths, Legends, Eschatologies,” this volume). By using this method for spreading his religion in a society which had been heavily influenced by the Zoroastrian religion, Mani and his followers stood to gain further followers, but also came to face great opposition, directly through persecution and indirectly through Zoroastrian apologetic texts. These texts clearly demonstrate that Zoroastrianism did not evolve independently from its encounter with Manichaeism during the Sasanian period or even in the early Islamic era.

Further Reading

The relationship and the intersections between Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism have been the subject of many investigations, a re-evaluation of the discussion has been offered by Hutter (1989) and Rudolph (1991), both building upon new textual studies and analyses given by Sundermann (1979, 1981, 1997, 2004c; see also the textbook with translations of Iranian Manichean texts by Klimkeit 1993). An outline of Manichaean history in the Sasanian Empire is given by Hutter (1993, 2000a), Huysse (1998), and Lieu (1992: 106–115). Beside

Sundermann’s study (1979) on the use of names of gods and demons in Iranian Manichaeism, recent studies by Sundermann (1992), Ekbal (1997), Skjærvø (1997a), and Colditz (2005) focus on Zoroastrian elements in Manichaeism. For Zoroastrian critiques of Manichaeism the reader can be referred first of all to de Menasce’s (1945) edition of the *Škand-gumānīg Wizār* (see also Sundermann 2001; Cereti 2005), and the study of the anti-Manichaean chapter in the 3rd book of the *Dēnkard* by Olsson (1991).

CHAPTER 31

Islam

Shaul Shaked

The Attitudes toward Zoroastrianism in Early Islam

Zoroastrianism was recognized by Islamic law quite early on as a religion with a book (*ahl al-kitāb*), and deserving to be tolerated, unlike “idol-worshippers,” who should be forced to convert. This was established after some hesitation among early Islamic authorities (Friedmann 2003: 72–76). In the process of conquest, Iran was submitted to rule by the Arab garrisons that were set up in various places, and eventually, after a fairly long process of inducement and pressure, economically and socially, most of the population converted to Islam. By the late 10th century the process of conversion in the urban centers of population had been largely completed (Bulliet 1979: 16–32 and 1990; Choksy 1997; Stausberg 2002b: 267–276; Morony 1990, 2012; most recently, Crone 2012: 1–17; Savant 2013).

As often happens when a new culture comes up and absorbs earlier established religious traditions, the impact is felt both ways. The conquered society adopts elements from the culture of the conquerors; the conquering culture, on the other hand, while imposing its will, also adapts itself, sometimes unconsciously, to the subdued people.

In the case of the violent encounter between Islam and Zoroastrianism in the 7th century, the story is even more complicated. Zoroastrianism, as a state religion of the Sasanians (3rd–7th centuries CE), and as the major Iranian religion before that, exercised a deep influence on other religions and cultures of the region around it. These religions and cultures, which include Hellenism, Judaism, and Christianity, became part of the Islamic world as a result of the Arab conquests, but some of their features had already been modified by the impact of Zoroastrianism. This applies, for example, to the field of eschatology and the judgment of souls after death. Since Islam emerged as part of the same cultural world, it is therefore not always easy to distinguish between the direct impact of Zoroastrianism on Islam and the indirect absorption of Zoroastrian

ideas through Judaism, Christianity, and Hellenism which subsequently influenced Islam. We should be well advised to avoid assigning precise dates for the adoption of individual Iranian features into Islamic civilization since they may well turn out to be earlier borrowings.

It should also be noted that Zoroastrianism, as it is known to us from the relatively late literature of the Sasanian and early Islamic periods, absorbed a good number of key notions and ideas from other cultures as well. We know that Indian books were translated into Pahlavi, and Greek compositions and philosophical notions became part of the learned discussions in Zoroastrian literature. (For these matters, see Bailey 1943; Shaki 1970, 1973; Shaked 1987c.)

Descriptions of Zoroastrianism in Muslim Literature

Accounts of religious beliefs held by members of non-Muslim cultures were a popular intellectual pastime of writers and readers of Arabic and Persian literature from an early period. Several handbooks concerning the faith of alien peoples and sects were produced, the best known among them are those of Tāj al-Dīn Abū al-Faḥ Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (1086–1153 CE), whose reports of Iranian doctrines are discussed in Shaked (1994b); Abū al-Rayḥān Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī (b. 973–d. after 1050 CE) (see *Elr* s.v.); Abū Muḥammad 'Alī b. Aḥmad b. Sa'īd b. Ḥazm (who lived in Muslim Spain, 994–1064 CE); and 'Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad al-Hamadhānī, a Mu'tazilite theologian and jurist who lived in Baghdad and then in Rayy c. 937–1025 CE (see the relevant entries in *El*).

These accounts demonstrate the characteristic thirst for encyclopedic knowledge that marked medieval Islamic culture. They also serve the needs of modern scholars, for they add to our understanding of Sasanian and post-Sasanian Zoroastrianism in a way that no other source can. The unique point of view of the Arabic-language authors enables them to report from a standpoint of Muslims who are at the same time heirs to Iranian culture. This applies not only to descendants of Zoroastrian converts, but also to Muslims who knew the Zoroastrian traditions through their Muslim transmission (see Daryaei, "Zoroastrianism under Islamic Rule," this volume). In the 3rd Islamic century (9th century CE), Islam was already a well-established religion. In the eyes of its adherents it outshone the claims made by earlier prophets, and yet they were fascinated by the study of other religions. Among Muslims of Persian descent, one detects an element of pride when they spoke of the wisdom of the Persians. There are a number of points that emerge from the Islamic reports concerning Zoroastrianism. It may be concluded, first, that there was a fairly wide range of articulations of faith which appear to have coexisted in Zoroastrian society, each one upholding a different myth explaining the emergence of evil and the creation of the world. The Islamic authors tend to present each one of these as a separate "sect," but these divisions are likely to allude in most cases to separate interpretive trends rather than to independent social structures. One group that may indeed deserve to be treated as a sect is the one that Shahrastānī calls *Sīsānīyya* or *Bihāfredīyya*, a group created in the early Islamic period in Nīšāpūr (Shaked 1994b: 46–47, 63–64). Other features of the reports of Shahrastānī consist in

meaningful deviation from the official records of Zoroastrianism: the two primeval entities of Zoroastrianism are called “light” and “darkness”; the mythical view of cosmic history is based not on three stages, i.e., creation, mixture, and separation, but on two: mixture and redemption. The treatment of the deity Zurwān (“Time”) in Shahrastānī shows a number of surprising details. Some of the Iranian views encountered in the Islamic reports are based on the assumption, which goes against a fundamental Zoroastrian doctrine of the Pahlavi books, that evil can be derived from good, or that good can become evil. Another idea that occurs in Shahrastānī but is nowhere found in the Zoroastrian books is that there are angels mediating between the two primeval powers. All of these points, peculiar to the Islamic reports, show that there was much greater variety of faith, sometimes touching on some of the essential points of Zoroastrianism, than can be surmised from a reading of the Iranian sources (for Zurwān, see Rezanian 2008, 2010; see also Vevaina, “Theologies and Hermeneutics,” this volume).

Iranian Influence in Early Arabic Literature

The *Qur’ān* and pre-Islamic Arabic poetry contain allusions to the Persians and their religion and they often use words of Persian origin. Quranic words of foreign origin have been collected and explained by Jeffery (1938). Persian words in other forms of Arabic have been collected, notably by Jawālīqī (Shākir and Tanūhī 1966).

The vast collections of phrases attributed to Muḥammad, assembled by Ḥadīth scholars of the early Islamic period, are a mine of relevant material which show that, if not Muḥammad himself, at least his followers were preoccupied with Persian ideas, for emulation or rejection, and regarded them as part of the holy tradition of Islam. Material of this kind was assembled by the great pioneer of Islamic studies, Ignaz Goldziher (1901, 1967: 98–136). Further instances of this kind were discussed in Bausani (2000: 111–121).

The authenticity of the attributions in Ḥadīth literature is not above criticism however. Muslim scholars in the early Islamic period were aware of the problem and subjected the numerous sayings that circulated in the name of the Prophet to rigorous examination.

Several Muslim injunctions embedded in the Ḥadīth literature show clear cases of borrowing from Iranian culture. Thus, Zoroastrian sources forbid walking about with one shoe only (Pahl. *ē(w)-mōg-dwārišnīh*), which is regarded as a grievous sin, and the same prohibition comes up in the early Islamic sources (Goldziher 1896–1899 I: 49 n. 4). In one of these Islamic passages, the practice of wearing a single shoe is characterized as being “a fashion of Satan,” a phrase that does not occur in the extant Zoroastrian sources, but smacks as typically Zoroastrian. There are parallels in the Classical tradition attributing a special significance to the use of a single shoe, a feature known as “monosandalism” (Edmunds 1984). The phenomenon is attested in various cultures, including apparently early Arabic, but Zoroastrianism appears to be the religion that condemned it in the strongest terms.

Zoroastrian sources declare that men should not urinate while standing. No explanation is given to this, but it may be suggested that this prohibition aims at avoiding

bodily pollution from accidental drops of urine, and displays the typical Zoroastrian effort at keeping the body pure (see Williams, “Purity and Pollution / The Body,” this volume). The Babylonian Talmud contains a similar admonition, and the same idea is present in Ḥadīth literature, both probably borrowed from Zoroastrianism (Shaked 2003a: 454b).

The Ḥadīth warns against manifesting excessive grief at the death of a close family member. This is explained by the statement that much wailing may impede the passage of the deceased person in the next world. The same requirement, with a similar justification, occurs also in Zoroastrianism (Goldziher 1900: 129; Gray 1902: 169; and Meier 1973: 219–229). Meier is of the opinion that there is no certainty this is a case of Iranian influence on Islam. The Zoroastrian requirement to restrain one’s grief is, however, part of a consistent Zoroastrian stand against giving way to gloom, which is regarded as demonic. While this is a characteristic Zoroastrian attitude, Islam does not normally object to displays of grief, and in Shī‘ī Islam manifestations of mourning at the death of leading persons of the faith are part of the ritual. Restraint in wailing for the dead has generally not been observed in Islamic history (Shaked 1992b: 144–145).

At the very beginning of Islam, still in Arabia, the figure of Salmān Pāk, or Salmān the Persian, looms large. A semi-legendary, almost mythological figure, Salmān was a man of Persian origin, born to a Zoroastrian family under the name Ruzbeh, who converted as a young man to Christianity and went in search of a true prophet, who turned out to be Muḥammad. He recognized the Arabian prophet as the messenger of god he was seeking, and became one of the first disciples of Muḥammad. The traditions about him are numerous. Among these is the story that he advised the Prophet of Islam in the battle that the disciples of Muḥammad waged against a confederation of Arab and Jewish tribes over Yathrib (later named Medina). This battle is known as that of the *khandaq*, or of the ‘trench’ – a form of defence based on digging a deep trench to make it difficult for attackers to occupy a town. Salmān is credited with this military idea, perhaps, it has been suggested, because the word *khandaq* is of Persian origin. Whatever the historical facts behind the story of Salmān, his importance in Islamic consciousness is enormous, in particular with the Shī‘a branch of Islam, where he assumes a position of supreme sanctity (for Salmān, see Massignon 1934; Levi della Vida 2004; and most recently Savant 2013).

The Iranian Festivals: Nowrūz and Mehragān

One area in which Zoroastrian customs made an impact in the Islamic commonwealth is the celebration of the spring equinox, known as *Nowrūz*, literally ‘the new day’, possibly shortened from something like **now-sāl-rūz* ‘the day of the New Year’. This feast is still alive in Iran and other countries even today. Besides this there are other Iranian celebrations, in particular Mehragān (Arab. *Mihrajān*), originally a feast honoring the god Mithra.

The history of *Nowrūz* is complex (see Rose, “Festivals and the Calendar,” this volume). It was both adopted and rejected in the early Islamic period. Goldziher (1967: 192 fn. 3),

notes that the Umayyad caliph ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (r. 717–720 CE) is reported as having abolished the gifts to the ruler given in Nowrūz and Mihrajān, but these gifts were reinstated at the time of Yazīd II (r. 720–724 CE). Under the ‘Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 847–861 CE), we are told that Nowrūz and Mihrajān were celebrated in all their glory. An account of the celebrations of these festivals in different periods of Islam is found in Mez (1922: 400–402), who reports, among other details, of actors performing in Baghdad in the presence of the caliph in a Nowrūz celebration. The caliph would throw coins as a reward for the actors. On one occasion, according to al-Maqrīzī, the coin fell close to the caliph, and an actor looked for it under the tail of the ruler’s coat. This caused alarm among his attendants, who were concerned about his security. From then on an elevated podium, separate from the performers, was made for the ruler. (Further material may be seen in Spuler 1952: 480–483; and a short account of the survival of the old festival is in Spuler 1955: 177.) Some notes on Nowrūz can be found in Shaked (1991). It may be noted that a long chapter is devoted to the feast of Nowrūz in the compendium of religious lore by the prolific Persian writer Majlesī (Alavī and Ākhūndī 1386/2007: vol. 59, chapter: *bāb yawm al-Nayrūz*).

Zoroastrian Polemics against Islam

Zoroastrian writers were also interested in writing about Islam. There is however a difference. When Arab writers included a description of Zoroastrian myths or practices, they did this out of interest in the other, and were writing from a Muslim point of view. When Zoroastrians wrote about Islam, they felt under pressure, and were intent on showing the veracity of Zoroastrianism from a perspective of apologetics, but quite often adopting the style of the Mu‘tazila school of theology. A whole body of Zoroastrian apologetics thus came into being around the 9th or 10th century CE. The most concentrated effort in this respect is the book of Mardān-Farrox, *Škand-gumānīg Wizār* (“The Doubt-Smashing Exposition”), which is extant in Pāzand, a late form of writing Middle Persian in Avestan script (de Menasce 1945). The book conducts a theological argument with the monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well as with the rival dualistic religion of Mani. The arguments against Islam concentrate on the contradiction of faith in an omnipotent deity who permits evil to exist in the world: this means, according to the author, either that He is not all-powerful, or not good, or lacking in wisdom, or lacking in forgiveness. If god has no rival, why is He called triumphant and sovereign? If god is wise and happy, how can He suffer evil? If He hates evil, why does He create sinners? If He is not forgiving, how can His divine essence be explained? If He is, why does he say: “I have sealed the heart, the ear, the eye of people, so that they should not be able to think, speak and act as it is proper to do to me?” The list of inconsistencies and outright contradictions which the author finds in the monotheistic system of Islam is almost endless (see in particular chapters 11 and 12 and the introductions by de Menasce (1945) where the somewhat confusing arguments of the author are summarized; see also Vevaina, “Theologies and Hermeneutics,” this volume).

Secular Themes in Islam Derived from Iran

Several themes borrowed from Iran have to do with the theory of government. The figure of Ibn al-Muqaffa' is one of the great transmitters of literature from Middle Persian to Arabic. He is credited with a number of books giving advice to rulers, usually derived from Persian sources, among which is the statement that religion and kingship are twins. His possible source for this is a book known under the title *The Testament of Ardashir*, which has survived only in Arabic translation, where we find the phrase: "Religion and kingship are twins and none of them can survive without the other" (Abbās 1967: 53). A king must keep under control both the requirements of religion, represented by the priesthood, and the needs of the state, symbolized by the king. The same phrase is found also in Middle Persian literature of the *andarz* type, i.e., in the writings containing advice for proper behavior and for the management of society, and it comes up also in some theological texts in Middle Persian (Shaked 1984a: 37–40). Ibn al-Muqaffa' must have borrowed this motif from the Persian sources with which he was familiar, and from his writings it spread quite widely in Islamic literature.

Another theme that comes up in several Arabic compositions of popular wisdom, and which is often directly attributed to Persian wisdom, involves a conversation between three or four sages, sometimes identified as belonging to three or four distinct empires of antiquity. In a typical story of this kind, each one of these sages states, in reply to a question put to them by the King of Kings (the official title of the Sasanian monarch): Who is the best person? Each one of the sages gives an answer. The Byzantine said, "a ruler without an opponent"; The Indian said, "a young man with property"; but the final and decisive opinion is expressed by a Persian sage identified by name, Ādurbād: "One who has no fear in this world or the next." It is typical of this kind of intellectual contest that the term "best person" turns out to be an allusion to two different ideas. According to one understanding of it, the term denotes "happy, successful." This is the implied understanding of the Byzantine and the Indian. The Persian sage, however, understands it to mean, "one who has achieved the highest religious goal," for the expression 'having no fear' (*abē-bīm*) is generally used in Middle Persian in the sense of "one who has no fear of retribution in this world or the next," hence "righteous and innocent." It is this twist of meaning that allows the Persian to come away with the most apt and most sagacious reply. (This text appears in a manuscript of the Royal Library, Copenhagen, MS K20, fol. 152r; see Shaked 1984a: 47, and the texts quoted on 41–49.) Another typical anecdote that is extant only in Arabic sources, but which also has a strong chance of being derived from Persian, says:

Four kings spoke four words as if they had been shot from a single bow. Kistrā said, "I am better able to retrieve something which I have not said than something which I have." The Indian king said, "If I speak a word, it possesses me, if I do not, I possess it." Caesar said, "I have not regretted anything I have not said, but have regretted things that I have said." The Chinese king said, "The result of something over which words have been spoken is graver than the regret over abstention from speaking." (Shaked 1984a: 43)

Here the decisive maxim by a Persian is put at the head of the sequence of sayings. It is perhaps no accident that this quotation was used in some of the best-known Sufi works,

such as Ibn al-'Arabī's *Muḥāḍarat al-Abrār wa-Musāmarat al-Akhyār* ('The Conversation of the Righteous and the Nocturnal Discourse of the Finest People'), and Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī's *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā'* ('The Adornment of the People Closest to God'). The virtue of silence was recognized by mystics no less than by rulers and princes, although they had different reasons for upholding silence as a meritorious mode of action. This is not the only theme on which Zoroastrian literature may have left its mark on Islamic piety and mysticism.

One of the earliest compositions of the *andarz* type done in Arabic is by 'Alī ibn 'Ubaydah al-Rayḥānī (d. 834 CE; see Zakeri 2007), under the title *Jawāhir al-Kilam wa-Farā'id al-Ḥikam* ('The Jewels of Verbal Expressions and the Precious Pearls of Words of Wisdom'), a very large compendium of anecdotes and sayings, some of which can be traced back to Zoroastrian prototypes, such as the Zoroastrian distinction between two types of wisdom: natural or innate wisdom, and acquired wisdom (Pahl. *āsn-xrad* and *gōšōsrūd xrad*), here given the labels *maṭbū'* and *muta'allam* (Zakeri has provided further material for this distinction; 2007 II: 693–696; see also Shaked 1987d).

One of the difficulties in assigning the origin of certain themes in Islamic literature is the fact that Sasanian culture had already been in close contact with Greek ideas, and during the early centuries of Islam Arabic writers and thinkers were again exposed to Greek philosophy. Certain common themes may have reached Arabic intellectuals by either channel, through Persian or through direct translation from Greek. In some cases, however, we may be justified in assuming an Iranian source for the Arabic formulations. Thus, in the field of ethics and religion, we find sayings attributed to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the venerated son-in-law of Muḥammad, which likely reflect Iranian attitudes: "Right and left are a misleading error. The Middle Way is the main road, and everything else in the Divine Book, the Sunna, and the prophetic traditions follows from it" (Hārūn 1975 II: 50). That the middle way is the correct path to take may sound like a platitude, but it is at first sight surprising in Zoroastrian literature, where this idea is prominently found, and from which it could have been borrowed into Arabic literature (though it could also have come into Islam from a Greek source). As Zoroastrianism is a religion that makes a sharp contrast between good and evil, it may seem that it would not agree to define the "good" as placed in the middle between two bad qualities. But in fact this is what we frequently find in Zoroastrian literature. Iran is viewed as being in the center of the world, and so is also the quality of justice (Shaked 1987d: 229). An Iranian flavor seems to accompany another maxim attributed in the Islamic tradition to 'Alī: "The middle part of things is incumbent upon you, for a person who goes beyond it should be brought back to it, and a person who lags behind it should be made to catch up with it" (Ābī 1980 I: 277). The Aristotelian doctrine of the mean or middle path appears to have been taken up by Zoroastrian thinkers in the Sasanian period and made a cornerstone of their system, while not relinquishing their attitude of fundamental dualism (Shaked 1987d: 230–231; see also Cantera, "Ethics," this volume).

In another area an affinity may be detected between certain Islamic notions and Zoroastrian thought. In the theory of ethics, we find a distinction made in Zoroastrian writings between forward-inclined and backward-inclined qualities. The difference between them is based on their dynamism: the first set designates qualities that are energetic, such as diligence, speed, agility and generosity; the second set is characterized by passivity, inertia and regression, for example patience, forbearance and economy

(Shaked 1987d: 220). This division of the modes of human qualities seems to be echoed in a system devised by the great Mu'tazilite theologian Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām (b. Basra c. 776 CE–d. Baghdad c. 836 CE), as quoted by Ash'arī (Ritter 1929: 427–428). Nazzām uses the term *khātirānī*, which may be literally translated 'the two (modes) that come up', to refer to two modes of action (under which term he also considers rest, i.e., lack of motion), which are given the labels *al-iqdām* and *al-kaff*, 'advancing' and 'desisting' respectively. These terms sound quite close in spirit to the Zoroastrian division of qualities as being inclined "forward" or "backward" (Shaked 1987d: 230–231; see also Cantera, "Ethics," this volume).

Middle Persian Books Translated into Arabic

Several books in Arabic are known to be translated from a Middle Persian original. Among them one may mention a few books of practical advice or admonition, for example *The Memorial of Wuzurgmihr* and *The Admonitions of Ādurbād*, both existing in Pahlavi manuscripts as well as in an Arabic version included in the book by Ibn Miskawayh (d. 1030 CE), *Jāwīdān Khirad* (Shaked 2013). Other books falling into the category of *andarz* or admonitions are found in Arabic versions, for example, passages from *Dēnkard* book 6 (Shaked 1984a). In addition, a composition entitled *King Khosrow and His Page* exists both in its Pahlavi original and in an Arabic translation. Among other books that entered Arabic literature by translation from Pahlavi is the famous *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, a book composed originally in Sanskrit under the title *Pañcatantra*, from which it was translated into Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffa'. The book enjoyed tremendous popularity in Arabic and Persian, and was further translated into many other languages. This is a collection of animal stories which were intended to convey lessons on a theory of government. Ibn al-Muqaffa' also translated an introduction that was added to the Pahlavi version, in which Burzōy, a physician in the court of King Khosrow I (r. 531–579 CE), recounts his search for truth in different religions, which ended in a rejection of most traditional religions, and brought him eventually to India. The book of *Kalīla wa-Dimna* is the outcome of this search. The Pahlavi version of the book is lost, but it served as the basis for the Syriac and Arabic versions (a thorough discussion of this book can be found in de Blois 1990).

Further Reading

For the most recent scholarship on conversion and the Islamicization of Iran, see Morony (2012); Crone (2012); and Savant (2013). For demographic trends on the process of conversion, see the classic work of Bulliet (1979, 1990) and the rejoinder of Morony (1990). For Islamic

jurisprudence on minorities, see Friedmann (2003). For Zoroastrianism under Islam, see Choksy (1997); Stausberg (2002b); and Daryaei (2012). For Zoroastrian themes inherited by Islam, see Shaked (1984a, 1987d, 1991, 1992b, 1994b, 2003a).

CHAPTER 32

The Yezidi and Yarsan Traditions

Philip G. Kreyenbroek

There can be no doubt that traces of Zoroastrian beliefs and observances can still be found in various spheres of Islamic Iranian culture, particularly in regions that are remote from major urban centers. In some other cases we find a mixture of elements which are similar to Zoroastrianism, and distinctive elements that do not appear to be connected with either Zoroastrianism or other known dominant religious traditions. In antiquity a similar combination of elements was found in the Roman cult known as Mithraism, which claimed to be “Persian,” and showed several features that were reminiscent of Zoroastrianism (see Gordon, “From Miθra to Roman Mithras,” this volume). Earlier scholars such as Franz Cumont (1903) therefore thought that Mithraism in fact originated in Zoroastrianism and had deviated from it to some extent in the process of transmission to another culture. A more precise comparison between Mithraism and Zoroastrianism showed, however, that the differences were too fundamental to warrant such an assumption. This inclined many students of Mithraism to believe that the connections between the two religions were relatively insignificant, and Mithraism came to be widely regarded as an essentially Roman phenomenon which had borrowed a few elements from Iranian culture. The present author has argued that key elements of Roman Mithraism, notably its cosmogony, appeared to go back to a bona fide Iranian tradition that was akin to Zoroastrianism but not identical with it (Kreyenbroek 1994b). This religion would have been close to the religion of the Indo-Iranians, having been affected by Zoroastrian departures from that tradition to a limited extent at most. In another publication (Kreyenbroek 1992) it was suggested that traces of this cosmogony could still be found in the traditions of two religious communities of the Kurdish-speaking regions, the Yarsan (or Ahl-e Haqq, and in Iraq Kaka’is) and the Yezidis.

A key argument is that the Zoroastrian cosmogony as it is found in the *Greater Bundahišn*, where the killing of a bull and the pounding of a plant (which correspond to

the ritual actions of Zoroastrian priests in antiquity), was attributed to the evil Ahreman. Given the apparent anomaly of a myth attributing to the devil actions that are regularly performed by priests, it was argued that this late account of the creation must represent an adaptation of an earlier Iranian creation myth. A comparison of Avestan passages with evidence from Vedic, taking into account what is known about Roman Mithraic beliefs, suggested that the outlines of an older, Indo-Iranian cosmogony could still be traced in the various accounts that had sprung from it, including the Avestan texts.

Both the cosmogony of the *Bundahišn* and the various older versions of the myth describe creation as a process in which two stages can be distinguished: a first, non-dynamic stage, in which a single prototype of some of the creations existed without movement; the dramatic killing of an animal by a supernatural being then brought about the second stage, in which the world is characterized by variety and dynamism. The *Bundahišn* describes the first stage as ideal; the killing of the First Bull as an act of murder by Ahreman (*Bd* 4.19–20); and the second stage as a lapse from grace whose effects need to be undone by humanity. Older versions, and thus perhaps the original Indo-Iranian myth, however, regarded the first, restricted and motionless stage as inferior to the second; the transition like a birth; and the initial act of killing, it seems, as a mythical parallel to the sacrifice. The hypothetical Indo-Iranian myth can be reconstructed as follows:

A creator god, like a father, generated the essence of the world: the world was small, and contained in rock, as an unborn child is contained in its mother's body. The world was small, without movement, without light, floating on the ocean. On it stood the prototypes of animals and plants: one bull and one plant. Then Mithra – the Lord of Fire, the Sun, and Energy, who had been hidden in the rock as fire is hidden in fire stones – came into the cave in the rocky sky that surrounded the embryonic world. Mithra offered the first ritual sacrifice, killing the bull and pounding the plant to extract its juice, as many generations of priests were to do later for every major ritual. While Mithra did that, his element, the Sun, appeared in the cave, and rose up, thereby raising the ceiling of the cave to three times its original height. As fire – and thus energy – entered the world movement became possible, and the waters began to flow. Mithra's ritual actions increased both earth and water three times, so that land and sea came into existence, and the world became as we know it. From the sacrificed prototypes of animals and plants sprang all species of animals and plants. Mithra, who was probably the head of a group of seven divine beings who were to take care of the earth, had thus delivered the world from its confinement as a child is delivered from its mother's body, by means of the first religious ritual, which involved killing a bull and pounding a plant.

The strong dualist element in the Zoroastrian worldview eventually gave rise to a different version of the cosmogony, in which Ahura Mazdā's original creation was regarded as superior to the variegated world that followed it. In the heroic age reflected in Vedic literature, on the other hand, we see that the act of delivering the world came to be attributed to the heroic, dragon-slaying god Indra rather than to the priestly Mithra, who performed the first ritual sacrifice.

If this is so, however, the question remains how the Roman Mithraists of the first centuries CE came to employ religious imagery that is reminiscent of the original Indo-Iranian myth, rather than a later Zoroastrian, or possibly an Indian version. Given the

presence of pronouncedly Indo-Iranian elements in Mithraist iconography, which cannot be easily explained as originating in Roman culture, it seems plausible to assume that the Romans adopted elements of a presumably Iranian version of the myth that was not deeply affected by Zoroastrian lore. The most likely scenario is that such contacts took place either in Anatolia or further to the east, in the western reaches of the Iranian Empire.

We know from the 3rd-century CE inscriptions of the priest Kerdīr (Back 1978: 423–431) that, when he accompanied the armies of Šāhbuhār (Šāpūr) I (r. 240–270 CE) on their marches into various regions to the west of Iran, he found many communities of *mōymard* ('Magians', i.e., priests he recognized as belonging to an Iranian religion), some of whom were "good," while others were "heretics and destroyers who did not care about the (proper) explanation (*wizār*) of the religion." We have no further information concerning the religious traditions of the "wicked Magians." However, the fact that Kerdīr could assess the nature of their traditions while accompanying the Iranian armies (which means that he presumably did not have more than a few weeks at most in each place), suggests that the differences between these and Kerdīr's idea of "true" Zoroastrianism did not consist of minor matters of belief and ritual; they must have been obvious and significant.

It is interesting to note that, perhaps a century later, the Eastern Christian leader Mār Šim'un, who was later executed by the Sasanians in 339 CE, admonished his flock as follows: "Stay away from the religion of the Vessels of Satan: the Manichaeans, the Marcionites, the Gēlāyē, the *Mukrē, the Kutāyē, the *Maydāyē, and the rest of the heathen" (Braun 1915: 18–19). The term *Gēlāyē* probably refers to the inhabitants of Gīlān, a province in Northern Iran, which included the region of Daylam, whose religious traditions were known to be peculiar even in Islamic times. The word *Kutāyē* was used, roughly, for the ancient inhabitants of what is now Iraqi Kurdistan. It would be difficult not to associate the *Mukrē* with the modern speakers of the Mukri dialect of Central Kurdish, and the term *Maydāyē* is probably connected with the Medes. If this is so, the regions listed here constitute a more or less unbroken region that surrounded the north-western parts of the Persian heartland where Zoroastrianism was dominant. The Christian catholicos Mār Šim'un, who lived under Sasanian rule and must have been familiar with Zoroastrianism, somewhat conspicuously failed to include the Zoroastrians in his list of "Vessels of Satan." Had the religion(s) he condemned been identical with Zoroastrianism in the perception of his readers, there would have been no obvious reason for him not to mention that religion by name. It seems plausible therefore to conclude that this contemporary theologian regarded the groups in question as distinct from Zoroastrians. In other words, both Kerdīr in the 3rd century and Mār Šim'un in the 4th century CE perceived the religion of various Iranian communities living to the west of Iran proper as being clearly distinct from mainstream Zoroastrianism.

All this would be consistent with a hypothesis (Kreyenbroek 1992, 1994b) to the effect that a distinct Iranian, but non-Zoroastrian religious system, in which the demiurge Mithra played a central role, must have existed in pre-Islamic Iran and that traces of it can still be found in the traditions of two religious communities whose religious centers lie in the Kurdish-speaking regions, the Yezidis and the Yarsan or Ahl-e Haqq.

The Yarsan live in the Kurdish border regions between Iran and Iraq, and some groups have evidently moved further into northern Iraq. The Yezidis live further to the west, in north-west Iraq, eastern Turkey, and Syria, with some communities in Armenia and Georgia and a considerable diaspora in Europe. More or less bordering on the Yezidi lands are those of the Alevis, whose traditions retain some of the non-Islamic elements we find among the Yezidis and Yarsan. Thus, these minorities live in a near continuum extending from western Iran to eastern Turkey, an area that now forms part of the Kurdish-speaking lands. As a great deal of work still needs to be done to investigate the non-Islamic elements in the Alevi communities, the present chapter focuses on the Yarsan and Yezidi traditions.

One of the elements which illustrates both these religions' similarity to and their differences from the Zoroastrian tradition can be found in the cosmogony which Yarsan and Yezidi cosmogony share (although no reference to a bull killing has so far been found in the Yezidi texts, the ritual sacrifice of a bull is made every year during the autumn feast, which may correspond to Zoroastrian Mehragān; see Rose, "Festivals and the Calendar," this volume). The outline of this creation myth is as follows:

God the Creator first fashioned a Pearl from his own light: a small round object containing within itself all the elements that were to form the universe. A pan of fire was placed under the world and this fire began to affect the process of creation (in the Yarsan version only). God then evoked a Heptad of Angels and made a Covenant (Av. *miθra-*) with their Leader, who became the lord of this world. A bull-sacrifice was then performed. After this the Pearl broke open, energy and movement came into the world, the waters began to flow, and the world became as we know it. The world was left to the care of the Seven.

As in some parts of the *Avesta* (*Yt* 13.14–16, 55–56, 77–78; *Vd* 2.10f) and the *Rigveda* (e.g., *RV* 2.12.2,3; see further Kreyenbroek 1994b), but unlike the *Bundahišn* version, the first stage of the creation is here described as a state of confinement, from which the world was delivered after the sacrifice of a bull had taken place. As in Zoroastrianism, however, the world is left to the guardianship of seven beings. As these Heptads may have some connection with the seven *Adityas* of the *Rigveda* the concept of seven divine beings who have special responsibility for the world may go back to Indo-Iranian times, and may thus also have been part of a non-Zoroastrian, western Iranian religion.

Like the Zoroastrian *Aməša Spəntas*, members of the Yarsan and Yezidi Heptad have special links with elements of nature, though the Kurdish traditions mention only four of these: water, fire, earth, and air. While in the Yarsan tradition, members of the Heptad have retained a certain individuality, and in fact share some functions and qualities with ancient Iranian divinities (Kreyenbroek 1992), in Yezidism these figures have lost much of their individuality.

As in Zoroastrianism, Yarsanism and Yezidism maintain a clear distinction between the hereditary priesthood and the laity. Unlike the Zoroastrian tradition, these systems regard the Heptad as the ancestors of their original lineages of priests, to which certain sub-groups and some new lineages came to be added in the course of time. In Sasanian and later Zoroastrianism, the link between an individual and his 'spiritual director' (Pahl. *dastwar*) played a crucial role in religious life (Kreyenbroek 1994a), the spiritual

welfare of the individual being partly dependent on his choice of *dastwar*. A similar phenomenon can be observed in the Kurdish religions. In all three religions it is stressed that spiritual directors need to have a spiritual director of their own. In the Kurdish traditions, unlike Zoroastrianism, the connection between an individual and one's spiritual director is a hereditary one, which passes on to the heirs of the spiritual director after his death. Unlike the Zoroastrians, the Yezidis and Yarsan (and also the Alevis) distinguish between two hereditary lineages of priestly figures, whose members have somewhat different functions in the ritual: Yezidi: Şeykh and Pîr; Yarsan: Pîr and Dalîl; Alevi: Pîr and Rêber.

All three traditions have their own sacred texts, which are held to have an inherent holiness and power. A Yezidi counterpart to the Zoroastrian *Avesta* (and particularly the *Yašts*), can be found in sacred hymns known as *Qewl*; the Yarsan have similar texts, called *kalām*. These texts serve a range of purposes. In all three traditions parts of the corpus of holy texts are recited on religious occasions. Among the Yarsans only short parts of *kalāms*, which have been adapted to music, are sung; in Zoroastrianism and Yezidism the entire texts are recited with great and reverent attention. In Yezidism and Yarsanism the music that accompanies such recitals, and the instruments used, are also regarded as sacred. The liturgical functions of such texts during rituals and religious observances are prominent and obvious. Besides these liturgical functions the texts also serve as a "scriptural" basis for discussions on religion, and as a means of preserving the religious and historical traditions of the communities. Committing such texts to writing was a slow process in Zoroastrianism and Yezidism (where it has begun only recently), and until the last century written versions of *kalāms* were probably scarce among the Yarsan also.

Although the details of the Zoroastrian sacrificial ritual, the *yasna*, and that of the Yarsan, the *jam*, are different in many respects, there are recognizable similarities. Both are performed regularly. In both cases there is a ritual offering and partaking of food and drink; there are two main celebrants; and the sacred texts serve as a liturgy. In both cases, the sacred space is emphatically demarcated, and those who are outside cannot come in during the ritual. Smaller ritual offerings of food (Zoroastrian *bāj*; Yarsan *niyāz*) also show similarities. Some Yezidi celebrations have one or two similar elements, but there is no equivalent to the Yarsan *jam* or *niyāz*.

Traditional Zoroastrians wear the sacred cord (*kostī*), and the sacred shirt (*sedre*). Older Yezidis wear a very similar girdle and shirt (Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 15), while the Yarsan tie a girdle or cummerbund around their waist before taking part in a ritual.

Zoroastrianism and Yezidism share a (originally) spring New Year, which in both cases is associated with a commemoration of the dead, and also an (originally) autumn festival, in which the sacrifice of an animal plays an important role. Moreover, both Yezidism and certain Yarsan communities have seasonal festivals that are comparable to the Zoroastrian *gāhānbār* (see Rose, "Festivals and the Calendar," this volume). On the other hand, the two Kurdish traditions share a fast lasting several days in winter, which in both cases is associated with the appearance of the "founder of the religion" (Yezidi Sheikh Adi; Yarsan Solţān Sahnāk), and at whose completion there is a festival. This fast has no counterpart in either Zoroastrianism or Islam, but might possibly be associated

with a festival to celebrate the return of the Sun that was associated with Mithra in the western Iranian religion (see Gordon, “From Miθra to Roman Mithras,” this volume).

Further common elements between Yarsanism and Yezidism are the belief in reincarnation and the manifestation of divine beings in human form; both groups believe in a cyclical course of history, in which the Seven become manifest in human form during each ‘period’ (Yarsan: *dowre*; Yezidi: *badīl*). Yezidis and certain groups of Yarsan share a belief in the Peacock Angel (Malak Ṭawūs), who is associated with the devil of other religions but is in no way evil. In Yezidi theology and in a few Yarsan communities the Peacock Angel is believed to be the Head of the Seven. The similarity between Mithra’s beneficent killing of a bull at the time of creation, and the “diabolical” bull-killing by Ahreman in later Zoroastrianism, may have played a role in the genesis of this figure.

In sum, while the fact remains that Roman Mithraism was a largely Roman phenomenon, there are good grounds for the assumption that some elements of that faith may have been inspired by a western Iranian, but non-Zoroastrian religious tradition.

Further Reading

On Roman Mithraism, see Beck (2006; for a reference to the theories outlined here, see especially 238–239). The study of the Kurdish religions is still in its infancy; on Yezidism, see Kreyenbroek (1995); Kreyenbroek with Kartal, Omarkhali, and Rashow (2009); Kreyenbroek and Rashow (2005). On the Yarsan or Ahl-e Haqq, see Hamzeh’ee (1990). On religious minorities in Kurdistan, see Omarkhali (2014).

CHAPTER 33

The Bahā'ī Faith

Moojan Momen

The Bahā'ī Faith arose in Iran in the middle of the 19th century. Sayyed 'Alī Moḥammad (1819–1850), a Šīrāz merchant, advanced a claim to religious authority and took the name of the Bāb ('Gate'). After his execution in 1850 and the violent suppression of his followers, the Bābīs, in 1848–1853, the movement went underground. A decade later in 1863, Mīrzā Ḥoseyn 'Alī Nūrī (1817–1892), who took the name *Bahā'u'llāh* (NP *Bahā'ollāh*) (the 'Glory of God'), claimed to be the figure prophesied by the Bāb who would bring an even greater message. Bahā'u'llāh also claimed to be the one prophesied in all of the religions of the world who would bring an age of justice and peace to the world. Bahā'u'llāh was exiled from Iran to Baghdad and then successively to Istanbul, Edirne, and finally to 'Akka in Palestine. He appointed his son 'Abdu'l-Bahā' (NP *'Abd ol-Bahā'*) (1844–1921) to lead the Bahā'ī community after him and the latter in turn appointed his grandson Shoghi Effendi (1897–1957) as Guardian of the Bahā'ī Faith. The Bahā'ī Faith is now led by an elected council, the Universal House of Justice. There are at present some five million Bahā'īs with communities established in almost every country of the world.

The Zoroastrians of Iran had resisted conversion to Islam despite centuries of pressure in the form of persecutions and inducements (in particular, during the last half of the Safavid period (1501–1736), in the 17th century; Moreen 1981: 133–134). In the process, they had developed very considerable mechanisms and resources within their communities to resist conversion pressures. For the Bahā'ī community to convert a large number of Zoroastrians was a considerable achievement since these would initially have viewed the Bahā'ī Faith as being based on Islam and the Bahā'īs as coming from the feared Muslim majority. In view of the later worldwide spread of the Bahā'ī Faith, this development was also of great significance in demonstrating the ability of the Bahā'ī Faith to attract non-Muslims. While the Muslim conversions to the Bābī and Bahā'ī

faiths in Iran never exceeded 2 percent of the Muslim population at their height (Smith 1984: 297–298), the conversions among the Zoroastrian populations of Iran far exceeded this, as will be discussed in this chapter.

From the 1880s onwards, a large number of Zoroastrians and Jews became Bahā'īs in Iran. This chapter will briefly survey the Zoroastrian conversions from their start into the early 20th century. It then examines the possible factors that may have brought about these conversions and the course taken by these Zoroastrian converts as they separated from their former community and were integrated into the Bahā'ī community. Lastly it will briefly examine the role played by these converts in later Bahā'ī history.

Early Interactions with Zoroastrian Leaders

The first interactions between the Bahā'īs and leading Zoroastrians occurred through Manekji Limji Hataria (1813–1890), known as Manekji Sahib, the agent of the Indian Parsi community. As he returned to India in 1861 from his first trip to Iran, he stayed for one year in Baghdad where he met with Bahā'u'llāh (Amīnī 2001: 4–5, 7). When Manekji returned to Iran in 1865, he established close relationships with the Bahā'īs there. He employed the eminent Bahā'ī scholar Mīrzā Abū al-Faḍl Golpāyegānī (1844–1914) both to teach Persian in the Zoroastrian school and to act as his Persian language secretary from about 1877 to 1882. Similarly, he employed another Bahā'ī in Tehrān, Mīrzā Ḥoseyn Hamadānī (d. 1299/1881), and persuaded him to write a history of the Bahā'ī Faith, the *Tārīkh-e Jadīd* ('The New History'), and then later edited this himself (Browne 1893; Balyuzi 1970: 62–70). He also carried on a correspondence with Bahā'u'llāh, resulting in two important letters in which Bahā'u'llāh answers questions relating to Zoroastrianism and Indian religion (Bahā'ollāh and 'Abd ol-Bahā' 1998: 19–45; trans. Bahā'u'llāh 2006: 3–54; see also Sefīdvaš 1999: 26).

The Zoroastrian Conversions

There was one recorded Zoroastrian conversion to the Bābī religion, Sohrāb Kāvūs in Kāšān in 1849. The first conversion to the Bahā'ī Faith, that of Kaykhosrow Khodādād (1266/1849–1344/1925), also happened in Kāšān, probably in 1870 (Sefīdvaš 1999: 21–23, 59; Farīdānī 2002: 33–34, 37). But it was when Mollā Bahrām (Akhtar-Khāvarī) became a Bahā'ī in Yazd in about 1884 that the conversions gained momentum with numerous conversions in Yazd and in the surrounding villages. In Mahdīyābād, for example, all but three of the seventy Zoroastrian families that made up the village converted (Behmardī, Vaḥīd, personal communication, Acuto, Italy, July 2003) and in Ḥoseynābād, all of the Zoroastrians (some 200 in number) converted (Māzandarānī 1975: 938). Conversions also occurred in Tehrān. But, interestingly, there were comparatively few conversions from among the important Zoroastrian community in Kermān. The Zoroastrians living in other towns consisted mainly of a small number of merchants. Thus when these merchants in Qom and Qazvīn converted, this represented all of the Zoroastrians in those towns (Dhalla 1975: 725; Sefīdvaš 1976: 7–18;

for information on the spread of the Zoroastrian converts, see table in Brookshaw 2008: 71).

Since the total number of converts is not known with any certainty, it is not possible to be sure what proportion of the Zoroastrians of Iran converted to the Bahā'ī Faith. One can estimate a minimum figure of 1,500 conversions, which from a total Zoroastrian population which had probably risen to about 10,000 by 1920 would give a 15 percent conversion rate, but Dastūr Dhalla (1975: 702), a Zoroastrian priest from Bombay who traveled around Iran in 1942, gives a figure of 4,000 converts, which with an estimated Zoroastrian population then of 13,200 would give a conversion rate of 30 percent.

Although the city of Yazd and the surrounding villages were the scenes of numerous episodes of persecution of the Bahā'īs by Muslims, the Bahā'īs of Zoroastrian background seem to have been left alone by the Muslims. During the anti-Bahā'ī pogrom in 1903, for example, in Yazd, Taft, and Ḥoseynābād, where there were many Zoroastrian converts, almost all of the Muslim attacks on the Bahā'īs were directed against Muslim converts (Ābādehī 1926b; Mālmīrī 1978: 393–432).

Factors in the Conversion of Zoroastrians

There are many aspects of these conversions that could be discussed. For most of the converts, what we have are accounts of conversions written decades later, often by their children, and thus conforming to Bahā'ī norms and brushing over some of the doubts and wavering that surely occurred. There may have also been some fluidity with individuals converting and reconverting (for an example of a reconversion in Karachi, see Dhalla 1975: 726–727). There have been some analyses of the causes of these conversions, by such scholars as Susan Maneck (née Stiles), Mary Boyce, and Freyduun Vahman. The following is a summary of some of the main points that can be made regarding this question. I have disregarded here some of the suggestions that have been put forward by writers from Iran that are more polemic than serious scholarship (Šahbāzī 2003: 29–32).

The kindness shown by Bahā'īs. Stiles (Maneck) suggests that the kindness shown by Bahā'īs to Zoroastrians, in contrast to the harshness and persecution to which they were subjected by Shī'ī Muslims, was a major factor in the conversions (Stiles 1984: 76–77). For example, it was the kindness of a Jewish convert to the Bahā'ī Faith, Mīrzā Āšūr, in looking after the body of Siyāvaš Sefīdvaš's father, when he had died unexpectedly in Solṭānābād (where there were no Zoroastrians to take care of the body), that induced Sefīdvaš to look seriously into the Bahā'ī Faith and convert in 1896 (Sefīdvaš 1976: 15–17). Similarly, Mollā 'Abd al-Ghanī, a Bahā'ī who wore the dress of an Islamic cleric, surprised Ardašīr, a young Zoroastrian, by inviting him into his home, treating him kindly, talking to him about the Bahā'ī Faith and, as if to make the point that these were not just empty words, drinking out of the same cup as Ardašīr without the ritual washing of the cup dictated by Islamic law when something has been touched by a impure person (Soleymānī 1966: 79).

1. *The universality, rationality, and modernity of the Bahā'ī teachings.* It would appear that a major factor in these conversions was the fact that the converts perceived the Zoroastrian communities to be immersed in endless rounds of ritual observances in unintelligible languages that seemed out of step with and irrelevant to the modern world. Most of the Zoroastrian converts were drawn from the younger educated members who were the most strongly affected by this. Finding themselves frustrated by the conservative, tradition-bound attitudes of the older generation, and in particular the Zoroastrian priests (*dastūrs* or *mūbads*) (see, for example, Qobād 1974: 3–4), they were attracted by what they perceived to be the rationality of the Bahā'ī teachings and their applicability to the modern world (Fischer 1973: 348–349; Stiles 1984: 75; Vahman 2008: 37–38). Boyce comments on the worldwide nature of the Bahā'ī Faith and states that it offered Zoroastrians “membership of a wider community, in which they would have an honoured place” (Boyce 1979: 212; see also Stiles 1984: 75–76; Vahman 2008: 34).
2. *Fulfillment of prophecy.* All accounts agree that one of the main causes for the conversions of Zoroastrians was the fact that, in the course of speaking to Bahā'īs, they became convinced that the Bahā'ī Faith was the fulfillment of Zoroastrian prophecies. Edward Granville Browne reported that in Yazd in 1888 “some few at least of the Zoroastrians are not indisposed to recognise in Behā [Bahā'u'llāh] their expected deliverer, Shāh Bahrām” (Browne 1926: 432). Boyce, Stiles, and Vahman all consider eschatology to have been an important bridge for those crossing over to the Bahā'ī Faith, with the Bahā'ī leaders being regarded as the fulfillment of such Zoroastrian messianic figures as the Saošiiant or Šāh Bahrām (Boyce 1979: 212; Stiles 1984: 76; Buck 1998; Vahman 2008: 35–7). Many biographies of the Zoroastrian converts record discussions about prophecy and appear to confirm its importance in the conversion process (for example, Sefīdvaš 1976: 12; Farīdānī 2002: 41, 53, 96).
3. *The verification of Shī'ī cultural norms.* Maneck (1991: 44–45) has suggested that Zoroastrians in Iran had subconsciously absorbed the values of the dominant Shī'ī Islamic culture of Iran, even while hating that religion. In particular, she suggests that they had absorbed the ethos which regards the suffering and martyrdoms of the Shī'ī imams as proof of the truth of their cause. This being the case, then the Bahā'īs provided ample evidence of the truth of their cause in the many episodes of persecution and martyrdom that occurred throughout Iran in the Qajar era. Certainly the conversion accounts of several of the Zoroastrians bear this idea out. For example, the first Zoroastrian convert, Sohrāb Kāvūs in Kāšān, is reported to have said, upon witnessing one of these episodes of persecution: “This very ill-usage and public humiliation is a proof of truth and the very best of arguments. Had it not been thus it might have been that a thousand years would have passed ere [before] one like me became informed” (Browne 1891: 34). Similarly, Anūšīravān Bahrām, one of the first Zoroastrian converts to the Bahā'ī Faith in the village of Ḥoseynābād, near Yazd, who witnessed the execution of seven Bahā'īs in Yazd in 1891, said: “I witnessed the constancy, steadfastness and self-sacrifice of each one of them and I considered their willingness to sacrifice their lives to be the great proof of the truth of their Lord” (Ābādehī 1926b: 4; for similar instances, see Soleymānī 1959: 412–413, 1966: 81–86; Qobād 1974: 9–13).

4. *Religious congruence.* In the process of conversion it is important to minimize the dissonance and incongruence felt by the convert. Edward G. Browne (1904: xv–xvi) noted that Muslims converting to the Bahā'ī Faith were not required to disavow Muḥammad or the *Qur'ān* (as compared to conversions from Islam to Christianity) and this facilitated such conversions. Similar factors were operating in relation to the Zoroastrian converts. Islam had generally denied any legitimacy or truth to Zoroastrianism. Bahā'u'llāh, on the other hand, acknowledged the truth and prophethood of Zoroaster. He claimed to be the fulfillment of Zoroastrian prophecies. Thus by becoming Bahā'īs, Zoroastrians were not betraying their family religion; rather they saw themselves as truly carrying out the injunctions in their scriptures to recognize the future savior. The Zoroastrian priests of course rejected such interpretations (see Dhalla 1975: 721–722; Stiles 1984: 86; Brookshaw 2008: 79–80).

There were many ways in which the Bahā'ī Faith resonated with Zoroastrian concepts and teachings. Just as the Zoroastrian months are named after divine beings, the Aməša Spəntas, the Bahā'ī months are named after divine names and attributes. There are also elements in the Bahā'ī teachings such as the strong condemnation of lying and the emphasis on kindness to animals that resonate with Zoroastrian teachings (Martinovich 1933; Vahman 2008: 38–39). Even the name *Bahā'*, meaning as it does a glorious effulgence of light, has echoes of the Zoroastrian ideas of divine glory (Av. *X'arənah*, Pahl. *xwarrah*, NP *farr(ah)*): Ahura Mazdā as a Being of Light; the luminous glory that invests Yima, the prototype god-king; and the light that became the prophethood of Zoroaster (Gnoli 1999; Momen forthcoming).

Cultural consonance. The Bābī and Bahā'ī faiths, as both Browne and Boyce write, were inherently much more palatable to the Zoroastrians, being considered to be, as the latter writes, “a purely Iranian movement, and necessarily opposed to Islam” (Boyce 1979: 212; compare Browne 1926: n. 432). For the Zoroastrians, anything connected to Islam and Arabs was abhorred (Browne 1926: 415–416). Thus, for example, Fīrūz Tīrandāz (Fīrūzmand, 1884–1968) was initially put off when he discovered that the Bahā'ī Faith upheld the truth of Muḥammad and Islam (Soleymānī 1966: 83–86) and Sefīdvaš writes that when he was given a copy of Bahā'u'llāh's *Ketāb-e Īqān* (“The Book of Certitude”), he stopped reading after a few pages when he came across a quotation from the *Qur'ān* and handed the book back (Sefīdvaš 1976: 11). Similarly, when Khodādād Jamšīd was told by a Bahā'ī that a piece of writing in Arabic was the daily prayer given by the promised Šāh Bahrām, he responded: “We don't want a Šāh Bahrām who comes and writes and speaks in Arabic” (Farīdānī 2002: 76).

These negative points were balanced by such factors as the Bahā'ī confirmation of Nowrūz as the New Year celebration; and the claim that Bahā'u'llāh was descended from the Zoroastrian Sasanian kings of Persia (Ābādehī 1926a: 5; Sefīdvaš 1976: 13; Golpāyegānī 1977: 41–47; Stiles 1984: 74). This last point became a major part of the way the Bahā'ī Faith was presented to Zoroastrians and is featured in some of the conversions accounts (for example, Ābādehī 1926a: 5).

In the 19th century, a movement arose among Iranian literati for writing in pure Persian, with no Arabic loanwords. Manekji particularly supported this movement and his Bahā'ī secretary, Mīrzā 'Abū al-Faḏl Golpāyegānī, composed letters on his behalf in this pure Persian for much of his correspondence with government officials (see Amīnī 2001). One of the factors that pleased Zoroastrians was that both Bahā'u'llāh and 'Abdu'l-Bahā' often wrote to them in an elegant pure Persian, freed from any Arabic words (see examples of this in Bahā'ollāh and 'Abd ol-Bahā' 1998: 1–61; see also Brookshaw 2008: 67–80). Indeed, hearing or reading Bahā'u'llāh's writings and prayers in Persian appears to have played a part in several conversions (see for example, Sefīdvaš 1976: 17–18; Farīdānī 2002: 108).

Support of leading Zoroastrians. A further factor that may have helped to make the Bahā'ī Faith more attractive to Zoroastrians is the support given to it by prominent Zoroastrians. This has been described above for Manekji, who was widely regarded in Tehrān as the head of the Zoroastrian community. He had a great deal of sympathy for the Bahā'ī Faith and Browne mentions this as a factor that opened the way for Zoroastrian conversions (Browne 1926: 431–432). Similarly, Arbāb Jamšīd Bahman (1850–1932), the wealthiest and most powerful Zoroastrian in Iran, who owned the Jamšīdīyān Company (a vast business empire including financial services, transportation, clothing, and real estate) and was elected the first Zoroastrian member of parliament, was very sympathetic to the Bahā'īs and in correspondence with 'Abdu'l-Bahā'. Several Zoroastrian converts to the Bahā'ī Faith, such as Sefīdvaš and Mollā Bahrām, worked for him in senior positions and he even employed a Bahā'ī of Muslim background, Āqā Moḥammad Hoṣeyn Ulfat, when the latter was forced to flee Yazd after the 1903 persecutions (Māzandarānī 1975: 923, 942, 950–952). Arbāb Keykhosrow Šāhrokh (1874–1940), the second Zoroastrian member of parliament, although at first unfriendly towards the Bahā'īs, later became more friendly and eventually, in 1927, married a Bahā'ī of Zoroastrian background after his first wife died (Farīdānī 2002: 29–32; Ramazani 2002: 15). The Bahā'īs were also helped by a statement by a Parsi priest and scholar, Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, which, although rejecting Bahā'ī interpretations of Zoroastrian prophecies, maintained nevertheless that it was possible for a person to be both a Bahā'ī and a Zoroastrian; that provided a Bahā'ī of Zoroastrian background wore the *sedre* and *koṣtī* and followed the teachings of Zoroaster, he was to be considered a Zoroastrian (Sefīdvaš 1976: 124–125; Stiles 1984: 86). In Yazd the majority of the Zoroastrian administrative council (*Anjoman-e Nāṣerī*) were either Bahā'īs or close sympathizers of the Bahā'īs (see list in Sefīdvaš 1999: 56–57).

Separation, Integration, and Inter-marriage

Most of the Iranian Bahā'īs were converts from Shī'a Islam and therefore carried with them the baggage of the cultural norms and prejudices of that society, including their disdain of the Zoroastrians. The Zoroastrian converts to the Bahā'ī Faith similarly

carried their cultural norms, including abhorrence of their Shī'ī persecutors. It is therefore of some interest to examine the extent and timing of the emergence of a Bahā'ī identity among the Zoroastrian converts and their integration into the main body of the Bahā'ī community.

At first, the Zoroastrian converts remained “concealed” within the Zoroastrian community of Yazd, following Zoroastrian laws and customs. This was partly due to the circumstances of Iranian society; there was no separate identifiable social locus within which Bahā'īs could exist. The Muslim converts to the Bahā'ī Faith continued to exist within the Muslim social framework and the Jewish and Zoroastrian converts continued to exist within the social framework of their former communities. Indeed, for a time in some towns such as Tehrān and Hamadān, because of the difficulties of Bahā'īs from a Zoroastrian or Jewish background going into Muslim quarters and vice versa, separate meetings were held; in other towns such as Kāšān and Yazd, this does not appear to have been the case. In 1906, 'Abdu'l-Bahā' wrote that he wanted the Bahā'īs to cease holding separate meetings or making any distinction between those from different religious background and to regard themselves just as Bahā'īs ('Abd ol-Bahā' 1922: 510–511).

When the priests (*dastūrs*) started to refuse to perform rites for the Bahā'ī Zoroastrians, beginning in the mid-1890s but more intensely in the 1900s and 1910s, this began the process of separating the Zoroastrian converts to the Bahā'ī Faith from their former co-religionists (Farīdānī 2002: 90). For example, when Mollā Bahrām's daughter died in about 1898, the Zoroastrian priests refused to allow the body to be taken to the *dakhme*, the open structures where the Zoroastrians left their dead until only bones remained. After further such problems and in view of the Bahā'ī law requiring burial of the dead, the Zoroastrian converts purchased some land for a cemetery (Soleymānī 1959: 397–400; Sefīdvaš 1976: 109–120; Stiles 1984: 83–84). They also, however, wrote to and obtained from Kaykhosrow Rostam, the head priest in Kermān, the opinion that burial of the dead had occurred among the Zoroastrians of old and was not therefore against their religion (Sefīdvaš 1976: 121). From about 1918 onwards, the Bahā'īs of Zoroastrian background no longer used the *dakhmes* and this caused great unhappiness among the priests. On one occasion the latter caused the body of a child who had been buried to be dug up (Sefīdvaš 1999: 125–126); on another they caused the graves, the gate, and the walls of the cemetery to be damaged (Sefīdvaš 1976: 122–123). The converts continued to use the Zoroastrian prayers in their funeral services until Ostād Javānmard's funeral in 1928, which was the first to be carried out completely according to Bahā'ī law and rituals, despite a storm of protests from the Zoroastrian priests (Sefīdvaš 1976: 17).

Many lay Zoroastrians do not appear to have sided with the Zoroastrian priests in opposing the converts. Indeed, in Yazd, the Zoroastrian council, the Anjoman-e Nāšerī, which represented the lay Zoroastrians, often sided with the Bahā'īs against the priests, using this as a way of exerting its own authority, lessening the power of the priests, and bringing about reform. For example, the Anjoman supported the Bahā'īs over their decision to bury their dead, and when priests refused to officiate at the Tašakkor–Hūšangī Bahā'ī wedding in 1915, the Anjoman authorized it to proceed without priests (Sefīdvaš 1976: 17, 101–116).

Consequently, the Zoroastrian community was split, not so much into Zoroastrians against Bahā'ī converts, but into a liberal reform-minded group headed by the Anjoman-e Nāṣerī, who supported the Bahā'ī converts, and the conservative group headed by the priests and by a newly created society, the *Majma'e-ye Haqqšenās va Haqqgū-ye Yazd* ('The Society of Truth-knowers and Truth-speakers of Yazd'). This split came to a head in 1918 when the conservative faction hired a certain Fereydūn Rostam from Kermān to assassinate Māstir Khodābakhš (1865–1918), the head of the Anjoman-e Nāṣerī, who was sympathetic to the Bahā'īs, and Fīrūz Tīrandāz (Fīrūzmand), a Bahā'ī member of the Anjoman who had carried out the marriage ceremony at the Tašakkor–Hūšangī wedding. The assassin succeeded in killing Khodābakhš but failed to kill Tīrandāz. As Stiles (Maneck) has commented about the conservatives,

while they may have succeeded in terrorizing some of the liberal faction of the Zoroastrian community, they irreparably undermined the moral credibility of the Zoroastrian clergy. From this point on, the power and authority of the priesthood disintegrated rapidly and the Anjoman assumed almost complete leadership of the Zoroastrian community. (1984: 89; see also Fischer 1973: 108, 354–355)

The episode also led to sympathy for the Bahā'ī Faith among the ordinary Zoroastrians and more conversions, including the family of Khodābakhsh. Inter-marriages are another indication of the good relationships between the Zoroastrian converts and their former co-religionists (see the example of Kaykhosrow Šāhrokh above).

With regard to the integration of the Zoroastrian converts into the Bahā'ī community, the fact that the Zoroastrian conversion accounts talk of the willingness of the Bahā'īs of Muslim background to invite them to their homes and to eat food with them would seem to indicate that these Bahā'īs of Muslim background had no difficulties in accepting the Zoroastrian converts. The comparatively early integration of the converts is also indicated by the comment made by Ḥājī Mīrzā Ḥeydar 'Alī Eṣfahānī (1980: 135, 2002: 309) when he visited Kāšān in the mid-1890s: "The friends came from many different backgrounds: Jewish, Christian, Zoroastrian and Muslim. But one could not tell them apart. Their unity was like water and rose-water: once mixed, it is impossible to distinguish one from the other" (see a similar statement about the Bahā'īs in Yazd in 1903 in Mālmīrī 1992: 135).

The Bahā'ī administrative institutions also demonstrated this integration. The first Central Spiritual Assembly (the precursor of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahā'īs of Iran), formed in 1897, had one Bahā'ī of Jewish and one of Zoroastrian background on it (Sefīdvaš 1976: 55). In Yazd and some of the surrounding villages, such as 'Alīyābād, there were both Muslim and Zoroastrian converts on the elected local assemblies.

The slowest area for integration appears to have been marriage – as is usually the case in conversions in traditional societies. In the early 20th century, Muslim converts to the Bahā'ī Faith tended to marry other Muslim converts or even Muslims; Zoroastrian converts married other Zoroastrian converts or Zoroastrians. Inter-marriage between the different elements in the Bahā'ī community does not seem to have occurred until quite late. It is of interest, therefore, that prominent Bahā'īs set an example in

encouraging intermarriage. The first such intermarriage appears to have been between Fereydūn Khošnūdiyān and the niece of the prominent Bahā'ī Ḥājī Ākhūnd, but the date of this marriage is not known (Farīdānī 2002: 312). There was then a gap of some decades and probably the next such intermarriage was either the one between Jamšīd Kūčekzādeh, a Zoroastrian convert from Kermān, and Maḥbūbeh Mo'men, a third-generation Bahā'ī from a Muslim family of Yazd, in 1934 in Tehrān, or that of the son of Mollā Bahrām Akhtar-Khāvarī and a member of the Khalīlī family (converts from Shī'ism) from Qazvīn at about this time. Such intermarriages gradually became more frequent in Tehrān where the Bahā'ī community was mostly refugees and migrants (who had thus to some extent cut their links with their roots) and are now common among the expatriate Iranian community outside Iran. In a conservative town such as Yazd in 1969–1971, however, Fischer noted that of some 114 Bahā'ī descendants of Zoroastrian converts, only fourteen had married someone who was not either a Zoroastrian or from a Zoroastrian convert family (Fischer 1973: 358–359, 1990: 40). But by this time (1969–1971), as per my observations among young Bahā'īs in Europe and North America, intermarriages were much more frequent in Tehrān, while among young Iranian Bahā'īs outside Iran, the question of family religious origins had by then ceased to be even a matter for discussion.

The Zoroastrian Converts in Later Years

The bulk of the Zoroastrian conversions occurred between 1884 and 1924. After this the rate of conversions decreased greatly although it never ceased entirely. During the 20th century, the Zoroastrian converts integrated into the Bahā'ī community both in Iran and India (more slowly in the matter of intermarriage, as noted above). A sign of this integration is the fact that Bahā'īs of Zoroastrian origin suffered equally alongside other Bahā'īs after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. When seven of the leading Bahā'īs of Yazd were executed in 1981, two of them were of Zoroastrian origin. There were at least another nine such Bahā'īs executed after the Revolution (Farīdānī 2002: 430–431).

There were a number of areas in which the Zoroastrian converts played a special role. 'Abdu'l-Bahā' selected mainly Zoroastrian converts who were farmers in the villages around Yazd to move to the Haifā-'Akkā area in order to develop and maintain the Bahā'ī gardens there. He also selected some fifteen families of Zoroastrian converts, mainly from the village of Maḥdīyābād, near Yazd, to settle in the village of 'Adasiyyah in the Jordan valley, that he owned; more families came later. Here 'Abdu'l-Bahā' experimented with innovative structures of landlord–tenant relationships, rural development, and agricultural methods, resulting in a village that prospered greatly and was often shown off by the government of Jordan to foreign delegations as a model village. This community was unfortunately very close to the eventual border between Jordan, Syria, and Israel and, as a result of hostilities between these countries and certain laws which the Jordanian government passed, had to disband and disperse. The descendants of this community continue, however, to form an important part of the Jordanian Bahā'ī community (Farīdānī 2002: 415–459; Poostchi 2010).

Many of the Iranian Zoroastrian converts migrated, as did other Zoroastrians, to India. Some were even sent specifically to convert the Indian Parsis and Dastūr Dhalla estimates the number of such converts to have been 1,000 (1975: 702). These Zoroastrian converts were for some decades the majority of the Indian Bahā'ī community and even up to the present day constitute a significant part of that community's leadership. There are eight Bahā'īs of Zoroastrian origin among the fifteen biographies of the leading Bahā'īs of the early days of the Indian Bahā'ī community in a book by Dipchand Khianra (1988), a Bahā'ī of Hindu background.

Conclusion

In summary, then, the conversions of Zoroastrians to the Bahā'ī Faith began in the 1880s and reached a peak in the 1890s–1920s, with the conversion of some 15–30 percent of the Zoroastrians in Iran, a proportion which was much higher than that from the Shī'ī Muslim majority. The factors promoting these conversions for which there is the best evidence were the convert's perception of their acceptance by the Bahā'īs, the willingness of the Bahā'īs to sacrifice themselves for their beliefs, the congruence of the Bahā'ī teachings with both Zoroastrianism and Iranian culture, and their rationality and modernity.

The separation of the Zoroastrian converts to the Bahā'ī Faith from their former co-religionists, when it eventually occurred, was not so much initiated by the converts but was more the result of the opposition of the Zoroastrian religious leaders, who forced the issue and compelled the Bahā'ī converts to leave the community. Relations between the converts and the rank-and-file of their former co-religionists appear to have remained, for the most part, very good and intermarriages between the two groups continued. The integration of the converts into the Bahā'ī community was rapid except for intermarriage between Bahā'īs of Zoroastrian background and those of Muslim background. Full integration in that area took about a hundred years and some four generations to accomplish. The Bahā'īs of Zoroastrian background contributed in a number of ways to the growth and development of the Bahā'ī Faith in Iran, India, and elsewhere and they suffered equally with other Bahā'īs in the persecutions that have occurred since the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

Further Reading

The study of the relationship between the Bahā'ī Faith and Zoroastrianism has not received much academic attention; see comments in Boyce (1979). Of the two studies of the conversion of Zoroastrians to the Bahā'ī Faith, the approach of Stiles (1984) is mainly historical and sociological; Vahman (2008) builds on this by giving more information

about the Bahā'ī interpretation of Zoroastrian prophecies and the letters from the Bahā'ī leaders to the Zoroastrian converts. There are two works in Persian that contain biographies of the main Zoroastrians who became Bahā'īs in Iran, Sefīdvaš (1999) and Farīdānī (2002, 2007) and one in English with some biographies of converts in India, Khianra (1988).

There is also much significant information in the biography of the first important Zoroastrian convert Mollā Bahrām Akhtar-Khāvarī in Soleymānī (1959) and in the autobiographies of two other converts, Siyāvaš Sefīdvaš (1976) and Esfandeyār Qobād (1974). The letters of

the Bahā'ī leaders to the Zoroastrian converts give insight into some of the reasons for these conversions (Bahā'ollāh and 'Abd ol-Bahā' 1998). Five of the most important of these letters are translated in Bahā'u'llāh (2006).

Part VI

Primary Sources

CHAPTER 34

Primary Sources Avestan and Pahlavi

Miguel Ángel Andrés-Toledo

Avestan

The oldest Zoroastrian primary source is the *Avesta* (Phl. *abastāg*; text: Westergaard 1852–1854, Geldner 1886–1896; German translation: Spiegel 1852–1863, Wolff 1910; English translation: Darmesteter 1880, 1882, Mills 1887; French translation: Darmesteter 1892–1893; dictionary: Bartholomae 1904, Schlerath 1968). The term “Avesta” designates a corpus of texts composed in Avestan, an Old Iranian language dating from the 2nd to 1st millennium BCE. These compositions were orally transmitted and learned by heart at priestly schools for many centuries until they were eventually written down in manuscripts, the oldest of which dates from the 13th century CE.

The corpus of Avestan literature is preserved in two types of manuscripts: liturgical and accompanied by Pahlavi translation. The former includes the texts recited in the long liturgies (*Yasna*, *Yasna ī Rapiθwin*, *Vīsprad*, *Vīdēvdād*, and *Vīštāsp Yašt*) or short liturgies (*Khorde Avesta* and *Yašt*), in which various Avestan texts are combined and ritual instructions in Pahlavi, Pāzand, New Persian, or Gujarati are added as a guide to the ritual performance. The latter contain collections in which these ritual instructions are generally omitted and each Avestan text is accompanied by its Pahlavi translation cum commentary, known as *Zand*.

Liturgical Manuscripts

Long Liturgies

The manuscripts attest five types of long liturgies: *Yasna*, *Yasna ī Rapiθwin*, *Vīsprad*, *Vīdēvdād*, and *Vīštāsp Yašt* (Cantera 2011).

Yasna (Y): The ‘Sacrifice’ comprises a heterogeneous collection of texts to be recited when preparing and offering the *haoma*. They are divided into seventy-two sections or *hāiti*, of which the following texts were composed in an older dialect known as Old Avestan: *Yaθā Ahū Vairiō* or *Ahuna Vairiia* (Y 27.13), *Aṣəm Vohū* (Y 27.14), the five strophic *Gāthās* or Chants (Y 28–34: *Ahunauuaitī Gāθā*; 43–46: *Uštāuuaitī Gāθā*; 47–50: *Spəntā Mainiū Gāθā*; 51: *Vohuxšaθrā Gāθā*; 53: *Vahištōišī Gāθā*; text and English translation: Insler 1975, Humbach, Elfenbein, and Skjærvø 1991; text and French translation: Kellens and Pirart 1988–1991; text and English and German translation: Humbach and Faiss 2010), the *Yasna Haptaḡhāiti* (‘*Yasna* of the Seven Sections’, Y 35.2–41.6; text and German translation: Narten 1986; text and English translation: Hintze 2007) and the prayer *Ā Airiēmā Išiiō* or *Airiiman* (Y 54.1). The Young Avestan part of the *Yasna* preceding these Old Avestan texts contains introductory invocations (Y 1–2); the ceremony consecrating and tasting the sacred bread (*drōn*) dedicated to Sraoša (*Srōš Drōn*, Y 3–8; text of Y 1–7.23 and French translation: Kellens 2006a); the hymn to Haoma (*Hōm Yašt* or *Hōm Stōm*, Y 9–12; text and English translation: Josephson 1997); the *Frauuarānē* or ‘Profession of Faith’ (Y 12–13), more invocations (Y 14–18; text of Y 7.24–15.4 and French translation: Kellens 2007b), commentaries to the prayers *Yaθā Ahū Vairiō*, *Aṣəm Vohū* and *Yejhe Hātəm* (Y 19–21), more invocations (Y 22–27.12; text of Y 16–27.12 and French translation: Kellens 2010). The Young Avestan part following the Old Avestan texts contains praises of the *Gāthās* and the *Staota Yesniia* (Y 55); invocation (Y 56); the hymn to Sraoša (*Srōš Yašt*, Y 57; text and German translation: Dehghan 1982; text and English translation: Kreyenbroek 1985); the prayer *Fšūšō Mqθrō* (Y 58); invocation repeating Y 17 and 26 (Y 59); blessings (*Dahma Āfriti*, Y 60); praises for the anti-demonic power of some prayers (Y 61; text of Y 27.13–59 and 60–61 and French translation: Kellens 2011); praise for the fire (*Ātaš Niyāyišn*, Y 62), the libation of the waters (*Āb Zōhr*, Y 63–69), and concluding invocations (Y 70–72; text of Y 62–72 and French translation: Redard and Kellens 2013). The text of the *Yasna ī Rapiθwin* liturgy of some manuscripts represents a simplified variant of the *Yasna* liturgy (Cantera 2011: 201).

Vīsprad (Vr): The sections or *kardag* of the ‘All *ratu*’ (‘Models’) are combined with those of the *Yasna* in the *Vīsprad* liturgy, in which some Avestan texts recited at several parts of the *Yasna* are substituted and others are added (text and French translation: Kellens 2006a, 2007b, 2010, 2011).

Vīdēvdād (Vd) (sometimes rendered as *Vendidād* or *Juddēvdād* in Pahlavi): The twenty-two sections or *fragard* of the ‘Law to Drive off the Demons’ are distributed in groups of four or two and recited after each group of Old Avestan texts in the *Vīdēvdād* liturgy, in which the texts of the *Yasna*, the *Vīsprad*, and the *Vīdēvdād* are combined. With the exception of some sections of mythical contents (Vd 1, 2, 19, 20, 22), the text of the *Vīdēvdād* mostly contains prescriptions and penalties concerning purity, treatment of certain animals, etc. (text of Vd 10–12 and English translation: Andrés-Toledo 2009).

Vīštāsp Yašt (Vy): Its eight sections or *fragard* were recited in the *Vīštāsp Yašt* liturgy in the same part in which those of the *Vīdēvdād* are recited in the *Vīdēvdād* liturgy. Its miscellaneous contents comprise blessings and admonitions to the king Vīštāspa (compare *Āfrīn ī Zardušt*) and parts of the *Hādōxt Nask* (see below) and the *Vīdēvdād*.

Short Liturgies

The high degree of textual variability in the manuscripts of the short liturgies makes it difficult to identify their textual sequences with certain liturgies. These manuscripts are divided into two main types: *Khorde Avesta* and *Yašt*.

The *Khorde Avesta* ('Minor Avesta') contains various praises, prayers, and litanies composed in Avestan (*Niyāyišn*, *Gāh*, *Āfrīnagān*, *Sīh-rōzag*, *Yašt*), Pahlavi and Pāzand (*Āfrīn*, *Bāj*, *Nāmaz*, *Nērang*, *Patit*, *Šnūman*, and other short texts edited by Antiā 1909), New Persian, Sanskrit, and Gujarati, to be recited in daily prayers or short liturgies by the laity without the assistance of a priest. All these texts are not usually included in the same manuscripts, so we cannot speak of a fixed compendium, but rather of variable practical collections for daily use.

The Avestan texts of these collections are the following:

Niyāyišn (Ny): praises to the Sun (*Xwaršēd Niyāyišn*), Mithra (*Mihr Niyāyišn*), the Moon (*Māh Niyāyišn*), the Waters (*Ābān Niyāyišn*), and the Fire (*Ātaš Niyāyišn*) (text and German translation: Taraf 1981).

Gāh (G): litanies to the deities presiding over each of the five parts of the day: sunrise to mid-day (*Hāwan Gāh*), midday to mid-afternoon (*Rapiθwin Gāh*), mid-afternoon to sunset (*Uzērin Gāh*), sunset to midnight (*Ēbsrūsrim Gāh*), midnight to dawn (*Ušahin Gāh*).

Āfrīnagān (A): blessings recited in honor of the dead (*Āfrīnagān ī Dahmān*), at the five last days of the year (*Āfrīnagān ī Gāhān*), at the feasts of the six seasons (*Āfrīnagān ī Gāhānbār*), and at the beginning or the end of the summer (*Āfrīnagān ī Rapiθwin*).

Sīh-rōzag (S): dedications to the deities presiding over the thirty days of the month. A short (S 1) and a long redaction (S 2) exist (text and English translation: Raffaelli 2014).

The *Yašts* are hymns dedicated to various deities (German translation: Lommel 1927; French translation: Pirart 2010). Although the *Khorde Avesta* incorporates certain *Yašts* in its textual sequences, some manuscripts only contain the *Yašts*, so that these manuscripts are considered a separate class. The most extensive collection of *Yašts* is preserved in the manuscript E1 (Kotwal and Hintze 2008) and includes the following twenty-one (Yt 5, 10, 13, and 19 being the longest):

Yt 1: *Ohrmazd Yašt* to Ahura Mazdā (text and English translation: Panaino 2002).

Yt 2: *Haft Amahraspand Yašt* to the Beneficent Immortals (*Aməša Spəntas*).

Yt 3: *Ardwahišt Yašt* to Aša Vahišta ('Best Order'), the *Aməša Spənta* associated with fire.

Yt 4: *Hordād Yašt* to Hauruuatāt ('Wholeness' or Integrity of Body), the *Aməša Spənta* associated with water.

Yt 5: *Ardwīsūr Yašt* to Arəduuī Sūrā Anāhitā and the Waters (text and German translation: Oettinger 1983).

Yt 6: *Xwaršēd Yašt* to the Sun (text and Italian translation: Panaino 1990c).

Yt 7: *Māh Yašt* to the Moon (text and Italian translation: Panaino 1990b).

Yt 8: *Tištār Yašt* to Tištriia, the star Sirius (the Dog Star) (text and English translation: Panaino 1990a, 1995a).

Yt 9: *Drwāsp* or *Gōš Yašt* to the Soul of the Bull.

Yt 10: *Mihr Yašt* to Mithra, the personified deity of 'Contract' and postmortem judgment (text and English translation: Gershevitch 1959).

- Yt 11: Srōš Yašt* to Sraoša ('Hearkening, Readiness to Listen'), a multifunctional deity already prominent in the *Gāthās*; associated with the postmortem judgment and the recitation of the divine texts, often invoked as a protector (text and English translation: Kreyenbroek 1985).
- Yt 12: Rašn Yašt* to Rašnu ('the Straightener'), one of the judges of humans in the next world (text and English translation: Goldman 2012).
- Yt 13: Frawardin Yašt* to the *frawuašis* ('Pre-Souls') (text and English translation: Malandra 1971; text: Kellens 1975; English translation: Ichaporia 1999).
- Yt 14: Wahrām Yašt* to Vərəθrayna ('Obstruction-Smashing'), the deity of victory who possesses ten shapes (text and German translation: König forthcoming).
- Yt 15: Rām Yašt* to Rāman ('Joy, Peace'), but actually dedicated to Vāiiu, the ambivalent deity of the wind or atmosphere (text and German translation: Wikander 1941; text and English translation: Panaino 2002).
- Yt 16: Dēn Yašt* to the *daēnā* ('Vision-Soul'), but actually dedicated to the minor goddess Čistā ('Noticed, Noticeable').
- Yt 17: Ard Yašt* to Aši ('Recompense') the goddess of rewards (text and French translation: Pirart 2006).
- Yt 18: Aštād Yašt* to Arštāt ('Rectitude'), but actually dedicated to the *xʷarənah* ('Fortune, Glory').
- Yt 19: Zamyād Yašt* to the Earth, the *xʷarənah*, and the mountains (text and French translation: Pirart 1992; text and German translation: Hintze 1994; text and English translation: Humbach and Ichaporia 1998).
- Yt 20: Hōm Yašt* to Haoma, the deity/divine intoxicant and divine priest.
- Yt 21: Wanand Yašt* to the star Vanaṅt (Vega) (text and Italian translation: Panaino 1987b [1989]).

Avestan Manuscripts Accompanied by Pahlavi Translations

Beside the long and short liturgies, some manuscripts preserve a learned tradition of collections of Avestan texts accompanied by their Pahlavi translations and commentaries, known as *Zand* and mostly going back to Sasanian times. Some texts, for instance the *Yasna* or the *Vīdēvdād*, were thus transmitted in two types of manuscripts. However, the following ones are only known in these collections:

- Āfrīn ī Zardušt (Az)*: blessings by Zarathustra upon King Wištāsp (text: Westergaard 1852–1854: 300–301).
- Aogəmadaēcā (Aog)*: blessings recited in honor of the soul of a departed person (text and German translation: Geiger 1878; text and English translation: JamaspAsa 1982).
- Frahang ī ōīm (Fīō)*: Avestan–Pahlavi glossary with quotations of lost Avestan texts (text: Reichelt 1900; text and German translation: Klingenschmitt 1968; text and English translation: Asha 2009).
- Hāδōxt Nask (HN)*: the benefits of reciting the *Ašəm Vohū* prayer (*HN 1*) and description of the soul's destiny in the afterlife (*HN 2*) (text and English translation: Haug and West 1872: 269–316; text and Italian translation: Piras 2000).

Hērbedestān and *Nērangestān* (*Hēr*, *N*): prescriptions concerning religious studies and rituals (text and German translation: Waag 1941; text and English translation: Humbach and Elfenbein 1990; Kotwal and Kreyenbroek 1992, 1995, 2003, 2009).

Nērang ī āta(x)š also formerly known as *Ātaš Niyāyišn* (*ANy*): religious formulas concerning the fire (text: Westergaard 1852–1854: 317).

Pursišnīhā (*P*): questions and answers in Pahlavi on religious subjects, including Avestan quotations accompanied by their Pahlavi translations (text and English translation: JamaspAsa and Humbach 1971).

Vaēθā Nask (*VN*): normative texts, including quotations from the *Vīdēvdād* (text and English translation: Humbach and JamaspAsa 1969). The so-called Bartholomae's fragment (*FrB*; Bartholomae 1901: 101–102) and Darmesteter's fragments (*FrD*; Darmesteter 1886) are respectively *VN* 1–8 and 23–39.

Texts not used in the liturgies were eventually no longer copied and some of them were lost throughout the written transmission. Their fragments were preserved as quotations in the Pahlavi and Sanskrit translations of extant Avestan texts or in other works of Pahlavi literature (Geldner 1896–1904: 8–10; Bartholomae 1904: ix–x; Schlerath 1968: viii–ix, 241–243, 251, 256; Kellens 1989b):

1. Fragments in the *Bundahišn* (*Bd* 30.16).
2. Sanjana's fragments in the *Dēnkard* (*DkB* 131; *DkM* 113–114; text: Dresden 1966: 749).
3. Anklesaria's fragments in the *Pahlavi Rivāyat* of Ādurfarrbag ī Farrozzādān and in the *Pahlavi Rivāyat* of Farrōbag-srōš ī Wahmānān (*FrA*; text and German translation: Klingenschmitt 1971).
4. Barthélemy's fragments (*FrBy*; text and French translation: Barthélemy 1887b: 55–56).
5. Geldner's fragments (*FrG*; text and German translation: Geldner 1885: 587–588 n. 6).
6. Gray's fragment (*FrGr*; text and English translation: Gray 1913: 284–285).
7. Westergaard's fragments (*FrW*; text: Westergaard 1852–1854: 331–334; see also Vevaina 2005 [2009]).
8. Fragments in the *Wizirgerd ī Dēnīg* (*FrWīD*; text and German translation: Bartholomae 1901: 92–101).
9. Fragments in the *Ganjeshāyagān* (*Gš* 163, 164; text: Sanjana 1885: 19–20).
10. Fragment of the *Nigādom* (*Nig*; text: Darmesteter 1886: 184).
11. West's fragments in the *Šāyest-nē-šāyest* (*Šnš* 8.22, 11.6, 13.43; English translation: West 1880: 307, 338, 366; text and English translation: Tavadia 1930: 114; text: Kotwal 1969: 116–118).

Middle Persian

Middle Persian is the Middle Iranian language in which most of the Zoroastrian literature of Sasanian (224–651 CE) and post-Sasanian times was composed (West 1896–1904; Tavadia 1956; Boyce 1968a; Cereti 2001, 2009; Macuch 2009b; dictionary: MacKenzie 1971; Nyberg 1974). Zoroastrian Middle Persian texts were

written in four alphabets: Inscriptional Middle Persian, Book Pahlavi, Avestan (the so-called Pāzand texts) and New Persian (the so-called Pārsīg texts). Since Book Pahlavi was the most usual, the term Pahlavi is also applied to all Zoroastrian Middle Persian texts, with the exception of the Sasanian inscriptions. Zoroastrian Middle Persian sources can be divided roughly into three main periods of literary activity:

Sasanian Middle Persian (3rd–7th centuries CE).

Classical Middle Persian (8th–10th centuries CE).

Late Middle Persian and Neo-Pahlavi (11th–19th centuries CE).

Sasanian Middle Persian

The Sasanian inscriptions engraved in Middle Persian in Sar Mašhad and Naqš-e Rostam (Iran), in which the priest Kerdīr (3rd century CE) recounts his curriculum vitae and his vision of heaven and hell, are vital for the study of Zoroastrian eschatology, ritual fires, links between religion and politics, etc. (English translation: Skjærvø 1983 [1985]; text and French translation: Gignoux 1991, Grenet 2002a). Apart from them, the main primary sources for Sasanian Zoroastrianism are the Pahlavi translations of Avestan texts.

Sasanian Pahlavi translations and commentaries of Avestan texts were composed and transmitted by each exegetical school as various texts known as *Zand*, which was the source of most Zoroastrian religious literature during post-Sasanian times. To the Sasanian period, or at least to one or two centuries later (Cantera 2004), belong those of the *Yasna*, *Vīspred* (text: Dhabhar 1949), *Vīdēvdād* (text: Jamasp 1907; English translation: Anklesaria 1949), *Hērbedestān*, *Nērangestān*, *Niyāyišn*, *Āfrīnagān*, and *Sīh-rōzag*. The Pahlavi translations of most *Yāsts* and the rest of the *Khorde Avesta* (text: Dhabhar 1927; English translation: Dhabhar 1963) were redacted in post-Sasanian times, although fragments of lost Pahlavi translations of *Yāsts* in some Classical Pahlavi texts demonstrate that older versions existed as well. Other Pahlavi translations, like those of *Vd 12* and the *Vyt*, were surely redacted much later, even during the 18th and 19th centuries, in a sort of Neo-Pahlavi.

Besides these translations, a commentary on the *Vīdēvdād*, the *Zand ī Fragard ī Juddēwdād*, is also extant (König 2010b). It contains Pahlavi translations and commentaries of the *Vīdēvdād* going back to those preserved in the manuscripts as well as variant translations and commentaries of the same texts.

Classical Middle Persian Literature

The bulk of the extant Middle Persian literature that can be considered its “Classical” period was redacted between the 8th and 10th centuries CE. It mostly comprises texts of religious contents, but also short epics, collections of gnomic and paraenetic texts, and other non-religious compositions that will not be mentioned in this brief account, unless they directly deal with religious issues.

These are the most important Classical Middle Persian sources for the study of Zoroastrianism:

Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag (AWN): The ‘Book of the Righteous Wīrāz’, known as the “Iranian *Divina Commedia*,” narrates Wīrāz’s ecstatic vision of heaven and hell. It was probably redacted in the 9th or 10th centuries CE (Gignoux 1969) and was also transmitted and recomposed in Pāzand, New Persian, Sanskrit, and Gujarati (text and English translation: Haug and West 1872, Vahman 1986; French translation: Barthélemy 1887a; text and French translation: Gignoux 1984).

Ayādḡār ī Jāmāspīg (AJ): The ‘Memorial of Jāmāsp’ belongs to the apocalyptic genre and contains the questions put by the king Wištāsp to the seer Jāmāsp and his answers on cosmogony, anthropogony, mythical and historical events, and eschatology. Only part of this text, the so-called *Jāmāsp Nāmag* (‘Book of Jāmāsp’), is transmitted in Pahlavi; the rest is in Pārsīg, Pāzand, and New Persian (text and English translation: Modi 1903a; text and Italian translation: Messina 1939; text and French translation: Agostini 2013).

Čīdag Andarz ī Pōryōtkēšān (ČAP): The ‘Selected Wisdom of the Teachers of Old’ (ČAP), also known as the *Pandnāmag ī Zardu(x)št* ‘The Book of Advice of Zarathustra’ (PZ), is a post-Sasanian text (pseudo-epigraphically) ascribed to Zardu(x)št son of Ādurbād ī Mārāspand (c. 4th century CE), which gathers the sayings of the ‘Teachers of Old’ (*pōryōtkēšān*). The text instructs Zoroastrians on the proper religious knowledge and duties (*xwēš-kārīh*) they are to follow by the time they are fifteen years of age. It enumerates taking a wife and having children, agriculture and animal husbandry, and attending the priestly school (*hērbdestān*); it advocates dividing the day and night into thirds with one third for study, one third for cultivating the earth, and one third for rest (text and English translation: Kanga 1960; English translation: Zaehner 1956; selections in Skjærvø 2011a: 192–196).

Čīm ī Kustīg (ČK): The ‘Significance of the Sacred Girdle’, also known as *Pus ī Dānišn-kāmag* (‘The Son Eager to Know’), is a brief treatise of unknown date in which a teacher explains to his pupil the reason for tying and wearing the sacred girdle (*kustīg*). Pāzand and Sanskrit versions of it also exist (text: Anklesaria 1913; text and German translation: Junker and Tavadia 1959; text and English translation: Asha 2005).

Dādestān ī Dēnīg (DD): The ‘Religious Judgment’ is a compendium of ninety-two answers given by Manuščihr, high priest of Fārs and Kermān during the 9th century CE, to questions on various religious subjects put to him by Mihr-xwaršēd and other Zoroastrians (English translation: West 1882; text and English translation of DD 1–40: Jaafari-Dehaghi 1998).

Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad (MX): The ‘Judgment of the Spirit of Wisdom’ is a series of sixty-two questions on miscellaneous religious issues put to this spirit by a believer and its answers. Its date of composition is unknown, but West (1871: xi) proposed the 6th century CE. Pāzand, Persian, Sanskrit, and Gujarati versions of this work are also extant (text and English translation: West 1871; text: Anklesaria 1913).

Dēnkard (Dk): The ‘Acts of the Religion’ is considered the Pahlavi encyclopedia of Zoroastrianism. It was compiled from older material by Ādurfarrbag ī Farrozzādān and re-elaborated by Ādurbād ī Ēmēdān in the 9th or 10th centuries CE (complete

text and English translation: Sanjana and Sanjana 1874–1928; complete text: Madan 1911, Dresden 1966). Its first and second books and the beginning of the third are lost. The third book is mainly philosophical and apologetic and contrasts Zoroastrianism with other contemporary religions (French translation: de Menasce 1973). The fourth book includes the history of the transmission of the *Avesta*, counsels and questions on religious subjects, and their answers (English translation: West 1892). The fifth book contains the questions on religious subjects put to Ādurfarrbag ī Farroxzādān by Ya‘qub Xaledān and Bōxt-Mārē, a Jew and a Christian respectively, and his answers (English translation: West 1897; text and French translation: Amouzgar and Tafazzoli 2000). The sixth book is a gnomic and paraenetic compendium (text and English translation: Shaked 1979). The seventh book recounts the life of Zarathustra (English translation: West 1897; text and French translation: Molé 1967). The eighth summarizes the contents of the Pahlavi translations of the twenty-one *nasks* or ‘bundles’ into which the *Avesta* was divided; the ninth contains three commentaries on the *Old Avesta* (English translation: West 1892; text and English translation of the *Sūdgar Nask* of *Dk* 9: Vevaina forthcoming).

Bundahišn (*Bd*): the ‘Primordial Creation’ is a cosmological text, also containing the mythical history of the world. It was probably redacted in the 9th century CE by Farrbay ī Ašwahištān with parts of Pahlavi translations of lost Avestan texts. It is preserved in two recensions, the Iranian or Great(er) *Bundahišn* (*GBd*) and a shorter Indian (*IBd*) one (English translation: West 1880; text and English translation: Anklesaria 1956; text: Pakzad 2005).

Mādayān ī Gizistag Abāliš (*GA*): The ‘Book of the Accursed Abāliš’ recounts a supposed religious dispute between the priest Ādurfarrbag ī Farroxzādān and the apostate Abāliš (for Abālīh or ‘Abdallāh, according to de Menasce 1958: 11) in the court of the caliph Al-Ma‘mūn, who reigned 813–833 CE (text and French translation: Barthélemy 1887b; text and English translation: Chacha 1936; English translation in Skjærvø 2011a: 243–247).

Nāmagihā ī Manuščihr (*NM*): The three ‘Epistles of Manuščihr’ were written by this high priest of Kermān to condemn the innovations introduced in the *barəšnūm* ceremony by his brother Zādspram, the high priest in Sīrjān. The first epistle is addressed to the people of Sīrjān, the second to Zādspram, and the third, dated from 881 CE, to all Zoroastrians in Iran (English translation: West 1882; text: Dhabhar 1912; text and English translation: Kanga 1966, 1967, 1968, 1971, 1974, 1975).

Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg (*PRDD*): This text, one of the main sources of the New Persian *Šaddar Bondahēš* (*SdBd*) (see Sheffield “Primary Sources: New Persian,” this volume), usually precedes and follows the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* (*DD*) in the manuscripts and contains sixty-five chapters, mostly answers to questions on various religious issues (text and English translation: Williams 1990).

Rivāyat of Ādurfarrbag ī Farroxzādān (*RAF*) and *Farrōbag-srōš ī Wahmānān* (*RFW*): This text comprises 147 questions on religious subjects to Ādurfarrbag ī Farroxzādān, five questions to Farrōbag-srōš ī Wahmānān and thirty more to an unknown addressee (text and English translation: Anklesaria 1969; text: Rezā‘ī-Bāghbīdī 2005).

Rivāyat of Ēmēd ī Ašwahištān (REA): This text contains forty-four questions and answers, mainly concerning legal issues and prescriptions on purity, composed by Ēmēd ī Ašwahištān, high priest of Fārs and Kermān in the 10th century CE (text and English translation: Anklesaria 1962, Safa-Isfehāni 1980).

Šāyest-nē-šāyest (Šnš): The ‘Licit, Illicit’ is a compendium of normative literature based on the Pahlavi translations and commentaries of Avestan texts, some of which its author(s) quote (text and English translation: West 1880, Tavādia 1930, Kotwal 1969).

Škand-gumānīg Wizār (ŠGW): The ‘Explanation to Dispel Doubts’ was composed by Mardānfarrox ī Ohrmazddādān in the 9th century CE. It expounds the tenets of Zoroastrianism and is a strong rationalist defense of the faith against other contemporary religions, like Judaism, Christianity, Manichaeism, and Islam. Only the Pahlavi version of some of its sixteen chapters is extant; the rest is preserved in Pāzand and Sanskrit (English translation: West 1885; text: Jamasp-Asana and West 1887; text and French translation: de Menasce 1945; text and English translation of the Jewish chapters: Thrope 2012).

Wizīdaḡīhā ī Zādspram (WZ): The ‘Anthology of Zādspram’ was probably composed by this high priest in the 9th century CE. It comprises thirty-five chapters divided into three main parts, corresponding to the three periods of the world’s history in Zoroastrianism: cosmogony (1–3); the life of Zarathustra (4–26); eschatology (34–35). To them other secondary themes were appended (English translation: West 1897; text and English translation: Anklesaria 1964; text and French translation: Gignoux and Tafazzoli 1993).

Zand ī Wahman Yasn (ZWY): In spite of including the word *Zand* in its title, this is not the Pahlavi translation of (a putative) *Wahman Yašt*, but an apocalyptic text. Its date of composition is uncertain, but according to Cereti (1995b: 13) its final version dates from the 9th or 10th centuries CE. It describes in nine chapters past and future events, highlighting Zarathustra’s vision of the (four or seven) ages of the world, in the context of the Zoroastrian doctrine of the millennia. Pāzand, Sanskrit, and New Persian versions are also extant (English translation: West 1880; text and English translation: Cereti 1995b).

Late Middle Persian

Colophons: Colophons of Zoroastrian texts were written in late Middle Persian, Pāzand, New Persian, and Gujarati, and the oldest, i.e., that of the manuscript B of the *Dēnkard* (Dresden 1966), goes back to 1020 CE. They are not only relevant as witnesses to the textual history of the manuscripts; they also provide us with valuable information about calendars, locations of Zoroastrian communities, migrations, priestly families, etc.

Nērangs: In the liturgical manuscripts they designate ritual instructions written in late Middle Persian, Pāzand, New Persian, and Gujarati and describe priestly activities during ritual performances. They also designate incantations in these languages, some of which are rendered into English by Hampel (1974), Mirza (1992), and Panaino (2004e).

Neo-Pahlavi Literature

Late redactions or recompositions in a sort of Neo-Pahlavi are the Pahlavi translations of *Vd* 12, *Vyt*, and *Yt* 14. The *Wizirgerd ī Dēnīg* (*WiD*; text and French translation: Molé 1967), a collection of Pahlavi translations of lost Avestan texts, may also belong to this type, according to West (1896–1904: 90; see also Sheffield [2005] 2009).

Scholarly Resources

For online access to Avestan manuscripts, see the Avestan Digital Archive (www.avesta-archive.com). There are various important entries in the *Encyclopædia Iranica* (open access: www.iranicaonline.org). The main edition of the Avestan corpus is Geldner (1896–1904). Surveys include West (1896–1904), de Menasce (1983), Boyce (1984b), Kellens (1989b), Cereti (2001, 2009), Hintze (2009a), and Macuch (2009b). For selected translations of the Avestan and Pahlavi texts, see Skjærvø (2011a).

CHAPTER 35

Primary Sources New Persian

Daniel J. Sheffield

For centuries after the Arab conquest of Iran, Book Pahlavi maintained its status as scholastic language of the Zoroastrian clergy. New compositions in Pahlavi were produced sporadically by Zoroastrian priests as late as the 19th century CE (see Andrés-Toledo, “Primary Sources: Avestan and Pahlavi,” this volume). Though New Persian linguistic elements can be found in late Pahlavi literature, New Persian itself did not become a common vehicle for literary expression in the Islamicate world until the 10th century. Perhaps due to a conservative attachment to Pahlavi, reluctance to adopt an idiom associated with Muslims, or distance from centers of Persian literary patronage, Zoroastrian authors began to write in the New Persian language at a relatively late date. The earliest datable works of Zoroastrian New Persian originate after the Mongol conquest of Iran in the early 13th century, commencing with the *Zarātoštnāma* (Zn) of Kaykāvūs b. Kaykhosrow and the later works of Zartošt b. Bahrām Paždū (see below). The establishment of the Gujarat sultanate in the 15th century brought western India and the Zoroastrians settled there into the world of cosmopolitan Persianate literary culture, and the adoption of Persian by the Parsis was reinforced with the beginnings of the Persian *Revāyat* correspondence in 1478 CE (see below).

As the primary literary language of Iranian Zoroastrians for almost 750 years, and in use among Indian Zoroastrians for three centuries, the Persian corpus of Zoroastrian texts is quite significant in its extent, documenting the history of Zoroastrian communities of Iran and India during an under-studied period of time. Below follows a brief survey of Zoroastrian literature in New Persian. (For previous scholarly surveys of this literature, see West 1896–1904; Āmūzgār 1970; and especially Shahmardān 1951.)

The Zoroastrian Dialects of Yazd and Kermān

Though New Persian became the primary vehicle for literary expression among the Zoroastrians of Iran during the medieval period, the use of the literary language was probably restricted to the learned elite of a community which primarily spoke regional dialects. Though only very rarely used for literary composition (notably see Khāze‘ 1979), mention should be made here of the modern spoken language of the Zoroastrian communities of Yazd and Kermān. This dialect, referred to as *behdīnānī*, *darī*, or pejoratively as *gabrī*, is part of the Central group of Iranian languages, and is closely related to, but distinct from, the Jewish dialects of the same area. Some of the oral literature of these dialects has been published in Ivanow (1935–1939) and in Vahman and Asatrian (2002). For grammatical descriptions and lexicographical studies, see Windfuhr (1990) as well as the studies of Sorūšīyān (1956) and Mazdāpūr (1995–).

Texts Written in Middle Persian Language in Persian Script (Pārsī)

The linguistic status of Zoroastrian literature in New Persian is made more complicated by the tendency to write Middle Persian language in Perso-Arabic script, a hybrid linguistic phenomenon referred to in secondary literature as *pārsī*, analogous to the writing of Middle Persian language in Avestan script (*pāzand*) (Spiegel 1851). A number of important Middle Persian texts exist either solely or primarily in their *pārsī* recension, notably the *Ayādgār ī Jāmāspīg* (*AJ*) (‘The Memorial of Jāmāsp’, text and Italian translation: Agostini 2013) and the *Hazār Pursišn* (‘One Thousand Questions’, K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, henceforth KRCOI, HP Ms. 290). The use of Middle Persian words and phrases in texts composed primarily in New Persian is not uncommon, resulting in a complex hybrid language that adds Middle Persian forms to the New Persian, Arabic, and Turkic vocabulary of the medieval and early modern Persian language.

Narratives of the Lives of Religious Figures

The earliest datable text to have been composed by a Zoroastrian author in the New Persian language is the versified *Mawlūd-e Zartošt* (‘The Birth of Zarathustra’), commonly known as the *Zarātoštnāma* (‘Book of Zarathustra’) (text and French translation: Rosenberg 1904), comprising approximately 1,530 verses. Tradition ascribes the work to the poet Zartošt b. Bahrām Paždū, but in fact the work was composed by an earlier poet, Kaykāvūs b. Kaykhosrow b. Dārā in the city of Rayy, whose manuscript Zartošt b. Bahrām Paždū transcribed in the town of Bīžanābād in 1278 CE (de Blois 2004: 150–154; Sheffield 2012: 43–46). According to the text, the author was shown a life of Zarathustra in Pahlavi in the possession of the high priest (*mūbadān mūbad*) of Rayy. This priest complains to the poet Kaykāvūs that “no one remembers the beginnings and origins of these old stories. / I fear that they will be lost altogether, since no one is skilled in this script.” As a result, the priest commands the poet that he should “set

them to verse, in pure speech and in Persian (*darī*) script.” The composition of the *Zarātoštnāma* was a tremendous success, becoming perhaps the most widely copied of all New Persian Zoroastrian texts (including, notably, one illustrated manuscript, KRCOI HPMS 149). The text narrates the life of Zarathustra from the portentous dreams of his parents prior to his birth to the miracles he performed during childhood; to his ascension into paradise where he meets Ohrmazd and the *Amšās-fands* (Av. Aməša Spənta, Pahl. Amahrspandān); to his return to earth with the *Zend-Avesta* to make a prophetic claim at the court of Kaygoštāsp (Av. Kauui Vīštāspa); and ultimately to his audience with Ohrmazd where he learns of the four ages and the end of the world, drawing upon the model of the *Zandī Wahman Yasn*. The text fits elements from oral accounts of the life of Zarathustra similar to those attested in Pahlavi sources into a prophetological narrative based on the performance of evidentiary miracles (*moʻjezāt*) and the revelation of divine scripture, which served as the basis for how most Zoroastrians understood their prophet into the modern period (see Stausberg, “Zarathustra: Post-Gathic Trajectories,” this volume).

An early copyist of the *Zarātoštnāma*, Zartošt b. Bahrām Paždū, who lived in Bīzanābād, was the author of a number of works, including the *Čangranaghāčānāma* (text published in Bahrām b. Ardašīr and Goštāsp b. Hormozyār 1900). The *Čangranaghāčānāma* (comprising approximately 750 verses) relates the story of an Indian sage named Čangranaghāča, the teacher of King Goštāsp’s vizier Jāmāsp, who hears of Goštāsp’s acceptance of Zarathustra’s claim to prophethood and sets out to the royal court to challenge Zarathustra to a debate. But, before the debate begins, Zarathustra shows this Čangranaghāča a *nask* (division) of the *Avesta* which predicts his coming to the court, and Čangranaghāča, abandoning any challenge he may have to Zarathustra’s prophethood, remains at the court to learn the *Zend-Avesta* and correct ritual practice. Zarathustra’s fame spreads across the seven continents, provoking the anger of the Turanian king Arjāsp and his sorcerer Tūr Barātūr. The two wage war against the Iranians, killing Zarathustra. The text concludes with an account of the kings of Iran following Goštāsp, until the time of the restoration of the religion under Ardašīr.

Zartošt b. Bahrām Paždū was also the first to versify the story of the *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag* (AWN) in New Persian (text: ‘Afīfī 1965; a prose version, likely older than the verse version, was published by Kargar 2009). In his *Ardāvīrāfnāma*, Zartošt b. Bahrām relates Ardāvīrāf’s visions of paradise and hell in approximately 1,850 couplets. In the New Persian version of the story, Ardāvīrāf journeys to the other world at the request of King Ardašīr I, in order to receive proof for the *Avesta*, reassembled under the reign of Ardašīr after its destruction by Alexander. In this, the text diverges from both the Pahlavi version of the story, which does not specify a monarch, and the Pāzand/Sanskrit version of the story, which takes place during the rule of Goštāsp. Several illustrated manuscripts of the *Ardāvīrāfnāma* have come down to the present, both in Iran and in India. The story of Ardāvīrāf became a popular subject in Zoroastrian Persian literature, and was versified on several more occasions, notably by the Iranian traveler Kāvūs b. Farīborz Yazdī in the mid-16th century CE in Navsari (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Supplément Persan 46). These two versions of the *Ardāvīrāfnāma* became the basis for the Gujarati verse translation by Ervad Rustam Pešotan Hamjiār (see Sheffield,

“Primary Sources: Gujarati,” this volume). The several versions of the *Ardāvīrāfnāma* reflect a broader trend of poetic imitation (*esteqbāl*) in which later authors reworked old material into new poetic compositions.

The tradition of writing stories about important religious figures on the model of the *Zarātoštnāma* and the *Ardāvīrāfnāma* continued into the 19th century. An important example of late hagiographical narrative is the *Māhyār-nāma* (“Book of Māhyār”), a versified biography of Dastūr Māhyār Vachā, the adopted son of Rānā Jesang (known to posterity as Dastur Meherjīrānā), in approximately 1,870 couplets (First Dastoor Meherjirana Library, henceforth MRL, MS F81). Composed by his descendent Erachjī Sohrābjī Meherjīrānā in 1825, the work recounts the life of the first man to be designated *dastūr* among the Bhagarsāth priests of Navsari, from his birth in 1514 to his audience at the court of the Mughal emperor Akbar. At court, Māhyār participated in religious debates and thwarted the sorcery of a certain Hindu charlatan named Jagatguru through the performance of a saintly miracle (*karāmat*). Out of respect for his religious stature, the text recounts that Māhyār was granted a land grant (*jāgīr*) by the emperor.

The *Ṣaddars*

The *Ṣaddar* (literally ‘One Hundred Gates’, i.e., ‘One Hundred Subjects’) literature comprises four distinct works, each of which addresses one hundred subjects related to the religion. The two oldest texts of the genre, the *Ṣaddar Naṣr* (text: Dhabhar 1909: 1–68; translation: West 1885: 253–361) and the *Ṣaddar Bondaheš* (text: Dhabhar 1909, 69–178; translation: Dhabhar 1932: 497–578), which have no connection to one another apart from their name and structure, are both written in Persian prose. In terms of contents, they very much resemble Pahlavi *Revāyat* texts. The *Ṣaddar Naṣr* treats subjects relating to sins and religious duties, such as the sin of anal intercourse, the correct slaughter of animals, the Farvardīgān ceremony, and the necessity of teaching Pahlavi only to priests. The *Ṣaddar Bondaheš* pertains primarily to cosmography, eschatology, and ritual practice, and begins with the creation of the world, the role of the Amahrspands (Av. Aməša Spənta), and Goštāsp’s acceptance of Zarathustra’s prophetic claim. Though the dating of these texts is uncertain (Tavadia 1954), they were regarded as authoritative by later authors and are frequently quoted in the Persian *Revāyats*. The popular *Ṣaddar Naẓm*, composed in *motaqāreb* meter in 1495 by Mardšāh b. Malekšāh, comprising approximately 1,850 couplets, expands on the *Ṣaddar Naṣr*, but diverges from the prose original in arrangement and in the substitution of two subjects regarding the festivals of the *Farvardīgān* and the *gāhānbārs* (see Rose, “Festivals and the Calendar,” this volume). Translated by Thomas Hyde in 1700 (Hyde 1700: 431–488), it was one of the earliest Zoroastrian texts known to Western scholars. The *Ṣaddar* continued to be reinterpreted by later authors and, in 1531, the fourth version of the text, called the *Ṣaddar Baḥr-e Ṭavīl*, was composed in *ramal* meter by Rostam Esfandeyār and his son Behzād Rostam in approximately 2,700 verses, further expanding on subjects found in the *Ṣaddar Naẓm* (text: MRL MS F66; Gujarati translation: Jāmāspāsājīnā 1881).

Religious Miscellanies

In addition to the *Šaddar* literature, a wide variety of religious miscellanies are extant in Persian. Perhaps the oldest text in this genre is the already mentioned *Hazār Porsešn*, a work composed in Pahlavi and transcribed into Persian script (KRCOI HPMs. 290). Other works of this genre often bear nondescript titles like *So'āl va Javāb* ('Questions and Answers'), *Šāyast na-Šāyast* ('The Permitted and the Non-Permitted'), *Vajargar-e Dīnī* ('Religious Decisions'), *Dādestān-e Dīnī* ('Religious Judgments'), and *Revāyat* ('Transmitted Tradition'). Despite the names of these texts, they have no relation with the Pahlavi *Šāyest-nē-šāyest*, *Wizirgerd ī Dēnīg*, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, or *Rivāyat*. The more important works of this genre include Dastūr Dārāb Pāhlan's *Farzīyātnāma* ('Book of Religious Duties') and his *Kholāše-ye Dīn* ('The Essence of the Religion'), written in 1690 (edition and translation: Modi 1924). The *Farzīyātnāma* is a compilation in 1,513 couplets of religious duties beginning with the duties a child must learn in order to be invested with his *koštī*, followed by the daily prayers of men and women, the duties of priests, and concluding with a description of funerary ceremonies. The *Kholāše-ye Dīn* is a short text (approximately 340 couplets) describing the creation of the world, the lives of Zarathustra and Jamšīd, the hundred names of god, the virtues of the *Ahūnvar* prayer (see Kotwal and Kreyenbroek, "Prayer," this volume), and a description of the contents of the twenty-one *nasks* of the *Avesta*.

The Persian *Revāyats*

In 1478, an Indian Zoroastrian named Narīmān Hūšang returned to Gujarat from Yazd in Iran, bearing a letter from the Zoroastrian community there. The letter, called the *Revāyat of Narīmān Hūšang*, concerned practices of Indian Zoroastrians that were at odds with Iranian custom, such as allowing menstruating women to eat with bare hands and employing non-Zoroastrians to help carry corpses. Having learned from Narīmān that the Indian Zoroastrians had little ability to read Pahlavi, the letter writer encourages Indian priests to come to Iran to study with their Iranian colleagues. This *Revāyat* initiated a formal written correspondence between Iranian and Indian Zoroastrians that lasted for almost three centuries (Vitalone 1987). In addition to letters between the communities, messengers also carried with them manuscripts and ritual implements, and, in the 300 years following the time of Narīmān Hūšang, more than twenty *Revāyats* were exchanged between India and Iran, originals and copies of which are still extant in Indian libraries. Eventually the correspondence grew to be so voluminous that attempts were made to compile and classify the rulings contained in the letters. The most important example of this is the *Classified Revāyat of Dārāb Hormazyār* (partial English translation in Dhabhar 1932), an autograph manuscript of which (dated 1678–1679) is kept in Mumbai University Library under the shelf mark BU 29.

In the 1720s, an Iranian priest named Jāmāsp was invited to come to Surat from Kermān to resolve a theological dispute (Cantera and Toledo 2008). A poem in praise of Jāmāsp (Mumbai University Library MS 48) records Jāmāsp's activities to bring religious practices in India into accord with those in Iran. Noting that the Indian Zoroastrian

calendar differed from the Iranian calendar by a period of one month, owing to a difference in the calculation of an intercalary month (*kabīse*) supposedly added to the Zoroastrian calendar every 120 years, he encouraged Indian Zoroastrians to adjust their calendar to correspond to that of Iran. Those who did so became known as *Qadīmīs*, ‘those (who use) the old (dates)’. Yet, most Parsis in India did not rectify their calendar and became known as the *Shahanshāhīs*, ‘those (who use) the imperial (dates)’, and ceased to participate in correspondence with Iranian Zoroastrians altogether (see Rose, “Festivals and the Calendar,” this volume). The *Qadīmīs* began to adopt Iranian ritual practice, even so far as pronouncing their prayers according to the Iranian, rather than the Indian, pronunciation, and continued to participate in the *Revāyat* correspondence. During the remainder of the 18th century, four more *Revāyats* were exchanged between the *Qadīmīs* of India and Iran, culminating with the *Revāyat-e Haftād va Hašt* (‘The *Revāyat* of 78 (Questions)’, better known by its Gujarati title, *Iṭhoter Revāyat*), written in 1773 (Vitalone 1996), which was brought back to India by the priests Kāvūs Jalāl and his son Mollā Fīrūz (also Mullā Feroz) (see below).

Scientific and Astrological Texts

The *Ārāste-ye Dādār ben Dādhūkht* (‘The “Embellishment” of Dādār son of Dādhūkht’) (edition: Aša and Mīršāhī 2004) is a work in Persian prose, purportedly translated from a Pahlavi original, detailing a debate that took place at the court of King Šāpūr I (r. 240–270 CE) between the high priest (*mūbadān mūbad*) Dādār, the son of Dādhūkht, and sages sent by the Roman Caesar Abūlneyūš (evidently a calque on the name Apollonius, though no historical Roman emperor is known by this name). The sages of the Roman emperor question why Zoroastrians have no books about the sciences of physiology and anatomy, to which Dādār responds that Zoroastrians are not permitted to dissect corpses as Roman doctors do, since to do so would be polluting. However, as Dādār argues, scientific knowledge is contained within the *Zend-Avesta* itself. He then proceeds to answer a number of questions – many of which echo popular themes in late antique and Islamic interpretations of Aristotle – about the various faculties of the soul, the details of human and animal reproduction, the origins of the senses and dreams, and the nature of hell and paradise. Finally, Dādār asks a question about the origins of good and evil to the Romans, which they are unable to answer. The text concludes with the Romans admitting that the *Avesta* must be a truly divine book and praising King Šāpūr, Dādār, and the Zoroastrian religion. The text is important as one of the very few sources providing a glimpse of a Zoroastrian interpretation of the natural sciences and metaphysics, revealing that some Zoroastrians continued to engage with Aristotelean and Islamic philosophy many centuries after the end of the Sasanian Empire.

Echoing the Classical association linking the magi with astrology, several Zoroastrian priests earned reputations as skilled astrologers during the medieval and early modern period. A number of astrological texts copied by Zoroastrian scribes in New Persian are still extant. Perhaps the most famous of these texts are known under the title *Jāmāspī* or *Jāmāspnāma* (*Jn*). The *Jāmāspnāma* was so famous during the Islamic period that it is referred to in several non-Zoroastrian sources; the 11th-century *Abū-Moslemnāma* for

instance refers to the *Jāmāspnāma* confirming the prediction of the Shī'a Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 115/733 CE) that, at the end of time, the hero Abū Moslem will rise to eliminate the disagreement of the seventy-two sects of Islam. Some works of Safavid-era Shī'a Ḥadīth literature, such as the 17th-century compilation *Waṣā'il al-Shī'a*, have even gone as far as to give *Jāmāsb* (variant: *Jāmāst*) as the name of the scripture of the Zoroastrians rather than the *Zend-Avesta*. A number of texts by the name of *Jāmāspnāma* are extant in New Persian, most of which derive from the Middle Persian *Ayādgar ī Jāmāspīg* (see, for instance, Unvala 1922 II: 101–130). Another text consisting of a series of nativities is known by the title *Aḥkām-e Jāmāspī* ('The Decrees of Jāmāsp') (MRL MS F39); apparently it is a New Persian translation of the Arabic *Kitāb Aḥkām al-Qirānāt* (on which, see Pingree 1997: 43). It reflects a complex chain of transmission in which late antique Iranian astrology (see Panaino, "Cosmologies and Astrology," this volume) is transmitted to medieval Zoroastrians via an Arabic-language recension.

Zoroastrian–Muslim Apologetic Texts

Several texts in Zoroastrian New Persian attest to religious debates between Zoroastrians and Muslims in the medieval and early modern periods. Perhaps the most famous of these texts are the two texts referred to by the title of '*Olamā'-ye Eslām*' ('The Scholars of Islam' I: Unvala 1922 II: 72–80; translation: Dhabhar 1932: 438–449; II: Unvala 1922 II: 80–86, translation: Zaehner 1955: 409–418). '*Olamā'-ye Eslām I* is a defense of the Zoroastrian doctrine of the creation of the world and the origins of evil, given by an unnamed Zoroastrian priest in response to four questions put forward by Muslim scholars ('*olamā'*'). The Zoroastrian author makes his arguments for the superiority of Zoroastrianism using the style and vocabulary of rational theology (*kalām*). '*Olamā'-ye Eslām II* is a more problematic text. The text begins with questions put to a Zoroastrian priest by Muslim scholars "600 years after Yazdegerd," but in the remainder of the text, the priest does not actually respond to these questions. He instead gives an account of Zoroastrian cosmology (de Blois 2007). Both texts have attracted considerable attention as latter-day reflections of the myth of Zurwān (see Panaino, "Cosmologies and Astrology" and Vevaina, "Theologies and Hermeneutics," this volume). Another text similar in content to the two better-known '*Olamā'-ye Eslām*', but composed in a more conversational style, is entitled *Qeṣṣe-ye Dastūr bā yek-ī az Dānešmandān-e Mosalmān* ('The Story of the Dastūr and One of the Muslim Sages', Bayerische Staatsbibliothek MS M52, 176v–188v). The text begins with a discussion about dualism and the creation of evil, before proceeding to the subject of astrology and ultimately concludes with a discussion of the prophethood of Zarathustra.

Later encounters between historical Zoroastrian figures and Muslim theologians are also attested. One late example of this genre is a work entitled *Mas'ale-ye Dīn* ('Tenets of the Religion'), which relates a historical encounter between the Qajar governor of Yazd, Moḥammad Valī Mīrzā (governor of Yazd 1821–1828), and Dastūr Kaykhosrow (Khāze' 1957: 132–186), composed in approximately 800 couplets during the year 1207/1837 by Khodābakhsh Jāmāsp in Yazd. The text details thirty-three questions put to the *dastūr* of Yazd by the governor, beginning with questions about the prophecy of Zarathustra,

ritual performance, and legal matters including religious endowments (*vaqfiyāt*), inheritance, and marriage. Notable are the categories by which the Qajar governor understands what constitutes a religion, all of which are derived from an Islamic model – he asks the *dastūr* what Zoroastrians do for ritual ablution (*vožū*), what the direction of their prayer (*qeble*) is, what their fasting practice (*rūze*) is, what their practice is concerning the correct slaughter of animals (*ḥalāl va ḥarām*), their practice of pilgrimage (*zeyārat*), and the like. After receiving the answers of the *dastūr*, the text concludes with the governor mourning the loss of the ancient Kayanian kings and heroes.

Stories of Migration to India

Though the presence of Zoroastrians in western India is known from epigraphic sources as early as the 10th century (Cereti 2007c), no narrative of the migration of Zoroastrians to India exists from before the late 16th century, when the *Qeṣṣe-ye Sanjān* ('The Story of Sanjan') was first composed (see below). A work which perhaps became the model for this genre is a short poetic text called the *Qeṣṣe-ye Kāvūs va Afsād* ('The Story of Kāvūs and Afsād', MRL MS F45, KRCOI MS R VII 119, Gujarati translation: Rabāḏī 1831), composed in approximately 440 Persian couplets. The text tells the story of two Iranian Zoroastrian merchants who set out for a business trip to India only to be shipwrecked on the island of Diu. News reaches the Zoroastrian community in Navsari that two Iranian Zoroastrians have arrived in India, and Mānek Shāh, the son of Changā Āsā, writes them a letter to invite them to Navsari. On their way, the two Iranians stop in the cities of Khambhat, Bharuch, Ankleshvar, and Surat, where they observe what they describe as corrupt Zoroastrian practices in each of these places. Finally, after arriving in Navsari, the two are asked about correct Iranian practice by Mānek Shāh. A long section is devoted to the ritual for consecrating a *dakhme*, which Mānek Shāh then commissions in the year 1531. The story concludes with a fight between Kāvūs and Afsād, in which Afsād leaves Kāvūs in Navsari after taking all of his money. Though the text itself is undated, its author, Kāvūs b. Farīborz-e Yazdī is also known from the *Ardāvīrāfnāma-ye Kāvūsī* (see above), which places him in the mid-16th century. However, some doubts over the authenticity of the text have been raised; some Shahanshāhī scholars have viewed the text as a forgery, written during the 18th or 19th century as Qadīmī propaganda.

The *Qeṣṣe-ye Kāvūs va Afsād* shares many features with the better-known *Qeṣṣe-ye Sanjān* (edition and translation: Williams 2009). Composed in 1599 CE by Bahman Kayqobād Sanjāna in 432 couplets, the work has probably generated more debate than any other Zoroastrian text composed in New Persian due to the role it plays as the foundation story of the Zoroastrian community in India (see Hinnells, "The Parsis," this volume). The story narrates the exodus of a group of Zoroastrians from an area called Kūhestān ('the mountainous region') in Iran to India a hundred years after the Arab conquest. The group of Zoroastrians goes first to the port of Hurmuz, then to Diu, and finally to the mainland of India, where they encounter a Hindu raja named Jādī Rāna, who lays out the conditions of their settlement in India and permits them to consecrate an Ātaš Bahrām in their settlement at Sanjan. The text quickly glosses over 500 years of Zoroastrian settlement under Hindu rule in India to the threat of an attack from a

Muslim ruler named Solṭān Maḥmūd, who reigned in the city of Champaner, the historical capital of the Gujarat sultanate. The descendent of Jādī Rāna mounts an army consisting of Hindu and Zoroastrian recruits to fight against Maḥmūd's general Ulugh Khān. A Zoroastrian champion named Ardašīr early distinguishes himself on the battlefield, but is ultimately killed by the Muslim army. The Zoroastrians, defeated, take the Ātaš Bahrām first to Bahārut and Bānsada for safe-keeping, before the fire is ultimately established in Navsari under Changā Āsā. Though the *Qeṣṣe* was composed by a Sanjānā during a time of dispute between the Bhagariā and Sanjānā priests of Navsari and should probably be interpreted in light of the circumstances in which it was composed, the story has, since its publication in Gujarati translation (Rabāḍī 1831), become a foundation myth for the Zoroastrian community as a whole. Interest in the text culminated in the construction of a memorial column (*stambh*) at the ancient site of Sanjan in 1917.

Another work, indebted to the *Qeṣṣe-ye Sanjān*, but written from the rival Bhagaria standpoint which continues the narrative into the 18th century, is the *Qeṣṣe-ye Zartoštīyān-e Hendūstān* ('The Story of the Zoroastrians of India', edition and translation: Cereti 1991), composed by Shāpūrjī Mānekjī Sanjāna, c. 1765–1790. The author of the text was the descendant of a Sanjānā priest who had been adopted into the Bhagariā *panṭhak*. After describing the arrival of the Zoroastrians in India, Shāpūrjī provides a description of the division of India into five priestly jurisdictions (Guj. *panṭhak*), absent from the *Qeṣṣe-ye Sanjān* narrative. The story then continues to the arrival of the Ātaš Bahrām in Navsari. Some years after this, according to the *Qeṣṣe-ye Zartoštīyān*, the Sanjānās began to stir up trouble with the Navsari laity, turning them against the Bhagariā priests of the city. These controversies led to riots and further disagreements, and even after the adjudication of the Mughal Nawab of Surat and legal decisions made at the court of the Gaekwad in Songadh, the Sanjānās were still not satisfied and ultimately took the fire out of Navsari to Valsad and ultimately to Udvada. The story concludes with the construction of a new Ātaš Bahrām in Navsari under the leadership of Khurshīd Desāi. This narrative generally corresponds to the historical documents kept by the Navsari Bhagarsāth Anjuman and to the narrative of the *Ātašnū Gīt* (see Sheffield, "Primary Sources: Gujarati," this volume).

Didactic and Ethical Works

A number of moral tales are extant in Zoroastrian New Persian. Several such tales are preserved in the Persian *Revāyat of Bahman Punjiya* (edition: Unvala 1922 II: 305–331), probably reflecting traces of pre-modern Zoroastrian folk narratives. One entertaining story of this type is the story of the *mūbad* who married his daughter to a bear (Mumbai University Library MS 46), composed in approximately 205 couplets. A Zoroastrian priest despairs to find his daughter a husband to the extent that he swears he would even marry her to a bear if a willing one were to be found. As fate would have it, a bear shows up at his house the next day requesting his daughter's hand in marriage. The *mūbad* reluctantly agrees, and the bear takes the girl to his hut in the woods. After a year, the *mūbad* decides that he should visit his daughter and sets out on a journey

through the forest to find the bear's abode. On the way he sees several strange things before he finally discovers his daughter and her groom, transformed into an upstanding religious man. The story concludes with the bear-turned-man explaining to the *mūbad* the moral significance of the wonderful sights he saw on his journey.

Besides what little information can be gleaned from texts like the *Hērbedestān* and the Persian *Revāyats*, very little is known about the traditional education of a Zoroastrian priest before the 19th century (see Vevaina, "Theologies and Hermeneutics," this volume). One rare example of a Zoroastrian Persian educational manuscript is MRL MS F85. The manuscript was copied by Erachji Sohrābji Meherjirānā in 1838, when Erachji was just twelve years old. The manuscript consists of a lexicon of the Arabic vocabulary of the *Golestān* and *Būstān* of Sa'dī Šīrāzī; the *Enšā'-e Ne'matī*, a manual composed in the late Mughal period containing models for correspondence and petitions; and a dialogue between a Zoroastrian teacher and his student entitled *So'al va Javāb fī-mā-beyn-e Ostād va Šāgerd-e Dīn-e Behī Mazdāyasnī* ('Questions and Answers between a Teacher and a Student of the Good Mazdean Religion'). The latter text provides a glimpse into the teaching of the principles of the Zoroastrian religion as they were understood at the outset of the colonial encounter.

Devotional Works

The early Zoroastrian New Persian poet Zartošt b. Bahrām Paždū (see above) is credited with composing the first Zoroastrian devotional poem (*monājāt*). The *monājāt* genre derives from a literary form associated with the 11th-century Šūfī poet Kh'āja 'Abdollāh Anšārī. The earliest examples of Zoroastrian *monājāt* originate in longer poetic compositions which begin customarily with passages written in praise of god and Zarathustra. The *monājāt* of Zartošt b. Bahrām was originally part of his *Ardāvīrāfnāma* but was collected in later *monājāt* collections and *Khorde Avestas* as a stand-alone work. Following on the pattern of Zartošt b. Bahrām Paždū, several later authors, including Dārāb Pāhlan, Jāmāsp Āsā, and Mollā Fīrūz composed their own *monājāts* (Schmermbeck 2008). By the 18th century, collections of *monājāts* were copied (see for example MRL MSS E39, E40, S83) for devotional use. In the 19th century, Persian *monājāts* came to be printed in Gujarati script at the end of *Khorde Avestas* and in independent booklets and are still recited or sung on auspicious occasions.

Āzar Kayvān

In the centuries following the Arab conquest of Iran, notions of Islam and Zoroastrianism interacted with one another in complex ways, as nominally Muslim and nominally Zoroastrian thinkers consciously and unconsciously adapted ideas of the other in their religious thought, at times blurring the distinction between the two religions. Such a phenomenon is especially evident in the complex religious landscape of early Safavid Iran (1501–1722), as Twelver Shī'a, Šūfī, millennialist, and *gholātī* ('Exaggerator') ideologies competed for legitimacy and political capital in the nascent empire (Babayan

2002; Abisaab 2004). In this context appeared a man who called himself Āzar Kayvān (d. 1618, according to the *Dabestān*, at the age of eighty-five), who claimed that, with the coming of the Islamic millennium, the dispensation of the Arabs and Islam had come to an end, and a new period of Persian superiority was beginning. Kayvān and his followers drew upon Zoroastrian New Persian texts, including the *Zarātoštnāma*, the *Šaddar Naẓm*, and the *Ardāvīrāfnāma*, as well as Islamic reports of Zoroastrians, and combined them with Šūfī and *gholātī* ideas, especially those of the Nuḡtavī and Nūrbakhshī orders, to fashion a new, cosmopolitan Zoroastrian religious order (*ṭarīqa*) who called their order the *kīš-e Ābādī* (the Ābādī sect). At some point, Āzar Kayvān left Iran with his followers to settle ultimately in Patna in north India, yet, even after leaving Iran, later texts suggest that members of the Ābādī sect traveled extensively. The Ābādīs believed that a work entitled the *Dasātīr-e Āsmānī* ('The Heavenly Regulations', text and English translation: Mollā Fīrūz b. Kāvūs 1818) was a work of divinely revealed scripture containing the teachings of the ancient prophet-kings of Iran. The cosmology of the *Dasātīr* holds that the world is eternal, and that time is cyclical. The cycle of prophet-kings is extended into pre-eternity beyond the reign of Gāyōmard, each cycle beginning with the prophethood of a certain Mahābād, from whose name the name of the sect derives. The *Dasātīr* is composed in an artificial language, which Ābādīs held to be the divine language, and is accompanied by a commentary in pure Persian (*pārsī-ye sare*, that is, Persian with virtually no Arabic loanwords). For Kayvān, non-Ābādī Zoroastrians, whom his followers refer to as *gabr*, do not share his beliefs because they do not accept the authority of the *Dasātīr*, nor do they understand that the *Zend-Avesta* of Zarathustra is an esoteric interpretation (*ta'vīl*) of the *Dasātīr*. The authorship of the *Dasātīr* itself is debatable, but one work of Āzar Kayvān himself is still extant, entitled the *Mokāšefāt-e Kayvānī* ('The Kayvānī Revelations', text: Mīr Ashraf 'Alī 1848), a work which describes a visionary journey of Āzar Kayvān as he projected his soul to the celestial spheres; this work is accompanied by a commentary written by Kayvān's successor Kaykhosrow entitled the *Jām-e Kaykhosrow* ('The Goblet of Kaykhosrow'). A number of short treatises associated with the Ābādīs, dealing with common themes in Šūfī literature, such as cosmology, angelology, and proofs of *vājeb al-vojūd* ('the necessary existent') and *vaḥdat al-vojūd* ('the unity of being'), also exist (Hātariā 1846).

Two works are of crucial importance for the historian of the sect. The first of these, entitled the *Šārestān-e Čahār Čaman* ('The Region of the Four Meadows', text: Bahrām Bīžan et al. 1909), composed by Bahrām b. Farhād (d. 1624/1625), is a text purporting to reveal the mystical importance of ancient Iranian mytho-history, which is interspersed with historical episodes involving various members of the sect as they enter into debates with some of the leading religious thinkers of Safavid Iran and Mughal India, including Shaykh Bahā'ī, Mīr Dāmād, Mīr Fendereskī, Faṭḥollāh Šīrāzī, Fayzī, and Abū al-Faẓl. A later work, entitled *Dabestān-e Mazāheb* ('The School of Creeds', edition: Reżāzāde Malek 1983; translation: Shea and Troyer 1843), probably the work of an author called Mūbad Šāh (who is also the author of a *Dīvān* of poetry, Khudābakhsh Library, Patna, MS HL 3747), describes the various religious traditions of India and is especially valuable for its coherent description of the beliefs and practices of the Ābādīs and the biographies of the sect's members. The work is also a very important source for Indo-Persian religious history in the 17th century more broadly.

The 18th and 19th Centuries

The 18th century witnessed a proliferation of Persian compositions by Zoroastrians in both Iran and India. The poet Marzbān Rostam Rāvaṛī, from the village of Rāvaṛ, near Kermān, was particularly prolific at the beginning of the 18th century, composing the *Vaṣf-e Kherad* ('The Description of Wisdom'), a new versification of the Pahlavi (*Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad*) and a long poem on Khosraw Anūšīravān which concludes with the pilgrimage of the Shī'a Imām 'Alī to his tomb. These compositions are contained in MRL MS F62, and are followed by an autobiographical account of the poet during the tumult of the early 18th century (on which see Daryae, "Zoroastrianism under Islamic Rule," this volume). This text, the *Qeṣṣe-ye Šā'er va Tārāj-e Balūč* ('The Story of the Poet and the Baluch Pillage'), is an eyewitness account of the devastation in the village of Rāvaṛ that Baluch troops carried out under the command of Maḥmūd Ghilzai, the leader of the Afghans, who captured the Safavid capital of Eṣfahān in 1722. Composed in approximately 440 couplets, the text is especially important as a primary historical source from an otherwise poorly documented period (see Daryae, "Zoroastrianism under Islamic Rule," this volume).

Perhaps the most prolific author of the 18th–19th centuries was Pešūtan b. Kāvūs Bharučā, better known by his sobriquet Mollā Fīrūz, who was born in the city of Surat, but who grew up in Iran. Among his extensive writings is the first Parsi autobiographical work, the *Dīnkherad* ('Wisdom of the Religion'), composed in 1786 CE in approximately 960 couplets, in which Mollā Fīrūz relates the experiences of his childhood while accompanying his father on a long journey to Iran (Text: Akhtar Jāved 1999; see Shahmardan Irani 1967; Sheffield 2013). Born in Bharuch in 1758 while religious controversy concerning the intercalation (*kabīse*) in the Zoroastrian calendar raged, Fīrūz's father was tasked with traveling to Iran to obtain answers from the Iranian priests to questions concerning the differing practices among Indian Zoroastrians (see *Revāyat-e Haftād va Hašt*, above). Fīrūz describes the arduous voyage by sea by which he and his father eventually came to Iran and the religious education he received in Yazd. Eventually, Fīrūz's father's fame as an astrologer reached the court of the king of Iran, Karīm Khān Zand, who employed him as a court astrologer. Fīrūz provides a first-hand account of the Zand court in Šīrāz, including an episode in which his father successfully intervened on behalf of two Zoroastrian petitioners who had requested that the king reduce the amount of the poll tax (*jezīye*) that they were supposed to pay. The two left Iran after Fīrūz's father predicted that Karīm Khān would be defeated by the Ottomans; rather than returning immediately to India, the two attempted to set out for Constantinople via Basra, Kuwait, and Baghdad; however, due to the ongoing war between the Zands and the Ottomans, they were stranded in Baghdad for two years before they were eventually able to return to India. Returning to Bombay, Fīrūz's father consecrated the first Ātaš Bahrām in the city on behalf of his patron Šeṭh Dādi Nasarvānji Dādišeṭh in 1783, where he remained for a year before leaving Bombay to accept a position as an astrologer at the court of the Nizam of Hyderabad. At this point, the narrative concludes with Mollā Fīrūz becoming the high priest of the Ātaš Bahrām. Before his death in 1830, Mollā Fīrūz composed a number of Persian works and was one of the earliest Zoroastrians to make extensive use of the printing press. Notable among his publications are an edition of the *Dasātīr* (see above) and the monumental

George-námah ('Book of (King) George', text: Mollā Fīrūz b. Kāvūs 1837) which recounts in nearly 40,000 couplets composed between 1811 and 1830 in the style of the *Šāhnāme* the British entrance into India.

Persian Printing in the 19th Century

In the 19th century Zoroastrians began to adopt the printing press in large numbers. Yet after Mollā Fīrūz's death in 1830, Parsi writing was for the most part restricted to Gujarati and, increasingly, English. Persian publishing in Bombay was largely dominated by Irani Zoroastrians, Zoroastrians who had begun migrating from Iran to western India in the late 18th century. In 1857, an educational treatise for young Iranian Zoroastrians was published by a certain Kaykhosrow b. Kāvūs in Bombay with the title *Golšan-e Farhang* ('The Garden of Education'), a catechism on the Zoroastrian religion interspersed with quotations from the major poets of the Persian canon. Mānekjī Limjī Hātariā's *Ezhār-e Seyāḥat-e Irān* ('Exposition of a Trip to Iran') was published in Gujarati (1865) and Persian translation (1864). A number of prayer books were published in Persian script as well, and, in 1882, the first Persian translation of the *Khorde Avesta* (*Khorde Avestā bā Neẓām-e Ma'nī*) was published in Bombay by Mūbad Tīrandāz b. Mūbad Ardašīr Irānī.

20th-Century Zoroastrian Persian Texts

Publication of Zoroastrian Persian texts for the Bombay Iranian community continued well into the 20th century. The most prolific publisher of this period was Ardašīr Khodāraḥm Marzbān Bonšāhī Elāhābādī (born 1902 in the village of Elāhābād near Yazd; d. 1987 in Bombay), known by his poetic sobriquet *Khāẓe'* (literally, 'the humble one'). *Khāẓe'* was a collector of Zoroastrian Persian texts from Iran, and published several 19th-century compositions over the course of his long career. His *Yādnāme-ye Gozaštēgān* ('Memorial Volume of the Departed'), published in 1958, is a useful biographical source for Iranian Zoroastrians who lived around the turn of the 20th century. He also published a copious biographical dictionary of the contemporary Persian poets of Yazd, entitled the *Tazkere-ye Sokhanvarān-e Yazd* ('A Biographical Dictionary of the Poets of Yazd', 1963) notably including several Zoroastrian authors. Finally, *Khāẓe'*'s published autobiography, entitled *Khāṭerāt-e Khāẓe'* ('The Memoirs of *Khāẓe'*', 1984), records his long literary life as a bookseller and publisher between Iran and India. A number of important works on the Zoroastrian religion were published in Iran during the early 20th century. Interest in the historical study of ancient Iran began during the Qajar period, and though an investigation of this literature lies outside the scope of the present chapter, the work of the Persian scholar Ebrāhīm Pūrdāvūd (1885–1968), who dominated the study of Zoroastrianism in Iran during the mid-20th century, should be noted here. Pūrdāvūd was the first Iranian to study Avestan and Pahlavi with European philologists during the first decades of the 20th century. (On Pūrdāvūd, see Moṣṭafāvī 1992; Nikūye 1999; on Pūrdāvūd's interaction with Parsis, see Marashi

2013.) After his return to Iran after the conclusion of World War I, he came into contact with Dinshah Jijibhoy Irani and came to Bombay in 1924 through the auspices of the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman. In Bombay, Pūrdāvūd began to give introductory lectures on Zoroastrian subjects and through the auspices of the Iran League published several books in Persian, beginning with a work entitled *Īrānšāh* (1926), about the history of the Parsis of India. The following year, acting on the suggestion of Ardeshir Reporter, the Parsi head of the Iranian Zoroastrian Amelioration Fund, Pūrdāvūd commenced translating Avestan texts into Persian, beginning with the *Gāthās* (1927) and the *Yašts* (1928). Indebted to Christian Bartholomae's German translations of the Avestan texts found in the *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (1904), Pūrdāvūd's translations have been used by Persian-speaking Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians alike since their publication (see also Stausberg, "Zoroastrians in Modern Iran," this volume). In 1956, with the assistance of Pūrdāvūd, a Zoroastrian named Jamšīd Sorūš Sorūšīyān (1914–1999) published a dictionary of the dialect of the Zoroastrians of Yazd and Kermān, entitled *Farhang-e Behdīnān*. As a well-to-do agriculturalist in Kermān, Sorūšīyān (see Cereti 2012) became a local community leader and corresponded extensively with European scholars until his death. His *Tārīkh-e Zartoštīyān-e Kermān dar īn čand Šade* ('The History of the Zoroastrians of Kermān during the Last Several Centuries', 1991), collects several of his writings on local Zoroastrian history. During the same period, the Iranian priest Mūbad Ardašīr Nāmdār Āzargošasb (1912–1966), who had studied in Bombay at the Cama Athornan Institute, published his Persian translation of the *Khorde Avesta* (1964, 2nd edition 1970), a treatise on the practice of the Zoroastrian religion (*Marāsem-e Mazhabī va Ādāb-e Zartoštīyān*, 1973), and an annotated translation of the *Gāthās* (1980).

Community Magazines

In 1950, the Anjoman of the Zoroastrians of Tehrān began to publish a journal called *Hūkht* (Av. 'Well-Spoken'), which was published until 1984. In 1965, a Zoroastrian youth organization in Tehrān named *Sāzemān-e Faravahar* began to publish a monthly (later bi-monthly) magazine entitled *Faravahar*. In 1981, the first new magazine to be published in the Islamic Republic of Iran devoted to the Zoroastrian community, entitled *Čīstā*, began to be published by the educator Parvīz Šahrīyārī (1926–2012) in Tehrān, where it continues to the present. The 21st century has ushered in the first Persian-language Zoroastrian news services, of which, at present, the sites *Amordād* (www.amordadnews.com) and *Berasād* (literally, 'May it come', www.berasad.com), provide up-to-date reporting on contemporary events.

CHAPTER 36

Primary Sources Gujarati

Daniel J. Sheffield

Though the date and circumstances in which Zoroastrians came to settle in western India are uncertain, the Zoroastrian myth of foundation contained in the *Qeṣṣe-ye Sanjān* (QS) relates a tradition that the Zoroastrians who came to settle in India from Iran made an agreement with the raja of Sanjān, Jādī Rāna, that they would “refrain from the language of the land of Iran and speak the language of the land of Hind” (QS 155). Whatever truth there may be in this story, literary evidence for Zoroastrians writing in a form of Gujarati goes back as far as the late 14th century CE. With the establishment of the Gujarat Sultanate and the beginning of the *Revāyat* correspondence with the priests of Iran, Zoroastrians for several centuries came to write in Persian, rather than in Gujarati, and literary compositions in the Gujarati vernacular only begin to appear in the 17th and 18th centuries. The Gujarati language was deeply affected by the Persian literary cosmopolis that linked India and Iran during the early modern period, and the vocabulary and literary forms of New Persian have left deep traces in Parsi Gujarati writing.

By the 19th century, Gujarati became the dominant language of composition for Parsis, and Gujarati literacy spread widely with the availability of cheap printed material. As early adopters of the printing press, Parsis wrote and published thousands of books, pamphlets, newspapers, and journals. Yet though many of the informants of the early British grammarians of Gujarati were in fact Parsis, and many of the earliest Gujarati dictionaries were likewise edited by Parsis, by the latter part of the 19th century, the Parsi dialect of Gujarati, closely related to the South Gujarati dialects of Surat and Navsari, retained a large amount of Persian vocabulary when elsewhere such vocabulary was being replaced by words of Sanskrit origin. As such, Parsi Gujarati was derided for being less pure than the dialect which served as the model for the standardization of the language, the highly Sanskritized dialect of the Nāgar

Brahmans of Ahmedabad (Isaka 2002). Few adequate grammatical descriptions of the Parsi Gujarati dialect (literary or spoken) exist. Brief accounts can be found in Tisdall (1892) and Grierson (1908). The most extensive description, based on the transcribed speech of informants, is Gajendragadkar (1974), which includes a thorough phonological analysis and a brief grammatical analysis. Modi (2011) contains short textual excerpts and word lists which may be of use, but is otherwise unsatisfactory. Few surveys of Parsi Gujarati literature exist in English, but mention should be made of Katrak (1974), which gives a brief survey of Parsi Gujarati works related to the field of Iranian studies. Several surveys of Parsi Gujarati writing exist in Gujarati. The most extensive history of Parsi Gujarati literature is Pilā Bhikāji Makāṭi's (1949) *Pārsi Sāhityāno Itihās* ('A History of Parsi Literature'), a work which surveys a large portion of the field of published Parsi Gujarati literature, along with well-researched descriptions of author's biographies.

The most important reference work for the study of the Parsi community is the *Pārsi Prakāś* ('Parsi Luster'). The work, which began under the editorship of Bamanji Behrāmji Paṭel (Bomanjee Byramjee Patell), was published over the course of nearly a century, comprising ten volumes, the first of which was published in 1888 and which continued until 1973. *Pārsi Prakāś* is a vast work, running to several thousand pages. Though an essential tool for historians of Zoroastrianism, its utility is limited in a few regards. Arranged chronologically, *Pārsi Prakāś* is almost entirely drawn from contemporary newspaper clippings, and as such, its coverage of events is typically quite brief. Yet, the subjects of the *Pārsi Prakāś* are diverse and the work is well indexed, making it a useful starting place for research relating to the Parsi community.

Old Parsi Gujarati Translation Texts

The earliest extant works written by Parsis in a form of the Gujarati language consist of interlinear translations of texts originally composed in Avestan and Pahlavi, and subsequently translated into Sanskrit, including texts from the *Khorde Avesta* and the *Yasna*, the *Škand-gumānīg Wizār* (text: Bharucha 1913: 62–97), and the *Ardā Wirāz-Nāmag* (text: Bharucha 1920: 29–72) (see Andrés-Toledo, "Primary Sources: Avestan and Pahlavi," this volume). These translations probably date to the late 14th–early 15th centuries. The oldest known manuscript (H1) containing an interlinear Gujarati text dates to 1415 CE. In these texts, the Gujarati text closely follows the Sanskrit translation. Later interlinear translations, such as that of the *Šaddar Naṣr* at the end of the 16th century, were made without the use of a Sanskrit intermediary. These earliest vernacular texts are composed in the regional literary language of Gujarat, referred to as Old Gujarati (or in older literature, Old Western Rajasthani), a learned and to some degree standardized written language also used by contemporary Hindu and Jain communities in parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan. The language differs significantly from the later texts of the 17th century onward, and employs a form of the Nāgarī script generally referred to as Jaina Nāgarī, archaic grammatical forms, and very few Persian loanwords.

The Archive of the Navsari Bhagarsath Anjuman

In addition to religious texts, a large number of important legal texts, contracts, and letters have been preserved in Persian and Gujarati from a very early date. The most significant extant collection of original documents is found in MRL MS U45 (some of which were published in Hodivala 1920), consisting of four volumes of original documents in Persian, Marathi, and Gujarati. Another important collection of old documents is the archive of the Navsari Bhagarsath Anjuman, which was collected and copied into two large manuscripts in 1876 (MRL MS U22) by Jāmāsji and Jamśedji Meherjirāṇā and printed in 1933 (see also the commentary of Meherjirāṇā 1939). This archive contains documents ranging from land settlements and agreements concerning the payment of priests to legal resolutions of priestly disputes and documents concerning the relationship of Navsari to other priestly jurisdictions and to Bombay. When taken together it constitutes a uniquely valuable source for the study of Parsi social history.

The Classical Compositions of Ervad Rustam Peśotan Hamjiār

Though Gujarati had been used for interlinear glosses of texts, ritual instructions, and record-keeping for centuries before, the earliest independent literary compositions in Gujarati emerge with the poet Ervad Rustam Peśotan Hamjiār (Hormazyār; the dates of Rustam's life are uncertain, but his name occurs as a signatory in *Revāyats* dating to 1668 and 1683). Residing in the port-city of Surat, Rustam was a prolific poet, with four long *ākhyāns* or epic poems attributed to him, of which three are still extant: the *Ardāvvrāfnāmū* (possibly c. 1651 CE, text: Driver 1979), the *Zartoštnāmū* (1674 CE, text: Anklesariā and Anklesariā 1932), and the *Siyāvaśnāmū* (1679 CE, text: Ankleśvariā [Anklesaria], 1873), the latter text derived from the story of Siyāvaś in the *Šāhnāme*. Like Persian Zoroastrian compositions, the texts begin with praise of Ohrmazd and Zarathustra, but, like contemporary Gujarati works from the Hindu and Jain communities, the poet invokes Sarasvatī, the Indic goddess of learning. Though these works are all based on earlier Persian works, which, Rustam relates, he studied in detail, unlike the earlier Gujarati translators Rustam significantly expands the original stories and draws freely from the canon of Sanskrit and Persianate poetic imagery to adapt the stories to an Indian vernacular, thus providing an interesting glimpse into how the Zoroastrian religion was conceptualized in an Indian environment. Though Rustam was something of an anomaly, writing extensively in Gujarati already in the 17th century, he laid the groundwork for later 18th- and 19th-century Parsi Gujarati authors.

The 18th- and Early 19th-Century Compositions

Beginning in the 18th century, a number of Persian works were translated into Gujarati by Parsis, including stories from the *Šāhnāme* and the *Golestān*. After the Parsi calendar controversy (*kabīse*) in the mid-18th century (see Rose, "Festivals and the Calendar"

and Sheffield, “Primary Sources: New Persian,” both this volume), the use of Persian as a literary language became increasingly associated with priests following the Kadmi (NP *qadīmī*) calendar. On the other hand, those who maintained the Shahanshāhī calendar began to write increasingly in the vernacular Gujarati. Some of the most significant texts from this period concern the priestly controversies which characterized this period. A collection of 18th- and 19th-century narratives concerning priestly controversies is found in MRL MS F110. The manuscript begins with a story in Gujarati prose about the origin of the *kabīse* controversy, told from the Shahanshāhī standpoint. According to the narrative, the Parsi merchant Dhanjīśāh Manjīśāh was approached by two priests in Surat who had been chastised by Dhanjīśāh’s rival Mancerji Khurśedji for performing ceremonies incorrectly. With Dhanjīśāh’s monetary backing, the priests claimed that they could prove the correctness of the Iranian Zoroastrian calendar and gain converts to the Kadmi cause. According to the texts, upon receiving Dhanjīśāh’s assistance, the two priests set out to forge books to support their claim. In addition, they enlisted the support of Kāvas Jalāl (the father of Mullā Feroz) and a certain Rustam Langḍo (“Rustam the Lame”) from Bharuch to help them convert the population of Surat to the Kadmi cause. According to the text, this Rustam Langḍo began providing magical charms to win the Surat laity over; the text describes Rustam as preparing a small bundled concoction (*poḷli*) for a Parsi layman to gain control over his domineering wife. Eventually the text describes how Dhanjīśāh successively approached the nawab of Bharuch to adjudicate in favor of the Kadmis, then the nawab of Surat, and ultimately the head of the English factory at Surat, spending 10,000 rupees in the process. The narrative alleges that the Kadmis went to such lengths to prove their superiority that they eventually conspired to kill the Shahanshāhī Dastur, Kāmdin (NP *Qīyām al-Dīn*) of Surat, in which task they failed, and ultimately had to send Mullā Kāvas to Iran, who according to the text had the *Iṭother Revāyat* (see Sheffield, “Primary Sources: New Persian,” this volume) written to cheat the Parsis of India. The text concludes bemoaning the construction of the Kadmi Dādiśeṭh Ātaś Bahrām in Bombay in 1783. The same manuscript also contains a narrative of the controversy between the laity and the priests of Navsari (see also *Qeṣṣe-ye Zartoštīyān* and *Ātaśnū Git*) as well as a 19th-century satirical poem ridiculing the priests of the Wāḍīāji Ātaś Bahrām.

The Calendar Controversy and the Beginning of Print Literacy

In the year 1797, the first Gujarati font for typesetting the Gujarati language was forged in the city of Mumbai by Behrāmji Jiji Chāpgar for the journal *The Bombay Courier*, and the following year, the first *Khorde Avesta* was printed by the *Courier* press. In the beginning of the 19th century, Parsis began to acquire printing presses for themselves, beginning with Fardunji Marzbānji, who acquired his first press in 1812 and who began to print calendars and almanacs. The earliest printed Parsi Gujarati material in Bombay reflects the still-raging calendar controversy. Fardunji Marzbānji was a Kadmi priest and a close associate of the leading Kadmi scholar of Bombay of the time, Mullā Feroz. In 1822, Marzbānji founded the *Mumbai Samācār* (www.bombaysamachar.com),

originally a Gujarati weekly serial which became a daily in 1832, the oldest continuously operating native-owned newspaper in Asia. In its early years, the paper devoted considerable space to promoting the Kadmi cause. Shahanshāhis began to acquire their own printing presses, and in 1826, the Shahanshāhi Dastur of Surat, Aspandīārji Kāmdinji, published a work entitled *Kadīm Tārikh Pārsioni Kasar* ('The Error of the Parsis Who Keep the Old Date'), which was countered two years later by Mullā Feroz in a Persian work entitled *Adelle-ye Qavīye bar 'Adam-e Javāz-e Kabīse dar Šarīat-e Zartostīye* ('Strong Arguments for the Eradication of the Permissibility of Intercalation in the Zoroastrian Religion'). The late 1820s and early 1830s saw a proliferation of treatises published on both sides, and reflect the breadth of the traditional learning of Parsi priests in the early colonial period, with arguments based on sources ranging from Pahlavi literature to Islamic astrology to contemporary European authors.

On March 12, 1832, a newspaper entitled the *Jām-e Jamšed* (www.jamejamshedonline.com) was inaugurated, originally for the Shahanshāhi community, named for the patron of the paper Jamšedji Jijibhāi (Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, 1783–1859). In the years following the death of Mullā Feroz in 1830 and his associate Fardunji Marzbānji in 1847, the Parsi calendar controversy began to die down, and newspapers which had originally been founded in the context of the calendar controversy began to report on community events more generally. By the mid-19th century, a number of new newspapers and journals had begun to be founded, including the *Rāstgoftār* ('Truth Teller') in 1851, originally as a journal serving the reformist group Rāhnumā-e Mazdayasnān Sabhā, as well as the *Pārsi Punch* (a satirical newspaper with political cartoons based on the London *Punch* magazine; see Hasan 2012) and the *Kaiser-e Hind* ('The Emperor of India'), a bilingual English and Gujarati newspaper in 1882. Monthly magazines were also founded by Parsis. The *Jagat Premi* ('Friend of the World', founded 1851) included articles about the discoveries of European science with a special focus on the archaeological discoveries in Iran. The *Stri Bodh* ('Woman's Advice', founded 1857) advocated for moral and social reform among the Parsi women of Bombay.

The Missionary Controversy

In 1839, upon the conversion of two Parsi boys, Dhanjibhai Navroji and Hormazji Pestonji, by the Reverend John Wilson of the Free Church of Scotland (1804–1875), prominent members of the Parsi community were up in arms against the perceived threat of Christian missionaries to the Parsi community (see Hinnells, "The Parsis," this volume). Wilson had arrived in Bombay in 1829, and began to write on Zoroastrian subjects already in 1831. Wilson brought with him a scripturalist interpretation of religion which sought to justify religious practice through reference to the oldest existing religious texts, a practice at odds with contemporary Parsi reading practices. In addition to polemics composed in English, Wilson, and the Bombay Tract and Book Society with which he was associated, published several tracts in Gujarati, for instance a polemic on the question of Zoroastrian monotheism entitled *Pārsio Khodāparast Che ke Nahī* ('Are the Parsis Monotheist or Not?'), published by the Bombay Tract and Book Society in 1861.

A number of works were composed by Parsis in response to the missionary crisis. The high priest of the Wādiāji Ātaś Bahrām, Dastur Edalji Dorābji Sanjānā, composed a response to the missionary crisis entitled the *Mojezāt-e Zartošti* ('Zoroastrian Miracles', 1840) in the form of a hypothetical conversation between a Christian missionary and a Parsi priest, recalling the style of the Persian language Zoroastrian–Muslim apologetic texts (see Sheffield, "Primary Sources: New Persian," this volume). Other reactions to the missionary crisis took a different approach. The son of a Parsi priest of Bharuch, Ḍosābhāi Sohrābji Munśi, who worked as a translator for the English, was exposed to European intellectual currents at an early period. His tract, entitled the *Tālim-e Zartošt* ('The Teaching of Zarathustra', 1840), cites contemporary European scholars including Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, in addition to deist writers including Voltaire and Thomas Paine, to argue against the missionaries. In 1842, a monthly journal was started by a young teacher at Elphinstone College, Navrozji Fardunji, in collaboration with Dastur Edalji Dorābji Sanjānā. The journal, entitled *Rahnumā-e Zartošti* ('The Zoroastrian Guide'), published for two years between 1842 and 1843, combined the traditional approach of Dastur Sanjānā with polemics against Christianity based on a Parsi interpretation of deist writings. A summary of the arguments of the journal were published in an English-language book, entitled *Discussion on the Christian Religion* (Manockjee 1845). A later journal, entitled *Khrišti Dharamnū Khotāru* ('The Fraud of the Christian Religion'), published between 1856 and 1857, continued to popularize deist literature within the Parsi community with a serialized translation of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*.

Zoroastrian Reform and Iranian Philology

Following the missionary crisis in the mid-19th century, a group of young graduates of Elphinstone College in Bombay began to enter into the public sphere, coming to be known by the title "Young Bombay." In 1851, a group was founded named the *Rāhnumā-e Mazdayasnān Sabhā* ('The Mazdayasnian Guide Society'), which convened monthly sessions to discuss the reform of certain Zoroastrian customs and to sponsor the delivery of lectures and publications on the Zoroastrian religion. One member of this group, Sorābji Śāpurji Baṅgāli, published the first comprehensive attempt to describe the various books of the Zoroastrian canon in Gujarati in a work entitled *Zartošti Lokonā Dharam Pustako* ('The Books of the Religion of the Zoroastrian People', 1858). Another reformer named K. R. Cama (Kharśedji Rustamji Kāmā) emerged as one of the main figures in the Sabhā, and began to advocate for Parsis to adopt European philological methods in interpreting their scripture. In 1864, Cama had founded his own organization called the *Zartošti Dinni Khol Karnāri Maṅḍali* ('The Society for Furthering Research on the Zoroastrian Religion'), and he began to teach Avestan and Pahlavi classes through its auspices. Many of Cama's early students became influential scholars in their own right, including Tehmuras D. Anklesaria, Sheriarji D. Bharucha, Kavasji E. Kanga, and Edalji Kersaspji Antia. Cama was a prolific writer; he founded the journal *Zartošti Abhyās* ('Zoroastrian Studies') in 1866; ten volumes were published by

1868, almost all of the articles of which were written by Cama himself. In 1870, Cama published a book attempting to reconstruct the life of Zarathustra on the basis of the *Gāthās* entitled *Zartoštnāmū* ('The Book of Zarathustra'; Kāmā 1870b; for other books to use this title, see Sheffield, "Primary Sources: New Persian," this volume). Also in 1870, Cama published a short work entitled *Yazdejardi Tārikh* ('The Yazdgirdi Date', Kāmā 1870a), in which he began to advocate for calendar reform, a movement which ultimately culminated in the introduction of the Fasli calendar (see Rose, "Festivals and the Calendar," this volume).

One of Cama's late protégés, Māṇekji Nasarvānji Dhālā (Dhalla), spearheaded the cause of Zoroastrian reform in the 20th century (see Hinnells, "The Parsis," this volume). Together with Behramgore T. Anklesariā [Anklesaria], Dhālā founded the journal *Zarhošti* in 1902. In 1905, Dhālā traveled to America to pursue his PhD at Columbia University with Abraham Valentine Williams Jackson. Dhālā published extensively in English and in Gujarati over the course of his life. His autobiography, simply entitled *Ek Ātmākathā* ('An Autobiography', 2nd edition 1946, English translation: Dhalla 1975) provides a fascinating glimpse into the world of Zoroastrian reform over the course of the 20th century.

Theosophy and *Ilm-e Kṣnum* (Khshnum)

The Zoroastrian reform movement was just one of several discourses through which the phenomenon of Parsi modernity came to be articulated in the mid-19th century. In 1879, the theosophists Helena P. Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott left America for Bombay and quickly came into contact with Parsis there. Two of the main activists in propagating theosophical knowledge among Parsis were Nasarvānji Frāmji Bilimoriā and his son Ardešar, who together founded the long-lived journal *Cerāg* ('Lamp') in Bombay in 1900. After his father's death in 1922, Ardešar published a biography of his father which sheds much light on the ways in which theosophical ideas were spread throughout the Parsi community (Bilimoriā 1923).

In 1911, Behrāmśāh Navroji Śrāf (Shroff) published the first volume of his *Ilm-e Kṣnum Series*, entitled *Zarhošti Dharma Samajvā Māṭe Ilm-e Kṣnumni Cāvi* ('Ilm-e Kṣnum: The Key to Understanding the Zoroastrian Religion', subtitled in English *Bird's Eye View of Ilm-i-Khshnum*). Shroff's followers claim he met a caravan of travelers while he was on his way from Gujarat to Peshawar in search of a job, who were in fact secretly Zoroastrians, and who brought him into the presence of Zoroastrian spiritual masters who lived under Mount Damāvand in Iran. These masters taught Shroff the esoteric meaning of Zoroastrianism, which, some years after returning to India, he began to teach under the auspices of the Parsi Vegetarian and Temperance Society in 1909. Shroff attracted a considerable group of followers, who then went on to publish their own Kṣnumist interpretations of Zoroastrian texts. One of the most prolific of Shroff's followers was Frāmroz Sorābji Cinivālā, whose two-volume *Nikiz-i Veh-Daen* (Pahl. *Nigēz ī veh dēn*, 'An Exposition of the Good Religion', 1932–1935) offers extensive symbolic and esoteric interpretations of a variety of Zoroastrian Avestan and Pahlavi texts (see Hinnells, "The Parsis," this volume).

Travelogues

The introduction of the steamship and the railroad opened up new economic horizons for enterprising Parsi merchants, who expanded their horizons beyond traditional trading partners in the Arabian Sea for the first time in the late 18th century. Though travel narratives are found in Persian texts, including the *Qeṣṣe-ye Kāvūs va Afsād* and the *Dīnkherad* of Mullā Feroz, the first book-length Parsi Gujarati travelogue to be printed was Ḍoṣābhāi Frāmji Karākā's 1861 *Greṭ Briṭan khāteni Musāfari* (English title: *Journey to Great Britain*). An important group of Parsi Gujarati travelogues concern travel to Iran, a popular destination for Parsi travelers beginning in the late Qajar period and increasing through the early Pahlavī reign. Mānekji Limji Hāṭariā's *Risāle Ezhār-e Siāt-e Irān* ('A Treatise Expounding upon a Journey in Iran') published in Gujarati and Persian translation in 1864–1865 (on Mānekji, see Boyce 1969a; Stausberg 2003; Sheffield 2013; see also Stausberg, "Zoroastrians in Modern Iran," this volume) is a special instance of this genre, but numerous other travelogues to Iran illustrate the evolving relationship of Parsis to the Iranian state. Within this group, the travelogues of Kuvarbāi Mānekji Dhālā (1922) and Meherbānu Behrāmgor Anklesāriā (1932) are especially interesting since the authors were the wives of the leading Parsi scholar-priests of their day who had greater access to Iranian women's spaces than did their male counterparts.

Sources on Zoroastrian Ritual

Many Avestan manuscripts written in India of the *Yasna* and the *Vīdēvdād* are accompanied by ritual directions (commonly referred to as *nerang*, or *kriyā*; see Andrés-Toledo, "Primary Sources: Avestan and Pahlavi," this volume). With the introduction of print in the 19th century, priestly manuals containing ritual directions for various ceremonies came to be printed in Gujarati. The most important of these ritual manuals for the *Yasna* was T. D. Ankleśvariā's *Yajaśne bā Nirāṅg* (1888). Later ritual manuals transcribe the text of the *Yasna* into Gujarati characters, including the *Kadmi Yajaśne bā Nirāṅg* of Garḍā (1916) and the Shahanshāhi text of Kuṭār and Kuṭār (1917). A number of books have been written on the various "inner" rituals (see Stausberg and Karanjia, "Rituals," this volume). The standard reference for these rituals is Ervad Hormazd M. A. Pāvri, which has been reprinted several times since its initial publication in 1938 (2nd edition 1995). The book represents the rituals as they performed according to the Bhagarsāth tradition of Navsari. Another ritual manual has been published for the rituals as they are performed by the Sanjana *panthak* of Udveda by Nośirvān Navroji Unvālā (1922).

In 1896, Eracji Sohrābji Meherjirānā composed a text entitled simply *Pursiś-Pāsokh* ('Questions and Answers'; Meherjirānā 1941) regarding questions on the correct ritual performance of Zoroastrian rituals in the style of a *Revāyat*, that is, in the format of questions and answers. Successive generations of priests have continued to write manuals of this type, of which Dastur Firoze M. Koṭwāl's *Zarhošti Dharma ane Kriyāo Viṣe Lakhāno* ('Writings about the Zoroastrian Religion and Rituals', 1994) is a contemporary example.

Parsi History and Genealogy

There is an extensive body of literature relating to Parsi history and genealogy in Gujarati. The genres of manuscript sources are particularly useful for establishing the chronology of individuals: *fehrests* (registers of *nāvar*, *marātīb*, *nīrangdīn*, and *varas* ceremonies), *disāpothis* (registers of death dates), and *vaṃśavalis* (family trees). The largest and to date only published is the *Fehrest* of the Navsāri Vaḍi Dar-e Meher belonging to the Bhagarsāth *paṇthak* of Zoroastrian priests (Kuṭār 1929). Until the beginning of the 19th century, all Bhagarsāth priests underwent their *nāvar* and *marātīb* rituals at the Navsāri Vaḍi Dar-e Meher; the *fehrest*, which lists the *nāvārs* and *marātīb*s between the years 1632 and 1929, contains the names and dates of the ceremonies of close to 8,000 priests, along with the names of their sponsors and the priests who performed the ceremony. Just as the *fehrests* list the dates on which members of the priestly class were initiated into the priesthood, *disāpothis* list the dates on which members of various families and communities passed away so that the rituals which take place after death could be performed correctly. Most of these documents remain in manuscript form, but an example of the Desāi-Dastur family has been published (Meherjirāṇā 1932). Several *vaṃśāvalis* or family trees of various priestly and non-priestly lineages have been published. The most extensive of these, that of the Navsāri Bhagarsāth priests, was published by Rustamji Jāmāspji Meherjirāṇā (1899a, English translation 1899b).

In addition to these primary sources, a number of community histories have been published. In 1874, Ratanji Frāmji Vāchā published a book entitled *Muṃbaino Bahār* ('The Spring of Muṃbai'), a compilation of biographical details on many of Bombay's most prominent mercantile families. Many notable family histories exist; here we may note the history of the Jāmāspāsā family compiled by Ardešar Khuršedji Jāmāspāsānā (1912), and the many valuable histories of Rustam Barjorji Paymaster. In 1843, a collection of documents relating to the Bombay Parsi Punchayet was published as *Kholāse-e Pancāt* ('A Selection of the Punchayet'), purportedly by Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy writing under the pseudonym *Ek bande khodā* ('A Slave of God', *Bande Khodā* 1843). In 1930, Jivanji Jamšedji Modi published a two-volume history of the Punchayet entitled *Muṃbaini Pārsi Pancāyetni Tavārikh* ('A History of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet'; see Hinnells, "The Parsis," this volume).

Translations of Avestan and Pahlavi Texts

While the *Khorde Avesta*, which was published already in 1798 (Chāpgar 1798), was one of the most commonly printed books published by the Parsis, the priestly community was initially hesitant to publish ritual texts in translation. The earliest efforts to print translations of Avestan and Pahlavi texts into Gujarati appear at the end of the second decade of the 19th century. Edalji Dorābji Jāmāspāsā published a Gujarati translation of the Pahlavi *Bundahišn* in 1819, yet, at the time, the text was rejected by some Parsis as a forgery. A lithographed folio edition of the *Vīdēvdād Sāde* was printed in Avestan script in 1830, under the supervision of Dastur Edalji Dorābji Sanjāṇā, mimicking manuscripts of the text. Yet, in 1822, Ervad Frāmji Aspandīārji

Rabāḍi had already set out to make a translation of the *Vīdēvdād Sāde* into Gujarati. Leaving his native Surat, he found sponsorship in Bombay from the wealthy merchant Frāmji Kawāsji Banāji on the condition that Rabāḍi's translation should be examined and approved by the leading *dasturs* of Bombay. After returning to Surat, Rabāḍi finished his translation in 1825. Frāmji Kāwasji then wrote a letter to the four leading *dasturs* of Bombay: Mullā Feroz (high priest of the Kadmi Parsis), Edalji Dorābji Sanjāṇā (high priest of the Shahanshāhi Parsis), Jamśedji Edalji Jāmāspāsā, and Jāmāspji Edalji Jāmāspāsā, asking them to examine and to certify the translation, so that there might be some standard interpretation of the *Avesta*. Dastur Sanjāṇā thought that any translation of the *Avesta* accessible to the laity would be injurious to the religion and recused himself from the meetings of the committee. The other members debated the finer points of the translation until 1826, when they decided to certify it (see the account in Rabāḍi 1842: Dībāco 1–22). Unlike older translations of the *Avesta*, Rabāḍi's translation provided not just interlinear, word-for-word translation, but also Gujarati paraphrases of each passage so that the text could be read without reference to the Avestan original. As the last translation of the *Avesta* to be made without the influence of Western philology, the translation remains useful as a reflection of the indigenous Zoroastrian interpretive tradition. Though the text circulated quite widely in manuscript form, it was not, however, printed until 1842–1843, through the assistance of the Reverend John Wilson (see Hinnells, “The Parsis,” this volume). Later notable translations of ancient Iranian texts into Gujarati include the translation of the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* by Tehmuras Dinśāh Anklesariā [Anklesaria] and Śehriārji Dādābhāi Bharucā (1926) and the translation of the *Nāmāgīhā ī Manuščīhr* by Bamanji Nasarvānji Dhābhar (1921).

Novels, Poetry, Songs, and Drama

The first generation of Parsis to receive higher education in the medium of English were consequently exposed to English literary works and generic conventions. Several early authors attempted to translate and adapt European novels to the medium of the Gujarati vernacular. The Gujarati language distinguishes between two kinds of translation: *bhāṣāntar*, literally, a change of language, and *rupāntar*, literally, a change of form. Whereas *bhāṣāntar* translations attempted to capture the setting, characters, and manners of the European novels, *rupāntar* translations tried to adapt the story to an Indian setting. Two of the most important Parsi novelists of the 19th century, Kaikhusru N. Kābrāji (1842–1904) and his brother Bamanji N. Kābrāji, began to write novels in support of moral and social reform on the model of English novels. Kaikhusru's novel *Gulī Garīb athvā Dīkrā te Dolat: Keḷave te Bhogave* ('Poor Gulī, or, Children Are Wealth: Educate and Enjoy', published serially between 1890 and 1891), tells the story of a widow who sacrifices everything for the sake of her son's education, and is ultimately rewarded when he reaches a high station in life. The work was very popular at the time of its publication, and received praise from the leading Gujarati author Govardhanrām Tripāṭhi for its realistic portrayal of Parsi life.

During the latter half of the 19th century, issues of women's reform were hotly debated among the Parsi Zoroastrian community in Bombay. Reformers advocated for abolishing child marriage and polygamy, educating girls in English, and reducing marriage expenditures. Yet the fundamental changes to the traditional system of Parsi marriage which resulted from the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act of 1865 and the numerous Parsi girls' schools which opened during this period ushered in a new sexual ethic, one negotiated by a generation of Parsis who had been raised both on Victorian romances and on traditional Indo-Persian stories. Entrepreneurial litterateurs looking to satisfy the demands of their highly literate audience quickly recognized the ability of the printed word to convey new ideas to a wide audience and, beginning in the 1870s, a spate of Parsi Gujarati literary magazines were founded delivering monthly installments of pulp fiction into the parlors of Bombay's Parsi community. A number of romances from this period, which were often printed with narrative illustrations or staged photographs, persist even today in the communal memory of the Parsi community, and are perhaps best exemplified in the writings of Dādi Edalji Tārāporvālā, whose *Duḥkhi Dādībā, athvā Pariṇno Pastāvo* ('Despondent Dādībā, or, Parin's Remorse', 1913) remains a well-known work among the community.

Many of the earliest literary instances of Parsi Gujarati were composed in poetic forms; yet, in the 19th century, Parsi poets began to experiment with form and with language. The social reformer Behrāmji Mervānji Malabāri frequently used poetry as a medium to convey social messages. His collection *Nitivinod* ('The Pleasures of Ethics', 1875) was written not in Parsi Gujarati but in the dialect of the Nāgar Brahmins of Ahmedabad, which by the late 19th century had become the prestige dialect of the language. Following in Malabāri's footsteps, the poet Ardeśar F. Khabardār received great acclaim from Gujarati literary critics for the beauty of his poetic diction.

In addition to poetic compositions, a wide variety of popular songs were composed and collected over the course of the 19th century. One of the most important collectors of songs was Sorābji Hormazji Chikan, whose *Pārsi Stri Garbā* ('Parsi Women's Garbas', 1879) and its sequels recorded numerous traditional Parsi songs, including the long *Ātaśnū Git* ('Song of the Fire'; see Stewart 2004; 2007), which tells the story of the events leading to the consecration of the Navsari Ātaś Bahrām (see Choksy, "Religious Sites and Physical Structures," this volume).

Unlike novels and poetry, which were intended for a primarily Parsi reading public, Parsi theatre reached a cosmopolitan Bombay audience. The term Parsi theatre refers to theatrical companies managed by Parsis, but often incorporating non-Parsi actors and writers. As such, most Parsi dramas were composed not only in Gujarati but also in Hindustani Urdu, which may be seen as the linguistic precursor of modern Hindi cinema. (On Parsi theatre, see Gupt[a] 2005; Hansen 2012; Marfatia and Taraporevala 2011.) In 1853, the Pārsi Nāṭak Maṇḍli ('The Parsi Theatre Association') was founded, and, by 1861, at least nineteen Parsi theatrical companies existed in Bombay. Several prominent Parsi novelists were also active in the realm of theatre. Kaikhuśru Navroji Kabrāji, who was a founding member of the Victoria Nāṭak Maṇḍli in 1868, began to publish plays based on the *Šāhnāme* of Ferdowsī, beginning with his play *Bejan ane Manijeh* (1869). Translation techniques applied to the realm of drama as well. Many early Parsi plays were in fact *rupāntar* transformations of the source, resulting in plays

such as Sohrābji Peshotanji Kangā's Urdu-language *Talātum-i Īrān ya'nī Shakspīr kā Mashhūr Dṛāmā Mekbath* ('The Battle of Iran: *Macbeth*, Shakespeare's Renowned Drama', Hyderabad, 1903), in which *Macbeth* is transformed into Nādir Qulī Khān, a general in the army of Fath 'Alī Šāh, king of Iran, who is at war with the armies of Turan. Many Parsi novelists, such as Kābrāji, were also involved in Parsi theatre, sometimes functioning as scriptwriters and directors. In the early 20th century, several actors and directors made the transition from the Parsi stage to the silver screen, notably including the renowned Sohrab Modi, whose historical films such as *Sikander* (1941) and *Nausherwan-e Adil* (1957) were inspired by *Šāhnāme* stories which were popular subjects on the Parsi stage. To this date, there remain several popular Parsi theatrical companies in Gujarat and Mumbai.

Library Abbreviation

MRL: The First Dastoor Meherjirana Library, Navsari (www.meherjiranalibrary.com)

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