

The ZOROASTRIAN FLAME

Exploring Religion, History and Tradition

EDITED by ALAN WILLIAMS
Sarah Stewart & Almut Hintze



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‘For anybody who wonders what Zoroastrianism was and still is, this is the perfect volume. With outstanding contributions by Western specialists and Zoroastrians themselves, it provides a superb overview of the content and history of the religion, as well as scholarly approaches to it, its traditions in the West throughout history and its relevance in the modern world.’

Prods Oktor Skjærvø, Aga Khan Professor of Iranian Studies Emeritus, Harvard University

‘Together with its beautifully illustrated companion volume, *The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination* (I.B.Tauris, 2013), this new book will be an essential resource for those readers, laypeople and scholars alike, interested in Zoroastrianism and more broadly in the time-honoured, long-lasting cultural traditions of the Near and Middle East.’

Maria Macuch, Professor of Iranian Studies, Freie Universität Berlin

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THE ZOROASTRIAN FLAME

'Zoroastrianism, revealed by God to Zarathustra, was the religion of the ancient Iranians who populated the Iranian Plateau in the first millennium BCE and of the rulers of Iran for over a thousand years, when it was supplanted by Islam. Although as old as Hinduism and Judaism, it is the great religion least known to the general public. For anybody who wonders what Zoroastrianism was and still is, this is the perfect volume. With outstanding contributions by Western specialists and Zoroastrians themselves, it provides a superb overview of the content and history of the religion, as well as scholarly approaches to it, its traditions in the West throughout history and its relevance in the modern world. We also learn about its astral cosmology and how the Zoroastrian calendar was inscribed on a silver plate from Bactria (Afghanistan); how Zarathustra was portrayed in images and in the Persian Book of Kings; how to weave the sacred belt worn by all Zoroastrians and the enduring importance of its symbolism; and the question that occupies both Zoroastrians and their non-Zoroastrian friends: how will they survive in today's world while still preserving their identity?'

Prods Oktor Skjærvø, Aga Khan Professor of Iranian Studies Emeritus,
Harvard University

'This impressive multi-authored volume by internationally renowned specialists embraces a large range of topics crucial to our understanding of one of the world's oldest yet still living religious traditions. Covering the huge timespan of three millennia, Zoroastrianism – the ancient Iranian religion – has not only shown surprising longevity among its adherents in Iran and India, but has also continually attracted and fascinated outsiders, from ancient Greeks and medieval Islamic Sufis to early modern European Christians. Many, over the centuries, have sought to unlock the enthralling mysteries of the religion of the magi. Despite much progress in modern scholarship, numerous questions regarding almost every aspect of Zoroastrianism remain to be discussed. The present volume offers a rich array of enquiries into some of the most intriguing problems of the field, extending from historical matters to modern practice. All the contributions here are of the highest quality, written from different perspectives by a wide spectrum of the foremost experts – Western academics as well as scholars from the Zoroastrian community – who provide absorbing new insights. Together with its beautifully illustrated companion volume, *The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination* (I.B.Tauris, 2013), this new book will be an essential resource for those readers, laypeople and scholars alike, interested in Zoroastrianism and more broadly in the time-honoured, long-lasting cultural traditions of the Near and Middle East.'

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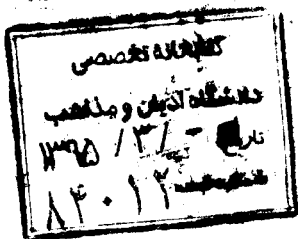
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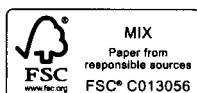
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The Ābrēzagān festival on a painting from Panjikent, Temple I, northern chapel, seventh century

The *Navjote* (initiation ceremony)

A painting titled 'Yellow Camel'

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Texts to the Šāyest nē-Šāyest, was published in Copenhagen. He has recently completed a multi-volume edition and translation of the Avestan-Pahlavi text *The Hērbedestān and Nērangestān* in collaboration with Philip Kreyenbroek. A *Festschrift* in his honour, entitled *Gifts to a Magus*, was recently edited by Jamsheed Choksy and Jennifer Dubeansky. His collected writings will soon be published as the first volume of a new series of books on Parsi priestly history and ritual.

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The proceedings of the conference 'Looking Back: Zoroastrian identity formation through recourse to the past' that accompanied the opening of the SOAS exhibition, *The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination* of 2013 could not have been published without the support of a number of people. The editors would like to thank Zarir Cama, Farrokh Kavarana, Adil Jilla, Homi Colah and Jim Wadia for their generous sponsorship of this volume. Our thanks also go to Iradj Bagherzade, Alex Wright and staff at I.B.Tauris for their support. We would like to acknowledge the sponsors of the conference that prompted this book, the British Institute of Persian Studies (BIPS) and the Iran Heritage Foundation, as well as the principal sponsors of the 2013 exhibition, Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) and the Aequa Foundation.

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Authors in this volume use a range of sources in a number of languages including Avestan, Pahlavi and New Persian. It will be seen that systems of transliteration most suited to the language have been used throughout the book. For Avestan editors have adopted that of K. Hoffman and for Pahlavi that of D. N. MacKenzie. For New Persian we have used the I.B.Tauris system of transliteration that follows the *Iranian Studies* scheme and employs very few accents and diacritical marks: 'a', 'e' and 'o' for short vowels and 'ā', 'ī' and 'ū' for long vowels.

INTRODUCTION

Alan Williams

The study of Zoroastrianism is a microcosm of the study of religion globally: so many of the patterns and problems we meet in the greater field are present here in miniature. First, there is the fact of the great antiquity of the tradition, spanning several thousand years and enduring a succession of empires from the Achaemenid to the British: this has necessitated constant reinvention of itself – a fact of being alive. The symbol of the Zoroastrian flame is a paradigm of the phenomenon of *continuity* and *change* – that ever-present and perennial double-edged theme in the study of religions. Zoroastrianism changed from being a proselytizing faith in its early stages and was later re-defined as an ‘ethnic’ identity, circumscribed by strict caste-like boundaries that prohibited intermarriage and conversion into the religion (for example among the Parsis).¹ Further subsequent re-definitions have presented it as a universal religion. It was previously an imperially sanctioned ‘church’ (under the Sasanian dynasty, 224–651 CE), and then became a struggling minority (*dhimmi*) community under Islam. Expanding from its original homeland, it passed through migrations westwards and eastwards and also became a minority religion of the Indian subcontinent. Now it also has a small but extensive global diaspora and has even taken on ‘para-Zoroastrian’ forms in post-modernity.² Its theological, doctrinal and ritual influence upon Judaism, Christianity and Islam (not to mention more widely) has been both advocated and disputed by scholars from inside and outside Iranian Studies. Having begun in prehistory as an oral tradition, with a strong liturgical-ritual foundation, in the course of time its ‘texts’ were written down, in a number of languages and scripts: yet for centuries afterwards oral transmission remained the norm within a professional priesthood. The nature and place of its very origins are still in dispute among scholars. Yet, in spite of all these vicissitudes and uncertainties, it has endured with a remarkable adaptability and vigour for regeneration,³ surviving into the twenty-first century as a small but perfectly multi-formed, living tradition, not a cultural fossil.

The fact of its ‘aliveness’ brings a dimension to its study which is taken for granted in more populous religions, namely that a dialogue exists between the faith tradition and those who study it in the academy. Nowadays the study of Zoroastrianism is not confined to European and North American, non-Zoroastrian academics. On the one hand, it is the case that for many years the North European/American academic tradition dominated scholarship on

the Zoroastrian tradition and its corpus of texts. On the other hand, however, there has been a robust Zoroastrian participation in the academic study of the history and texts of the tradition for two centuries, since K. R. Cama (1831–1909), T. D. Anklesaria (1842–1903), J. J. Modi (1854–1933), M. N. Dhalla (1875–1956) and J. C. Tavadia (1896–1955), down to the Zoroastrian scholars of the present day, in India and Iran, some of whom are contributors to this volume. For recent and contemporary Zoroastrian scholars, both Indian Parsi and Iranian, this field is not merely an academic curiosity, but something with which, in varying degrees, they may identify and to which they feel connected.

In their recent compendious volume, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*, the editors Michael Stausberg and Yuhān Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina assert that scholarly books on Zoroastrianism in general (that is, not covering specialized studies on particular texts, themes or periods) can be divided into the following categories: the shorter introductory volume, the selection of textual primary sources, the multi-volume survey, the illustrated volume, the exhibition catalogue and the online encyclopedia. This present book does not fit into any of those categories. Its origins lie in a series of conversations over the years with Sarah Stewart on our concerns with acknowledging and bridging the gap between what some call the ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ approaches to religion. (This is a subject directly addressed in one of the essays below, namely that of Yuhān Vevaina in on ‘Insiders’ and ‘Outsiders’ and all that lies between in the study of Zoroastrianism.) Dr Stewart and I had independently worked on Zoroastrian texts following the established methods of the European academic tradition we had learnt from our teachers and senior colleagues (principally Mary Boyce and others who had been influenced by the scholarship of Walter Bruno Henning and Friedrich Carl Andreas). On the other hand, both of us had also spent time, separately, in India, with Parsi Zoroastrians, and in Iran with Zardushtis (she much more than I – see her Chapter 18 in this volume). As a result, unlike Western students of Zoroastrianism and Iranian Studies from previous generations, we knew many Parsi and Irani Zoroastrians well and we had collaborated with them as well as studying texts in libraries. What formed the centre of our conversation was the very different ways of *looking back* at Zoroastrianism. This was initially sparked by discussion of the curiously refracted and layered memory recorded in the text of the *Qesseh-ye Sanjān* I had edited and translated, a late sixteenth-century composition by a scholar-priest of Navsari in Gujarat, Bahman Kaikobad Sanjana, which tells of a great sweep of thousands of years of Zoroastrian ‘history’ in a story of just 432 verse couplets. I quote a brief passage from the introductory section of Bahman’s account to illustrate what I mean by ‘refracted and layered memory’:

Now listen to the tales of wondrous things,
told from the lore of priests and ancient sages.
I tell it, but it’s not contained in telling,
and writing cannot limit it to paper.

But I would seek to tell a little portion,
 were there a hundred words, I'd say just one.
 I came to hear it from a wise dastur,
 whose goodness made him famous for all time.
 And he had read the Zand and the Avesta,
 he'd rid himself of Ahreman's dark forces. [...]
 [...] He told this tale just as the ancients told it,
 he spoke the hidden mysteries of the righteous.
 One day it was he told this story to us,
 strung beautifully the pearls of past events.
 For that dastur who told this story to me
 may goodness be his ever-present friend.
 I shall relate the story in his words,
 I'll tell the secret deeds of Zoroastrians.⁴

Here the author, who stands within the tradition, sees himself as a link in a chain: the tradition has come into his present, and he is re-telling it for the future. In this sense he is not *looking back* at all as a historian does: he is facing forwards to the future, addressing a pious readership, embodying the tradition of the past in his present. The medium of poeticized story (*qesseh*) is ideal for this relating of tradition, connecting the past to the future, expressed in the metaphor of 'the pearls of past events' (*dor-e akhbār*) being 'strung beautifully' (*beh niku' i ... softeh*).

In this volume, also 'strung beautifully together' (we hope), are the essays of 18 scholars from 10 countries: Canada, Germany, India, Iran, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, the UK and the USA. All the authors in this book delivered a previous short form of their presentations at a conference held at SOAS, University of London, in October 2013: since then they have written them up into chapter-length essays. They represent a very wide spectrum of scholars in the field, younger and older, linguistic and literary specialists, social scientists and Religious Studies specialists and indeed religious experts from the tradition itself. The editors have regarded it as a virtue and enrichment of the volume that the contributors all write from such different perspectives. To borrow the terminology of Yuhan Dinshaw-Vevaina's chapter, our contributors range across an axis from 'The Full Insider' to the 'Full Outsider', with the intermediate positions of 'Critical Insider' and 'Embedded Outsider'. Clearly the High Priest, Dastur Dr Firoze M. Kotwal, is a 'Full Insider', as is also Khojeste P. Mistree, the founder of the religious education trust Zoroastrian Studies – though this is nuanced by the fact that both are scholars who have studied in the Western academy. It may be thought that the fact that all have participated in a volume such as this implies that all occupy the middle ground of either 'Embedded Outsider' or 'Critical Insiders' – but that is not the case. The register and reasoning of each discourse are sufficient indicators of our stance with regard to our subject. One thing has become apparent in the overcast light of post-modernity: we all come from somewhere and, like it or not, reveal our own agendas, theological or otherwise.

For example, authors' use of the term 'essentialist' or 'relativist', when used of others, reveals the implicit position of the speaker. These days nobody in the study of religion can claim the kind of scientific objectivity 'we' used to claim, with regard to the larger dimension of the field at least.

The volume is not merely a series of chapters in a compendium, edited objectively in a list of categories that must be covered, in which none of the authors talk to one another. All the essays were heard by all the contributors at the conference, before an audience of several hundred listeners from the academic and Zoroastrian communities in London, and others from the general public. In this sense 'conference volume' is not an apologetic term for a publication. We were talking *to* one another. It was not a tightly directed conversation, focused on a narrow time frame or particular theme. The brief of the conference was methodological rather than thematic, looking at *how* we see, rather than merely *what* we see in regard to the ancient, medieval and recent past. Moreover, we were asking people to think about how identity is formed by the act of looking back through both history and tradition. The brief to contributors, sent out a year before the October 2013 conference, explained the agenda as follows:

Throughout their long history Zoroastrians have referred to notions of what is traditional and authoritative in order to conserve their identity as both a majority and a minority faith. This involves a process of connecting, in every generation, to what is received and recovered from the past, whether it be religious texts, teachings, practices, or events both real and imagined. However, tradition is not a simple or static phenomenon; it is on-going, accumulative and responsive to the need for change in social and cultural contexts [...] In this two-day conference we examine the patterns of identity formation in ancient, medieval and more recent periods, looking at how texts, traditions, icons, rituals and symbols have been used to form Zoroastrian identities.

There is no attempt in this volume to give definitions or general answers to the great questions that our field contemplates – on origins, meanings, pasts and futures. The nature of this format is that it allows an international assembly of scholars to develop particular themes and theories they have been working on independently and present them to a wide audience for further discussion. With due respect to all of them, each chapter in this book is highly characteristic of the work of that particular author: by contrast academic text books and 'companion volumes' normally try to avoid giving the sense of the temporal and cultural context in which scholars write, aspiring rather to a timeless scientific objectivity. This collection is a polyphony of different studies around the theme of how and why we look to the past.

Before turning to a summary of the chapters it would not be fitting to proceed without mention of one scholar who, unfortunately for reasons of ill-health, was unable to attend the original conference nor to contribute to this volume, namely one of the most prolific and influential scholars in the study of the Zoroastrian community worldwide, Professor John R. Hinnells. I was able to

read out a message from him to the conference in lieu of his lecture, and I should record here that I know he would very much have wished to have contributed to this volume. The fact that his name is actually mentioned on more than 50 occasions in the text, notes and bibliography is testimony to the tireless contribution he has made to the field, for which scholars are most grateful.

This book is divided into four parts. Part I, 'Theme and Approaches', comprises two chapters, one thematic and one methodological in subject matter. Philip Kreyenbroek, in his keynote address to the conference, 'Looking to the Past in the *Gāthās* and in Later Zoroastrianism', sets the discussion off in the direction of thinking about the concepts of time, the past, tradition and history in Zoroastrianism. Professor Kreyenbroek finds that the distinction between an archetypal mode of being and a mundane one, was a crucial element of Zarathustra's thinking. This is related to the deeply rooted notion of the two times in Zoroastrianism: *limited*, mundane time and *limitless*, beginningless and endless time. The difference between the two times is the fact of the invasion of evil and subsequent corruption of the physical world in limited time. Religious tradition, then, emulates and strives after the values and realities of the archetypal, timeless state of being – in this sense identity is sought not in the ways of this *transient* world, but in looking to the reality that preceded it and yet which runs parallel to it. In short, the present world will be made whole again only by embodying those realities of the archetypal world in existence. 'Looking back' has, therefore, an existential and theological meaning for Zoroastrians, and indeed it is through tradition rooted in the past that the way to the eschatological future is found.

Yuhan Vevaina, in his provocative chapter 'No One Stands Nowhere', jumps straight into the methodological deep end of our subject, namely that of our subjectivity and objectivity as academic scholars of Zoroastrianism. Dr Vevaina is well up to speed on methodological issues in the general history of religions, and brings insight into the problem that until recently has been a fact of life in Iranian Studies and the study of Zoroastrianism: the relative invisibility of Zoroastrian academic participants in the academic world. Although Zoroastrians, Parsis and Iranians have played an active part in scholarship in the past two centuries, it remains true that in the past the principal historical agenda and theoretical schemata have been set down by non-Zoroastrian, European scholars – in Vevaina's typology, mentioned above already, by outsiders. Vevaina is himself proof, along with Jamsheed Choksy, Dastur Firoze M. Kotwal, Shernaz Cama and Khojeste Mistree in this volume, that Zoroastrian voices are now more fully participating in international debates. His essay brings a clarity, salted with his own wry turn of phrase and supported by a wealth of evidence: the more radical hypothesis behind his argument is generally expressed in relatively technical language, for example in identifying 'the mutually implicated nature of our knowledge production', but he puts the meaning of this for our subject into more concrete terms for our consideration:

we all, both 'Insiders' and 'Outsiders', are co-authoring the (auto-)biography of not merely Zoroastrian Studies, but by extension, 'Zoroastrianism' as well.

In Part II of the volume, 'Antiquity and Tradition', there are five chapters that look at some ancient dimensions of the religion. Alberto Cantera's chapter, 'The "Sacrifice" (*Yasna*) to Mazdā: Its Antiquity and Variety', is a technical study that is also important for the general history of the religion as a re-evaluation of the most important Avestan liturgical text, the long liturgy of the *Yasna* 'The sacrifice'. For many centuries prior to modern times, and before they were referred to by the name 'Zoroastrians' and by other incorrect and theologically inaccurate names, adherents of this religion described themselves as '*mazdayasna*' (Avestan *mazdaiiasna*), meaning 'one who performs the sacrifice to Mazdā'. Professor Cantera shows how he and two other specialists (Jean Kellens and Antonio Panaino) have demonstrated that this liturgy is not, as has previously been thought, a late composition on the basis of saved fragments of the Sasanian Great Avesta, but rather that it is a very old ceremony composed in its actual form before other Avestan texts and long before Sasanian times. He demonstrates intriguingly that its importance lies not only in its early existence, but also in its being an embodiment of the 'Vision' of the union of Zarathustra with Ahura Mazdā, as well as the ritual frame for the composition of many Avestan texts not belonging strictly to the long liturgy.

Almut Hintze is also concerned with 'A Zoroastrian Vision', as she addresses the subject of the way in which the encounter of the soul with its belief, or *daēnā*, is elaborated, both in the Avestan texts and in the later tradition. Professor Hintze directs our attention to a devotional drawing found in the Mazdayasnian temple at Dunhuang, in the Gansu Province of north-west China, where a Sogdian expatriate community from Samarkand still practised a form of Zoroastrianism in the tenth century CE.

This is followed by a chapter of unusual fascination, 'Continuity, Controversy, and Change: A Study of the Ritual Practice of the Bhagaria Priests of Navsari', by the world's foremost expert on Zoroastrian ritual, Dastur Dr Firoze M. Kotwal. It is a finely textured study of four examples of divergences in ritual practice that have emerged between different *panthaks* (parishes), with illustrations from Avestan and Pahlavi manuscripts, *Persian Rivāyats*, Gujarati documents pertaining to the Bhagarsath priestly *anjuman*, and observations on contemporary practice. He shows how the study of the Zoroastrian ritual tradition is essential for the correct understanding of the textual tradition, and vice versa. Next, Antonio Panaino presents an authoritative exposition of Zoroastrian cosmology and astrology, in his discussion 'The Mazdean Cycle of 12,000 Years and the Final Renovation of the World'. Professor Panaino is perhaps the world's leading expert in this field and is a peerless guide who is able to bring alive what is for many a technical and esoteric subject. To introduce the next chapter in Part II, by Touraj Daryaee, 'Refashioning the Zoroastrian Past: From Alexander to Islam', I take the liberty of referring to a particularly poignant passage of the

Qesseh-ye Sanjān, which mentions ill-starred events in the legendary history of Zoroastrian Iran, namely the destruction of Persepolis by Alexander, the rise of 'accursed' Mani, and the invasion of Iran by the forces of Islam:

At length King Alexander came upon them,
 he burnt religion's holy books in public.
 Three hundred years this faith was brought down low,
 and tyranny oppressed its faithful people.
 Then after, for a while, the faith found refuge
 when Ardashir took sovereignty of it.
 And once again the noble faith could flourish,
 it came to be illustrious in the world.
 Ardā Virāf was posted to God's court,
 in order to describe the world of spirit.
 And after that the accursed Evil Spirit
 wrought his destruction on this way again.
 Again he cast the noble faith to ruin,
 the faith came into ill repute all round.
 A time passed; when Shāpur came to the throne,
 he made the good faith full of light again.
 When Ādarbād-e Mahrasfand, the Faithful,
 resigned himself like this for the Religion,
 The seven brazen substances were mixed,
 all molten as they flowed upon his body.
 He solved the problems of the Zoroastrians,
 he gave this Faith its dignity again.
 From King Shāpur until King Yazdegerd,
 the Noble Faith was honoured and respected.
 By fate the days of Zoroaster ended:
 no one could even trace the Noble Faith.
 When Zoroaster's thousandth year had come,
 the limit of the Noble Faith came too.
 When kingship went from Yazdegerd the king,
 the infidels arrived and took his throne.
 From that time forth Irān was smashed to pieces!
 Alas! That land of Faith now gone to ruin!⁵

In his chapter, Professor Daryaei examines how the history of Iran between the conquest of Alexander of Macedon and the coming of Islam was crafted. He also reflects on how the Avestan dynasties, the Achaemenids, Alexander, the Arsacids and the Sasanians were treated in this history to refashion a Zoroastrian past for those living in the Sasanian and the Islamic world.

Part III is entitled 'Tradition and Culture', and comprises six chapters, of which the first three are on imagery and iconography. James R. Russell's wide-ranging chapter 'On the Image of Zarathustra' starts from the premise that no certain image of the Prophet Zarathustra is preserved in ancient Iranian art,

and that his followers seem to have venerated the *message* rather than deifying its *messenger*, calling themselves Mazdā-worshippers. Over the centuries native legends accreted about the Prophet and the miraculous signs of his birth and foreign testimonia compound the image of magus and astrologer. Professor Russell sifts through a very wide range of textual and iconographic evidence from many different sources, including those of his own primary field of Armenian studies. Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis examines the religious and royal iconography of the Parthian and Sasanian periods, with reference to coins, reliefs and some objects of the third century BCE to the seventh century CE, including relevant material from local kingdoms within the Parthian Empire, such as Persis in south-western Iran, and neighbouring regions such as Commagene in modern Turkey and Kushan Bactria in modern Afghanistan. Dr Sarkhosh Curtis's aim is to explain some of the iconography within an Iranian Zoroastrian background and to trace the survival of some of these motifs into modern times. The chapter by Frantz Grenet, 'Extracts from a Calendar of Zoroastrian Feasts: A New Interpretation of the "Soltikoff" Bactrian Silver Plate in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris', focuses on the one particular object of the title, known traditionally as the 'Anaitis plate'. In his chapter Professor Grenet reviews previous interpretations of this plate, which he dates to the second half of the seventh century CE, and suggests certain new ones, including a different interpretation of astral symbols. In Chapter 11, Albert de Jong moves to another little known subject in a timely and original chapter entitled 'The *Dēnkard* and the Zoroastrians of Baghdad'. As he says, it is almost certain that the *hudēnān pēšōbay*, the 'leader of the Zoroastrians' in the ninth century CE, resided in Baghdad. Yet the existence of Zoroastrians in Baghdad for centuries has been overlooked by most scholars, even though they know that the *Dēnkard*, the most majestic of all Zoroastrian writings, was redacted in Baghdad, in the *dīwān* of the Zoroastrians. Professor de Jong considers the implications of the presence of Zoroastrians in Baghdad for a reinterpretation of the meeting between Islam and the religious minorities, and how they built a new society together.

In his chapter 'Friendship in the Pahlavi Books', Jamsheed K. Choksy focuses attention on the Middle Persian literature, while also examining older and later sources, and considers the significance of a theology of friendship (*dōstih*) in Zoroastrianism. Professor Choksy examines the origins of such a notion, its relation to other important Zoroastrian virtues, and wonders what was the range to which such 'friendship' was extended within and even beyond the Zoroastrian community. The last chapter in Part III is an extensive study of literary interest in Zoroastrianism in tenth-century Iran: 'The Case of Daqiqi's Account of Goshtāsp and Zarathustra in the *Shāhnāmeh*' by Ashk Dahlén. Dr Dahlén offers a close reading of this aspect of Abu Mansur Daqiqi's contribution to the *Shāhnāmeh*: the account of Goshtāsp and Zarathustra is of particular interest both for its religious content and for the fact that the most ancient elements of the *Shāhnāmeh* comprise the Old Iranian myths as recalled in the Avesta.

Part IV comprises five chapters relating to the theme 'Modernity and Minorities'. Shernaz Cama writes both as an academic at the University of Delhi and as a Zoroastrian who specializes in the history of her own religious tradition. Her chapter, 'The Sacred Armour of the *Sudreh-Kusti* and its Relevance in a Changing World', benefits from Dr Cama's long and extensive research on the culture associated with the sacred garments of Zoroastrianism, looking back to Avestan, Pahlavi, Persian and Gujarati sources, and also to her knowledge of the oral tradition. As she herself says, her chapter presents how, in recording the process of weaving, a spiritual iconography comes to life: rejection of the *sudreh-kusti* in modern times is seen as a rejection of the faith. In this study of the creative process of *kusti* weaving, symbolic links are considered which, she argues, could explain the value of retaining this tradition.

In the evocative title of the next chapter, 'Riding the (Revolutionary) Waves between Two Worlds: Parsi Involvement in the Transition from Old to New', Jenny Rose explains how the Parsis were key players in the mercantile activities of British India, and then of the independent United States of America. Dr Rose energetically explores the Parsi contribution to both the material and intellectual culture of America during a time marked by political and industrial revolutions and by the emergence of both 'scientific' and 'transcendentalist' approaches to religion. Richard Foltz, in an equally vigorous pursuit of his subject entitled 'Co-Opting the Prophet: The Politics of Kurdish and Tajik Claims to Zarathustra and Zoroastrianism', faces the challenge of interpreting a conundrum in both cases. As one who has visited both regions in recent years, and who knows well the historical contexts of both cultures, Professor Foltz is well qualified to tackle the problematic subject of Kurdish and Tajiki identification with Zoroastrianism. As he observes, the two different cases bear striking resemblances to each other, and also with those attempts to appropriate the Zoroastrian heritage in Iran under the Pahlavis and by opponents of the Islamic regime there since 1979. He concludes that what such groups say about Zoroastrianism and their relationship to it tells us more about how they are attempting to face the challenges of living in the modern world than about their own actual history.

Khojeste P. Mistree, in his chapter 'Collision, Conflict and Accommodation: A Question of Survival and the Preservation of the Parsi Zoroastrian Identity', brings his own critical perspective on Parsi history not, as others have so often done, by looking at the story of Parsi adaptation and harmonious existence as a minority group but rather by facing the facts of a series of events and situations of conflict. With his focus on disharmonious encounters between Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians over the centuries, he discovers much to learn from the struggles of Parsis to ensure the preservation of Parsi identity and the survival of their religious institutions. As one who has been (at the time of writing) an active serving member of the Bombay Parsi Punchayat, his scrutiny is aided by a life steeped in the history of that city. His chapter articulately seeks to set the record straight with what may be, for some parties, uncomfortable facts about the way the Parsi community have been received and accommodated in India.

Lastly, Sarah Stewart presents 'Ideas of Self-Definition among Zoroastrians in Post-Revolutionary Iran'. She draws on interviews she coordinated with members of Zoroastrian communities over seven years in cities, towns and villages in Iran to illuminate some of the changes to religious and social life that have taken place since the Islamic Revolution of 1979. She asks a series of pressing questions of the contemporary situation that hold true for many periods of Zoroastrian history in Iran and beyond: what does it mean to be Zoroastrian, and how do Zoroastrians negotiate their minority status as a community? What sets Zoroastrians apart from their fellow Iranians and what are the shared identities that separate them from Zoroastrians outside Iran?

It only remains for me to thank all 18 contributors to this volume, both for coming to London in October 2013 and for remaining true to their word to write up their 30-minute conference papers into chapter-length essays; I would also like to thank the two other editors for their patience in working with me as we laboured to bring them all together for publication.

NOTES

1. Without wishing to enter into the maelstrom of the modern debate on the subject of intermarriage and conversion into Zoroastrianism, it must be said that some argue that even in the early days of the faith Zoroastrianism had an 'ethnic' identity albeit with a universal message.
2. See Michael Stausberg, 'Para-Zoroastrianisms: Memetic Transmissions and Appropriations', in John R. Hinnells and Alan Williams (eds), *Parsis in India and their Diasporas* (London and New York, 2007), pp. 236–54.
3. An idea that is articulated most fully by Mary Boyce – see for example her *Zoroastrianism: Its Antiquity and Constant Vigour*, Columbia Lectures on Iranian Studies (Costa Mesa, 1992).
4. Alan Williams, *The Zoroastrian Myth of Migration from Iran and Settlement in the Indian Diaspora: Text, Translation and Analysis of the 16th Century Qeṣṣe-ye Sanjān 'The Story of Sanjān'* (Leiden and Boston, 2009), vv. 64–76, pp. 67–9.
5. Williams, *The Zoroastrian Myth of Migration*, vv. 82–97, pp. 70–3.

PART I

THEME AND APPROACHES

I LOOKING TO THE PAST IN THE *GĀTHĀS* AND IN LATER ZOROASTRIANISM

Philip G. Kreyenbroek

The study of Zoroastrianism has a great deal to offer the world, not least because the modern concept of 'religion' as it is usually understood in the West today may have its origin in the Zoroastrian tradition. Zoroastrianism was the first Iranian religion – and may indeed have been the first social movement in history – to claim identity on the basis of adherence to beliefs rather than tribal or traditional practices. The individual is invited to join a community of men and women whose 'worldview' (*daēnā*) differentiates them from those around them. If one joined this group, pronouncing a formal profession of faith, one belonged to what must originally have been a novel social category: a group that was based upon a common creed. Much later the ancient concept of *daēnā* gave rise to the Middle Persian word *dēn* and the New Persian *dīn*, which can be used for 'religion' in our modern sense of the word, that is a set of beliefs that bind people together, thereby creating a community. This new worldview included several other elements that the Abrahamic religions have accepted and come to take for granted, but without which their beliefs might not have developed as they did.

It may be useful at this stage to clarify what we mean when we speak of 'Zoroastrianism'. In the past this concept conjured up an image of a static, undifferentiated and essentially unchanging system of beliefs and observances, beginning with the Prophet Zarathustra and continuing down to our day. It is certainly possible to think of Zoroastrianism in this way, but this approach means that one loses the perspective of development and change. In reality, change was probably at least as significant for the history of Zoroastrianism as was continuity. The task students of Zoroastrianism face at present is to interpret the extant sources while taking into account both its unchanging tenets and the many developments the tradition underwent. That task is made all the more challenging because during the first millennia of its existence Zoroastrianism was transmitted orally. Zoroastrian priests, who could not fall back on a corpus of written exegesis, were confronted by the needs and

questions of a lay public that were conditioned by contemporary culture and conditions. The priests' replies therefore had to be based on a combination of their knowledge of the tradition and their common sense, and must also have been informed by the culture of their particular period of history.

Elements of continuity and development can be aptly illustrated by examining the question of 'looking back'. While one might have expected Zoroastrians of all ages to have looked back first and foremost to the period of the religion's founder, as is the case in Christianity and Islam, the reality was more complex. The figure whose 'looking back' was to have the greatest impact on Zoroastrianism was the Prophet Zarathustra himself. Zarathustra was a priest of a perhaps somewhat conservative, cattle-breeding community some time before 1000 BCE. The conditions of his time forced him to look back. His community, it seems, had settled in a region that was dominated by a cognate people,¹ whose language and practices were intelligible to Zarathustra and his followers, but seemed to them utterly misguided.

It is now widely accepted that Zarathustra's community was involved in a conflict with members of this cognate culture. The opponents were more powerful than Zarathustra's people, who regarded them as 'deceitful' and felt that there 'was no decent life for the cattle breeder' in their culture.² Zarathustra, as a priest, understood the roots of this conflict in religious terms, and arrived at very significant new insights.³ To understand his teaching we need to remind ourselves that Zarathustra lived in a different culture from ours. As has been shown by Rezania,⁴ early Zoroastrianism distinguished between two 'times', that is between two concurrent modes of reality. One, called 'limited time', is equivalent to our everyday reality, with good alternating with bad, heat with cold, that is, the dynamic, ever-changing, time-bound reality we all experience. Underlying this mundane world, however, was 'unlimited time' or 'timeless time', a parallel, unchanging, absolute reality that is distinct from everyday affairs, but nevertheless plays a role in them. Absolute reality, remote though it is, could be accessed by an able priest such as Zarathustra, who was thus capable of being in touch with the divine sphere.

The present writer's study of the *Gāthās* suggests that the distinction between an archetypal mode of being and a mundane one, was a crucial element of Zarathustra's thinking. It appears to be the key to his interpretation of the reality of his day: he came to the conclusion that only those aspects of mundane reality that corresponded to eternal reality were 'good', and all else represented evil. He also believed that eternal reality had been fully manifest in actual reality 'in the beginning', that is at a primeval stage in the world's history. Zarathustra, in other words, formulated his criteria for good and evil by looking back to this ideal.⁵ On this basis, Zarathustra came to understand the tensions of his time as a reflection of the distinction between two groups of supernatural beings. First there were the *daēvas* who appear to have been as anthropomorphic, unpredictable and self-willed as their Greek and Roman counterparts (the *theoi* and *dei*.) These *daēvas* inspired the morals and

behaviour of Zarathustra's opponents. Zarathustra's group, on the other hand, worshipped the *ahuras*, who were originally divine personifications of 'abstract' concepts, and of natural phenomena such as the sun. These *ahuras* were bound to follow the laws of *asha*, 'Truth' or 'Righteousness'. Just as Truth underlies all manifestations of what is good, the ideal 'timeless time', reflecting reality as it was originally intended by the *ahuras*, had been present in pre-Eternity, is present in our time of trials and tribulations, and will still be there when evil has been overcome and 'limited time' ceases to play a role.

Zarathustra stressed the vast superiority of the 'moral' *ahuras* over the self-willed *daēvas*. He invoked a whole group of 'abstract' concepts that could be helpful to him, as *ahuric* divinities. These divinities, Zarathustra taught, owed their origin to the greatest *ahura* of all: Ahura Mazdā, or Lord Wisdom. The *Gāthās* suggests that, in order to play a role in our physical world, the qualities of these divinities had to be embodied or internalized by humans, who thus became earthly 'vehicles' for the concept(s) in question. Only material beings, notably humans, could act directly in this world, and in the battle against evil the divinities needed humans as much as men needed divine inspiration and guidance.

Although there is no doubt that in later Zoroastrian sources Ahura Mazdā is the Creator, Kellens has argued with some justification that this does not appear to be the case in Zarathustra's own *Gāthās*.⁶ An analysis of the facts shows that whenever the verb *da-* 'to create' is used for Ahura Mazdā's creative activities, the word always refers to the institution of fundamental laws of existence (*mąnthra* or *dāta*), or to the creation of prototypes such as the 'Soul of the Cow', and certain divinities – in other words, to beings who essentially belong to 'timeless time'. In the *Gāthās*, Ahura Mazdā is not normally represented as intervening directly in the affairs of our world. He belongs even more strictly to the sphere of 'timeless time' than the other divine beings. However, his laws or concepts may be realized through those other divine beings, who are capable of acting in our world at least partly because they can be 'embodied' by humans.

The *Gāthās* clearly show that 'in the beginning',⁷ before our time began, the fundamental laws of existence were laid down by Ahura Mazdā, and all was ideal. However, these 'laws' were just that: laws that could either be obeyed or ignored. Although the eternal structure is sound, in other words, it is up to human beings to realize its perfection, or not, as the case may be. Humans must understand these laws, and choose to follow them. The *daēvas* and their followers did neither, and Zarathustra's claim is that after 'the Beginning', the world was damaged by the *daēvas* and their followers. Zarathustra fears, moreover, that these powers of evil may damage the world a second time in his day,⁸ and exhorts his own group to resist such *daevisc* tendencies, in the knowledge that the ultimate reality, to which the world must one day return, is the one created by Ahura Mazdā. Zarathustra prays that Ahura Mazdā may teach him the *mąnthras* (that is 'teachings' or 'commands') through which the

world will again be 'as it was in the beginning'.⁹ The world, that is, had been ideal 'in the beginning', but because of misguided divinities and their followers it had lapsed into a state that was very different from Ahura Mazdā's intentions. Mazda himself was too holy to intervene directly, and the *Gāthās* indicate that those divine beings who could help could only do so if their qualities were embodied by human followers.

It is important to note that it may well be the first time in the history of religions that a consistent worldview was proposed, implying that the world is *not as God wants it to be*, and that it is up to humans to embody the virtues represented by the holy beings who emanated from the divine source, and thereby to bring the world back into harmony with its fundamental laws of existence. Zarathustra, in other words, was the first religious leader who came to a conclusion we now take for granted, but without which neither Christian nor Islamic theology could have evolved, namely that our world is not a pure reflection of the divine will. Zarathustra taught that it was not such a reflection of the divine world, but that the current conditions of our world were the result of wicked misinterpretations, and the world needed to be made 'whole' again, which could be achieved only if humans lent the *ahuric* beings their physical power. Men and women, therefore, needed to choose to embrace the *daēnā* that was proposed by Zarathustra.

Zarathustra expected that an ideal existence would come into being when the forces of evil had been overcome. This ideal state would mirror Zarathustra's conception of the state of the world 'in the beginning'. This pattern of looking back to the past in order to elucidate the future repeatedly plays a role in the history of Zoroastrianism, as it does in many other religions. Zarathustra's time was presumably followed by a long period during which his teachings gave rise to the formation of a religious community. His religion, uniquely for early Indian and Iranian cultures, was able to spread beyond the confines of a single people or tribe. Unlike the usual tribal cults, Zarathustra's *daēnā* accepted believers 'wherever they were born',¹⁰ so that all those who shared the 'world-view' (*daēnā*) could join the 'religion' (*daēnā*). We have no accurate information as to what happened exactly during these 'dark centuries', but it is clear that many of the developments that characterized this period are referred to in the Young Avesta (that is in those texts that continued to evolve as to language and contents, probably until Achaemenid times).¹¹

As far as the question of 'looking back' is concerned, it is important to stress that Zarathustra's revelation was evidently regarded as the only source of religious knowledge. This gave rise to the belief that all knowledge had been revealed to Zarathustra,¹² and had been handed down to the community since his time. The early followers of the religion therefore looked back above all to the time when Ahura Mazdā taught Zarathustra the Truth. In the confession of faith (*Fravarānē*)¹³ the believer pledges: 'As Ahura Mazdā taught Zarathustra ... and as Zarathustra taught [his community] to repudiate any connection

with the *daēvas*, I also, as a Mazdā-worshipper and follower of Zarathustra, repudiate any connection with the *daēvas*.⁷

When the ideal period when Zarathustra was in direct contact with God receded into the remote past, one has the impression that expectations about the end of time came to be projected further into the future. Legends developed about the events leading up to the end of time, depicting a sequence of events that was a mirror image of that of Creation.¹⁴ Given that Zarathustra had communicated God's truth to the world, it was evidently felt that he should also be prominently represented at the end of time. Zoroastrianism does not teach reincarnation, however, and the resurrection of the dead was not expected to take place until the process leading to the end of time was already well advanced, so Zarathustra himself could not be an initiator of these events. A solution was found that was to have implications for Christianity as well as Zoroastrianism. A legend developed saying that Zarathustra's seed was preserved in a lake. In the fullness of time, a virgin would bathe there and give birth to a Saviour who, miraculously, is Zarathustra's son.¹⁵ Eventually, it was foretold that three such Saviours would appear before the end of time, each Saviour arriving after a long period of decline in the state of the world.

When the authors or transmitters of the Young Avestan texts¹⁶ looked back, then, they still saw Zarathustra as a pivotal figure. Curiously, this is not the case in Iranian sources reflecting the next stage in the history of Zoroastrianism, the Achaemenid Inscriptions, which begin in the reign of Darius I (521–484 BCE). Darius and his successors, the sovereigns of a new Empire, looked back to the recent past, and particularly to their own exploits. Although there are good grounds for the assumption that the Achaemenids were profoundly influenced by Zoroastrianism from the time of Darius I onwards,¹⁷ we do not find a single mention of the Prophet Zarathustra in the Inscriptions. Briant¹⁸ has drawn attention to a single seal from the time of Darius I that is inscribed in Aramaic letters with the word *zarathushtrish* (that is 'belonging to Zarathustra'), but this can hardly be taken as evidence of a strong tendency in court circles to look back to the time of the Prophet.

This dearth of references to Zarathustra has given rise to speculations that the early Achaemenids were not Zoroastrians at all, which for reasons given elsewhere¹⁹ I regard as untenable. Rather, the true explanation may be that although Zoroastrianism came to be the religion of choice for the Achaemenid elite, and gradually for the people generally, the nobility was not overly preoccupied with the founder of their faith, or with its earlier history.

If we accept that the early Achaemenids were indeed Zoroastrians or strongly influenced by Zoroastrian thinking, the question arises whether the founder of this religion was no longer felt to be relevant, or if he just did not seem very significant to the Achaemenid kings and their courtiers. When we look at Greek sources, we find that Zarathustra's name, in its Greek version, Zoroastēr, occurs for the first time in the works of Xanthus of Lydia²⁰ and Plato,²¹ two authors of the fifth century BCE, that is of the time when Zoroastrianism

became dominant in Achaemenid Iran. Undoubtedly the Greeks learned about Zoroastēr from Iranians. The fact that Zarathustra's name is mentioned in the works of two Greek authors of the fifth century BCE²² therefore suggests that the Persians' new preference for Zoroastrianism had indeed generated a great deal of discourse, in which Zarathustra played a key role, in Iran itself, and that this discourse reached the Greeks. Ordinary believers, then, appear to have been more interested in looking back to Zarathustra than their royal masters.

Zarathustra taught that a righteous person does not necessarily meet with success and happiness in this world. That part of his teaching was not taken on board by the Achaemenids, however, for their Inscriptions state that Ahura Mazdā made them kings because they were righteous.²³ This comfortable view of the world came to an abrupt end in 331 BCE, when Alexander defeated the Achaemenid Empire. When Zoroastrians looked back after that point in time, they saw that a good period had given way to a bad one. Given that they had been taught that God had supported the Achaemenids because they – and by implication their religion – were righteous, this needed an explanation. The answer that was found involved a novel way of understanding the past, which was to influence several other religions. This new teaching stated that history follows a preordained course. Good periods will inevitably be followed by times of decline until things become so bad that a Saviour is needed to restore the world. After that another period of gradual decline will follow. These preordained periods came to be thought of as lasting for a thousand years, and these ideas gave rise to a view of history we now call 'Millennialism', which also plays a part in several other religions. Such myths may already have existed in later Achaemenid times, but they probably acquired a particular significance after Alexander.²⁴ In other words, current religious problems were solved by proposing a different view of the past.

The scarcity of relevant data about Alexander's successors, the Seleucids and the Parthians, does not allow us to follow the development of Zoroastrianism during this period in detail. We are on firmer ground with the Sasanians, who ruled Iran from 224 to 651 CE. To understand their view of history, we need to consider a few points. Firstly, in a culture where the legitimacy of the king was a key consideration, the Sasanians' succession to the throne had been the result of a military victory, which in itself was not sufficient to warrant acceptance. The Sasanians and their counsellors solved this problem by means of a propaganda campaign based on two main points, both of which involved the construction of an appropriate view of the past. First of all, the Sasanians claimed to be the descendants and legitimate successors of the Achaemenids by inventing an improbable genealogy.²⁵ Secondly they presented themselves as the champions of 'true' Zoroastrianism. It was argued that the incursion of Alexander had led to the disintegration of the original, 'true' form of the religion, and that only the Sasanian king had the qualifications to restore the religion to its true form.²⁶

In other words, while in fact a range of local Zoroastrian cults and of Zoroastrian beliefs must have existed, the Sasanian political and religious

leadership asked the community to look back to a hypothetical, ideal period when a 'true' form of the religion existed. Such ideas are reflected in the works of the first two great religious leaders of the time, Tansar and Kirdir. The former, Tansar, simply claims that the Sasanian king has full authority in matters of religion because he is so virtuous.²⁷ In combination with the physical fact that the king held the power, this argument was evidently sufficient.

For his successor, Kirdir (a dominant personality in the religious life of Iran in the third century CE), the question of religious authority presented more of a challenge. One reason for this was that two rival religions had entered Iran, namely Manichaeism and Christianity. Both religions claimed to be based upon direct divine revelations that had taken place recently enough to be still authoritative. The Zoroastrian Kirdir could not counter this with a similar claim for Zoroastrianism. By his time, it seems, Zarathustra had become a symbolic, mythical figure shrouded in legend. Neither Kirdir nor Tansar explicitly refers to Zarathustra or to the *Gāthās* as a direct source of authority. The Pahlavi Books often refer to the 'first teachers' (*pōryōtkēšān*) rather than Zarathustra as the main source of religious authority. The key condition for being a good Zoroastrian, it seems, was that one should be *andar ērihud pōryōtkēših*, 'belong to Iranian culture and follow the first teachers'.²⁸

Kirdir's own inscriptions²⁹ show that he felt that in matters of religion, the ultimate authority was his alone. Perhaps in order to prove that, like the Christians and Manichaeans, he also had direct access to the Divine, Kirdir claimed that his alter ego had visited heaven and hell. The apparent need for such a narrative implies that the status of a high priest was no longer enough in itself to legitimize the claim to authority in matters of religion. The question of religious authority came up again a little after Kirdir, during the reign of Shahbuhr II (309–79 CE). The High Priest of the time, Ādurbād ī Mahraspandān, is said to have undergone an ordeal by molten metal to prove his claims to religious authority.³⁰ Next to the 'first teachers', Ādurbād came to be regarded as an important source of religious authority. Later again, three priestly schools' (Pahl. *čāstag*) emerged, each of whose members claimed authority from his *čāstag's* founder.

All this shows that in early Sasanian times, the mere assertion of 'looking back' to Zarathustra's message was no longer enough. The unspecific 'first teachers' evidently carried greater weight, but we also see a tendency to demand that religious leaders have a direct or indirect connection with the Divine. The ordeal of Ādurbād ī Mahraspandān, and perhaps Kirdir's visit to heaven and hell, became points of reference to which Zoroastrianism looked back in questions of religious uncertainty. Zarathustra of course remained a legendary figure, the founder of the faith, who had been in direct contact with Ahura Mazdā.³¹ Myths developed about his life, which reflects the veneration in which he was held. He was the legendary source of all religious authority, but apparently no longer the primary figure to look back to when deciding actual questions.

The problem of authority continued to haunt Sasanian Zoroastrianism. The next problem arose with the appearance of Mazdak (d. c. 524), who challenged the status quo, on the basis of his understanding of 'true' Zoroastrian teaching as reflected by the *Zand* (the Middle Persian translation and exegesis of the Avesta). His revolt, which at first enjoyed great popularity, was quashed. Clearly afraid of the potential power of religious teaching, King Khosraw I banned the laity from studying the *Zand*, as it had been entitled to do. This blocked the laity's voice in religious affairs, and left the priesthood as the only body capable of 'looking back' in search of religious truth.

Another relevant development is the increasing role that writing began to play under the Sasanians. As a result of this people began to feel the need for a written scripture. Interestingly, when this question was addressed it was claimed that written versions of the Avesta had already existed in the past until they were destroyed by Alexander. There are good grounds for regarding this as a myth. Such claims represent a tendency to legitimize new phenomena by claiming they had existed in an earlier, better period in the past. All this means that, when the later Sasanians looked back to their past, their understanding of that past differed considerably from that of their ancestors: they believed in a past in which a single 'true' form of Zoroastrianism had existed and a written Avesta had been available.

Another result of the increasing role of writing in Sasanian culture was the emergence of the desire to have a 'proper' history of Iran, perhaps on the model of Greek histories. It is difficult to overestimate the difficulty of achieving the profound transformation this required. In oral culture various narratives in a sense exist side by side, associated with an undifferentiated past. Written culture requires a more or less linear sequence, with a beginning, a middle and an end. This required a new way of looking back, one that involved a time sequence accommodating a broad range of unrelated narratives, ranging from religious myths, via mythical and factual accounts of history, to romantic tales about ancient heroes. At some stage in the Sasanian period the Iranians began to construct such accounts of their own history. The results of these efforts were probably known collectively as *Xwadāy-nāmag*, 'Book of Lords'. *Xwadāy-nāmag*, then, may have been a generic name for a range of such texts, a genre rather than the single *Urtext* of Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāme* (Book of Kings).

The *Xwadāy-nāmag* tradition continued to form part of the Iranian cultural heritage long after the Sasanian Empire had been defeated by the armies of Islam. Part of its contents eventually came to be included in a work that was to shape and determine the way Iranians look back to their pre-Islamic past: Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāme*.³² Ferdowsi's work integrated ancient Iranian traditions into Islamic Iranian culture, thus allowing Iranian Muslims to look back to their past with pride, which clearly played a key role in the development of a distinct Iranian/Islamic identity.

After the Arab conquest, the Zoroastrian community experienced something akin to its ancestors' reaction to the conquest of Alexander. Millennialist ideas

and other legends prophesying that this bitter period would come to an end, and would be followed by a restoration of Zoroastrian dominance, once more came to seem very meaningful. Speculations about a Saviour figure, Bahrām Warzāwand,³³ became an important part of the living tradition of the community. Apart from this, after about two and a half centuries under Islamic rule the Zoroastrian priesthood had become aware of the difficulty of preserving religious knowledge in the form of an oral tradition. Instead, they proceeded to write down whatever they felt was most relevant in their traditional knowledge. It is important to stress that this process consisted of writing down, and thus 'fixing', a set of texts that originally formed part of a living oral tradition that was intended to be interpreted by a contemporary *dastur* (spiritual authority). Owing perhaps to the weakness of their social position, the Zoroastrian community was not able to develop this into a legal system of the type normally found in written cultures. In a way their efforts to save their religious tradition in fact resulted in the transformation of a living tradition, that needed the personal input of a *dastur*, into a fixed, somewhat archaic and exclusive legalistic system. After Khosraw I's ban on teaching the *Zand* to the laity, ordinary believers never recovered their right to participate in advanced religious studies, and became wholly dependent on the priesthood in questions of religion. This may account for the fact that, in the centuries that followed, Zoroastrian teaching failed to develop in ways that adapted to current conditions. As the religion lost some of its sense of actuality and official religion focused mainly on questions of ritual and observance, looking back to an imagined, ideal past may have become all the more important to the Zoroastrian community.

We do not know exactly when the Parsis migrated to India and have little information about the early Parsi community. It seems likely, however, that they looked back to their country of origin and the heyday of their religion under the Sasanians. Later, from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, the Zoroastrian priests of Iran and India kept up a long correspondence. Their letters, the *Rivāyats*, give us some insight into the preoccupations of the priesthood. These, it turns out, hardly differed from those of the earlier Pahlavi Books, focusing on ritual and observance. Medieval Parsi priests, in other words, looked back to the knowledge of their Sasanian and early post-Sasanian ancestors, without much reference to earlier or later periods.

From the sixteenth century onward, however, we hear of new religious movements in which Zoroastrianism played a role, such as the school of Āzar Kayvān (c. 1530 – c. 1618 CE), an Iranian who migrated to India during the time of the Emperor Akbar. He became the founder of a school which Henri Corbin³⁴ calls a representative of 'Zoroastrian *İşrāq* or illuminative philosophy' and which, he says, 'helped produce a sort of philosophical and mystical revival in the Zoroastrian milieu.' A detailed history of Āzar Kayvān's movement cannot be given here. However, it seems plausible to assume that, in the heady climate of Akbar's religious policies, some Zoroastrians became interested in

the teachings, rather than rituals, of their faith. Later, we see the appearance in India of other figures who claimed divine inspiration for a new interpretation of Zoroastrian teachings, such as Behramshah Shroff (1858–1923), the founder of the Ilm-e Khshnoom school, and Nusservanji Pundol (d. 1975).³⁵ One way of explaining this development in the Zoroastrians' perceptions of their religion is the assumption that, from the sixteenth century onward the Parsis' cultural environment led some of them to seek new horizons. The appearance of new religious teachers, in other words, afforded those who needed it an opportunity of finding a more recent reference point to which they might look back.

When we examine the spectrum of tendencies in modern Parsi Zoroastrianism we notice that, conditioned by their present perceptions of what their religion is or should be, various sections of the community are looking back to different aspects of the past. Thus, the members of the 'orthodox' community focus on the tradition as a whole, implicitly regarding their *dasturs* as the legitimate representatives of a long spiritual lineage that began with Zarathustra. Others, prompted perhaps by a more Western concept of religion, feel that the essence of a faith lies in its teachings and look back to Zarathustra alone, rejecting the evidence of later sources as more or less irrelevant. Some occultist groups believe that the very remote past is still potentially with us, and that its representatives may even now materialize and guide the faithful, as the followers of Ilm-e Khshnoom believe happened in the case of Behramshah Shroff.³⁶ Although a deep veneration for the Prophet Zarathustra is common to all or most groups, and myths and legends are told about him, he is shrouded in the mist of the remote past. Some Parsi, therefore, evidently feel the need to look back to more recent authority figures.

In Iran, the Pahlavi dynasty (1925–79) presented the Iranian people with an ideal image of the pre-Islamic past, in which Zoroastrianism played a key role. For many Iranians that religion still symbolizes their cultural independence and identity. This perception of its religion clearly affected the Zoroastrian community and helped it become emancipated. Not enough evidence is currently available to offer a detailed and balanced account of the way the cultural climate of the Pahlavi dynasty, and later that of the Islamic Republic, affected the Iranian Zoroastrians.

Having examined how Zoroastrians looked back to their own past, we may briefly address the question as to what the West may see as particularly relevant points when looking back to the influence Zoroastrianism has had on Western culture. First of all, Zarathustra's concept of *daēnā* probably informed the development of our concept of 'religion'. Furthermore, Zarathustra may have been the first religious teacher to claim that the world was not as God intended it to be, a premise which has been tacitly accepted by many religions after him. As is well known, Zoroastrianism gave us the idea of a Saviour born of a virgin, as well as those of heaven and hell, and of the resurrection of the dead. It probably also contributed to the development of 'millennialist' ideas. As Stausberg³⁷ has shown, moreover, 'Zoroaster' became an object of speculation

for many European thinkers. Lastly, when we think of the achievements of the Achaemenids and the Sasanians, and of the spectacular philanthropy of the Parsis, we can see that Zoroastrianism offers us a view of the lofty ideals which a religion can inspire in its followers. Zoroastrianism, in short, has offered its followers, and the world at large, a great deal. May it live long!

NOTES

1. Jean Kellens and Éric Pirart, *Les Textes Vieil-avestiques*, vol. 1: *Introduction, Texte et Traduction* (Wiesbaden, 1988), pp. 22–6.
2. *Yasna* 29.5.
3. See Philip G. Kreyenbroek, 'Good and evil in Zoroastrianism', in H.-G. Nesselrath and F. Wilks (eds), *Gut und Böse in Mensch und Welt* (Tübingen, 2013), pp. 51–61.
4. Kianoosh Rezanian, *Die zoroastrische Zeitvorstellung. Eine Untersuchung über Zeit- und Ewigkeitskonzepte und die Frage des Zurvanismus* (Wiesbaden, 2010).
5. See Kreyenbroek, 'Good and evil'.
6. Jean Kellens, 'Ahura Mazdā n'est pas un dieu créateur', in C.-H. de Fouchecour and P. Gignoux (eds), *Études indo-iraniennes offerts à Gilbert Lazard* (Paris, 1989), pp. 217–28. Against this, see e.g. Albert de Jong, 'Ahura Mazdā the creator', in J. Curtis and S. Simpson (eds), *Achaemenid Persia* (London and New York, 2010), pp. 85–9, esp. p. 88.
7. Various forms of the word *paouruuuīia* 'first' appear to be used in this sense in the *Gāthās*. See also below, n. 8.
8. *Yasna* 45.1: 'The one of evil doctrine shall not destroy existence a second time.'
9. *Yasna* 28.11: 'You, Lord Wisdom, teach me to pronounce them [the *manthras*] according to your spirit, with your mouth – through which Existence shall be as it was in the Beginning.'
10. *Yasna* 39.2: 'So we worship the souls of the righteous, men or women, wherever they were born, whose *daēnā*, being better, triumphs, will triumph or has triumphed.'
11. See Philip G. Kreyenbroek, 'The Zoroastrian tradition from an oralist's point of view', in H. J. M. Desai and H. N. Modi (eds), *K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, Second International Congress Proceedings* (Bombay, 1996), pp. 221–37.
12. See e.g. the Pahlavi translation of *Yasht* 11.14, in [Philip] G. Kreyenbroek, *Sraoša in the Zoroastrian Tradition* (Leiden, 1985), pp. 64–5.
13. *Yasna* 12, 5–6.
14. See Philip G. Kreyenbroek, 'Millennialism and eschatology in the Zoroastrian tradition', in A. Amanat and M. T. Bernhardsson (eds), *Imagining the End: Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America* (London, 2002), pp. 33–55, esp. pp. 47–8.
15. Kreyenbroek, 'Millennialism', p. 38.
16. i.e. those texts which, unlike the *Gāthās* and the *Yasna Haptanḥāiti*, were not memorized in their original form, but whose language continued to develop along with the natural language of the 'Avestan' people, and probably became fixed only when a class of priests who were not native speakers of Avestan became leaders of the Zoroastrian community under the Achaemenids. See Kreyenbroek, 'Zoroastrian tradition'.

17. See Philip G. Kreyenbroek, 'Zoroastrianism under the Achaemenians: A non-essentialist approach', in J. Curtis and S. Simpson (eds), *Achaemenid Persia* (London and New York, 2010), pp. 103–9.
18. Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire* (Winona Lake, 2002), p. 250.
19. Kreyenbroek, 'Zoroastrianism under the Achaemenians'.
20. *Lydiaca*, Fragment 32.
21. *First Alcibiades* 122a1.
22. Herodotus does not mention Zarathustra, but he may have described an Iranian cult that was practised in Asia Minor before Zoroastrianism fully took hold there.
23. 'Saith Darius the King: for this reason Ahuramazda bore aid, and the other gods who are, because I was not hostile, I was not a Lie-follower, I was not a doer of wrong – neither I nor my family. According to Righteousness I conducted myself'. Inscription of Darius at Behistun IV. 61–7. Translation: Ronald G. Kent, *Old Persian: Grammar, Texts, Lexicon* (New Haven, 1953), p. 132.
24. According to Plutarch (fl. 45–125 CE; *De Iside et Osiride* 47), who cites Theopompus (fl. fourth century BCE), the Magians believed that a series of periods of 1,000 years would succeed each other, in which the good and the evil gods would dominate alternately.
25. Philip G. Kreyenbroek, 'How pious was Shahbuhr I?: Religion, church and propaganda under the early Sasanians', in V. S. Curtis and S. Stewart (eds), *The Sasanian Era: The Idea of Iran*, vol. 3 (London and New York, 2008), pp. 7–15.
26. Mary Boyce, *The Letter of Tansar* (Rome 1968), p. 36.
27. Boyce, *Tansar*, p. 36.
28. *Pahlavi Vendidad* III.42.
29. For the text and a German translation of these inscriptions see Michael Back, *Die sassanidischen Staatsinschriften* (Tehran and Liege, 1978).
30. See Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London, 1979), pp. 118–19.
31. See *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* 1.
32. On the *Shāhnāme* see further Ashek Dahlén's chapter in this volume.
33. See *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* 7.5; 8.1.
34. *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 'Āzar Keyvān'.
35. See Philip G. Kreyenbroek, *Living Zoroastrianism: Urban Parsis Speak about their Religious Lives* (Richmond, 2001), pp. 48–50.
36. See Kreyenbroek, *Living Zoroastrianism*, p. 49.
37. Michael Stausberg, *Faszination Zarathustra: Zoroaster und die Europäische Religionsgeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit*, Part 1 (Berlin, 1998).

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2

NO ONE STANDS NOWHERE

Knowledge, Power and Positionality across the Insider–Outsider Divide in the Study of Zoroastrianism¹

Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina

Knowledge itself is power (*ipsa scientia potestas est*)

Sir Francis Bacon, *Meditationes Sacrae* (1597)

Since the heyday of the ‘Oriental Renaissance’ in the eighteenth century, the vast bulk of scholarship in the academic study of Zoroastrianism has focused on editing, emending, and commenting upon ancient and late antique texts – philology – in an attempt to reconstruct early and ‘classical’ Zoroastrianism.² As a consequence of such a sustained disciplinary focus on pre-modern textuality, scant attention has been paid to our sociology of knowledge, that is, to questions of location, position, relation and boundaries in the present regarding our knowledge production, positionalities,³ and academic identities as scholars.⁴ The present chapter therefore seeks to raise a number of disciplinary questions and tensions related to the so-called Insider/Outsider (I/O) problem as it pertains to academic knowledge production about Zoroastrianism. As Russell T. McCutcheon has stated about the I/O problem:

In a nutshell the problem is whether, and to what extent, someone can study, understand, or explain the beliefs, words, or actions of another. In other words, to what degree, if any, are the motives and meanings of human behaviors and beliefs accessible to the researcher who may not necessarily share these beliefs and who does not necessarily participate in these practices?⁵

The latter part of the above quotation is particularly apt for the academic study of Zoroastrianism since the lion’s share of research on and writing about Zoroastrianism has historically been produced by authoritative ‘Outsiders’.⁶ What does it mean for one of the world’s oldest (and smallest) living religions to be almost exclusively represented, advocated for, and defined in scholarly discourse and academic institutions by so-called ‘Outsiders’?⁷

THE PROBLEM

A number of questions come to mind regarding the Insider/Outsider 'problem' in the study of religion more generally or a religious tradition in particular. To begin with, we have a basic philosophical question that has been much discussed: Is the I/O distinction or 'problem' to be understood in ontological, epistemological or social terms?⁸ As Matthew Day has noted: 'The methodological bedrock for many religion scholars is that the verdicts of religious insiders must be granted infallible first-person authority when it comes to the *whys* and *hows*.'⁹ He goes on to quote Wilfred Cantwell Smith's often-cited dictum in *Religious Studies*: 'No statement about religion is valid unless it can be acknowledged by that religion's believers.'¹⁰ In stark contrast, Bruce Lincoln in his equally often-cited 'Theses on Method' unequivocally states in his fifth and thirteenth theses respectively:

Reverence is a religious, and not a scholarly virtue. When good manners and good conscience cannot be reconciled, the demands of the latter ought to prevail. [...]

When one permits those whom one studies to define the terms in which they will be understood, suspends one's interest in the temporal and contingent, or fails to distinguish between 'truths,' 'truth-claims,' and 'regimes of truth,' one has ceased to function as historian or scholar. In that moment, a variety of roles are available: some perfectly respectable (amanuensis, collector, friend, and advocate), and some less appealing (cheerleader, voyeur, retailer of import goods). None, however, should be confused with scholarship.¹¹

As one can gather from the quotations above, the field of Religious Studies is still grappling with theoretical and methodological questions related to the issue of first- versus third-person epistemic authority, and as Day has so acerbically stated, 'when we yield the epistemic floor to religious insiders, academic third parties are relegated to merely translating the insider's perspective into another vocabulary and adding a few touches of ethnographic delight'.¹²

Despite much recent scepticism in the study of religion by Day and others about whether or not the I/O distinction is in fact a philosophical 'problem', nonetheless it raises fundamentally important theoretical and methodological questions for those of us scholars writing about Zoroastrianism, precisely because we seem to speak so little about it. When I have raised the issue with many of my colleagues, I invariably hear the old refrain that, regrettably, they don't *do* living religion; they simply translate 'old texts' and hence, they tend to view their work as apolitical and a-social, if not objective, forms of knowledge production vis-à-vis the lived religious communities of 'Insiders' and their particularist ethnic, political, and social concerns. Such epistemological viewpoints or methodological *mea culpas*, simply do not acknowledge the now commonly held view in the humanities and social sciences that knowledge production for *both* the past *and* the present is always negotiated, acquired and disseminated in social terms and is, therefore, inextricably embedded in an

economy of power relations. As Michel Foucault so famously stated about the intimate relationship between knowledge and power:

We should admit [...] that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.¹³

One of the enduring legacies of orientalism is that while we as scholarly authorities – social agents in a knowledge economy acquiring, possessing, and wielding authoritative representational power – pay lip service to respecting the self-perceptions of ‘Insiders’ about ‘Zoroastrianism’, more often than not *their* contemporary beliefs, practices, and self-understandings are ignored entirely or treated as mere data to be mined for archaisms that relate to the pre-modern Zoroastrian past which most of *us* work on and which *we* often view as properly constituting *our* field of study.¹⁴

Yet many of us, myself included, who do translate ‘old texts’ work in archives in India that are controlled by ‘Insiders’ with whom we delicately negotiate for privileged access to knowledge – pre-modern manuscripts – in the shadow of the often fraught legacies of orientalism and colonialism. The archival politics associated with working at the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute¹⁵ and the First Dastoor Meherjirana Library,¹⁶ immediately spring to mind.¹⁷ In addition, many of us academics give lectures at conferences from which the present volume is produced, which are often financially sponsored by socio-economically elite ‘Insiders’ whose political views, community positionalities, and religious subjectivities are never critically examined or commented upon by us scholars.¹⁸ Besides the archive and the conference there are multiple sites where ‘Insider’ and ‘Outsider’ knowledge producers and consumers interact, for example, the classroom,¹⁹ religious and communal sites and structures like community centres,²⁰ community publications,²¹ and museum exhibits and catalogues.²²

Another issue that needs to be raised concerns the intellectual, disciplinary and social implications of recognizing that knowledge – both *emic* and *etic*²³ – is distributed unevenly and is always contested in terms of authority and power. How do so many of us historians and philologists conceive of speaking and writing about pre-modern stages of a still-living religious tradition, especially a small minority one, where our social capital is often highly sought after by various ‘Insider’ groups to legitimate their own communal, social and political agendas? Even as scholars of ‘old texts’, how must we responsibly engage with questions of faith, theology and the diverse practices of living communities in Iran, India and the global diasporas, while maintaining our critical distance and scholarly authority over the Zoroastrian past? This is especially salient in the case of contemporary Zoroastrianism when we – the academics – are largely

the advocates for, and gate-keepers of, pre-modern Zoroastrianism. Moreover, except for a small number of priests, few if any 'Insiders' can read their sacred literatures, notably Avestan and Pahlavi,²⁴ in the original languages, and hence, they often turn to us academics for explanations of 'their' theology. An orientalist feedback loop, if there ever was one!

This constellation of issues in our sociology of knowledge leads me to interrogate the interrelated questions of who speaks for Zoroastrianism, from what positionalities, and with what methodologies? In his groundbreaking *Living Zoroastrianism: Urban Parsis Speak about their Religion*, Philip G. Kreyenbroek (with his 'Insider' [Parsi] interviewer – Shehnaz Neville Munshi) produced a typology of Parsi 'Insiders'. His interview subjects and their viewpoints on 'religion' were divided into six groups and labelled using etic categories such as: 'Traditionalists', 'Neo-Traditionalists', 'Modernist Views', 'Eclecticism in Religious Views', 'Esoteric Beliefs', and 'Religion as Cultural Heritage'. With regard to the rationale for this externally imposed typology of 'Insiders', Kreyenbroek stated:

This division is in many ways an arbitrary one, aimed at making the material more accessible by imposing some sort of order. Hardly any of the categories concerned are clear-cut, nor can personal realities usually be brought under one heading only.²⁵

The imposition of 'order' onto our objects of study – in this case, the religious beliefs and identities of 'Insiders' – by recourse to *our* scholarly authority as academics – perfectly typifies Foucault's views on the intimate relationship between knowledge and power. It might prove illuminating to impose a similar typology upon ourselves as scholars of Zoroastrianism across the Insider/ Outsider divide. Rather than viewing such a reflexive typology of academic selves as simply a rhetorical gimmick based on post-colonial *ressentiment*, I would contend that our positionalities and methodologies as scholars deserve the same level of critical scrutiny as our objects of study: 'Insiders' and their religious beliefs and practices. As the eminent French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu stated in the Preface to the English translation of his *Homo Academicus*:

One cannot avoid having to objectify the objectifying subject. It is by turning to study the historical conditions of his own production, rather than by some form or other of transcendental reflection, that the scientific subject can gain a theoretical control over his own structures and inclinations as well as over the determinants whose products they are, and can thereby gain the concrete means of reinforcing his capacity for objectification.²⁶

By engaging in just such a reflexive exercise of recognizing ourselves as objectifying subjects, I wish to problematize the I/O divide itself by demonstrating the mutually implicated nature of our knowledge production. In doing so I will suggest that we all, both 'Insiders' and 'Outsiders', are co-authoring the (auto-)biography of not merely Zoroastrian Studies, but by extension, 'Zoroastrianism' as well.

A TYPOLOGY

The quadripartite typology I deploy below is based on well-known social science models of participant observation and ultimately derives from the sociological work of Buford Junker and Raymond Gold from the 1950s. It was adapted by Kim Knott for Religious Studies in her chapter, 'Insider/outsider perspectives' in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion* (which was edited by the scholar of Zoroastrianism and Parsi history, John R. Hinnells).²⁷ Ranging from a 'complete participant/full Insider' to a 'complete observer/full Outsider', we can add the categories of 'observer as participant' or 'embedded Outsider' as I term it and 'participant as observer' or 'critical Insider'.²⁸ McCutcheon defines these four approaches in general terms as empathetic, explanatory, agnostic and reflexive.²⁹ Despite its specifically social science origins I believe that such a typology applies, at least partially, to all of us scholars of Zoroastrianism whether we simply do textual work on the past as humanists or whether we also engage with Zoroastrian communities – 'Insiders' – in ethnographic or sociological contexts in the present.

THE FULL INSIDER

In the case of the 'full Insider' we have a member of a class of scholars trained communally and seen as religiously and publicly authoritative: they are the theologians, rabbis, muftis, pandits, priests, etc. of other religious groups. Drawing on 'traditional' sources of learning and authority, they primarily speak *from within* and *for* the 'religion', 'tradition' or 'faith' to which they belong. While this category of scholar might seem like the most straightforward of the four in the Zoroastrian context, it is in many ways the most fascinating since some of the most illustrious scholar-priests in the twentieth century, such as Dastur Dr Hormazdyar Kayoji Mirza, Dastur Dr Firoze M. Kotwal and Dastur Dr Kaikhushroo JamaspAsa have doctorates from academic institutions of learning, in addition to their priestly training in the Zoroastrian madressas.³⁰ Their being agents in two knowledge economies deeply problematizes our understanding of categories of Insider/Outsider knowledge, power and authority in absolute (ontological) or contrastive terms. Perhaps the most famous example of a scholar-priest bridging the I/O chasm was Dastur Dr Maneckji Nusservanji Dhalla (1875–1956), the High Priest of Karachi, who studied with Professor Abraham Valentine Williams Jackson at Columbia University, USA from 1905 to 1908 and was the first Zoroastrian to receive a doctorate related to the study of Zoroastrianism from a Western university. Dhalla, an avid student of evolutionary theories of religion while at Columbia, acknowledged the evolving nature of his intellectual development and spiritual growth after studying in the West, when he wrote so triumphantly in his autobiography:

Now that I had been enlightened by scientific study, and now that I had come to know and gain so much, I no longer adhered to old ideas. My thinking, my outlook, my ideals and my philosophy of life changed. The purpose and meaning of living changed – everything changed. I was now eager to become the thinker of new thoughts, the student of new ideas and the propagator of new concepts. In 1905 I had set foot on American soil as an orthodox. Now in 1909 I was leaving the shores of the New World as a reformist.³¹

Despite this often-cited quotation, Dhalla's complex relationship between his scholarly and priestly identities and his engagement with the challenges of I/O knowledge production to educate his 'flock' in Karachi both typify the paradox of simply reducing his writings and identity to facile labels such as 'reformist' or 'orthodox,' despite his own use of those particular labels.³² As a corrective to simply viewing Dhalla as a Western-educated reformist who left traditionalism behind when he departed the New World with a 'Protestant Zoroastrianism,' Hinnells presciently notes:

for although his western studies affected his writings, every person I have spoken to who knew him, refers to his love for the practice of the religion, indeed his saintly qualities. However Protestant the Dastur may be seen to be in his writings, in his personal life the practices of the religion he believed sustained his soul, just as they did those of lay community members.³³

In addition to the case of Dhalla, whose intellectual genealogies straddle the I/O divide and, hence, blend I/O knowledge production, we have a number of important academic monographs produced in collaboration with 'Insider' priests and 'Outsider' academics. Dastur Dr Kotwal's work on rituals with James Boyd³⁴ and his philological works with Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Almut Hintze are worth mentioning.³⁵ In addition, we also have the philological collaborations between Helmut Humbach and Dastur Dr Kaikhusroo JamaspAsa.³⁶ In the next generation, we now have Ervad Dr Ramiyar Karanjia's recent work on death rituals with Dorothea Lüddeckens,³⁷ and his collaboration with Michael Stausberg on 'Rituals' for *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism* co-edited by Michael Stausberg and myself.³⁸ Lüddeckens's and Karanjia's reflections on the problematics of the I/O divide in terms of co-authorship and hierarchies of power are worth quoting:

The two authors, Lüddeckens as a foreign scholar, 'outsider', and Karanjia as a native scholar, an 'insider', are differently placed in terms of access to the Parsi death rituals. Whereas Karanjia's engagement with the topic in his capacity as a 'scholar priest' is simultaneously motivated by his religious and theological interests, Lüddeckens as a scholar of religious studies (*Religionswissenschaft*) has no religious motivation for her work, regarding it as a 'purely scientific undertaking', that is academic research in the fields of social sciences and religious studies, with no religious parti pris. [...]

No matter how consistently 'dialogical' a relationship between an external scholar and a field's insider may be, it will still never constitute a non-hierarchical discourse. Both the present authors are aware that this applies to their own mutual relationship, notwithstanding all the cooperation and all the desired and accepted reciprocal influence that have characterized it. The two authors respectively claimed for their own person and conceded to the other differing degrees and types of competence and authority, and thus of sovereignty of interpretation.³⁹

I cite these examples of collaborative work to illustrate the point that our scholarly knowledge production for both pre-modern and contemporary Zoroastrianism is shared across the so-called Insider/Outsider divide and yet unequal in terms of power and authority as Lüddeckens and Karanjia candidly acknowledge. Despite their claims of the 'sovereignty of interpretation', I would contend that the idea of using or citing the 'Insider' perspective or knowledge as an unmediated access to 'traditional' or 'authentic' learning and erudition with regard to these collaborations is epistemologically problematic. There have been numerous collaborative projects between Western scholars and their Zoroastrian priestly counterparts or informants beginning with the advent of Western philology by Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (1731–1805) with the aid of Dasturs Darab, Kaus, and Mancherji in Surat, Gujarat in the mid-eighteenth century.⁴⁰ These hybridized intellectual collaborations produced a form of knowledge that cannot simply be reduced to 'Western' or 'Eastern' scholarship or discourse, namely that of the academy *versus* that of the *madressa*, but they represent knowledge production that is quintessentially modern, blended, mutually informing, and mutually implicated in terms of power and authority between authoritative 'Insiders' and 'Outsiders'.⁴¹

THE FULL OUTSIDER

At the other end of the spectrum we have the 'complete observer' or 'full Outsider'. The methodological claims commonly associated with this type of scholar(ship) generally focus on objectivity, neutrality and social scientific or philological rather than religious or theological approaches to the religion or religious tradition in question. Any number of our colleagues might fall within this category. My teacher Prods Oktor Skjærvø, a philologist of Iranian languages, once recounted to me an anecdote of having been invited to southern California to speak to a Zoroastrian – 'Insider' – audience. In order to be sensitive to the interests of his hosts, he decided to remain neutral on the Gathic translation and authorship controversies which he had engaged in years earlier in 1996 at the 2nd North American Gatha Congress in Houston (hosted by 'Insiders') when he unequivocally stated his (then) methodological viewpoint regarding the I/O divide:

The major problem with the way the Old Iranian texts and religion have been studied in this century leaps to the eye. Western scholars, rather than adopting an objective scientific attitude and methodology, have made themselves champions of a religion and its prophet. That is, rather than doing their own job – their *xwēškārih*⁴² – they have been doing the job of Zoroastrian theologians. And what about the Zoroastrian theologians? Well, they have made themselves pseudo-scholars by involving Western scholarship to support their theology [...] Zoroastrian theology must not be allowed to influence Avestan philology or the study of Iranian religion – although, of course, Zoroastrian theology may itself be the object of study – nor should Avestan philology and the study of Iranian history or religion be needed for Zoroastrian theologians to establish the tenets of their faith. In short, objective science, to which the study of old texts and religions ought to belong, can not [*sic*] base itself upon a subjective scripture. If it does, it is no longer objective and for the sake of decency should admit as much.⁴³

Rather than simply present his 'objective' (etic) approach to the Avestan texts, which he feared might prove too technical and alien for his 'Insider' audience, he chose instead to emphasize the importance of 'their' (emic) Pahlavi hermeneutical tradition for understanding the *Gāthās*. What was, for Skjærvø, a seemingly neutral intellectual decision to emphasize one particular academic approach based on shedding light on a particular corpus and time period proved to be far more socially problematic than he had imagined when he realized that many in the crowd were Ali Jafarey supporters who were utterly dismayed that an 'Outsider' scholar was advocating for anything but a *Gāthā*-only methodology for the study of early Zoroastrianism!⁴⁴

Ali Akbar Jafarey, an Iranian, born to a Muslim family and educated in Pakistan, co-founded 'The Zarathushtrian Assembly' in 1990, which is based in Anaheim, California, USA.⁴⁵ Jafarey's organization, looking back to Dastur Dhalla's teachings for inspiration, propagates a reformed and more 'authentic' form of Zoroastrianism that bases itself exclusively on the five *Gāthās* or poems of Zarathustra.⁴⁶ Jafarey contends that the conversions to Islam under duress from the seventh century CE onwards are null and void and he claims to have helped thousands of Muslim Iranians 'revert' (Persian *bāz-gašt*) to Zoroastrianism over the years. While reliable numbers are hard to verify, Jafarey has undoubtedly been highly influential amongst the Iranian populations in California for the last three decades and he is, to some large extent, the spiritual head and inspiration for many of the 'Para-Zoroastrian' or Neo-Zoroastrian identitarian groups around the world (for which see below).⁴⁷

Despite Skjærvø's quotation above advocating for the strict separation of 'objective' scholarship and 'subjective' theology, the power of a 'scientific' philology as an orientalist textual practice to re-read and hence, re-write the sacred scriptures of Zoroastrians has, nonetheless, had profound social effects for 'Insiders' since the mid-nineteenth century. This is especially acute for modern and contemporary Zoroastrianism, since no canonical or authoritative translation of the *Gāthās* in the vernaculars exists akin to the King James Bible, and as I stated earlier, only a handful of 'Insiders' can read Avestan and Pahlavi.

'Insiders' are commonly faced with a bewildering array of translations across the I/O divide that appear to have little in common with one another. This results in a hermeneutical morass peculiar to 'modernity': Zoroastrians often read popular 'Insider' translations of their sacred scriptures which, unbeknown to them, are themselves based on the philological editions produced by scholarly 'Outsiders'.⁴⁸ This is a further example of the mutually implicated nature of knowledge and power across the I/O divide.

Another example of a 'full Outsider' scholar who claims no connection with contemporary communal and identity politics is Jean Kellens, who has stated that he works on the 'archaic mind' of the Old Avesta and ancient Iranian religion and literature rather than on Zoroastrianism or the Zoroastrian 'tradition':

we must consider the Avesta as a mythological book, that of an archaic religion with which nobody today has familiar sentiments, purely and simply because despite all possible and imaginable traditions, the evolution of thought over three millennia has wrought deep, inexorable, and unconscious changes. And it has to be said of the Avesta what Kuiper said of the Veda: 'the texts [...] speak [...] but through the mind of the modern scholar'.⁴⁹

For Kellens, we are all 'Outsiders' to the world of the Avesta, regardless of our ascriptive or chosen identities as 'Zoroastrians', 'scholars' or 'Zoroastrian scholars'. Kellens' quest for methodological independence for the Old Avesta from the later Zoroastrian tradition has – and will continue to have – a profound impact on how much fidelity we see in the later Avestan and Pahlavi hermeneutical traditions vis-à-vis the *Gāthās*. This holds regardless of whether we choose to read the *Gāthās* as the product of group composition of inherited Indo-Iranian poetic forms produced in a ritual context as he does, or as the *ipsissima verba* of a prophet's revolutionary message as do many of our colleagues. Kellens addressed this question of the fidelity of the 'tradition' vis-à-vis the *Gāthās* more than a quarter of a century ago when he stated:

Western scholarship decided to seek enlightenment from the historical Mazdean tradition, which recognized the *Gāthās* as its founding text. Without exception, all of the analysts – Humbach somewhat more prudently – chose to measure the text by the yardstick of tradition. Such a choice is neither legitimate nor illegitimate: it is a mere wager. We do not know if the tradition is reliable and if, once rid of the distortions inevitable when ideas evolve and freed of the legendary outcroppings that come to decorate the original account, it gives a faithful description of its early history; or if, in its obscure progress down through the centuries (fourteen!) it underwent ruptures that rendered it more ignorant and defenseless than even we ourselves.⁵⁰

This is not the venue for a critique or evaluation of Kellens' approach or methodology, but rather one might suggest that what might be healthy for Old Avestan Studies, from a particular methodological perspective based on a theoretical stance of scientific 'objectivity' using the comparative method

with Vedic, would not be productive for the study of later 'Zoroastrian' texts in Young Avestan and Pahlavi commenting on the Old Avesta from another methodological point of view, namely that of hermeneutics. We are back to the old debate between the causal explanations of social scientists and the hermeneutical understanding of humanists. The more one treats the Old Avesta as a phenomenon detached from the rest of the Old Iranian ('Zoroastrian') textual legacy, as Kellens would have us do, the harder it becomes to claim historical continuities and then to view 'Zoroastrianism' as a single, continuous 'tradition'.⁵¹ Albert de Jong discussed this issue of approach to early Zoroastrianism/ancient Iranian literature in the late 1990s.⁵² It remains crucially important for us scholars of Zoroastrianism to grapple with the socio-religious and epistemological implications for 'Insiders' of the diverse forms of *our* knowledge production that nominally rely on *shared* philological tools but in fact espouse radically *different* intellectual goals.⁵³

This may sound like academic hair-splitting and internal debates on scholarly method unconnected to the I/O problem but that is patently not the case. I know of Zoroastrian reading groups comprised of laypeople in Boston and Houston for example, who compare the various 'Insider' and 'Outsider' editions and translations of the *Gāthās*⁵⁴ in order to create meta-translations of scripture which appeal to them personally but have little fidelity to the philologically rigorous editions and translations. In effect, they seek semantic commonality across the translations they compare in an attempt to resolve the inherent translational and, hence, theological contingency they find in the wildly divergent translations across the I/O divide.⁵⁵ In doing so, these particular 'Insiders' simply elide the methodological genealogies that Kellens takes such pains to lay out for the purpose of distinguishing his own scientific/anti-traditional approach from many of his philological contemporaries (whom he sees as lacking sufficient critical distance from the Zoroastrian hagiographies of 'Insiders'). There is, however, an irony in regard to Kellens' work (with Éric Pirart),⁵⁶ in so far as his translation is not consulted, at least by the Parsis I have encountered, since it is written in French (it would be more accessible to Iranian 'Insiders' who often read French), yet another example of the uneven access to privileged 'Outsider' academic knowledge on the part of 'Insiders'. It is perhaps equally ironic that despite his insistence on the strict separation of 'objective science' and 'subjective scripture', Skjærvø has provided his unpublished translation of the *Gāthās* to the Boston reading group of 'Insiders' who now enthusiastically use his 'objective science' as an authoritative hermeneutic tool to find spiritual meaning in their 'subjective scripture'.

THE EMBEDDED OUTSIDER

The 'embedded Outsider' or 'observer as participant' is often associated with an empathetic approach to religion as espoused by phenomenologists. This

approach is also based on Max Weber's notion of *Verstehen* or 'Understanding', a type of inquiry intended to allow the researcher to be able to put him/herself into the shoes of the 'Other'.⁵⁷ Value-free translation of foreign concepts, beliefs, and mores is often seen as the goal of such an approach, and it is what Ninian Smart termed 'methodological agnosticism'. This approach espouses neutrality with a concomitant need to bracket out truth claims and judgements on the part of the researcher when engaging with the beliefs of 'Insiders'.⁵⁸ Such 'methodological agnosticism' was particularly popular in the 1970s and 1980s prior to the post-modern movement: post-modernism called into question the dichotomies between 'inside' and 'outside' in terms of constructed and overlapping identities, and challenged the related dichotomies of 'Self' and 'Other', 'Subject' and 'Object', and 'Subjectivity' and 'Objectivity'.⁵⁹ Once again, a number of philologists and scholars of religion might identify with this 'embedded Outsider' position as they attempt to work on and with Zoroastrian 'Insiders'.

John R. Hinnells and Philip G. Kreyenbroek are probably the two 'Outsider' scholars who have done the most sustained ethnographic work on Zoroastrian 'Insiders'. As any scholar who has dealt with 'Insiders' can attest, the ability to remain neutral is less of a question than the definition of neutrality in the first place. Michael Stausberg, in his review of John Hinnells's *Zoroastrians in Britain*,⁶⁰ raised the question of Hinnells's involvement in Zoroastrian communal life in Manchester but lacked of any mention of such in his book.⁶¹ While Hinnells responded in his *The Zoroastrian Diaspora* (see below), one would have liked to know more about his involvement with the various diaspora groups and their influence on his research and his on their organizational governance.⁶² The ethnographic challenge for Hinnells was that many of the most important revelations of community politics and governance were revealed to him in confidence, often in people's homes where he was a guest as he logged his 250,000 miles of travel for his massive trans-national project.⁶³ Hinnells directly addressed this question of his neutrality when he stated:

In much contemporary scholarly writing, for example in anthropology and on religion, it has become common for scholars to 'locate' themselves, to identify their biases, presuppositions, and relations with the arena where they study. In my case this is essential, because while I seek never to take sides in community disputes, I am nevertheless conscious of a bias in my approach and use of sources. Numerous Parsis in many countries have become close personal friends in the course of my stays in different places. Many of the names referred to in this book are those of people for whom I have a deep respect and affection. I have stayed with them at times of celebrations such as initiations and weddings, and shared their grief as deaths have occurred in the homes while I have been staying there, just as they shared my grief when my wife died. I have acted as confidant to a number, and they have been my confidants at crucial moments. Sometimes, people I consider to be close friends have been vigorous opponents, in some cases even taking each other to court. I have been present at many of the bitter disputes referred to in the book. Writing the scholarly 'neutral' or 'objective' account has been a difficult task.⁶⁴

As the very forthright quotation above indicates, Hinnells is deeply sensitive to the social reality of being an 'Outsider' who has often been asked for his 'opinion' or 'help' in adjudicating doctrinal issues. Such issues hold deep significance in people's lives, religious beliefs and personal identities: so, the lines between the academic researcher's status as an authoritative 'Outsider' is often compromised and he or she is cast into the role of being an honorary or nominal 'Insider'. Even more significant for the purposes of this discussion is the statement Hinnells makes a few paragraphs later:

Communities around the world have trusted me with unrivalled access to their archives. In centres as far apart as Toronto, London and Hong Kong I have been given open access to any of the files I have asked to read. They have all been willing to discuss any question I raised. Inevitably, not everyone in every community is a saint, and I do know of some scandals, but I have rarely referred to them. Each chapter has been sent to at least one member, usually more, of the communities I am writing about, to ensure that the text is accurate. In discussing disputes I have sought to depersonalize them and have used as bland a style of writing as possible. Some of my academic colleagues will consider this a failure of objective, neutral, factual historical writing. However, I also believe an academic has to be sensitive to the consequences of his/her work. We are not remote and distant from what we study; we do not live in a vacuum. Generally I have sought to respect the feelings of individuals, but this cannot always be done. What we write does, for better or for worse, influence the people we write about.⁶⁵

Rather than simply laud the unfettered representational power of 'Outsider' – Western – academics in an Edward Saidian sense, Hinnells's illuminating quotation highlights the vital importance of privileged archival access for 'Outsider' scholars and the constraints that that potentially places on their representational power. His latter quotation also speaks eloquently to the mutual implicatedness of 'Outsider' scholarship with 'Insiders' when he plainly states that he allows his 'neutral' knowledge production as an 'Outsider' to be vetted by presumably trusted and authoritative 'Insiders' *prior* to publication. My citing of these issues in Prof. Hinnells's delicate negotiating of his positionality is not intended as a criticism of his clearly empathetic ethnographic methodology, since as a specialist scholar of a particular religious tradition he needs to maintain the trust of his informants as he will not be moving on to another community, as is often the case with anthropologists or sociologists, for example.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, in a small community of 'Insider' believers and an even smaller community of 'Outsider' scholars, we find a feedback loop that puts paid to the notion of epistemologically discrete and stable knowledge production on either side of the I/O chasm.

Let me now turn to another example of an 'Outsider' scholar who studies 'Insider' communities. In his co-authored book (with an 'Insider') on interviews with urban Parsis discussing their beliefs on 'Zoroastrianism', Philip G. Kreyenbroek also addressed the question of neutrality, in this case, regarding

his Gujarati-speaking⁶⁷ co-interviewer Mrs Shehnaz Neville Munshi, a 'Neo-traditionalist Insider':

It may be relevant to mention in this context that Mrs Munshi is an active member of 'Zoroastrian Studies', a Bombay-based organization which generously put its resources at the writer's disposal throughout the period of research. 'Zoroastrian Studies' is not uncontroversial in the community, being known for its outspoken Neo-traditionalist teachings. It should be stressed, however, that all parties concerned were clearly aware of the need for objectivity in carrying out research of this type, and considerable care was taken to ensure that Neo-traditionalist views should neither influence the choice of informants nor obtrude during the interviews themselves. In a few cases where Mrs Munshi's remarks did reflect her personal views, attention is drawn to this in the text.⁶⁸

As Kreyenbroek noted, Mrs Munshi⁶⁹ belonged to a 'Neo-traditionalist' revitalization movement called 'Zoroastrian Studies'⁷⁰ which began almost 40 years ago and is now globally active with a wide range of religious and social activities promoting a strong defence of boundary maintenance, viewing Zoroastrianism as an 'ethnic' religious tradition. 'Zoroastrian Studies' has over the years vociferously attacked and been counter-attacked by 'reformist', 'liberal', 'progressive', and 'secular' Parsis for their staunch defence of 'classical' dualism, their upholding of menstrual purity laws and the importance of rituals, and their strident condemnations of intermarriage and conversion. Given the modest size of the community, it is highly unlikely that any of the subjects amongst those Parsis interviewed were unaware that the 'Insider' interviewer was affiliated with 'Zoroastrian Studies'. As a very real consequence, they may well have understood 'Zoroastrian Studies' and their views on the 'Zoroastrian religion' and the 'Parsi tradition' as being legitimated and endorsed by Prof. Kreyenbroek, the authoritative 'Outsider'. Neutrality in this case would not merely be methodological but is fundamentally affiliative as well, regardless of Prof. Kreyenbroek's personal beliefs or his unimpeachable neutrality in print.

As with Prof. Hinnells, I cite the quotation above not as a criticism of Prof. Kreyenbroek's ethnographic method or to insinuate any claims of academic bad faith on his part, but rather to highlight how the construction of our 'Outsider' categories of analysis and research interests can affect the definition of who counts as a representative or model 'Insider'. In this case, our disciplinary location – generally as philologists and historians of religion – fundamentally shapes not only *what* we decide is worth studying but also *who*.⁷¹ Prof. Kreyenbroek himself acknowledged the lacuna of liberal and secular Zoroastrians in his work – the very groups most hostile to the political agenda of 'Zoroastrian Studies' and their defence of 'orthodoxy' – when he states:

The impossibility of holding an in-depth interview on religion with someone who is wholly uninterested in the subject caused an important section of the community to be left unrepresented here.⁷²

I would wholeheartedly agree with Prof. Kreyenbroek that it is impossible to study 'secular' members of an 'ethno-religious' community when, for many scholars, Zoroastrianism is still largely understood as primarily a trans-historical religious entity, namely a 'tradition' that is reducible to certain essential beliefs and core practices (rituals, disposal of the dead, menstrual purity laws, etc.) that constitute its 'essence', and therefore secular beliefs seem beyond our purview and expertise. Prof. Kreyenbroek was all too aware of this very issue of essentialism when he stated in his Preface:

A strong preoccupation with classical theology, in other words, has led to an academic understanding of Zoroastrianism which tends to be used as a prescriptive definition of that religion – a state of affairs that has not encouraged the study of the religious lives of modern Parsis as valid expressions of Zoroastrians.⁷³

It seems to me that 'secular' Parsi identity could just as easily be studied as a western Indian, post-mercantile phenomenon with religion being just one variable amongst a host of other more historical, geographical, and materialist concerns, many of which are vitally important in the everyday lives of even 'orthodox' Parsis.

THE CRITICAL INSIDER

The last of the four categories of scholar is the 'critical Insider' or 'participant-as-observer'. Here we might include academics such as Jamsheed K. Choksy, Katayun Mazdapour and myself, as scholars of Zoroastrianism who were raised in Zoroastrian families. What distinguishes this group from that of Dastur Dr Kotwal and Ervad Dr Karanjia is that while both groups are published and publishing in academic venues, using mutually accepted scholarly and academic methodologies⁷⁴ – one group sees its 'religious' authority being derived primarily from institutional affiliations of a communal and sacral nature, while the other derives its authority 'on religion' and 'the religious' from the academy. These two groups of 'Insiders' further problematize the question of academic writing on Zoroastrianism by highlighting the differences between their primary identities and discourses as closer either to the theory and practice of theology, on the one hand, or the pursuit of Religious Studies on the other. The former is typically distinguished along the lines of normative, prescriptive, and didactic statements about religious matters while the latter is drawn towards descriptive or critical ones.⁷⁵ I hope to have demonstrated that even this distinction is highly porous in terms of our field of study.⁷⁶

Despite these differences, the socially embedded nature of such complex scholarly positionalities is perhaps best illustrated using Prof. Choksy's recent research on the Zoroastrians (Parsis) of Sri Lanka.⁷⁷ He has discussed the enormous importance and influence of Kaikhusru D. Choksy (1863–1938),

his paternal great-grandfather, in the communal affairs of the tiny diaspora community where he himself was raised. The value of Prof. Choksy's ethnographic and communal archival research on the Parsis of Sri Lanka is significant given the fact that the population of the Zoroastrian community in Sri Lanka declined to just 61 Parsis in 2006.⁷⁸ It also bears stating that this particular diaspora community was, unfortunately, not featured in John Hinnells's magnum opus.⁷⁹ Despite their modest numbers, this lacuna is particularly problematic for the study of contemporary Zoroastrianism since, in the case of Prof. Choksy, we have a socially elite 'Insider' authoritatively commenting on his own family's involvement in communal politics with no alternative archival or ethnographic corrective to his scholarly narrative. Once again, I am in no way impugning Prof. Choksy's scholarly findings or research methodologies but, in my own personal experiences as an academic who is also an 'Insider', the challenge of maintaining a critical stance while simultaneously negotiating familial and social ties, obligations, and expectations is notoriously difficult.

Lest my colleagues suspect that I would not focus my critical gaze in the mirror, I will cite two personal ethnographic vignettes – one with Parsis and one with Iranian Zoroastrians – to illustrate the often politically fraught nature of complex academic and communal identities for 'critical Insiders' with regard to the I/O problem. On a trip to Mumbai in 2008, Khojeste Mistree, the founder of 'Zoroastrian Studies'⁸⁰ asked me to speak to a group of priests at a fire temple⁸¹ as they were interested in hearing from a Parsi scholar of pre-modern Zoroastrianism. I must acknowledge that as a 21-year-old visiting Mumbai I approached Mr Mistree for his advice about pursuing graduate work in Zoroastrianism (he steered me to his fellow-student from his days in the UK, Prof. James R. Russell at Harvard University) and many years earlier, my parents had enrolled me in the first classes on religion organized by 'Zoroastrian Studies' when I was a pre-teen in Bombay in the mid-1980s.⁸² That particular morning, ten or so priests from their twenties to their seventies sat, arms folded, in a semi-circle and proceeded to ask me questions on a variety of historical, doctrinal, and sociological questions. My discomfort was most pronounced when a young priest asked me if it was theologically permissible to tell his fire temple attendees that intermarried couples would not be reunited in the afterlife because one member of the couple believed in reincarnation and one in 'true' Zoroastrian notions of heaven and hell. I responded that I had no way of verifying their ultimate metaphysical destinations being simply a scholar of 'old texts'. While my response was an attempt to implicitly argue for a naturalistic approach to religion, I was also unreflectively resorting to the same neutrality discourse as many of my 'Outsider' colleagues. I then proceeded to suggest, as is my usual *modus operandi* as a specialist on Pahlavi (Zoroastrian Middle Persian) literature, that the Zoroastrian theologians of late antiquity and the early Islamic era have much to say about contemporary social issues related to boundary maintenance, doctrine and belief.

At the time I was struck by the fact that ‘traditional’ priests wanted a Western-educated ‘secular’ Parsi scholar of Zoroastrianism to tell them what their theology was all about. It was only later that the full social import of the interaction struck me when another young priest offered me a ride home and wanted to discuss the controversial topics of boundary maintenance more privately. He expressed grave reservations about publicly supporting the ‘orthodox’ line taken by most employed priests in Mumbai regarding the pressure to not perform mixed marriages and *Navjotes* or initiations of the children of such unions. He wanted to know if ‘the authentic Zoroastrianism of the Avesta and Pahlavi *really* enjoined conversion and intermarriage’. Perhaps our authoritative opinions as scholars count far more than we often realize largely due to the powerful legacies of orientalism and colonialism, and in that sense, even my looking back to pre-modern Zoroastrianism for doctrinal legitimacy had a real political valence as a conservative intellectual manoeuvre; not one likely to be employed by an anthropologist or sociologist for example. I must confess I myself did not fully appreciate the intellectual and social import of my response in the moment, even though I was attempting to be so self-reflexive about whether I had any authority to speak in the present for or about an unbroken, trans-historical theological ‘tradition’ untainted by orientalist interventions and modernist re-imaginings of pre-modern religious discourses.

My second vignette is from 2009 when I was living in southern California and was asked by Dr Mobed Rostam Vahidi at the California Zoroastrian Center in Westminster to conduct informal (unpaid) religious education classes on a few Sundays for Iranian Zoroastrians interested in learning more about their faith from a Parsi scholar of pre-modern Zoroastrianism. I stressed that my approach would be ‘strictly’ educational and informative rather than theological, normative or prescriptive in any way. Despite my reservations, I agreed because it seemed like an excellent opportunity to interact with Iranian Zoroastrians with whom I had had little contact while living in Bombay and Boston. While I chose to read sections of the Pahlavi *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad* (Treatise on the Spirit of Wisdom) in translation with the 4–5 young men who came that month, I observed that their knowledge of ‘traditional’ or ‘mainstream’ Zoroastrianism, as I understood it then, was quite impressionistic. Their names were ambiguous – either Muslim or Zoroastrian – and I began to wonder if I was perhaps being tested by Ali Jafarey’s supporters amongst these Zoroastrian ‘Insiders’.

The young men I encountered on those Sundays, like most Iranian ‘Insider’ audiences I have spoken to, wanted to know my personal views about conversion (intermarriage being less interesting to them, unlike the Parsis) and I did my usual spiel: ‘It’s complicated, we have to define what we mean by “ethnicity” in the pre-modern Iranian world, we have to look at religious practices and identities historically, contextually, and geographically – pre-modern Armenia, Georgia, and Central Asia being different from Iran and so forth’. In those particular pedagogical encounters the authority of my ‘Outsider’ – non-Iranian

– knowledge and my authenticity as an ‘Insider’ – Zoroastrian – academic were being both simultaneously respected and subtly challenged by either ‘Insiders’ or ‘Outsiders’, depending on whether one views the participants as ‘Zoroastrians’ or ‘Para-Zoroastrians’ (see below; an etic categorization or distinction that the actors themselves may well reject), to serve ethno-religious and socio-political ends far beyond what I was prepared for as a scholar of ‘old texts’. At this juncture, the defenders of disciplinary boundaries amongst us might simply suggest that philologists, be they ‘Insiders’ or ‘Outsiders’, should not presume to engage with living people without ethnographic training. Yet, when I was interacting with these ‘Zoroastrians’ or ‘Para-Zoroastrians’ should there have been a difference in how I engaged with them as either a co-religionist ‘Insider’ Zoroastrian or a cultural ‘Outsider’ Parsi/South Asian (that is a non-Iranian)? Or, for that matter, as an ‘Insider’ scholar from the community and therefore, perhaps entitled to make some personal – perhaps normative or prescriptive – claims regarding ‘authenticity’ or an ‘Outsider’ academic who is ethically obliged to have maintained some form of professional neutrality on the emotionally charged topics of group affiliation and boundary maintenance?⁸³

With the work of Jafarey in the Iranian Zoroastrian communities in diaspora especially, we now see a radically changing definition of ‘Zoroastrian’, from those born to Zoroastrian parents in the minority ‘ethnic’ communities to new ‘Para-Zoroastrians’. Michael Stausberg coined this etic term to describe members of religious movements organized by people not born into any ‘ethnic’ Zoroastrian community but who nonetheless now self-identify as ‘Zoroastrians’. As Stausberg has averred, ‘one way or the other, they raise a claim of “Zoroastrianness”, and unlike Zoroastrian institutions in charge of religious boundary maintenance the History of Religions is in no position to simply deny such claims.’⁸⁴ These groups significantly problematize academic writing on Zoroastrianism since we find rhetorically persuasive normative claims in the Zoroastrianism of the Pahlavi texts for example, regarding the unity of ‘Tradition/Religion’ (Pahl. *dēn*), and yet, we encounter a multiplicity and diversity of practices and rhetoric that precisely undercut these powerful homogenizing claims.⁸⁵ A critical study of boundary maintenance remains a desideratum in the study of a religion that is described these days as either an ‘ethnic tradition’ or a ‘universalist philosophy’, largely depending on whether you were born in Mumbai or Tehran. Where we as scholars choose to locate ourselves, and what and whom we choose to include in our purview, will ultimately help determine the contours of what is ‘Zoroastrianism’, but perhaps more importantly in this case, who counts as a ‘Zoroastrian’.

CONCLUSION

By this point in my survey of complex academic identities, approaches, and positionalities, I hope to have demonstrated that the antinomies implied by the

notion of an Insider/Outsider divide are deeply problematic if we continue to understand our academic identities and their attendant knowledge production along strictly ontological and epistemological lines. Instead, I would view them as entailing a complex negotiation between both ascriptive and chosen identities and positionalities, fundamentally social in nature, and hence, deeply powerful. Ironically, while we scholars deconstruct the beliefs and practices of 'Insiders' and explain them in historically contingent terms, our own academic identities and disciplinary best practices are often reified as ontologically stable and epistemologically unproblematic. I would like to suggest that the social and reflexive view of identity that I espouse need be consistent *both* for our objects of study – religious, cultural, and knowledge production by 'Insiders' – and, just as crucially, for ourselves as objectifying subjects – scholars of Zoroastrian religious, cultural, and knowledge production who are, by definition, the only agents formally tasked with critically examining our own beliefs, theories, and methodologies.

Rather than arguing that we are dealing with absolute identities – 'Insiders' or 'Outsiders' – I would instead suggest that the distinctions between these four types of scholars and their attendant knowledge production are often contextual and shifting, much like the very diverse Zoroastrian identities that we encounter, reconstruct, and define in both temporal and geographical terms. Ultimately, we must be willing first to recognize and then to acknowledge that our identity shifts as scholarly actors are directly related to our ability to acquire and maintain privileged access to knowledge, resources and, hence, authority. I am well aware of the irony of this line of argumentation on my part, which could well be viewed as self-justificatory in the extreme given my liminal positionality as both a Parsi and an academic, and hence my privileged ability to participate, in some capacities and contexts, within 'authorized' discourse on both sides of the Insider/Outsider chasm. In the case of Zoroastrian communal life in India for example, my 'Insider' identity enables me to enter sacred spaces (for example, fire temples and funerary complexes) forbidden to 'Outsiders', and therefore represents symbolic capital related to boundary maintenance beyond merely the ability to participate in authorized (that is, 'Insider') discourse. In the case of my academic life I have the symbolic capital to produce and get published just such a chapter on *our* sociology of knowledge precisely because of my university affiliations and training and hence, my participation in the knowledge economy of the academy. Pierre Bourdieu eloquently argued for the fundamental importance of symbolic capital with regard to these questions of representational power and group legitimation when he stated:

In the struggle to impose the legitimate vision, in which science itself is inevitably caught up, agents possess power in proportion to their symbolic capital, i.e. in proportion to the recognition they receive from a group.⁸⁶

Symbolic capital in broader disciplinary terms is precisely what is so crucially at stake for all of us scholars of Zoroastrianism in the early twenty-first century.

Increasingly in our contemporary academic world, hyper-specialized and esoteric fields such as ours now find it increasingly difficult to transfer our newly acquired specialist knowledge efficiently to contemporaries in related fields who are often more interested in the theoretical implications of our research rather than simply our field-internal empirical discoveries. Our professional survival as authoritative 'Insiders' on Zoroastrianism depends on our ability to interact with and be relevant amongst the larger intellectual currents in the academic environment today. As representational strategies for studying the world's religious traditions become increasingly complex, sophisticated, and nuanced, we in the study of Zoroastrianism must become relentlessly reflexive in order to more critically define, justify, and defend our respective intellectual projects. I fear that if we scholars of an endangered field of study do not engage in such a reflexive project of 'navel gazing' we will continue to produce theoretically and methodologically dated research and consequently, we will stand to lose what little forms of institutional support, representational power and disciplinary legitimacy we currently possess. In that sense, the scholar of Zoroastrianism in the early twenty-first century is perhaps at greater risk of going extinct in his/her 'Insider' world – the academy – than the demographically challenged Zoroastrians themselves. What happens to scholarly knowledge production on Zoroastrianism when the I/O distinction is virtually elided simply because there is virtually no one left standing who has third-person epistemic authority to speak for or about Zoroastrianism in the academy?

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Daniel J. Sheffield and Alan Williams for their prescient comments on and criticisms of my chapter.
2. A historiographical point noted in Michael Stausberg, 'Textrezeption und Sinnproduktion', *Mitteilungen für Anthropologie und Religionsgeschichte* 1 (1998 [2001]), pp. 333–44; see the further discussion in Jean Kellens, 'Philology and the history of religions in the study of Mazdaism', *History of Religions* xxxviii/4 (2009), pp. 261–9. For a survey of recent scholarship on Zoroastrianism, see Michael Stausberg, 'On the State and Prospects of the Study of Zoroastrianism', *Numen* lv (2008), pp. 561–600.
3. 'Positionality' is a now well-established concept in critical theory and studies of identity, first articulated by the feminist philosopher Linda Alcoff in the late 1980s. Alcoff argues that gender, race, class, and other identity markers (such as 'insider' or 'outsider' status) ought to be understood as relational positions rather than as essential qualities. As a result, knowledge production has greater validity and accountability when it includes acknowledgements of the knower's or producer's specific social position in a particular context, since differing contextual and relational factors help shape and define our identities and therefore our knowledge production as well. See Linda Alcoff, 'Cultural feminism versus post-Structuralism: The identity crisis in feminist theory', *Signs* xiii/3 (1988), pp. 405–36.

4. For a discussion of scholarship and the interplay with complex academic identities, see the essays in José Ignacio Cabezon and Sheila Greeve Davaney (eds), *Identity and the Politics of Scholarship in the Study of Religion* (London, 2004).
5. Russell T. McCutcheon, 'General introduction', in Russell T. McCutcheon (ed.), *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (London, 1999), p. 2.
6. A great deal of scholarship on Zoroastrianism has been produced by Parsis in particular since the mid-nineteenth century, though most of those works are rarely cited. For a brief discussion of this 'Insider' scholarly tradition and its response to orientalist scholarship, see Tanya Luhrmann, 'Evil in the sands of time: Theology and identity politics among the Zoroastrian Parsis', *The Journal of Asian Studies* lxi/3 (2002), pp. 861–89; see now Monica M. Ringer, *Pious Citizens: Reforming Zoroastrianism in India and Iran* (Syracuse, 2011); also Michael Stausberg and Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina, 'Introduction: Scholarship on Zoroastrianism', in Michael Stausberg and Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina (eds), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 1–18. Synthetic studies of Zoroastrian (i.e. 'Insider') knowledge production about 'Zoroastrianism' in the modern and contemporary periods remain a desideratum.
7. Currently, Jamsheed K. Choksy (University of Indiana, USA) and I (Stanford University, USA) are the only 'Insider' academics with full-time positions in religion departments teaching courses on Zoroastrianism in the West. In Iran, the recently retired Katayun Mazdapour was the first scholar from a Zoroastrian background. We now have younger 'Insider' academics such as Katayun Nemiraneyan (Shiraz University) and Bahman Moradeyan (University of Tehran).
8. For recent philosophical discussions of the I/O 'problem' in the study of religion, see Mark Q. Gardiner and Steven Engler, 'Semantic holism and the insider-outsider problem', *Religious Studies* xlviii/2 (2012), pp. 239–55; Jeppe Sinding Jensen, 'Revisiting the insider-outsider debate: Dismantling a pseudo-problem in the study of religion', *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* xxiii (2011), pp. 29–47; Matthew Day, 'The ins and outs of religious cognition', *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* xvi (2004), pp. 241–55.
9. Day, 'The ins and outs', p. 241.
10. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, 'The comparative study of religion: Whither – and why?', in Mircea Eliade and Joseph Kitagawa (eds), *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology* (Chicago, 1959), p. 42. Cited in Day, 'The ins and outs', p. 241.
11. Bruce Lincoln, 'Theses on method', *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* viii/3 (1996), pp. 225–7; repr. in Russell T. McCutcheon (ed.), *The Insider and Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (London, 1999), pp. 395–8, in particular, pp. 396 and 398.
12. Day, 'The ins and outs', p. 241.
13. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London, 1977), p. 27.
14. The number of academic monographs dedicated to contemporary Zoroastrianism by Western 'Outsiders' is still very meagre since Mary Boyce's groundbreaking ethnographical fieldwork in Iran conducted in 1963–4: Mary Boyce, *A Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism* (Oxford, 1977). For Iran, see Michael M. J. Fischer, 'Zoroastrian Iran between myth and praxis' (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 1973); see also Janet Kestenberg Amighi, *The Zoroastrians of Iran: Conversion, Assimilation,*

- or *Persistence* (New York, 1990); Robert Langer, *Pirān und Zeyāratgāh: Schreine und Wallfahrtstätten der Zarathustrier im neuzeitlichen Iran* (Leuven, 2008); Éric Phalippou, *Aux sources de Shéhérazade: Contes et coutumes des femmes zoroastriennes* (Leuven, 2003). For India, see Philip G. Kreyenbroek with Shehnaz Munshi, *Living Zoroastrianism: Urban Parsis Speak about Their Religion* (London, 2001); Tanya M. Luhrmann, *The Good Parsi: The Fate of a Colonial Elite in a Postcolonial Society* (Cambridge, MA, 1996); Rafael Walthert, *Reflexive Gemeinschaft. Religion, Tradition und Konflikt bei den Parsi Zoroastriern in Indien* (Würzburg, 2010). For the diaspora communities, see John R. Hinnells, *Zoroastrians in Britain: The Ratanbai Katrak Lectures*, University of Oxford 1985 (Oxford, 1996); John R. Hinnells, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora: Religion and Migration* (Oxford, 2005). For a global survey, see Michael Stausberg, *Die Religion Zarathushtras. Geschichte – Gegenwart – Rituale*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart, 2002); for monographs by South Asian ‘Outsiders’, see, for example, Buddhishchandra Shah, *Godavara Parsis* (Surat, 1954) and Snehal Nagarsheth and Pallavi Chilleriga, *Living with Memories* (Ahmedabad, 2009).
15. Available at <http://www.krcamaorientalinstitute.org>.
 16. Available at <http://www.meherjiranalibrary.com>.
 17. For an ‘Insider’ critique of Parsi archives by a historian, see Dinyar Patel, ‘The Parsis, once India’s Curators, now Shrug as History Rots’; available at <http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/23/the-parsis-once-indias-curators-now-shrug-as-history-rots/>.
 18. John R. Hinnells briefly discusses the politics of inviting non-Zoroastrian (‘Outsider’) academics to community-sponsored (‘Insider’) conferences in Hinnells, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora*, pp. 532–3. I must acknowledge that my current lectureship in the Department of Religious Studies at Stanford University is endowed by a mix of wealthy ‘Insider’ donors in India, Hong Kong, and the USA, as well as support from FEZANA (The Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America), the apex body for Zoroastrians in North America.
 19. For a discussion of the I/O problem and teaching in the classroom, see Martin S. Jaffee, ‘Fessing up in theory: On professing/confessing in the religious studies classroom’, in Russell T. McCutcheon (ed.), *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (New York, 1999), pp. 274–86.
 20. See the various chapters in Hinnells, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora*.
 21. For example, see community-published magazines like *Parsiana*, *FEZANA*, and *Hamazor*, which occasionally feature articles by ‘Outsider’ academics. See also the volume produced by Parsis Pheroza J. Godrej and Firoza Punthakey Mistree (eds), *A Zoroastrian Tapestry: Art, Religion & Culture* (Ahmedabad, 2002).
 22. For a museum catalogue featuring both ‘Outsider’ academics and ‘Insider’ community members and edited by ‘Insider’ Parsis, see Pheroza J. Godrej and Firoza Punthakey Mistree with Sudha Seshadri (eds), *Across Oceans and Flowing Silks: From Canton to Bombay 18th–20th Centuries* (Mumbai, 2013). For a museum catalogue featuring both ‘Outsider’ academics and ‘Insider’ Parsis and edited by an ‘Outsider’ jointly with ‘Insiders’, see Sarah Stewart with Firoza Punthakey Mistree, Ursula Sims-Williams, Almut Hintze and Pheroza J. Godrej (eds), *The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination* (London, 2013).
 23. For the notions of ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ approaches to knowledge production, see Kenneth L. Pike, ‘Etic/Emic standpoints for the description of behavior’, *Language*

- in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior*, 2nd edn (The Hague, 1967); repr. in Russell T. McCutcheon (ed.), *The Insider / Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (London, 1999), pp. 28–36: ‘The etic viewpoint studies behavior as from outside of a particular system, and as an essential initial approach to an alien system. The emic viewpoint results from behavior as from inside the system’ (p. 28).
24. Ironically, the corpora in Persian and Gujarāṭi are the largest, and yet are un- or under-studied by scholars of Zoroastrianism, nor has there been much critical work on the scholarly knowledge production of ‘Insiders’ in these languages. As Stausberg has noted, ‘the Zoroastrian literatures in New Persian and Gujarāṭi are situated in academic no man’s land and have to a large extent remained terra incognita for Zoroastrian studies’ (Stausberg, ‘On the state and prospects’, p. 586). For a notable exception to this trend, see now Daniel J. Sheffield, ‘In the path of the Prophet: Medieval and early modern narratives of the life of Zarathustra in Islamic Iran and Western India’ (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2012). See also Beate Schmerbeck, *Persische zarathustrische monāḡāt, Edition, Übersetzung, Tradition und Analyse* (Wiesbaden, 2008).
 25. Kreyenbroek with Munshi, *Living Zoroastrianism*, p. xii.
 26. Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, MA, 1991), p. xii.
 27. Kim Knott, ‘Insider and outsider perspectives’, in John R. Hinnells (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion* (London, 2005), pp. 243–58.
 28. For a survey of more complex approaches to participant observation as it pertains to religious communities, see now Graham Harvey, ‘Field research: Participant observation’, in Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion* (London, 2014), pp. 217–44.
 29. McCutcheon, ‘General introduction’, p. 8.
 30. The two institutions of formalized priestly learning in India are the Dadar Athornan Institute (Athornan Boarding Madressa) and the M. F. Cama Athornan Institute, both in Mumbai (Bombay).
 31. Maneckji Nusservanji Dhalla, *The Saga of a Soul: An Autobiography of Shams-ul-Ulama Dastur Dr Maneckji Nusserwanji Dhalla*, trans. Gool Rustomji and Behram Sohrab H. J. Rustomji (Karachi, 1975), p. 158.
 32. See for example Maneckji Nusservanji Dhalla, *Zoroastrian Theology: From the Earliest Times to the Present* (New York, 1914); Maneckji Nusservanji Dhalla, *Zoroastrian Civilization: From the Earliest Times to the Downfall of the Last Zoroastrian Empire, 651 AD* (New York, 1922); Maneckji Nusservanji Dhalla, *Our Perfecting World: Zarathushtra’s Way of Life* (New York, 1930); Maneckji Nusservanji Dhalla, *History of Zoroastrianism* (New York, 1938); Maneckji Nusservanji Dhalla, *Homage unto Ahura Mazda* (Karachi, 1942). For a recent discussion of Dhalla, see Ringer, *Pious Citizens*, pp. 126–41 and Hinnells, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora*, pp. 212–16.
 33. Hinnells, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora*, p. 216.
 34. Firoze M. Kotwal and James W. Boyd, *A Guide to the Zoroastrian Religion: A Nineteenth Century Catechism with Modern Commentary* (Chico, CA, 1982); Firoze M. Kotwal and James W. Boyd, *A Persian Offering. The Yasna: A Zoroastrian High Liturgy* (Paris, 1991).

35. Firoze M. Kotwal and Philip G. Kreyenbroek (with contributions by James R. Russell), *The Hērbedestān and Nērangestān*, vols 1–4 (Paris, 1992, 1995, 2003, 2009). Firoze M. Kotwal and Almut Hintze, *The Khorda Avesta and Yašt Codex E*, facsimile edn (Wiesbaden, 2008).
36. Helmut Humbach and Kaikhusroo M. JamaspAsa, *Vaeθā Nask: An Apocryphal Text on Zoroastrian Problems* (Wiesbaden, 1969); also Kaikhusroo M. JamaspAsa, and Helmut Humbach, *Pursišnihā: A Zoroastrian Catechism* (Wiesbaden, 1971).
37. Dorothea Lüddeckens and Ramiyar P. Karanjia, *Days of Transition: The Parsi Death Rituals* (Göttingen, 2011).
38. Michael Stausberg and Ramiyar P. Karanjia, 'Rituals', in Michael Stausberg and Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina (eds), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 363–77. See also the other I/O collaboration of Firoze M. Kotwal and Philip G. Kreyenbroek, 'Prayer', pp. 333–44 in the same volume.
39. Lüddeckens and Karanjia, *Days of Transition*, pp. 13–14, 16.
40. See Mohammad Tavakoli-Targhi, 'Orientalism's Genesis Amnesia', *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism, and Historiography* (New York, 2001), pp. 18–34; see also Michael Stausberg, "mais je passai outre" oder: Zur Frühgeschichte des Orientalismus: Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron und die Zoroastrier in Surat (1758–1760)', *Temenos* xxxiv (1998), pp. 221–50.
41. For a discussion of the often fraught I/O collaborations between (German) orientalists and (Parsi) priests in the nineteenth century, see Sheffield, *In the Path of the Prophet*, pp. 182–5.
42. His intentionally playful use of the theological (i.e. emic) term from Pahlavi or Zoroastrian Middle Persian meaning 'one's own work and duty' to refer to the scholarly work of remaining 'objective' is rather ironic.
43. Prods Oktor Skjærvø, 'The literature of the most ancient Iranians', in Sarosh J. H. Manekshaw and Pallan R. Ichaporia (eds), *Proceedings of the Second North American Gatha Conference, Houston, Texas, 1996* (Houston, 1996 [1997]), pp. 221–35, in particular p. 222.
44. For an authoritative (traditionalist) 'Insider' critique of the *Gāthā*-only approach, see Firoze M. Kotwal, 'Select ritual aspects of the Gathas and their continuity in later tradition', *Iran & the Caucasus*, iii (1999–2000), pp. 1–8.
45. As they say on their website, available at <http://www.zoroastrian.org>, the founding of the Assembly is not a Protestant, sectarian, or denominational movement, a separatist move to split apart from an existing body. The Assembly has been formed as an organization, an authority which does not identify itself with Zoroastrianism as an 'ethnic entity'. It lies outside the closed communal religious fold of the people generally known as traditionalist or orthodox Zoroastrians. Nevertheless, the Assembly is a Zarathustrian organization, simply because it precisely follows Zarathustra. It has, in theory and practice, restored the religion of Good Conscience to its Gathic purity and Zarathustrian universality. It reserves the religious, constitutional, and legal rights to call itself and its members by the name 'Zarathustrian' and any of its variants – 'Zaratushti, Zartoshti, Zoroastrian, Mazdayasni and Behdin.
46. As they state on their website, available at <http://www.zoroastrian.org>, the Zarathustrian Assembly was formed in Los Angeles in 1990 to restore the religion

to its 'pristine purity' and to meet the increasing demand of those who want to choose the Good Religion, the first 'universal' religion. The Assembly follows the pristine pure Gathic Guidance. While treasuring old traditions and customs, it does not follow those which have become outdated and/or do not conform to the Gathic Teachings. For an English translation of the *Gāthās*, see Ali Akbar Jafarey, *The Gathas, Our Guide* (Cypress, CA, 1988).

47. For a brief discussion of Ali Jafarey and the phenomenon of 'Para-Zoroastrians' ('Insiders' or 'Outsiders?'), see Michael Stausberg, 'Para-Zoroastrianisms: Memetic transmissions and appropriations', in John R. Hinnells and Alan Williams (eds), *Parsis in India and their Diasporas* (London, 2007), pp. 236–54, in particular pp. 246–8; see also Hinnells, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora*, pp. 523–6; and Jenny Rose, *Zoroastrianism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London, 2011), pp. 13–17.
48. Perhaps the most commonly read translation of the *Gāthās* by Parsis is Irach J. S. Taraporewala, *The Divine Songs of Zarathustra* (Bombay, 1951), largely based on the philological work of his mentor on Avestan, Christian Bartholomae (1855–1925) about whom he said: 'What Bartholomae taught me has become a part of my intellectual being. His inspiration has guided me ever since those days at Heidelberg' (p. xvii). Bartholomae's philological influence can also be seen in the works of the Persian nationalist poet Ebrahim Purdavud (1886–1968) who produced the first academic translation of the *Gāthās* into Modern Persian: *Gāthā: Sorudhā-ye Moqaddas-e Peyghāmbar-e Īrān Hazrat Sepantāmān Zartosht* [The *Gāthās*: The Holy Songs of the Prophet of Iran, Zarathustra Spitama] (Bombay, 1927).
49. Kellens, 'Philology and the history of religions', p. 269.
50. Jean Kellens, 'Characters of ancient mazdaism', *Essays on Zarathustra and Zoroastrianism*, trans. and ed. Prods Oktor Skjærvø (Costa Mesa, 2000), pp. 1–24, esp. p. 3.
51. Clearly, the notion of an unbroken 'tradition' is deeply problematic in the early modern and modern periods, especially with the orientalist intervention and the rediscovery of 'ancient Iran' by 'Insiders' in the nineteenth century, for which see Ringer, *Pious Citizens*; see also Sheffield, *In the Path of the Prophet*, pp. 144–217.
52. Albert F. de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 44–68. See the critical response to de Jong in Jean Kellens, 'Sur quelques grandes tendances des études avestiques et mazdéennes au XXe siècle', in Carlo G. Cereti, Mauro Maggi, and Elio Provasi (eds), *Religious Themes and Texts of Pre-Islamic Iran and Central Asia: Studies in Honour of Professor Gherardo Gnoli on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday on 6 December 2002* (Wiesbaden, 2003), pp. 213–22. See also Jean Kellens, *La quatrième naissance de Zarathushtra* (Paris, 2006).
53. See the critical discussion of this methodological question in Michael Stausberg and Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina, 'Introduction: Scholarship on Zoroastrianism', in Michael Stausberg and Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina (eds), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 1–18.
54. Sarosh Manekshaw in Houston kindly provided me with his 'Combined Gathas' file (approx. 500 pages) containing the translations of Insler, Taraporewala, Duchesne-Guillemin, Moulton, Bode – Nanavutty, Azargoshasb, Jafarey, Sethna, Humbach, Punegar, Humbach – Ichaporia, Smith, Anklesaria, Mills, Kanga, and Irani.

55. For a discussion of the problematics and importance of translation in Religious Studies, see Alan Williams, 'Translation', in Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion* (London, 2014), pp. 421–32.
56. Jean Kellens and Éric Pirart, *Les textes vieil-avestiques*, 3 vols (Wiesbaden, 1988, 1990, 1991).
57. Knott, 'Insider/outsider perspectives', p. 251.
58. See Ninian Smart, *The Science of Religion and the Sociology of Knowledge: Some Methodological Questions* (Princeton, 1973), p. 62.
59. See Mark C. Taylor, 'Introduction', in Mark C. Taylor (ed.), *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Chicago, 1998), pp. 1–20; see also Paul Heelas, 'Postmodernism', in John R. Hinnells (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion* (London, 2005), pp. 259–74.
60. Hinnells, *Zoroastrians in Britain*.
61. Michael Stausberg, *Numen* xlv (1999), pp. 225–33, esp. p. 227.
62. See also my review of Hinnells, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora* in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, xvii/3 (2007), pp. 344–9, esp. p. 347, fn. 7.
63. For a critical examination of guesthood in ethnographic work, see Graham Harvey, 'Guesthood as ethical decolonising research method', *Numen* 1/2 (2003), pp. 125–46.
64. Hinnells, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora*, pp. 3–4.
65. *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.
66. For a brief survey of research ethics in the study of religion, see Fredrick Bird and Laurie Lamoureux Scholes, 'Research ethics', in Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion* (London, 2014), pp. 81–105.
67. Despite a field of study that stretches back to the mid-eighteenth century in the West, we have yet to have any ethnographic or social science work conducted by Western 'Outsider' scholars fluent in Gujarātī, a further legacy of orientalism and its focus on the earlier – more prestigious – corpora.
68. Kreyenbroek with Munshi, *Living Zoroastrianism*, p. x.
69. For an interview by Sarah Stewart (a co-editor of the present volume) on religion with Mrs Munshi herself, see Sarah Stewart, 'On the use of oral testimony in understanding religious tradition: An interview with Mrs Shehnaz Neville Munshi', in Christine Allison, Anke Joisten-Pruschke and Antje Wendtland (eds), *From Daēna to Dīn: Religion, Kultur und Sprache in der iranischen Welt. Festschrift für Philip Kreyenbroek zum 60. Geburtstag* (Wiesbaden 2009), pp. 249–61.
70. For brief descriptions of 'Zoroastrian Studies', their activities and communal politics, see Luhrmann, 'Evil in the sands of time', pp. 875–81 and Stausberg, *Die Religion Zarathushtras*, pp. 141–4.
71. For a study of the Zoroastrian laity, see Sarah Stewart, 'On the role of the laity in Zoroastrianism' (PhD diss., SOAS, University of London, 1998).
72. Kreyenbroek with Munshi, *Living Zoroastrianism*, p. 49.
73. Kreyenbroek with Munshi, *Living Zoroastrianism*, p. vii.
74. Stausberg states: 'The dominant modes of legitimate academic activities in the study of religion's comprise analysis, comparison, critique, description, explanation, interpretation, and observation' (Stausberg: 'Advocacy', p. 220).

75. For a problematizing of this distinction, see Denys Turner, 'Doing theology in the university', in David F. Ford et al. (eds), *Fields of Faith: Theology and Religious Studies for the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 25–38; see also Christine Helmer, 'Theology and the study of religion: A relationship', in Robert A. Orsi (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 230–54; David F. Ford, 'Theology', in John R. Hinnells (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion* (London, 2005), pp. 61–79, esp. pp. 61–9; see also the critical remarks in Taylor, 'Introduction', p. 13.
76. For a methodologically provocative approach to religious fieldwork on Catholics by a 'critical Insider', see Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton, 2005).
77. Jamsheed K. Choksy, 'Iranians and Indians on the Shores of Serendib (Sri Lanka)', in John R. Hinnells and Alan Williams (eds), *Parsis in India and the Diaspora* (London, 2007), pp. 181–210.
78. Choksy, 'Iranians and Indians', p. 204.
79. See my review of John R. Hinnells and Alan Williams (eds), *Parsis in India and the Diaspora* (London, 2007), in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Third Series) xx/1 (2010), pp. 100–6, esp. p. 104.
80. Khojeste Mistree (for an interview with him, see Kreyenbroek with Munshi, *Living Zoroastrianism*, pp. 126–44) views Zoroastrianism as an 'ethnic' religion and finds support for his views by citing his teacher, the late Mary Boyce. See Khojeste P. Mistree, *Zoroastrianism: An Ethnic Perspective* (Bombay, 1982); and Khojeste P. Mistree, 'The breakdown of the Zoroastrian tradition as seen from a contemporary perspective', in Shaul Shaked and Amnon Netzer (eds), *Irano-Judaica 2: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture Throughout the Ages* (Jerusalem, 1990), pp. 227–54. In October of 2008, Mistree was elected as one of the seven trustees of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP), the apex body of the Parsi community. For the BPP, see Hinnells, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora*, pp. 70–7; Walthert, *Reflexive Gemeinschaft*, pp. 128–35. Mr Mistree is now also a co-founder of The World Alliance of Parsi and Irani Zarthoshtis (WAPIZ), a traditionalist organization founded in 2005 and based in Mumbai. They state on their website, available at <http://www.wapiz.com/whoare.htm>: 'The Parsis and Iranis who follow the ancient Zarthoshti religion have never promoted conversion as a policy. Like the Hindus and Jews, the religion is ethno-focused. Therefore the Parsi or Irani identity is fused to the Zarthoshti religion and is seen to be inseparable from it ... It is this historically fused identity of being Parsi and or Irani as of race and Zarthoshti as of religion, which has helped to maintain the unique identity of this group, which in turn has preserved the ancient practices of the Zarthoshti faith. The Parsi Irani Zathoshtis have never promoted a policy of conversion, not even in the days when Zarthoshti kings ruled a mighty empire stretching from Eastern Europe to the River Indus, in present-day Pakistan.'
81. The Modi Sorabji Vatchha Gandhi Agiary on (N. S.) Patkar Marg, formerly Hughes Road; see Marzban J. Giara, *Global Directory of Zoroastrian Fire Temples* (Mumbai, 2002).
82. Since the founding of 'Zoroastrian Studies' in 1977, Khojeste Mistree found enthusiastic collaborators with two 'Outsider' scholars with whom he had been a student in the UK. Alan Williams (editor of the present volume) and James R. Russell (a teacher

- of mine at Harvard University) aided him with his extremely popular public lectures to 'Insiders' in Bombay in the group's gestational period. Mistree refers in his book to 'James Russell and Alan Williams, my two great friends and colleagues, who have been sources of inspiration in helping me to formulate an intellectual appreciation of Zoroastrian doctrine which we all studied together' (Mistree, *Zoroastrianism: An Ethnic Perspective*, p. x). It is also worth mentioning that several 'Outsider' scholars of Zoroastrianism and Parsis have received his generous support and the helpful infrastructure of 'Zoroastrian Studies' as they conducted fieldwork in Bombay and Mumbai. See for example the candid acknowledgements in Kreyenbroek with Munshi, *Living Zoroastrianism*, p. xiii and Luhrmann, *The Good Parsi*, p. 314.
83. For a very public attempt at negotiating my liminal identities at the 16th North American Zarathusti Congress in Rye, New York in August 2012, see Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina, 'Thinking with Zoroastrianism in the 21st century', *FEZANA Journal* xxvi/3 (October 2012), pp. 41–9.
 84. Stausberg, 'Para-Zoroastrianisms', p. 236. For 'Para-Zoroastrians' in Russia, see Anna Tessmann, 'On the good faith: A fourfold construction of Zoroastrianism in contemporary Russia' (PhD diss., University of Gothenburg and Södertörns Högskola, 2012); also Michael Stausberg and Anna Tessmann, 'The appropriation of a religion: The case of Zoroastrianism in contemporary Russia', *Culture and Religion* xiv/4 (2013), pp. 445–62.
 85. See Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina, 'Theologies and hermeneutics', in Michael Stausberg and Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina (eds), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 211–34.
 86. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, p. 106.

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PART II

ANTIQUITY AND TRADITION

3

THE 'SACRIFICE' (*YASNA*) TO MAZDĀ

Its Antiquity and Variety

Alberto Cantera

For more than 2,000 years the celebration of a liturgy for Ahura Mazdā has been the main feature of Zoroastrian self-identity. In the Avestan texts the term *mazdaiiasna* – 'someone who performs a sacrifice to Mazdā' – is applied mainly to the sacrificer, but also to the members of the community who participate in the performance and obtain the benefits of this sacrifice. Sometimes *mazdaiiasna* is accompanied by the adjective *zaraθuštri* and the meaning is then 'someone who performs a sacrifice to Mazdā in the way of Zarathustra'.¹

Most of the extant manuscripts of the Avesta contain the Avestan recitative and the ritual directions for the correct celebration of this liturgy. In fact, the only texts in Avestan that have been transmitted to us are those of the long liturgy in its numerous variants and a collection of outer ceremonies (the *Khordeh Avesta*) together with some short treatises on ritual matters. The *Dēnkard* (and other Pahlavi works) describe a Great Avesta in 21 *nasks* or books, but the bulk of it is lost. Only one of the 21 *nasks*, the *Vidēvdād*, is preserved as such in the extant manuscripts. Its preservation is a consequence of the use of this text in a special celebration of the long liturgy (the *yašt ī wisperad abāg jud-dēwdād* 'the celebration for all the articulations together with the prescription for keeping the *daēuuu* away'). The Great Avesta is supposed to have been written down towards the end of the Sasanian Empire or even later. This hypothesis is combined with another: that the extant manuscripts derive from this first copy of the Great Avesta. The problem is that the contents of the extant manuscripts do not fit the distribution of the contents of the Great Avesta. Whereas the books of the Great Avesta are arranged *scholastically*, in the manuscripts we find a much shorter selection of texts arranged *ritually*. The traditional explanation is that the extant texts are fragments of the Great Avesta that were re-arranged in later times for producing the recitative of the liturgy. Accordingly the actual recitative of the liturgy for Ahura Mazdā, the long liturgy, is a late composition made up with surviving fragments of the Great Avesta.

This view has been challenged in recent years by several scholars (Kellens 1998: 476 ss. Panaino 1999; Cantera 2012a: 285ff.; Kellens 2012: 53; Panaino 2012: 85 ss.). The Zoroastrian long liturgy continues an Indo-Iranian tradition: a sacrifice to the gods that is characterized by an initial pressing and drinking of a stimulating drink, the *sauma-*, followed by an animal sacrifice offered to the fire and completed with an office for the fire and the waters (Tremblay 2006–7). The number of correspondences could be easily increased, but this general structure should be enough (together with the evidence of a largely common ritual vocabulary) to confirm that the long liturgy, usually known as *Yasna*, continues the same tradition as the Vedic sacrifice. Thus, we can assume that a liturgy similar to the *Yasna* has been celebrated in Iran since Indo-Iranian times down to the twentieth century.

But when did this ceremony get the shape it has still today? The *Nērangestān* provides evidence that the long liturgy was celebrated already in Sasanian times in a very similar way as described in the manuscripts. However, we can trace the actual liturgy much further back than to Sasanian times. In a recent contribution Kellens (2012: 55ff.) has analysed three descriptions of a sacrifice in the Young Avestan texts (Y 57.2–8, 57.19–26 and Yt 10.88–94) which show the same structure that is found in the long liturgy:

the spreading of the holy bundle (*barəsmān*)

the consecration of the wood

the investiture of the *zaotar*

the pressing of the *haoma*

the choice thanks to the vision (*daēnā*)

the recitation of some texts in Old Avestan: either the five *Gāthās* or the *Ahuna Vairiia*, the *Yasna Haptanḫāiti* and the *Fšušō Mąθra* or just the *Ahuna Vairiia*.

These descriptions exactly fit the structure of the long liturgy. Thus, as Kellens notices, the ‘conceptual spine’ of the long liturgy existed already at the time of the composition of Y 57 and Yt 10. (Kellens 2012: 57).

In fact, during the productive time of the Avestan language there existed not only the conceptual spine of the ceremony, but also its recitative had already taken the form we know today. This recitative is *not* a late patchwork of fragments of the Great Avesta compiled in Sasanian or post-Sasanian times, but in fact goes back to the productive time of the Avestan language, probably still in the Achaemenid period. The clearest proof of this fact is provided by the Avestan text of the *Nērangestān*. This section of the *Husparom Nask* has two linguistic layers: a short Avestan text and its Pahlavi translation. The Pahlavi translation is not only a translation, but includes long commentaries providing the most extensive information about the ritual practice in Sasanian times. Today it is easily accessible, thanks to the edition and translation by Kotwal and Kreyenbroek (1995, 2003, 2009). The Avestan version is our principal source of information for the pre-Sasanian ritual practices.

In several passages it is clear that the Avestan *Nērangestān* (N) knows the actual version of the long liturgy. In fact, it contains several *nērangs* or ritual directions in the Avestan language similar to the later *nērangs* in Pahlavi. Thus N 53.4–13 describes the tasting of the *drōn* by the priest exactly as it takes place in the long liturgy, including the Avestan recitative:

N 53.4–13 (translation after Kotwal-Kreyenbroek)	Y 8.3–4
zaōtā gəuš *paiti āpōiṭ paōiriio <i>fraṇharōiṭ</i> 'Let the zaotar be the first (to) consume (part) of meat at the water.' <i>ptylk y MYA yšt YKOYMWNYt</i> <i>pltwm HD OŠTENyt</i>	
mrūiti aēta zaōta *imq vacō 'The zaotar speaks the following words' <i>AMTš gwpt HWE't' zwt' ZNE</i> <i>gwbsn'</i>	
aməša spənta *daēne *māzdaiiasne <i>'mhrspnd' n' HWE'yt' dyn'</i> <i>m'zdyšn' n' [PWN gwbsn' w</i> <i>KRYTWNšn']</i>	aməša spənta daēne māzdaiiasne vanhauuasca <i>van'hišca zaōθrāasca</i> <i>'mhrspndyt' dyn' m'zdyšn' n' [PWN</i> <i>KLYTWNšn'] MNW ŠPYL ZKL W ŠPYL NKḂ</i> <i>[AYK ZKLc LKWM ŠPYL HWE'yt' W NKḂ</i> <i>LKWM ŠPYL HWE'yt] zwhlc [ZK ŠPYL MN</i> <i>mdyn' y LKWM]</i>
vanhauuasca van'həušca <i>zaōθrāasca</i> <i>ŠPYL ZKL W ŠPYL NKḂ zwhl</i> <i>[AYK ZKL LKWM ŠPYL HWE'yt</i> <i>' W NKḂ LKWM ŠPYL HWE'yt</i> <i>mdy' n' zwhl ZK y LKWM ŠPYL]</i>	
yō *aēšuuu mazdaiiasnaēšuuu <i>mazdaiiasnō aojanō</i> <i>AMT BYN OLEš' n' m'zdyšn' n'</i> <i>' m'zdyšnšn' YMRWNYt [y</i> <i>YMRWNYt AYK GBRA-HD ŠPYL</i> <i>GBRA GBRA HWE'm]</i>	yō aēšuuu mazdaiiasnaēšuuu mazdaiiasnō <i>aojanō ašahe rāθma jīštaiiamnō</i> <i>MNW MN OLEš' n' m'zdyšn' n' m'zdyšnynh</i> <i>' YMRWNYt [HNA YMLLWN't AYK GBRA</i> <i>ŠPYL GBRA GBRA HWE'm] W PWN ZK y</i> <i>'hl'y yh b'hl zyw't AYK b'hl W d'sl ŠPYL' n'</i> <i>OŠTE''t</i>
ašahe rāθma jīštaiiamnō <i>PWN 'hl'y yh b'hl z'yšt [AYK b'hl</i> <i>W d'sl y ŠPYL' n' OŠTE'yt</i>	
yāθβa gaēθā ašahe *mərəyənte <i>MNW PWN y'twkyh gyh' n' y</i> <i>'hl'y yh *mlncynyt' [AYK y'twk</i> <i>HWE't]</i>	yāθβa gaēθā ašahe mərəyənte <i>MNW PWN y'twkyh gyh' n' y 'hl'y yh</i> <i>mlncyn't' [AYK y'twk HWE't]</i>

<i>aōi tūm dim disiata yā apasca</i> <i>uruuārā zaōθrāsca</i> QDM LKWM OLEy LA YDBHWNyt² [AYKš pyt 'gynyt'] MNW QDM MYA MNW QDM 'wlwl MNW QDM zwhl [HWE 't]	<i>auui tūm dim disiata yā apasca uruuārā</i> <i>zaōθrāsca</i> QDM LKWM 'w' OLEš 'n' 'QDM nykycyt [AYK dhšk y t 'štyk ptš pyt 'k BRA OBYDWNx₂] MNW MYA W 'wlwl W zwhlc
<i>yasca aētaēšqm mazdaiiasnanqm</i> <i>pərənāiiunqm aiβi.zūzuiianqm</i> <i>imq vacō nōiṭ visaite framrūite</i> <i><aētqm ā></i> MNW QDM MN OLEš 'n m'zdysn 'n' 'pwrn' y 'n' QDM gwpt 'l' n' 'ZNE LA MKBLWNyt PWN pr 'c gwbsn 'AYK amaša spənta LA YMRWNyt <ā>	<i>yasca aētaēšqm mazdaiiasnanqm</i> <i>pərənāiiunqm aiβi.zūzuiianqm imq vacō nōiṭ</i> <i>visaite framrūite aētqm ā yātumanahe jasaiti</i> MNWc MN OLEš 'n' m'zdysn 'n' y pwl n' k' n pr 'c gwpt 'l' n' ZNE gwbsn LA MKBLWNx₁ 't pr 'c gwbsnyh AYK amaša spənta LA YMRWN 't 'š hnbwsšnyh-1 y y 'twkyh YAMYTWN 't AYKš dhšk-1 y t 'štyk ptš pyt 'k YHWWN 't AYT MNW 'ytwn' YMRWNyt 'y YAMTWNyt PWN nplyn³
<i>aētqm ā yātumanahe jasaiti</i> PWN y 'twkyh *hnbwsšnyh YAMTWN 't AYKš dhšk y t 'štyk ptš OBYDWNyt AYT MNW 'ytwn YMRWNyt 'y YAMTWN 't PWN nyplyn ' OBYDWNtn ZNE MN 'pst 'k pyt 'k bc 'y y dlwn '	

Since the *Srōš Drōn* is as well celebrated as a separated ritual, this passage could only prove the existence of the *Srōš Drōn* but not of the complete ceremony. However, the same does not apply for the description of the offerings to the *barsom* in N 52.4–8. This describes exactly the Avestan recitative and the ritual actions of the offerings to the *barsom* mentioned in the liturgical manuscripts at Y 63.3:

N 52.4–8	Y 63.3 (Pt 4)
<i>yaṭ zaōta ahurəm mazdqm yazāiti maḍimāi</i> <i>barəsmān paiti.barōit</i> 'When the zaotar worships Ahura Mazda [that is, recites <i>ahurəm mazdqm</i> ... <i>yazamaide</i>], he should make the offering on the middle of the <i>barəsmān</i>	<i>ahurəm mazdqm</i> PWN myd 'nk 'blswm QDM 'y YBLWNyt 'He brings (it) to the middle of the <i>barsom</i>' <i>ašauuanəm ašahe ratūm yazamaide</i> QDM wl zwhlk MN LOYŠE y blswm PWN 4 'ngwst 'on the side of the cup (for the <i>zōhr</i>), four fingers away from the <i>barsom</i>'

<i>amašā spəntā yazāiti frātəmāi barəsmən paiti.barōiṭ</i> When he worships the <i>Ameša Spənta</i> [that is, recites <i>amašā spəntā ... yazamaide</i>], he should make the offering on the foremost part of the <i>barəsmən</i>.	<i>amašā spəntā huxšaθrā huδāṇhō yazamaide</i> <i>pr'ctwm LOYŠE blswm</i> '(he brings it) to the foremost part of the <i>barsom</i>.'
<i>apō aṭ yazamaide *hauuiōtəmāi barəsmən paiti.barōiṭ</i> When he (recites) <i>apō aṭ yazamaide</i>, he should make the offering on the point of the <i>barəsmən</i> that is farthest to the left.	<i>apō aṭ yazamaide</i> <i>QDM hwytl y blswm PWN wl y zwhlk W MN LOYŠE blswm PWN 4 'ngwst'</i> '(he brings it) to the point of the <i>barəsmən</i> that is farthest to the left, on the side of the cup (for <i>zōhr</i>), four fingers away from the barsom'
<i>ašāunəm urunascā frauuašišcā yazamaide dašinōtəmāi barəsmən paiti.barōiṭ</i> When he (recites) <i>ašāunəm urunascā frauuašišcā yazamaide</i>, he should make the offering on the point of the <i>barəsmən</i> that is farthest to the right.	<i>ašāunəm urunascā frauuašišcā yazamaide</i> <i>OL dšn'tl y blswm PWN wl y zwhlk</i> '(he brings it) to the point of the <i>barəsmən</i> that is farthest to the right, on the side of the cup (for <i>zōhr</i>).'
<i>vīspaēibiiō yasnō.kərətaēibiiō maδəmāi *barəsmən paiti.barōiṭ</i> At all recitations of the <i>Yenḥē hātəm</i>, he should make the offering on the middle of the <i>barəsmən</i>.»	<i>yenḥē hātəm āaṭ yesne paiti PWN myd'nk blswm *YBLWNyt PWN wl y zwhlk</i> «he brings (it) to the middle of the <i>barsom</i>, on the side of the cup (for <i>zōhr</i>)'

Very interesting is the mention in the Avestan *Nērangestān* of seven articulations (*ratu*) for the spreading of the *barsom*. These are seven Avestan texts recited during the *Yasna*. These appear exactly in the same order as in the *Yasna* and confirm thus that the recitative of the long liturgy had found its actual shape before the composition of the Avestan *Nērangestān*:

<i>hapta hənti hāuuanaiiō ratauuō barəsma stərənaēti</i> Seven are the articulations of the morning during which one spreads the <i>barəsmən</i>	
<i>paoiriia yenḥē mē ašāṭ hacā</i> The first is <i>yenḥē mē ašāṭ hacā</i>	VrS 3.11
<i>bitiia ahunanəm vairiianəm</i> The second is that of <i>Ahuna Vairiia</i>	Y 13.7
<i>θritiia dāidī mōi</i> The third is <i>dāidī mōi</i>	Y 18.1

<i>tūiriiā uštāuaitiā vā spāntā mainiiūš vā hātōiš</i> The fourth is the section of the <i>Uštāuaiti</i> or of the <i>Spāntā.mainiiu</i>	Y 43 or Y 47
<i>puxda yeñhē mē ašāt hacā</i> The fifth is <i>yeñhē mē ašāt hacā</i>	Y 63.1
<i>xštuuō dāidī mōi</i> The sixth is <i>dāidī mōi</i>	Y 65.15
<i>haptaθa uštāuaitiā vā spāntā mainiiūš vā hātōiš</i> The seventh is the section of <i>Uštāuaiti</i> or of <i>Spāntā.mainiiu</i>	Y 68.24

As mentioned above, the long liturgy and its actual recitative are not a modern patchwork, but an old liturgy whose recitative goes back probably to Achaemenid times. As with every living liturgy, and contrary to erudite compositions, it shows a range of variations for different purposes. In Geldner's edition of the Avesta, only one long liturgy (the *Yasna*) and a more solemn variant, called *Wisperad* (or better *Yašt ī Wisperad*), are contained. The latter is, however, edited only partially. Actually, the manuscripts (witnessing the ritual life from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries) show a wider range of liturgies (Cantera 2012a: 280):

- The *Yasna ī Rapihwin*: This ceremony is celebrated only in the summer months and the differences to the *Yasna* are limited to the substitution of the time articulations by the mention of just the articulation of *rapiθβina* 'noon' and a special dedicatory (*šnūman*).
- The morning daily ceremony or *Yasna*.
- The solemn ceremony (*Wisperad*): the main ritual difference is the celebration of two *Yasna Haptañhāiti* and two *Sroš Drōn* instead of one.

The solemn ceremony serves as the basis for other ceremonies, like a ceremony with an additional *Hōmāst*, called the *Dō-Hōmāst*, attested only in the oldest manuscript (MS 2000 [K7b]). Furthermore, there is another variation of the solemn ceremony: the intercalation ceremonies, in which a Young Avestan text is divided in sections and intercalated between the Old Avestan texts. The manuscripts attest two such ceremonies: the *Yašt ī Wisperad abāg Vidēvdād* and the *Vištāsp Yašt*.

The Pahlavi *Nērangestān* witnesses still a greater ritual variety than our manuscripts. Beside the *Dō-Hōmāst* it mentions other ceremonies like the *Dwāzdah-Hōmāst*. Also the catalogue of the intercalation ceremonies is longer in the *Nērangestān*. It includes two such ceremonies not attested in the manuscripts: the *Bayān Yašt* and the *Hādōxt Nask*. The first has been correctly interpreted by Kreyenbroek as a ceremony with intercalated *Yašt* (Kreyenbroek 2008). As I showed some years ago (Cantera 2009), the list of textual articulations of the *Wisperad* is originally a fragment of the recitative of this ceremony

in which some *Yašts* (Yt 5, 19, 14 and 10) are intercalated between the Old Avestan texts. The *Hādōxt* ceremony is quite likely to be an intercalated ceremony as well in which *Hādōxt* 1 was intercalated after the *Aṣəm Vohu*⁴ and *Hādōxt* 2 after Y 53. Both ceremonies ceased to be celebrated before the seventeenth century.

In order to have an idea of the variety of the long liturgy in the *Nērangestān* it is very useful to consider the hierarchical classification and grouping of different variants of the long liturgy according to the number of *barsom* twigs to be used and the proportions of milk and water in the libation:

	Proportion of milk and water N 28.21	Twigs of the <i>barsom</i> N 72.11
<i>Yašt ī keh</i>	(2 water?) / 2 milk	15
<i>Yašt ī hāwan</i>		21
<i>Wisperad</i>	4 water / 2 milk	33
<i>Ēk-Hōmāst</i>		33
<i>Hādōxt ī Ēk-hōmāst</i>	4 water / 2 milk	33
<i>Dō-Hōmāst</i>	6 water / 2 milk	At least 70
<i>Dah-Hōmāst</i>	8 water / 2 milk	At least 70
<i>Dvādaśa-Hōmāst</i>	8 water / 2 milk	At least 70
<i>Wisperad ī artōkartēn</i>	10 water / 2 milk	551

From these classes of ceremonies the manuscripts provide evidence only for the *Yašt ī keh* (the *Yašt ī rapihwin* would belong to this group), the *Yašt ī hāwan*, the *Wisperad*, the *Hādōxt* (only in exegetical manuscripts) and the *Dō-Hōmāst* (only in the oldest manuscript, MS 2000 [K7b]). Obviously, the ritual variety decreases from Sasanian times to the time of the extant manuscripts, that is from the oldest manuscripts to the modern ones.

The changes in the different variants of the liturgies appear in central parts of the ritual and the recitative. Some examples are given here. The meat offering to the fire could be done once or twice (or even not at all) and accordingly the *Yasna Haptanḥāiti* is recited just once (in the daily ceremony) or twice (in the solemn ceremonies). The pressing of the *haoma*, together with the recitation of the *Hōmāst* can be celebrated once, twice or more often during the liturgy.⁵ The changes in the recitation of the Old Avestan texts are very interesting. Usually it is assumed that there is only 'one' way to recite the Old Avestan texts: namely as they appear in Geldner's edition of the Avesta and in the daily ceremony in modern times.⁶ However some deviations are attested. The *Yasna Haptanḥāiti* is recited twice in the solemn ceremonies. The *Airīaman īšiiō* is as well repeated in the *Dō-Hōmāst* ceremony. Furthermore, the *Uštaiuaiti* and the

Spəntā.mainiiu Gāthā exchanged their positions in the *Dō-Hōmāst* ceremony. This table shows the arrangement of the Old Avestan texts in the different ceremonies:

<i>Yasna</i>	<i>Wisperad</i>	<i>Dō-Hōmāst</i> (after the <i>Nērangestān</i>)	<i>Dō-Hōmāst</i> (after K7b)
<i>Ahuna Vairiia</i>	<i>Ahuna Vairiia</i>	<i>Ahuna Vairiia</i>	<i>Ahuna Vairiia</i>
<i>Ahunauuaitī G</i>	<i>Ahunauuaitī G</i>	<i>Ahunauuaitī G</i>	<i>Ahunauuaitī G</i>
<i>Yasna Haptanḥāiti</i>	<i>Yasna Haptanḥāiti</i>	<i>Yasna Haptanḥāiti</i>	<i>Yasna Haptanḥāiti</i>
<i>Uštatauaitī G</i>	<i>Uštatauaitī G</i>	<i>Spəntā.mainiiu G</i>	<i>Uštatauaitī G</i>
<i>Spəntā.mainiiu G</i>	<i>Spəntā.mainiiu G</i>	~~<i>Ahunauuaitī G</i>~~	<i>Spəntā.mainiiu G</i>
<i>Vohu.xšaθrā G</i>	<i>Vohu.xšaθrā G</i>	~~<i>Vohu.xšaθrā G</i>~~	<i>Vohu.xšaθrā G</i>
	<i>Yasna Haptanḥāiti apara</i>	<i>Yasna Haptanḥāiti apara</i>	<i>Yasna Haptanḥāiti apara</i>
<i>Vahištōišti G</i>	<i>Vahištōišti</i>	<i>Vahištōišti G</i>	<i>Vahištōišti G</i>
		<i>Vahištōišti G</i>	<i>Vahištōišti G</i>
<i>Airiīaman Išiia</i>	<i>Airiīaman Išiia</i>	<i>Airiīaman Išiia</i>	<i>Airiīaman Išiia</i>
		<i>Airiīaman Išiia</i>	<i>Airiīaman Išiia</i>

In Sasanian times the long liturgy had a wide range of variants and many parts of the ceremonies were still mutable. It was a living ceremony with many variants for different purposes, not just a patchwork of erudite compilers.

For pre-Sasanian times the evidence is not as overwhelming as for Sasanian times, but we have good reason to assume a similar or even a greater variety. The intercalation ceremonies provide a nice example.⁷ Traditionally they have been considered later creations on the basis of already existing texts, and so they are the clearest example of an erudite patchwork. According to Boyce (1992), the text of the *Vīdēvdād* existed independently of the long liturgy as a legal treatise, and then in Sasanian times a ceremony was created in which this text was intercalated at random between the Old Avestan texts in order to produce a ceremony including a fashionable text on purification. The *Vīštāsp Yašt* would have been created after the model of the *Vīdēvdād*.

Actually, the intercalated texts are not divided and intercalated among the Old Avestan texts *at random*. On the contrary, these texts were composed to be intercalated among the Old Avestan texts, and their intercalation is the result of an exegesis of the Old Avestan texts. Thus the intercalation after Y.53 of the encounter of the *uruuan* of the deceased with its own 'vision' (*daēnā*) is constant in all intercalation ceremonies and, of course, is not unintended. Y 53 is a nuptial hymn for Pouru.cištā, an alter ego of the Vision (*Daēnā*), the

daughter of Zarathustra. The Young Avestan exegesis put (correctly) this hymn in connection with encounter of the soul (*uruuan*) of the deceased with his own Vision.

The clearest example of the rationale for such intercalations is provided by the *Vidēvdād*. Skjærvø (2007) has shown some years ago that the intercalation of the *Vidēvdād* depends on a reading of the Old Avestan texts as representing the universal history that goes from the creation (*Ahuna Vairiia* and V.1) to Zarathustra (Y 53 and V 19) and the final victory over Evil (*Ariiāman Išiiā* and V 20–2). But the connections of the *Vidēvdād* with the Old Avestan texts are not limited to these three central moments (Cantera 2013a: 43 ff.). The *Vidēvdād* represents the process of universal purification of the world. It begins with the origins of impurity after the creation of the countries. After presenting the first sacrificial attempt to restore immortality by Yima, it deals with the greatest impurity, the *nasuš*. After the *Yasna Haptaŋhāiti* is intercalated the *baršnūm* presented as correspondence in the purification ritual to the *Yasna Haptaŋhāiti* in the sacrificial rituals. From now on, only minor impurity (the *nasā ī zīndagān*) will appear until the arrival of Sraoša in V 18, Zarathustra in V 19 and the final purification in V 20–2. Nothing is at random in the structure of the *Vidēvdād*: it has been composed to be inserted between the Old Avestan texts in order to provide a reading of the Old Avestan texts, under the motto of the process of universal purification, and to create a special variant of the long liturgy contributing to the universal purification, which is a kind of *baršnūm* for the whole universe:

World history	Old Avestan texts	<i>Vidēvdād</i>
Creation of the world	<i>Ahuna Vairiia</i> Y 27.13	Creation of the countries (V 1)
First sacrifice		Yima (V 2)
		Major impurity (<i>nasuš</i>)
The new sacrifice	<i>Yasna Haptaŋhāiti</i>	<i>Baršnūm</i> (V 8–9) and other purification rituals (V 10–12)
		Minor impurity (V 15–17)
Zarathustra	<i>Vahištōiši Gāθā</i>	Zarathustra and encounter with the Vision (V 19)
Final purification	<i>Ariiāman Išiiā</i>	V 20–2

A further proof of the early existence of the type of the intercalation ceremonies is that its name is already attested in the intercalated ceremonies, in the *Vištāsp Sāst* (Vyt 8.8 [60]) and in the parallel version of *Hādōxt Nask* (HN 2.14).

The scene is situated in the encounter of the soul with the Vision (Daēnā). It explains to the soul (*uruuan*) of the deceased that, every time he (the deceased) recited the *Gāthās* (*gāthāasca srāuuaiiō*), celebrated a sacrifice to the waters (*apasca varj'hiš yazəmnnō*) or satisfied the fire of Ahura Mazdā and the man *ašauuan* (*ātarəmca ahurahe mazdā narəmca ašauuanəm kuxšnuuqnō*), it made the Vision more beloved and put her in a more prominent position. Then the speaker changes and Ahura Mazdā speaks:⁸

āaṭ mām narō paskāt yazənte ahurəm mazdām darəyō.yaštīmca hām.parštīmca

Henceforth men celebrate a long *yašt* and a *hām.paršti* for Ahura Mazdā.

Kellens (2012: 57) has identified rightly the reciting of the *Gāthās*, the sacrifice to the waters and the satisfaction of the fire and of the organizer of the sacrifice (*ašauuan*) with a celebration of the long liturgy, of a *Yasna*. Through the celebration of the long liturgy the pious man has made the Vision more beloved and has put her in a more advanced position. Then it follows the conclusion announced by Ahura Mazdā that this is the reason for the celebration the 'long liturgy and the interview' (*darəyō.yašti- hām.paršti-ca*). Av. *Hām.paršti-* is the abstract noun of *hām-fras-*, the technical verb for having an interview with the Ahura Mazdā already in the *Gāthās* (Y 47.3). This is also used in Vedic (*sam-prc-*) for a consultation of men with the gods (RV 10.69.9c). In the Pahlavi literature the correspondence of *hampursagih* is the *terminus technicus* for such encounters in which the revelation takes place.

There is then no doubt. The intercalation ceremonies are not late creations. As a matter of fact, we have reasons to assume rather that they belong to the very core of the long liturgy, the special sacrifice to Ahura Mazdā introduced by Zarathustra (the **[mazda-]yasna- zaraθuštri-*). It is not accidental that the mention of the intercalation ceremonies appears in the context of the encounter of the soul with the Vision. The function of the Vision is to lead the soul of the deceased to Ahura Mazdā and the same function takes the Vision in each sacrifice to Ahura Mazdā: she leads the soul of the sacrificer to the presence of Ahura Mazdā and allows him to have a consultation with the divinity. After drinking the *haoma* (Y 10.14 and 11.10), the sacrificer is consecrated: he assumes his function through the right choice of celebrating a sacrifice to Mazdā in the way of Zarathustra (*frauuarāne*). Immediately after he offers the vitality of his own body (Y 11.18, Y 13.4 *tanuuasciṭ x'aṣiia uštānəm*) as Zarathustra did (as already mentioned in the *Gāthās*, Y 33.14). Thus the sacrificer enters into a state of self-induced death, emulating that of the sacrificial victim that is going to be killed at the end of Y 34. His soul (*uruuan*) will be able to accompany the soul of the victim (the *gəuš uruuan*) into the realm of gods. Thus the soul of the sacrificer is able to make the same journey as the dead, but to return safe at the end of the sacrifice.

The second *fragard* of the *Vidēvdād*, the story of Yima, deals with the particularity of Zarathustra's sacrifice and the reason for its superiority regarding the former sacrifice of Yima (Cantera 2012b). At the beginning of V 2 Zarathustra asks Ahura Mazdā a question linking the Vision and the consultation with Ahura Mazdā (V 2.1):

*kahmāi paoiriō mašiiānəm *apərəsanha tūm yō ahurō mazdā aniiō mana yaṭ zaraθuštrāi kahmāi fradaēsaiiō daēnəm yəm āhūrim zaraθuštrim*

With whom, the first of men, have you, Ahura Mazdā, had a consultation but with me, who am Zarathustra? To whom, the first of men, have you shown the Vision in which are involved Ahura (Mazdā) and Zarathustra?

The answer is Yima, but he did not accept the proposal of Ahura Mazdā, for he was neither created nor instructed for this function. In fact, at the time of the cosmogonical sacrifice of Ahura Mazdā, Zarathustra, or his *frauuaṣi*, was present and witnessed the *Ahuna Vairiia* recited by Ahura Mazdā. Therefore, since Yima was not present there and lacks this essential knowledge, he is not able to perform a sacrifice with the *Ahuna Vairiia* as the right articulation (*ratu*) of the sacrifice and cannot participate in the ritual technique of the Vision (Daēnā). He cannot be the memorizer and bearer of the Vision. This capacity is exclusively that of Zarathustra and his ritual technique. As a consequence, the sacrifice of Yima was only partially successful and the immortality that he could offer the creatures is an imperfect one: immortality in the world, first, and in the *vara*- afterwards. The perfect immortality can be reached only in the realm of the gods, but the access there is possible only through the Vision. This is the achievement of the second millennium of the world history through the new sacrifice introduced by Zarathustra.

Through the use of the *Ahuna Vairiia*, Zarathustra is able to act during the sacrifice as Ahura Mazdā. The assumption of this role by the sacrificer is the key to the ritual technique of the Vision. The sexual union of the sacrificer's soul during the long liturgy is a Zoroastrian variation of the Indo-European myth of the wedding of sky with his daughter, the morning dawn, which brings a new day.⁹ In the mythology of the long liturgy, it is the wedding of Ahura Mazdā with the Vision, Daēnā, whose auroral features have been brought to light many years ago by Kellens (1994; 1995: 49ff.). Zarathustra, acting in the sacrifice as Ahura Mazdā, marries his own daughter, Pouru.cišta, the alter ego of the Vision and gets thus access to the world of the gods. Therefore, each priest celebrating the long liturgy acts as Zarathustra and his soul is united with the Vision during the recitation of Y53 and gets access to the divinity, Ahura Mazdā.

The Aramean inscription of Arebsun (Cappadocia) (Donner et Röllig 1966: inscrip. 264) presents one of the very rare loanwords of Avestan in the western regions of the Achaemenid Empire, namely DJNMZDJSNŠ.¹⁰ The inscription presents her as the sister (and not daughter) and wife of the god Bēl that appears here likely for Ahura Mazdā:

Mazda. [Die]se DJNMZDJSNŠ, die [König]in, die Schwester und Gattin des Bēl, hat also gesprochen: « Ich bin die Gattin des Königs Bēl. Danach hat Bēl also zu DJNMAZDJSNŠ gesprochen: « Du, meine Schwester, bist sehr weise, und schöner bist du als Göttinnen; und deshalb habe ich dich gemacht zur Gattin *meines Herzens*

This inscription is the only direct witness of the wedding between Ahura Mazdā (here as Bēl) and the Vision (Daēnā) and an additional proof of the parallelism between Zarathustra's wedding with his daughter and the Indo-European myth of the marriage of the morning dawn with his father. This bears witness further of the celebration of the long liturgy in Cappadocia and the existence there of the mythology associated with her and the central role of the wedding of Ahura Mazdā and the Vision obtained in the sacrifice to Mazdā for the long liturgy. Unfortunately the date of the inscription is controversial. It could be dated back to the fifth or fourth century BCE, but also to the second century BCE.

Through the union with his Vision the soul of the priest gains access to Ahura Mazdā and a consultation with him becomes possible. The consultation was, actually, also possible for Yima but the chief difference is that Yima is lacking in the ritual knowledge for being 'a memorizer and bearer of the Vision' (*bərətā- mərətā-daēnaiiāi*)¹¹, that is, to present the Vision of the consultation with Ahura Mazdā to the ritual community of the *mazdaiiasna- zaraθuštri*-. His interview with Ahura Mazdā is then reported by Zarathustra. The latter is the first sacrificer who is 'memorizer and bearer of the Vision'. Through his new ritual technique, he and the sacrificers acting like him are able to transmit the vision of the consultation with Ahura Mazdā to the ritual community. Besides Zarathustra, a few characters closely linked to him and to the mythology of the Vision are also able to perform interviews with Ahura Mazdā. Thus the *Vištāsp Yašt* attests a consultation between Fərəšaōštra and Ahura Mazdā that seems to have taken the place of a former consultation between Vištāspa and Ahura Mazdā (Cantera 2013b: 125ff.).

In the intercalation ceremonies, the consultation is between the soul of the sacrificer acting as Zarathustra and Ahura Mazdā. The soul of the individual sacrificer loses its own individuality and becomes assimilated to the sacrificer par excellence, Zarathustra, who in his turn acts as Ahura Mazdā. Through the union with his Vision the sacrificer becomes 'memorizer and bearer of the Vision' and is able to transmit live this encounter between his soul and Ahura Mazdā. The words *pərəsaṭ zaraθuštrō ahurəm mazdāṃ* 'Zarathustra asks Ahura Mazdā' indicate the beginning of the performance of the consultation. The answers of Ahura Mazdā are preceded by *āaṭ mraoṭ ahurō mazdā* 'Then Ahura Mazdā says'. We can imagine a kind of theatrical performance between two priests acting as Zarathustra and as Ahura Mazdā, but unfortunately there is not any evidence of it. The whole consultation is reported in the extant ceremonies by the *zaotar*, the priest leading the ceremony. This representation was originally intercalated after Y 53, the *Vahištōišti Gāthā*, but then the intercalations extended to other sections of the Old Avestan texts, giving the occasion for exegetical readings of these central texts of the liturgy and for creating new ritual uses for them.

I assume that all Avestan texts belonging to the *ham.paršti*-genre were composed to be recited as intercalations in the long liturgy. Beside the texts used in actual intercalation ceremonies, they belong to this genre as well some *Yašts*, such as 1, 4, 5, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14 (end of 17?) and 18. As a matter of fact, all of the *Yašts* included in the *Bayān Yašt* ceremony, as presented in the list of the textual articulations, belong to this genre. The only exception is Yt.19 but we can easily imagine that the same *Yašt* could be converted without many difficulties from one genre to another. If the texts of this genre were composed in order to be intercalated in the long liturgy, we can conclude that the structure of the ceremonies of intercalation predates the composition of a good number of Young Avestan texts that are usually considered to belong to the core of the Young Avestan texts, like most of the Great *Yašts*.

The celebration of the long liturgy that allowed a consultation of the soul of the sacrificer with Ahura Mazdā is an essential feature of the **yasna- zaraθuštri* that differentiates it from the *yasna* of the former sacrificers such as Yima. I would go so far as to affirm that the daily celebration, namely the *yazišn* of the manuscripts and the *yasna* of the western editions, is not the basic ceremony that has been extended through the addition of intercalated texts. On the contrary, it is an intrinsic feature of the **yasna zaraθuštri* that it makes possible, through the ritual technique of the Vision, a consultation with the divinity and to transmit it to the ritual community. From this point of view, we could say that the daily standard ceremony is a simplification of the solemn ceremony with intercalated consultations with Ahura Mazdā.

The Vision is also the capacity for the consultation and for transmitting the consultation to the ritual community as the contents of the consultation. Thus we can understand the meaning of *daēnā* as 'tradition' or 'corpus of the religious texts'. Every consultation transmitted to humankind in the long liturgy is *daēnā*, that is, part of the Vision of the realm of gods obtained by the sacrificer during the ceremony. Accordingly, neither the standard daily celebration of the long liturgy nor its more complex forms such as the *Wisperad* or the ceremonies of intercalation are late compositions on the basis of extant fragments of the Great Avesta, but real ceremonies that have been celebrated for centuries without interruption. The recitative of the ceremony is not an artificial patchwork of post-Sasanian times, but the product of a long lasting ritual activity in an oral tradition. The long liturgy is a living ceremony that knows many variants for different ritual purposes since the oldest period that we can trace back. The composition of the very core of the liturgy, the *Ahuna Vairiia*, is attributed to the god Ahura Mazdā; the ritual innovation of the Vision transmitted to the ritual community is ascribed to Zarathustra and was only possible because he attended the cosmogonical sacrifice of Ahura Mazdā. The recitative in Avestan language is consubstantial with the liturgy. Thus, when in Achaemenid era the liturgy was exported from eastern Iran to the western regions of the Achaemenid Empire,¹² the liturgy continued being celebrated in Avestan language. The reasons why precisely this liturgy in Avestan language

was so successful remain hidden to us. Its adoption as the standard liturgy for the cult of Ahura Mazdā by the Achaemenid kings in the context of a royal cult is a plausible explanation, but unfortunately cannot be confirmed.

NOTES

1. When applied to human beings, *zaraθuštri-* is a patronymic (Y 23.2, 26.5, Yt 13.98) or accompanies *mazdaiiasna-*. In fact, *zaraθuštri-* does never have the meaning 'Zoroastrian' as member of a religious community. When it appears together with *mazdaiiasna-*, then *zaraθuštri-* is an epithet of the *mazdaiiasna-* and not of the person qualified as *mazdaiiasna-*. Thus, it is to be compared with *zaraθuštri-* as epithet of the *srauuah-* 'prayer' (Y 57.4, Vr 12.3) or *data-* 'prescription' (Y 1.13). The case of *daēna-* could perhaps be interpreted as a patronymic: *daēnā āhūri-zaraθuštri-* would mean 'the vision which is the daughter of Ahura and Zoroštra (as equivalent of Ahura during the sacrifice)'. Nevertheless, an interpretation as 'the vision between Ahura and Zoroštra' is also possible.
2. LA YDBHWyt/nē yazēd/ for nigēzēd.
3. J2, K5 omit AYT 'ytwn' YMRWNyt 'y YAMTWNyt PWN nplyn.
4. This implies, of course, a recitation of the *Ašəm Vohu* after the *Ahuna Vairiia*, that is, a celebration which is different from the actual celebration of the long liturgy and from the versions we find in the liturgical manuscripts (Alberto Cantera, 'Talking with god: The Zoroastrian *ham.paršti* or intercalation ceremonies', *Journal Asiatique* xxxi (2013), pp. 85–138).
5. Thus in the *Dō-Hōmāst*, as still attested in MS 2000 [K7b] and the *Nērangestān* (N 84.13–15), a second pressing is celebrated after the first *Yasna Haptanhāiti*.
6. With the difference that in the modern celebration, like in the manuscripts, *Ašəm Vohu* and *Yejhē Hātqm* are not recited after the *Ahuna Vairiia* and the first *Gāthā*.
7. On the intercalation ceremonies and the arguments for their antiquity, see Cantera, 'Talking with god', pp. 85–138.
8. Another possibility is to delete *mqm* and take it for an addition under the influence of the previous *āat mqm*. In this case the Vision would keep speaking.
9. On this myth see Cheryl Steets, 'The sun maiden's wedding: An Indo-European sunrise and sunset myth' (PhD diss., UCLA, Los Angeles, 1993) and Michael Janda, *Eleusis: das indogermanische Erbe der Mysterien* (Innsbruck, 2000).
10. On this inscription see Antonio Panaino, 'Philologia Avestica III', *Annali di Ca' Foscari* (Serie orientale) xxxii (1993), pp. 135–73, and Alberto Cantera, 'La liturgie longue en langue avestique dans l'Iran occidental', in C. Rédard and W. F. M. Henkelman (eds), *La religion des Achéménides: confrontation des sources* (Paris, forthcoming).
11. The transmitted text is *mərātō bərātaca* that should be corrected into *mərata bərātaca*. For a discussion of the correction and of alternative proposals and interpretations, see Alberto Cantera, 'Yima, son *vara-* et la *daēnā-* mazdéenne', in Samra Azarnouche and Céline Redard (eds), *Yama/Yima: Variations indo-iraniennes sur la geste mystique* (Paris, 2012).
12. On the reasons for assuming the celebration of the long liturgy in Achaemenid times in western Iran see Cantera, 'La liturgie longue en langue avestique dans l'Iran occidental'.

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A ZOROASTRIAN VISION

Almut Hintze

The name 'Zoroastrianism,' referring to the religion showcased in the exhibition *The Everlasting Flame*, was coined only relatively recently. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it first occurs in 1874 in *Principles of Comparative Philology* by the Oxford assyriologist The Reverend Archibald Henry Sayce in connection with the religion of the Persians.¹ The term is based on the form Zarathustra, which is the Greek variety of the Iranian name of the religion's founder, Zarathustra. The indigenous Zoroastrian sources, however, refer to this religion as *daēnā*, from which *dēn* in Middle Persian and *dīn* in New Persian derive.² The Avestan word *daēnā* literally means 'vision,' or 'world view'. It is formed from the verb *dī*, whose meaning 'to see' lives on to the present day, for instance in the Persian verb *didan*. However, rather than seeing with the eyes of the body, the noun *daēnā* metaphorically denotes the activity of seeing with the inner eye of one's mind and, especially, what is produced by such an activity, that is to say 'thought', 'conviction', 'belief', or 'vision'. The word, which lacks an exact cognate in Vedic, is a Zoroastrian technical term.

In the Avesta, which constitutes the oldest source for our knowledge of the Zoroastrian religion, the word *daēnā* is usually qualified by an attribute, a fact that indicates that there is more than one *daēnā*. More precisely, the Avesta speaks of two: one which it describes as 'good' and which it promotes, and one which it describes as 'bad' and which it vehemently rejects and opposes. The *daēnā* favoured by the Avesta is usually qualified as *māzdaiiasni*-, that is the *daēnā* of a person whose *yasna*, or ritual worship, is dedicated to Mazdā. Occasionally this *daēnā* is further characterized as 'belonging to Zarathustra' (*zaraθuštri*-), as 'belonging to the Lord' (*āhūiriš*), as 'good' (*vaŋhī*) and 'best' (*vahišta*-). According to the Zoroastrian tradition, the *daēnā* that focuses on the worship of Mazdā, the *daēnā*- *māzdaiiasni*-, was revealed by the god Ahura Mazdā to Zarathustra, and the latter urges everyone to embrace it. Those who have done so are 'of good belief', that is *hu-daēna*-, because their *daēnā*- is *māzdaiiasni*-, that is 'the belief which belongs to a person who worships Mazdā'.³ Moreover, the *daēnā* is personified as a female whose father is Ahura Mazdā and whose mother is Ārmaiti (Yt 17.16, Vyt 52). At the same time she is also the sister of Aši 'Reward', of Sraoša 'Hearkening', Rašnu 'Justice' and Mithra 'Contract' (Yt 17.16).

The other *daēnā*, which the Avesta opposes, is that of those who worship and sacrifice not to Mazdā but to the *daivas*. The latter are of course the gods of the Indo-Iranians, the prehistoric common ancestors of the Iranian and Indo-Aryan peoples, and indeed, even further back in time, the gods of the Indo-Europeans. In all Indo-European languages the equivalent of Iranian *daiva*- means 'god'. Such is the case, for instance, in Vedic Sanskrit *devá*- and Latin *deus* 'god', and in the adjective *divinus* 'divine'. But everywhere in Iranian this word for 'god' has changed its meaning into its opposite: the old gods have become false gods in the *Gāthās*, and then 'demons' in the Younger Avesta, the *dēws* of the Pahlavi literature, and the *divs* in New Persian. The Avesta describes the *daēnā* 'of those who worship, or sacrifice to, the *daēvas*', the *daēnā daēuuaiiasnanəm*, as 'evil', *aya*- (Vd 18.9) and as belonging to the deceitful ones (*druuant-*) and to Angra Mainyu (Y 72.11), the 'destructive force' which embodies Evil. Those people who have it are *duž.daēna*- 'of bad belief'.

The Avesta thus distinguishes two convictions, or *daēnās*, embraced by two groups of people respectively: those who worship Mazdā, the *mazda-yasnas* and who therefore have a good *daēnā*, and those who worship the *daēvas*, the *daēuua-yasnas* and whose *daēnā* is bad. The criterion for whether a *daēnā* is good or bad is whether or not its owner worships Mazdā, and therefore observes ritual practices connected with the cult of Mazdā rather than those connected with the cult of *daēvas*. Ahura Mazdā is *yazata*-, that is 'worthy of worship', but the *daēvas* and their chief, Angra Mainyu, are *aiiesniia*-, 'not to be worshipped'. The Avesta promotes the 'Mazdā-worshipping Belief' by spreading it, and aims at reducing the numbers of those who practise *daiva*-worship.⁴

The *daēnā māzdaiiasni* entails both a belief system and a set of precisely defined ritual and devotional practices. Such practices include the correct recitation of the sacred texts, the Avesta, and wearing the *kustī*, the sacred thread which is tied around the waist. By adhering to the prescribed practices, individuals, men and women alike, shape their own, personal *daēnā*- during their lifetime. The *Gāthās* put it this way:

Y 48.4 *yā dāt manō vahiiō mazdā aštiascā*
huuō daēnəm šiiāoθanācā vacarhācā
ahiiā zaošāng uštiš varəṇəṅg hacaitē

He who makes his thought better or worse, O Wise one,
 (makes better or worse) his belief (*daēnā*) by his action and word.
 She follows his leanings, likings and choices.

Since a person's *daēnā* is 'seen' with the eye of one's mind, rather than with the eyes of one's body, it cannot be physically beheld and described as long as the individual is alive. However, it becomes visible after death. It is at that point that the immortal soul is confronted with its own *daēnā*. This encounter is a powerful motif that pervades the entire Zoroastrian tradition. It is found

not only in literary sources in Avestan, Middle Persian, and, in a Manichaean context, in Sogdian,⁵ but also in figurative art.⁶ During this encounter the soul, who initially fails to recognize that the female who approaches it is its own *daēnā*, engages with her in a conversation in the course of which the *daēnā* reveals to the soul that she is not a woman but the embodiment of the deceased person's actions performed while alive. She further explains how she acquired the appearance which she now has and which the soul sees for the first time with its eyes. In what follows we shall focus on this dialogue and especially on the explanations which the *daēnā* provides for how she acquired her shape. Against this background we shall consider a Sogdian drawing of what has been interpreted as representing the two *daēnās*.

THE ENCOUNTER ACCORDING TO THE AVESTA

In the Avesta the most detailed accounts of the encounter of the soul and its *daēnā* are found in *Fargard* 19.27–32 of the *Vīdēvdād*, in the second chapter of the *Hādōxt Nask* (H) and in *Fargard* 8 of the *Vištāsp Yašt* (Vyt 53–65). While the Vyt is only concerned with the fate of the truthful person's soul, in the narrative of the *Hādōxt Nask* the respective fates of the truthful and deceitful persons run parallel, but differ from one another in significant details. The accounts of both are presented as answers given by Ahura Mazdā to questions asked by Zarathustra about the fate after death of the souls of a truthful and a deceitful person respectively:

Truthful Soul	Deceitful Soul
H 2.2 āaṭ mraoṭ ahurō mazdā asne vaydanāt nišhidaiti uštāuuaitīm gāḡqm srāuuaiiō uštātātəm nimraomnō uštā ahmāi yahmāi uštā kahmāicīt vasē.xsāiiqs mazdā dāiiāt ahurō upa aētqm xšapanəm auuauuat šātōiš uruua išaiti yaḡa višpəm imaṭ yaṭ juiiō aṇhuš	H 2.20 āaṭ mraoṭ ahurō mazdā auuaḡa bā ašāum zaraḡuštra asne kamərəḡāt handuuaraiti kimqm gāḡḡiiqm vacō srāuuaiiō kām nāme zqm ahura mazda kuḡra nāme aiiēni upa aētqm xšapanəm auuauuat ašātōiš uruua išaiti yaḡa višpəm imaṭ yaṭ juiiō aṇhuš
Then said Ahura Mazdā: 'It sits near the head, reciting the Uštāuuaiti Gāḡā, calling upon happiness: uštā ahmāi yahmāi uštā kahmāicīt vasē.xsāiiqs mazdā dāiiāt ahurō	Then said Ahura Mazdā 'There, O truthful Zarathustra, it scuttles about near the head, reciting the Gathic kimqm word: kām nāme zqm ahura mazda kuḡra nāme aiiēni
In that night the soul experiences as much joy as all this living existence.'	In that night the soul experiences as much un-joy as all this living existence.'

In both cases, after death the soul hovers around the head of the dead body for three days and nights, but the soul of the truthful one sits composed by the head, while that of the deceitful one scuttles around it nervously. The soul of the truthful person recites two verse lines from the *Uštavaitī Gāthā* in correct Old Avestan. But the Old Avestan language of the line from the *Kemnamaēzā Gāthā*, *Yasna* 46.1, which the soul of the deceitful person recites is corrupt:

Y 46.1 in H 2.20 *kām nāme zqm ahura mazda kuθra nāme aiiəni*

Y 46.1 *kqm nāmōi zqm kuθrā nāmōi aiiēni*

To which land shall I go for pasture, where to (shall I go) for pasture?

The quotation in H 2.20 displays Young Avestan features, including word final *-e* for OAv. *-ōi* and the shortening of word final long vowels.⁷ Moreover, the insertion into the quotation in H 2.20 of the name of Ahura Mazdā, whom the deceitful person has refused to worship during their lifetime but the soul invokes at this stage, destroys the Gathic metre of four plus seven syllables. This situation is said to continue for three days and nights, but at the dawn of the third night the soul has to move on. The truthful one seems to be passing through flowers, enjoying lovely perfumes and southerly breezes, but the deceitful one passes through frozen grounds, and is exposed to stench and cold northerly winds. It is out of this wind that the *daēnā* appears to be emerging to the soul. The *daēnā* of the truthful person is described in great detail as a beautiful maiden:

H 2.9 *aṇhā dim vātaiiā frēraṇti sadaiieiti*

yā huua daēna

kaininō kəhrpa srīraiīā xšōiθniiā

auruša.bāzuiuō amaiīā huraodaiīā

uzarštaiīā bərəzaitiiā ərəduua.fšniiā

sraotanuuō āzātaiīā raēuuasciθraiīā

paṇca.dasaiīā raodaēsuua

kəhrpa auuuuuatō sraiīā

yaθa dāmən sraēštāiš

In this wind appears to him advancing⁸

his own Belief

in the form of a beautiful, majestic maiden,

white-armed, strong, well-grown,

upright, tall, with high breasts,

of able body, noble, of glorious stock,

of fifteen years in looks,

in form so much more beautiful

than the most beautiful creatures.

H 2.10 āaṭ hīm aoxta pərəsō yō narš ašaonō uruua
 cišca carāitiš ahi
 yaṃ iṭ yauua carāitinəm kəhrpa
 sraēštəm dādarəsa

Then the soul of the truthful man, asking, says to her:
 ‘What women are you,
 who (are) in body the most beautiful of the women
 I have ever seen?’

H 2.11 āaṭ he paiti.aoxta yā huua daēna
 azəm bā te ahmi
 yum humanō huuacō hušiiəoθana hudaēna
 yā huua daēna xʼaēpaiṭe tanuuō
 cišca θβəm cakana
 auua masanaca vanhanaca sraiiianaca
 hubaoiḍitaca vərəθrajaṣtaca paiti.duuāēšaiiantaca
 yaṭa yaṭ me sadaiiehi

Then his own belief said to him:
 ‘I am indeed,
 O young man of good thought, good word, good deed, good belief,
 your own belief of your own self.’ —
 ‘Who loved you
 with such greatness, goodness, and beauty,
 with fragrance, victoriousness, resistance against hostilities,
 as you appear to me?’

H 2.12 tum məm cakana
 yum humanō huuacō hušiiəoθana hudaēna
 auua masanaca vanhanaca sraiiianaca hubaoiḍitaca
 vərəθrajaṣtaca paiti.duuāēšaiiantaca
 yaṭa yaṭ te sadaiiemi

‘You loved me,
 O young man of good thought, good word, good deed, good belief,
 with that greatness, goodness, and beauty,
 with fragrance, victoriousness, resistance against hostilities,
 as I appear to you.’

H 2.13 yaṭ tum ainim auuaēnōiš
 saocaiiaca kərənauuanətm
 baosauuasca varəxədrāšca varəžintəm
 uruuarō.straiiqsca kərənauuanətm
 āaṭ tum nišhiḍōiš
 gāḍāšca srāuuaiiō
 apasca vanʼhiš yazəmnō
 ātrəmca ahurahe mazdā
 narəmca ašauuanəm kuxšnūuqno

asnāatca jasəntəm dūrāatca

'Each time you saw another person
making blazes
practising *baosava*-s and *varəxədrā*-s
making a stew of plants,
then you used to sit down
reciting the *Gāthās*,
worshipping the good waters,
and the fire of Ahura Mazda,
gratifying the truthful man
coming from near and from far.'

This passage spells out what comprises the good deeds that produce a good *daēnā*:

- to sit down and recite the *Gāthās*
- to worship the good waters
- to worship the fire of Ahura Mazda
- to gratify the truthful man.

The actions enumerated here are performed when the *Yasna* ritual is celebrated with the *Gāthās* and *Yasna Haptaŋhāiti* at its centre, followed by the *Āb Zōhr*, the *Ātaš Nyāiš* and the *Dahma Āfriti*, as rightly noted by Kellens (1995: 28 fn.20). Such good behaviour markedly contrasts with that of the deceitful person who is described in H 2.13 as performing ritual practices which the truthful one has opposed and counteracted. Although unfortunately some of the words describing the rejected ritual practices have so far resisted full analysis⁹ and have therefore been left untranslated above, it is clear that the *daēnā* of *daiva*-worshippers neither recites the *Gāthās* nor worships the good waters and the fire of Ahura Mazda. Each performance of the prescribed rituals makes the *daēnā māzdaiiasni* dearer, more beautiful and more honoured, and places her on an even more prominent seat. As a result, the worship of Ahura Mazda is promoted:

H 2.14. (= Vyt 60)

āat məm friθqm haitīm friθōtarqm
srīrqm haitīm srīrōtarqm
bəṛəyδqm haitīm bəṛəyδōtarqm
frataire gātuuō aŋhanqm fratarō.taire gātuuō nišādaiiois
aēta humata aēta hūxta aēta huuaršta
āat məm narō paskāt yazənte
ahurəm mazdqm darəyō.yaštəmca hqm.parštəmca

'Then (you made) me, being dear, dearer,
being beautiful, more beautiful,
being honoured, more honoured,

sitting on a prominent seat, you used to make me sit on a more prominent seat by means of this good thought, this good speech, this good deed.

Thereupon men worshipped me,

(namely) Ahura Mazdā, as one who is worshipped for (a) long (time), and conversed with.'

The description of the bad *daēnā* should be expressed in analogous but negative terms. Unfortunately, however, all the manuscripts of the *Hādōxt Nask* and *Vištāsp Yašt* are abbreviated here. As a result, the description of the bad *daēnā* survives neither here nor elsewhere in the Avesta, although we would expect her to be pictured in parallel but negative terms to that of the beautiful good *daēnā*. In the Pahlavi text, the bad *daēnā* is painted as an ugly, stinking maiden (*kanīg* MX 2.167, IrBd 30.18; *carātīg* Dd 24.5), more horrid and filthy than any of the creatures (*xrafstar*) of Ahreman. In AWN 17.9 she is described in imagery that derives from the description of the demon of the corpse, the Avestan *druj nasu*.¹⁰

THE SOGDIAN *DAĒNĀS*

From the Achaemenid period until far into Islamic times the Zoroastrian religion and worldview, the *daēnā māzdaiiasni*, constituted a major intellectual force in the Near and Middle East and in Central Asia. Promoted by various imperial Iranian dynasties, Zoroastrian ideas and religious practices spread as far as Egypt and Asia Minor in the West and were carried to the East by Iranian, especially Sogdian, merchants along the Silk Road to Central Asia and China. Evidence from the Sogdian Ancient Letters, which date from the fourth century CE and mention 'a hundred freemen from Samarkand' (100 'ztpyδrk sm' rknδc) at Dunhuang,¹¹ indicates that in the first millennium CE there was a sizeable community of expatriate Sogdians at Dunhuang, a town on the southern Silk Road in the Gansu Province of north-west China, and that a form of Zoroastrianism was among the many religions practised there. By the tenth century, Sogdian communities at Dunhuang lived in a largely Turkish and Chinese, and predominantly Buddhist, environment. While being fully integrated, they preserved their distinctive traditions. This is borne out by indirect evidence for a Sogdian Mazdayasnian temple at Dunhuang. Unfortunately no archaeological traces survive, but Chinese sources mention regular supply of commodities to the temple, including repeated allocations of 30 sheets of drawing paper used for the production of devotional images that were carried in Mazdayasnian religious processions in Dunhuang.¹²

One of these images survives in the form of a line drawing in ink touched up with orange-red paint on a sheet of coarse paper measuring about 38 × 30 cm. It was found by Paul Pelliot in the early twentieth century in the 'manuscript cave' at Dunhuang, and is now kept at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (Fig. 1). The drawing was first published in 1978 and displayed in the exhibition *Sérinde*,



Figure 1 Line drawing in ink from Dunhuang, Pelliot chinois 4518, 24, Bibliothèque Nationale Paris. Photo: courtesy Frantz Grenet

Terre de Bouddha at the Galeries nationales du Grand Palais in Paris, 24 October 1995–19 February 1996.¹³ On stylistic grounds it has been dated to the ninth–tenth centuries. Grenet & Guangda (1996 [1998]: 181) note that the photograph published in 1978 still showed a string, which has now disappeared, on the upper edge, indicating that the image was intended to be hung on a stand for display.

The drawing shows two young women seated opposite each another. Both have a halo and are physically identical except that the left figure has two arms and the right has four. They differ markedly, however, in their physical behaviour and in their attributes. The eyes of the figure on the left are wide open, while those of the figure on the right are half-closed. They both wear bud-shaped headgear, but the left one is filled with a grid pattern and the one on the right has a scale pattern. There are four flowers in the hair of the left figure, and two in that of the right figure. The two figures also differ in the way they are dressed. Both women wear long folded skirts and tunic, but the dress of the left figure is held attached to the body by means of three cords, each tied with a knot in front, while the cloak of the right figure is loose and floating, closed at one point in the front at breast height with two long (leather?) strips ending in buckles hanging down from the point of closure, one of them between the legs, the other over the woman's left knee. Both

have a nimbus, or halo, which has been understood as representing supernatural power, whether good or bad.¹⁴ The differences can be illustrated as follows:

	left figure	right figure
arms	two	four
eyes	wide open	half-closed
hat of bud-like ornament	filled with grid pattern	filled with scales pattern
flowers in hair	four	two
long folded skirt and tunic	plus floating scarf	straight hanging mantle
belt	three soft strips each tied with a knot in front	one strip tied at chest level from which hang two untied belts with buckles at the end
seat	throne resting on a row of globular elements	wolf with multiple fangs and claws expresses ferocious nature
object in right hand	foliated cup	index finger carries what looks like a scorpion or a beetle
object held in left hand	rimmed dish with dog with tail raised	snake's tail
upper pair of arms	–	raised upper hands hold solar and lunar discs; sun is filled with the image of a three-footed phoenix-crow; moon filled with a cinnamon tree

Since the drawing is unaccompanied by any text, the interpretation can only be based on iconographic observations. Frantz Grenet and Zhang Guangda, who published the first detailed iconographic analysis and interpretation, argue that the drawing shows the two Zoroastrian visions, or *daēnās*, the good on the left and the bad one on the right. They support their view with reference to the respective positive and negative attributes of the two figures. These include the miniature dog on the plate in the left hand of the good *daēnā*, an animal which the Zoroastrian tradition holds in highest esteem and which is associated with the *Daēnā* when she appears to the soul after death. Furthermore, they point out that the three-fold soft belt tied around her waist looks like what is known

as the *kusti*, the protective belt of the Zoroastrians. The figure on the right, by contrast, obviously accumulates attributes which the Zoroastrian religion regards as negative. These include the wolf on which she sits, the snake in her left hand, and the creature on the finger of her right hand, the identity of which is not quite clear. It could be a beetle or a scorpion or perhaps a crayfish. Nevertheless, clearly these are animals which the Zoroastrian religion categorizes as obnoxious, or *xrafstar*.

A complication, however, arises from the fact that her upper two arms holding the sun and the moon discs are also an iconographic feature typical of the goddess Nana, a Mesopotamian deity which ascended to become one of the chief goddesses of the Sogdians in their homeland.¹⁵ Was Nana rejected and demonized by the expatriate Sogdians of Dunhuang, far away from their homeland, as Grenet and Zhang Guanda surmise?¹⁶ By contrast, Azarpay argues that, rather than the bad *daēnā*, the figure on the right is in fact the goddess Nana. She suggests that the attributes of wolf, snake and scorpion, 'are rendered harmless and compliant in Nana's hands' and interprets what looks like a belt hanging down from her left knee, as the tamed wolf's leash. In her view, the banner shows two Sogdian goddesses, the Zoroastrian Daēnā on the left and Nana on the right. It would have been used in religious processions at Dunhuang to parade the two goddesses.¹⁷ Grenet's interpretation of the woman on the right as the bad *daēnā* is also contested by Russell-Smith (2003: 410–13 and 2005: 99–104), who points out that the figure shares attributes, including the wolf, with images of goddesses who pairwise flank the entrance of Buddhist caves at Bezeklik near Turfan. One of them (Fig. 2) wears a dress that is similar to that of the figure on the right in the Dunhuang drawing, although her belt is different and does not seem to have the leather part. Russell-Smith (2003: 412 and 2005: 101) argues that her hair is arranged in the Uygur style. She has four arms, with the upper two probably holding up the sun and the moon. There is a dog or a wolf-like animal behind her similar to the one in the Dunhuang drawing. A snake appears on the right in a cloud. The deity's name is inscribed in a cartouche in Chinese characters, but unfortunately the characters are rendered in an illegible way.

Not being an art historian, I am in no position to evaluate fully the iconographic evidence and arguments put forward for each of the conflicting interpretations of the two figures in the Dunhuang drawing. From the point of view of the Zoroastrian texts, each of them has its problems. To associate Nana, who elsewhere rides on a lion rather than on a wolf, with the creatures which the Zoroastrian religion deeply and vehemently abhors, seems plausible only if the Sogdian Zoroastrians of Dunhuang rejected Nana as a *daiva*, together with the daivic creatures around her with which the drawing shows her in direct physical contact. Moreover, her physiognomy in the drawing seems to have little in common with the way the bad *daēnā* is described in the Zoroastrian texts, which picture her as a 'frightful, filthy and harmful maiden' (see above with endnote 10).



Figure 2 Bezeklik, Cave 18. Line drawing of the wall painting of one of two female figures flanking the entrance of the cave. Source: A. Grünwedel p. 255 fig 531.



Figure 3 Eleven-headed Guanyin standing in a landscape surrounded by selected illustrations and quotations from the Lotus Sutra, hanging scroll; ink and colour on silk. Reportedly retrieved from Dunhuang, dated 985 CE. Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop, 1943.57.14, © President and Fellows of Harvard College

While the headdress and hairstyle of the two figures have been compared to Uyghur examples,¹⁸ four- and six-armed figures have their origins in Indian Hindu iconography and are very common along the Silk Road with its great cultural diversity. Russell-Smith (2003: 411) emphasizes that all other figures from Dunhuang holding up the sun and the moon are well known from Chinese iconography, where they usually represent Avalokitasvara (Avalokiteśvara) of whom there are numerous representations,¹⁹ such as the one on a tenth-century hanging scroll from Dunhuang (Fig. 3). The painting shows the Chinese version of Avalokitasvara, Guanyin, who mostly represents the bodhisattva as a saviour of human beings from dangers of all kinds, or as a guide of souls towards the Pure Land of Amitābha. The upper arms, and the discs of the sun and moon filled with a phoenix and cinnamon tree which they hold, are stylistically very similar to those of the figure on the right in the Sogdian drawing.

While Chinese, Indian and Uyghur artistic influences are visible in the Dunhuang drawing, and pairing of deities is common in the Buddhist art of China and in the arts of Eastern Central Asia,²⁰ Grenet (2010) has shown, with special reference to Hindu iconography, the extent to which non-Iranian features are employed in the art of the Sogdians in order to express Zoroastrian ideas. Several features in the Dunhuang drawing which Grenet and Zhang Guangda identify as Zoroastrian agree with the narratives of the Avestan and Pahlavi texts. The belts of the two figures are a case in point. The two belts with buckles of the figure on the right seem to be made of leather and hang down loose, one of them over her left knee. While depictions of females wearing belts are rare in early Iranian art,²¹ in the Zoroastrian texts, wearing a belt made of leather is described as an attribute of the demons, or *dēws* (ZWY 7.11).²² The figure on the left, by contrast, wears soft triple belts tied around her waist. Although, as Russell-Smith and Azarpay suggest, the iconography of the belts and details of the women's costumes have parallels in Uyghur imagery,²³ in the context of the Dunhuang drawing Grenet's interpretation of the belt as the *kusti* seems plausible. That Zoroastrians of Central Asia and adjoining areas wore the *kusti* emerges, for example, from the image of the Daēnā on a seal in the collection of Aman Ur Rahman (Fig. 4) and from the front wall of a 5–10 century CE ossuary from the necropolis at Krasnorechensk in Kyrgyzstan (Fig. 5).²⁴ The seal represents a woman accompanied by two dogs as she meets two male figures of unequal size, the smaller one holding on to the arm of the taller one. She is wearing a full-length dress tied at the waist with a soft belt and is offering a jar to the male figures. The ossuary shows two priests attending to the ritual fire. In addition to the *kusti*, the priests also wear mouth sheets and the right figure carries a bowl in his left hand which may be compared with the bowl which in the Dunhuang drawing the woman on the left carries in her right hand.

The *kusti* is worn by Zoroastrians to the present day as a reminder to produce good thoughts, good words and, especially, good deeds. Zoroastrians untie and retie the *kusti* while prayerfully reciting verses from the *Gāthās* and



Figure 4 Seal from Gandhāra showing the Daēnā accompanied by two dogs. Measures: 27 × 27 × 24 mm. No. 05.01.11 of the collection of Aman Ur Rahman. Photo: courtesy Aman Ur Rahman



Figure 5 Front of an ossuary from the necropolis at Krasnorechensk, showing two priests attending to the sacrificial fire and wearing *kustis* tied around their waists three times. Photo: courtesy Frantz Grenet

other Avestan texts. It also symbolizes the protection the *daēnā māzdaiiasni* affords against the forces of evil and is even identified with it, as in the following passage from Y 9.26:

Y 9.26 [...] *aiβiiāṇhanəm*
stəhrpaēsaṇhəm mainiiutāštəm
vaṇ'hīm daēnəm māzdaiiasnīm

[...] the girdle
 bedecked with stars, fashioned by the spirit,
 the good, Mazdā-worshipping Belief.

The way in which the eyes of the two figures are depicted have been said to represent two different iconographic styles which are also found elsewhere.²⁵ From the point of view of the Zoroastrian texts, however, it is significant that the artist has chosen to represent the Mazdayasnian Daēnā with eyes wide open, and those of the Daēnā of the *Daēvayasnās* half-closed. Grenet and Zhang Guangda interpret the wide open eyes of the left figure with reference to the meaning of the word *daēnā* as 'vision', and the half-closed eyes of the figure on the right as expressing contempt, which Great Bundahišn 30.18 attributes to the bad *daēnā*.²⁶ One may even go further and interpret this feature in the light of the *Gāthās* for, from the *Gāthās* onwards, the Zoroastrian tradition places great emphasis on considering 'with a clear mind' the choices which each person has to make:

Y 30.2 *sraotā gēuš.āiš vahištā auuaēnatā sūcā manarḥā*
āuuarənaṅ viciθahiiā narēm narēm x'axiiāi tanuiiē

Listen with your ears to the best things, look with a clear mind
 at the choices of decision, man for man for himself!

If interpreted in the light of this passage, the wide open eyes could be said to express the importance, instilled into Zoroastrians up to the present day, of looking at the possible choices with a clear mind, and of being aware that each person is responsible for, and has to bear the consequences of, the decisions they make. By contrast, the half-closed eyes of the woman on the right might be seen in the light of another Gathic verse Y 30.6, according to which those who chose the destructive force did not distinguish clearly between the two choices and chose wrongly because they were deceived:

Y 30.6 *aiiā nōiṭ ərəš višiiātā daēuuācinā hiiat iš ā.dəbaomā*
pərəsmanəṅg upā.jasaṭ hiiat vərənātā acištəm manō
aṭ aēšəməm hēnduuārəntā yā bənaiiən ahūm marətānō

Between these two (forces), any (false) gods (*daēvas*) failed to discriminate rightly,
 because Deception

came over them as they were deliberating with one another when they chose the worst thought.

Thereupon they rushed into violence, by which they sickened the existence of the mortal.

Just as the two forces, the creative and the destructive, are presented as ‘twins’ in an earlier stanza of the same hymn, *Yasna* 30.3, so also the two *Daēnās* here appear to be mirror-images of one another. However, just like the two antagonistic forces, in reality they are fundamentally different, incompatible with one another and mutually exclusive. The fact that the *Daēnās* are shown as a pair is explainable within the framework of Zoroastrian dualism.

Looking at the Sogdian drawing from an Avestan point of view, the feature of four arms could be an iconographic marker which the Dunhuang Zoroastrians employed to represent a non-Avestan deity of a religion of Indian origin where *devá-* means god. The figure on the right would then represent what the Avesta calls the *daēnā daēuuaiiasnanqm*, ‘the Belief of those who worship *daēvas*’, in the form of a four-armed goddess, a *devī*. The figure on the left, by contrast, personifies the *daēnā māzdaiiasni*, ‘the Belief of a person who worships *Mazdā*’ and represents the *daēnā* as the *yazata* to whom the 24th day of the Zoroastrian month is dedicated. The *daēnā*-drawing from Dunhuang could be the only surviving specimen of presumably 30 drawings of the Zoroastrian calendar deities on sheets of paper of which the delivery in batches of 30 is recorded in the local government registers.²⁷ More evidence for images of Zoroastrian calendar deities has recently been found in the Akchakhan-kala hypostyle hall (c. 150 BCE to early first century CE) in Khorezm in the form of a colossal figure that has been tentatively identified as *Srōš*.²⁸ In our drawing, the *daēnā māzdaiiasni* is seated on a throne, having been put in a prominent place by the Zoroastrians of Dunhuang by means of their worship of Ahura *Mazdā* in the prescribed way.

NOTES

1. Archibald Henry Sayce, *The Principles of Comparative Philology* (London, 1874), pp. 370, 342.
2. In New Persian a follower of the religion is a *behdin*, ‘one of the good religion’, or rather ‘one of the better religion’ which is how the Zoroastrians referred to themselves after the Muslim conquest of Iran. In Middle Persian they are called *mazdesn*, which is based on Avestan *mazda-iiasna*- ‘one who worships *Mazdā*’.
3. On the meaning of *daēnā*- see Almut Hintze, *A Zoroastrian Liturgy: The Worship in Seven Chapters (Yasna 35–41)* (Wiesbaden, 2007), pp. 58–60. The form *māzdaiiasni* is based on the adjective *mazda-iiasna*-; see Almut Hintze, *Change and Continuity in the Zoroastrian Tradition* (London, 2013), p. 28 with fn. 18 for further details.
4. Almut Hintze, ‘Disseminating the Mazdayasnian religion: An edition of the Avestan *Hērbedestān* chapter 5’, in Werner Sundermann, Almut Hintze and François de

- Blois (eds), *Exegisti monumenta. Festschrift in Honour of Nicholas Sims-Williams* (Wiesbaden, 2009), pp. 171–90.
5. Werner Sundermann, 'Die Jungfrau der Guten Taten', in Philippe Gignoux (ed.), *Recurrent Patterns in Iranian religions: From Mazdaism to Sufism* (Paris, 1992), pp. 159–74; Christiane Reck, '84000 Mädchen in einem manichäischen Text aus Zentralasien', in P. Kieffer-Pülz and J.-U. Hartmann (eds), *Bauddhavidyāsudhākaraḥ: Studies in Honour of Heinz Bechert on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday* (Swisstal-Odendorf, 1997), pp. 543–50; Christiane Reck, 'Die Beschreibung der Daēnā in einem soghdischen Manichäischen Text', in C. G. Cereti, M. Maggi and E. Provasi (eds), *Religious Themes and Texts of pre-Islamic Iran and Central Asia* (Wiesbaden, 2003) pp. 323–38.
 6. Gherardo Gnoli, 'The Sassanian iconography of the Den', *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* (Iranian Studies in Honor of A. D. H. Bivar) vii (1993), pp. 79–85; Reck, 'Beschreibung der daēnā', pp. 333f.; Michael Shenkar, *Intangible Spirits and Graven Images: The Iconography of Deities in the Pre-Islamic Iranian World* (Leiden and Boston, 2014), pp. 93–5; Michael Shenkar, 'Images of daēnā and Mithra on two seals from the Indo-Iranian borderlands', *Studia Iranica* xlv (2015), pp. 99–109.
 7. Andrea Piras, *Hādōxt Nask 2. Il racconto zoroastriano della sorte dell' anima. Edizione critica del testo avestico e pahlavi, traduzione e commento* (Rome, 2000), p. 118; Yuhān S. D. Vevaina, 'Relentless allusion: Intertextuality and the reading of Zoroastrian interpretive literature', in C. Bakhos and M. R. Shayegan (eds), *The Talmud in Its Iranian Context* (Tübingen, 2000), pp. 220f. with fn. 44, where the Pahlavi version of the passage is quoted and discussed.
 8. The manuscripts of the *Hādōxt Nask* transmit the form *frārēnta*, while those of the *Vištāsp Yašt* have the reading *frārēnti*. The latter reading is to be preferred; see Almut Hintze, 'The Advance of the daēnā: The Vištāsp Yašt and an obscure word in the Hādōxt Nask', in E. Morano, E. Provasi & A. V. Rossi (eds), *Philologia iranica selecta, in memory of Professor Gherardo Gnoli* (Napoli, forthcoming).
 9. For a discussion of the words in question, see Jean Kellens, 'L'âme entre le cadavre et le paradis', *Journal Asiatique* cclxxxiii (1995), pp. 27f. fn. 19.
 10. Frantz Grenet and Zhang Guangda, 'The last refuge of the Sogdian religion: Dunhuang in the ninth and tenth centuries', *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* (Studies in Honor of Vladimir Livshits) x (1996 [1998]), p. 178 rightly point out that even the bad Dēn is presented as a maiden and argue that her chief physical feature is a frightful appearance. For descriptions of the bad daēnā in the Pahlavi texts PRDd 23.23 and Dd 24.5, see Alan V. Williams, *The Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, vol. 2 (Copenhagen, 1990), p. 173 with references, and M. Jaafari-Dehaghi, 'Dādestān ī Dēnīg, Part 1: Transcription, translation and commentary', *Studia Iranica* xx (1998), pp. 84–5, 200–1 respectively.
 11. Walter B. Henning, 'The date of the Sogdian Ancient Letters', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* xii (London, 1948), p. 606 fn. 9. For the relevant passage in AL 2.19–20 see Nicholas Sims-Williams, 'The Sogdian Ancient Letter II', in M. G. Schmidt and W. Bisang (eds), *Philologica et Linguistica. Historia, Pluralitas, Universitas. Festschrift für Helmut Humbach zum 80. Geburtstag am 4. Dezember 2001* (Trier, 2001), pp. 269–70.
 12. Grenet and Zhang Guangda: 'The last refuge', pp. 180–2; Guitty Azarpay, 'Imagery of the Sogdian dēn', in Rika Gyselen and Christelle Jullien (eds), "Maitre pour

- l'éternité": Florilège offert à Philippe Gignoux pour son 80e anniversaire', *Studia Iranica* xliii (2011), p. 74 with fn. 81 for references.
13. For references, see Lilla Russell-Smith, 'Wives and patrons: Uyghur political and artistic influence in tenth-century Dunhuang', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* lvi (2003), p. 410 with fn. 18.
 14. Grenet and Guangda: 'The last refuge', pp. 179, 184 notes 19–20.
 15. Azarpay, 'Imagery of the Sogdian *dēn*', p. 58 with fn. 17 for references.
 16. Grenet and Zhang Guanda, 'The last refuge', p. 179.
 17. Azarpay, 'Imagery of the Sogdian *dēn*', pp. 69–71.
 18. See Russell-Smith, 'Wives and patrons', p. 411, and Lilla Russell-Smith, *Uyghur Patronage at Dunhuang: Regional Art Centres on the Northern Silk Road in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (Inner Asian Library Series 14) (Leiden and Boston, 2005), pp. 100, 103, who points out that this is the only example of Uyghur headdress on a portable piece of art from Dunhuang and concludes that the iconography of the drawing indicates close links between Bezeklik and Dunhuang.
 19. S. L. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain* (New York and Tokyo, 1985), pp. 264–5; Chün-fang Yü, Kuan-Yin, *The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara* (New York, 2001); Grenet and Zhang Guangda, 'The last refuge', p. 185 n. 26.
 20. Azarpay, 'Imagery of the Sogdian *dēn*', pp. 71f.
 21. Peter Calmeyer, 'Belts', in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 4, fasc. 2 (1989), pp. 130–6.
 22. Grenet and Zhang Guanda, 'The last refuge', p. 179.
 23. Russell-Smith, 'Wives and patrons', and *Uyghur Patronage*, pp. 102f.; Azarpay, 'Imagery of the Sogdian *dēn*', p. 70.
 24. Shenkar, 'Images of *daēnā*', pp. 100–1 with figs 1–3; G. A. Pugachenkova, 'The Form and Style of Sogdian Ossuaries', *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* (Studies in Honor of Vladimir Livshits) x (1998), pp. 239–41.
 25. Azarpay, 'Imagery of the Sogdian *dēn*', p. 69.
 26. Grenet and Zhang Guangda, 'The last refuge', p. 178 f.
 27. See Grenet and Zhang Guangda, 'The last refuge', pp. 181–2, who link the repeated mention of deliveries of 30 sheets of paper with the 30 Zoroastrian calendar deities comprising the 27 deities individually worshipped on each day of the Zoroastrian calendars plus the three additional ones of Hōm, Dahman Āfrin and Burz.
 28. Betts et al., 'The Akchakhan-kala Wall paintings: New perspectives on kingship and religion in ancient Chorasmia', *Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology* vii (forthcoming). I am grateful to Frantz Grenet for drawing my attention to this forthcoming publication.

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CONTINUITY, CONTROVERSY AND CHANGE

A Study of the Ritual Practice of the Bhagaria Priests of Navsari

Dastur Firoze M. Kotwal

The existence of a large community of Parsi priests in India, for more than a thousand years, has ensured the integrity and continuity of ritual practices as nowhere else. This pious transmission is enabled by three factors. The first is the careful process by which sons from priestly families were trained by their fathers and elders, long before priestly *madressas* were founded in India. Second, in the case of the Navsari Bhagaria priests, as early as the thirteenth century the institution of the Vadi Dar i Mihr, where young priests received their initiation and rigorous training, ensured that the corpus of ritual practice was resolutely handed down from generation to generation. Third, the sustenance of ritual practice in India owes much to the letters collectively known as the *Persian Rivāyats*, which were written from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries by the High Priests of Turkabad, Sharifabad, Khorasan, Yazd, Kerman and Sistan. These letters were written in reply to queries sent by their co-religionists in India, on matters of ritual and other related issues. The existence of these letters that continue to be of interest to scholars and priests even today, has afforded a reference point for matters concerning ritual practice. Notwithstanding the above, it is inevitable that despite the continuity of practice, some subtle elements of change have occurred over time in Zoroastrian ritual practice. It is often noted in histories of the Zoroastrian religion that ritual practice has historically maintained a *silsila* or tradition of ritual fidelity, such that many rituals are still practised today in much the same way in which they were centuries ago. Nevertheless, a few rituals attested in documents of previous centuries have been lost, or are maintained by only small groups of priests. The focus of this chapter is to trace some of the minor changes in Zoroastrian ritual practice, effected by priests over a period of time during their stay in India.

After their arrival in India, Parsi priests, as members of what is called in Gujarati the Khorāsāni Maṇḍali ‘the Congregation of Khorāsān’, have maintained

the ancient ritual practices according to the tradition followed by their ancestors in Khorasan. Yet in the ensuing centuries, minor differences in practice have emerged between different *panthaks* and, in modern times, controversies regarding the correct performance of such ritual actions have raged among the Parsi priestly community. This phenomenon is illustrated in this essay by examining four examples of divergence in ritual practices, with supporting evidence from Avestan and Pahlavi texts, *Persian Rivāyats*, Gujarati documents pertaining to the Navsari Bhagarsāth priestly *anjuman* and my own observations on contemporary practice. These changes have been observed first in the ritual recitation of the letters of the Avestan alphabet at the beginning of the *Navjote* ceremony, as is maintained by the Sanjana *panthak* of Udvađa; second, the elements which have changed in the ritualized action of bowing to the sun in the performance of the *Xwaršēd Niyāyišn*; thirdly the origins of a priestly controversy concerning the correct performance of the *Āfrīnagān ī Frištaḡ* (*Firishta*) and the *Āfrīnagān ī Rōzgār*; and fourthly this essay will draw on the history of the ritual offering of fat of a sacrificial animal to the sacred fire (*Ātaxš-Zōhr*), and the controversy which emerged in the early nineteenth century between the Bhagarīa priests of Navsari and the Bombay Parsi Panchayat regarding its practice.

RITUAL RECITATION OF THE AVESTAN ALPHABET

It is common practice for Parsi children to have their *Navjote* ceremonies performed at the age of seven years. After undergoing a ritual bath (*nāhn*) and reciting the *Patēt*, the *Dīnnō Kalmō*, and the *Yaθā Ahū Vairiīō* prayer, the child recites the *Nērang ī kustīg* together with the priest who, when initiating the child, ties the *kusti* around his or her waist for the first time. Yet if the ceremony is performed in the village of Udvađa, within the *panthak* of the Sanjānā priests, the *Navjote* ceremony is preceded by the recitation of the Avestan alphabet, a practice not followed by other priestly groups. Before reciting the *Dīnnō Kalmō* the child is made to recite the following lines, transcribed from a Sanjana ritual manual:

*ba-nām-i yazad bakhshāyande dādgar-e dādār. pa-nām-e yazdān. gagagaa ghauamgha
aghamuamgha khaokhaie karaele jajajaaie sašasaaie jasanāmma anānayaema
dadadaa thathathaa vababaa fafafaamamamaa vakhavakha aie jacacae āo uaao iyae
amāmaiema ivoe amghumaiyaema. Yaθā Ahū Vairiīō 1 Aṣəm Vohū 1.*

This short recitation contains all of the letters of the Avestan alphabet arranged in a pseudo-phonetic pattern. The constant repetition is said to help the child to pronounce the Avestan words correctly. According to Dastur Khurshed Kaikobad Dastoor of Udvađa, the recitation of this practice is performed by all boys and girls who have their *Navjotes* performed in Udvađa by the Sanjana

priests. For those children who do not belong to the Sanjānā *panthak* and who have not memorized the alphabet, the priest performing the ceremony will recite it on behalf of the child.

While the practice may at first seem a curiosity, in former times the ritual recitation of the Avestan alphabet was apparently a custom even outside the Sanjānā *panthak*. For example, the *Khordeh Avesta* in the Meherjirana Library,¹ which is an accurate copy of the manuscript of Hormazdyār Frāmarz, begins with what is referred to as the *harf-hā-ye zand*, 'the letters of the *Zand*', in which an identical phonetic text is found.² Likewise, in an autograph copy of Dārāb Hormazdyār's *Rivāyat*, housed in the Bombay University Library³ copied in AY 1048/1678 CE, reproduced as appendix text 1.2, in a section commencing with the phrase *harf-hā-ye avestā zand be ravesh-e hendustān minevisam* 'I will write the letters of the *Zend-Avesta* in the manner of India':

*panqmi. yazdān *gagaya* ŋaŋa *aŋaŋa
xva(o)xa* kaharala *zažaja* šaša ša *
zasana* anan(a)iaa *daḍaḍa *ḍata*
waba *fapa *mahma* vaxa xva *yāiaa *
zača *a* uuō *yaē *qm.ūm.īm *
əioie *ŋaūma.ima*
Yaḍā. ahū. vairiio. aḍā. ratuš. ašāt.
čīt. hačā. vaŋhəuš. dazdā. mananḥō.
šiiioḍ ənanqm. aŋhəuš. mazdāi. xšaθrəm.cā
ahurāi. āim. darəyobiiō. daḍ(a)ḥ. vāstārəm *
Ašəm. vōhū. vahištəm. asti. uštā. asti.
uštā. ahmāi. hiiat. ašāi. vahiš tāi. ašəm*⁴*

From a comparison of the present text as recited by the Sanjana priests with the text of Darab Hormazdyār and also that of Hormazdyār Framarz written in AY 1009 (1639 CE) it is clear that the text adhered to by the Sanjana priests has become corrupted with the passage of time. The ms. E1 (1601 CE) written by Shapur Hoshang Asa gives the Avestan alphabet on fol. 2v–3r.⁵ This tallies well with the text of Dārāb Hormazdyār and Hormazdyār Framarz, but not with the text recited at present by the Sanjana priests.⁶ Although there is no indication in either manuscript that the text is to be used during the *Navjote* ceremony, the introductory formulas and the prayers that follow the alphabet indicate that the text was meant to be recited orally. One can therefore surmise that the practice of reciting the alphabet was intended as an educational exercise whereby a child would acquire a rudimentary literacy in the Avestan script. Indeed, ritual recitation of the Avestan alphabet seems to have been a known custom in recent times. In 1867 CE, Dastur Hoshangji Jamaspji writes that:

The Parsi priests in India attach the character of sacredness to the Avestan alphabet. Many pious Mobeds repeat it when reciting their daily prayers, just as pious Brāhmins repeat the first Sūtra of Pānini when performing the Brahmayajna.⁷

Thus we have, preserved in the Sanjānā *navjot* ceremony, what is perhaps a ritualized vestige of religious education, which has otherwise been lost in contemporary practice.

PERFORMING HOMAGE TO THE SUN IN THE *XWARŠĒD* *NIYĀYIŠN*

In certain cases, it is possible to determine when a particular ritual practice fell out of use. For instance, in the performance of the *Xwaršēd* and the *Mihr Niyāyišns*, it used to be the practice that after the recitation of Ny 1.5, the celebrant would recite a passage specific to the watch of the day (*gāh*) and then recite the *Aṣəm Vohū* three times, each time bowing deeply in reverence toward the sun before continuing with the recitation. This practice was already known in the ninth century CE, and it is referred to in the *Dēnkard*.⁸ With effect to ritual salutations in Ny 1.5, it is to be noted that it relates only to the three daylight watches when three *Aṣəm Vohū* are recited in Ny 1.5, after the relevant sentence in each of the three *Gāhs*: in the *Hāwan Gāh*, ‘*vohu uxšiiā* [...]’ is recited; in the *Rapithwin Gāh* or second *Hāwan*, ‘*imā raocā* [...]’ is recited; and in *Uzērīn Gāh*, ‘*yahmi spəntā θwā* [...]’ is recited. This ritual salutation may be compared to the *sūrya namaskār* ‘homage to the sun’ of the Hindus.

When he, knowingly and thoughtfully, in (his) action (reaches) the end of the (holy) utterance, he should say *Aṣəm Vohū* (= *ahlāyih stāyīšnih*) three times, and at the end of each (utterance), it is the custom that he should bow deeply.

This ritual action is also referred to in several important manuscripts of the *Khordeh Avesta*, notably ms. T12 of the Meherjirana Library, an old and important manuscript comprising texts of the *Khordeh Avesta*, the *Sī-Rōzag*, and *Višperad* written by Dastur Āsdīn Kākā in AY 921 / 1551 CE. The manuscript includes ritual directions written in Pahlavi. Following the text of Ny 1.5, the text adds:

(Recite) *Aṣəm Vohu* 3. With each recitation, one should take a step, and with each, one should bow deeply.

In his edition of the Pahlavi *Khordeh Avesta*, Dhabhar notes also that later manuscripts of the *Khordeh Avesta*, U1, U3, D add to this instruction the phrase: ‘and with each *Aṣəm Vohū*, one should lower one’s head.’ Here the act of bowing deeply before the sun as a gesture of reverence has been modified to lowering one’s head. That there was controversy about how the ritual action was to be performed is already evident from the *Rivāyat of Narīmān Hūshang*, sent to the priests of Gujarat from the *dasturs* of Turkābād and Sharīfābād in

Iran in the year AY 847 / 1478 CE.⁹ Apparently there had been a question as to whether one should fully prostrate oneself by placing one's head to the ground while reciting the *Aṣəm Vohū* or whether one should simply bow. The Iranian priests write:

During the *Khurshīd Niyāyiš*, there is no need to place one's head on the ground. Full bowing (*namāz*), salutation (*salām*), and veneration (*ikrām*) are necessary and appropriate.

From these texts, the practice of lowering one's head and bowing entered into early printed texts of the *Khordeh Avesta* during the nineteenth century. The *Shahanshāhi Tamām Khordeh Avesta* written by Behdin Dādābhāi Kāvasji, published in 1874, contains the following instruction after Ny 1.5:

While reciting each *Aṣəm Vohū*, one should lower one's head and bow. (*namāj*)

However, it is worth noting that the practice of bowing one's head during the *Xwaršēd Niyāyišn* seems to have been entirely absent from Qadimi ritual practice in the early nineteenth century. The instruction is not to be found in the Qadimi *Khordeh Avesta* of the Daftar Āshkārā Press of AY 1213 / 1843 CE. Even Behdin Dādābhāi Kāvasji, who had printed the ritual instruction in his *Shahanshāhi Khordeh Avesta*, omitted it from his Qadimi *Tamām Khordeh Avesta*, published in the same year, 1874. The *Khordeh Avestas*, which were printed later, even those intended for use by the Shahanshāhis, began to omit the practice. Some innovated even further. Frāmroz Sorābji Chinivālā's *Khordeh Avesta* omits the ritual gesture entirely.¹⁰ As a result, the ritualized bowing to the sun during the recitation of the *Niyāyišn* has been lost in contemporary practice.

THE RECITATION OF THE *KARDA* OF *YĀ VĪSĀAA* DURING THE *ĀFRĪNAGĀN*

Throughout Zoroastrian history, matters of ritual practice have repeatedly been the subject of controversies between priests. This phenomenon was already attested in 881 CE when Manuščihr, the High Priest of Pars and Kerman, wrote to Zādspram, who attempted to simplify the *barašnum* ritual ablutions, from the city of Sirgān.¹¹ Letters composed in Pahlavi by Zādspram's brother, Manuščihr, berate Zādspram for this ritual innovation and enjoin that the ancient ritual practices should be re-established. Controversies over ritual matters are found throughout the whole history of Zoroastrian religious literature, but became particularly widespread in the nineteenth century, when certain priests of Bombay sought to establish their priestly independence from the ecclesiastical stronghold of the Bhagaria *panthak*, of Navsari. One such instance

occurred when a controversy broke out between two Shahanshahi priests of Bombay, Dastur Peshotan Behramji Sanjana, a Bhagaria priest of the Wadiaji Ātash Bahrām and Jamaspji Minocherji Jamaspasana, the future *dastur* of the Anjuman Ātash Bahrām. The two families had been bitter rivals for decades, but in 1866 CE, when Dastur Peshotan republished Dastur Edalji Dorabji Sanjānā's treatise, entitled the *Farmān-e Dīn* 'The Command of the Religion' (originally published in 1847), on the subject of correct ritual performance during the five *Gāthā* days, Jamaspji was angered by this. Publishing his own treatise, entitled the *Radi-e Farmān-e Dīn* 'The Refutation of the Command of the Religion', Jamaspji argued that what Sanjana had written was incorrect. He further argued that, contrary to the practice as followed by the Sanjanas of the Wadiaji Ātash Bahrām, one should in fact recite the *karda* of *tā ahmī nmāne* in the *Āfrīnagān* ceremony performed during the Frawardīgān days. The disputation about the correct performance of the *Āfrīnagān* ceremony raged for some time and continues to this day, with the Bhagaria priests of Navsari continuing the ancient practice of reciting the *karda* of *yā vīsāda* during the *Āfrīnagān ī Frištag* (*Firishta*) and *Rōzgār* ceremonies, while some Bombay priests continue to follow Jamaspasana in reciting the *karda* of *tā ahmī nmāne* instead.

The *karda* of *yā vīsāda* as recited in the *Āfrīnagān* of *Frištag* (*Firishta*) is the *karda* 13 of *Yašt* 13.49–52. This is the whole *karda* of *yā vīsāda* as recited in the *Āfrīnagāns* of all divinities. However, only in the *Āfrīnagān* of *Ardā Fravash*, two more passages namely paragraphs 156 and 157 of *Yašt* 13 are added to the original *karda* of *yā vīsāda*. Some priests consider the recital of the *karda* of *yā vīsāda* as found in the *Āfrīnagān* of *Ardā Fravash* as the full *karda* of *yā vīsāda* and they recite it along with the two additional paragraphs in all the *kardas* of the divinities. But this is not correct. The *karda* of *yā vīsāda* is only *Yašt* 13, *karda* 13 and the additional passages which are attached should not be recited, except when reciting the *karda* of the *Āfrīnagān* of *Ardā Fravash*.

In the miscellaneous Gujarati ms. F97, written by Dastur Eruchji Meherjirana in AY 1236 (1867 CE) and described by Dhabhar,¹² among other matters, Dastur Eruchji transcribes a text on the recital of the *yā vīsāda* formula in the *Gāthā Āfrīnagān* from a very old manuscript (dated AY 721 / 1351 CE, as we shall see below) without a colophon, belonging to Ervad Maneckji Rustomji Unvalla of Surat. In the old ms. the *Āfrīnagān*, which is recited during the five *Gāthā* days, is given on p. 37. In this *Āfrīnagān* the *karda* of *yā vīsāda* is mentioned up to the words *aša nāsa nēmanha* (end of Yt 13.52), that is the whole *karda* 13 of the *Fravardin Yašt*. Fortunately this old ms. also contains the Pazand *Āshirvād* on p. 45 wherein the date of the old manuscript is given in Pazand:

'Sāl. awar. haf(t)saṭ. bist. yak. aṣ. šahan. šāh. īziṭ. žarṭ. šahariiār'.

This indicates that the manuscript was written in AY 721 / 1351 CE and F97 provides a copy of a text from one of the oldest among the Zoroastrian manuscripts which is, however, unfortunately lost. In his complete edition

of the Avestan texts, N. L. Westergaard mentions the *karda* of *yâ visâda* (Yt. 13.49–52) as the appropriate one for the *Āfrīnagān* of *Gāthās*,¹³ as did K. F. Geldner, in his edition.¹⁴

The ms. F7 was written by Dastur Eruchji Meherjirana in AY 1239 / 1870 CE and is an exact copy of the valuable ms. written by Dastur Hormazdyār Framarz in AY 1009 / 1639 CE (= Samvat 1696). This ms. was brought to Navsari by Seth Behramji Nusservanji Seervai and shown to Dastur Eruchji, at the time of the controversy regarding the *karda* of *yâ visâda* to be recited in the *Āfrīnagān* of *Firishtas*. This manuscript was housed in the personal library of Dastur Kaikhushru Dadabhoy of Surat; Behramji Seervai brought it from Kaikhushru's son Dastur Noshirwanji Kaikhushru and Eruchji copied it exactly as it was written. In his colophon, Dastur Eruchji Meherjirana writes:

In the original ms. where the scribe has blotted what is written mistakenly, I have also done the same thing. I have written his mistake and blotted it as he has done in the ms. After completing the ms. I have asked Ervad Khurshedji Minocherji Kateli, Ervad Temulji Dinshawji Anklesaria, Ervad Minocherji Shapoorji Vatcha, Ervad Edulji Kersaspji Antia, Ervad Cawasji Rustomji Meherjirana and Ervad Edulji Maneckji Daftari to compare my copy with the original one. They have examined it thoroughly well and signed it with Persian, Pahlavi and Avestan words.

Interestingly, the question of which *karda* should be recited in the *Āfrīnagān* was not a new one. Already in the Avestan-Pahlavi *Nērangestān*, it is stated that the *karda* of *yâ visâda* should be recited during all ten days of the *Frawardigān*.

TRANSLATION OF THE *KARDA* OF *YÂ VĪSĀDA* (*YĀŠT* 13.49–52)

13.49 We revere the good, strong/powerful and beneficent Fravašis of the righteous who, at the time of *Hamaspəθmaedəm* (*Gāhāmbār*) come to the dwellings (of Mazdā-worshippers) and move about for ten nights (including during the day time) for seeking help (as mentioned below).

13.50 Who will praise us? Who will venerate us? Who will sing our glory? Who will befriend us? Who will welcome us with the hand containing cow-product, clothing and with a prayer causing to reach righteousness? Whose name amongst us will be remembered here? Whose soul amongst you will revere us? To whom of us will that gift be given which shall be an inexhaustible food forever and up to eternity?

13.51 Again the person who reveres them with the hand containing cow-product, clothing and a prayer causing to reach righteousness, the strong/powerful Fravašis of the righteous (when) pleased, un-distressed and un-offended bless him (as under):

13.52 'May there be in this house the increase of cattle and heroic men. May there be a swift horse and a solid chariot. May the man who verily reveres us with the hand containing cow-product, clothing and a prayer causing to reach righteousness be powerful and leader of the assembly'.

As for the ten days in the *Frawardīgān*, during the first five days, (one should recite) the *Aṣəm Vohū* three times, the *frauuarānē*, (the formula for) the appropriate *gāh*, the *šnūman* of *Ahurahe Mazdā* and *aṣāunqm*, the *kardag* of *yā vīsāda āuuaiieinti* and concluding with *āfrināmi*.

During the five *Gāthā* days, (one should recite) the *Aṣəm Vohū* three times, the *frauuarānē*, (the formula for) the appropriate *gāh*, the *šnūman* of *ahurahe mazdā*, *gāthābiiō* and *aṣ. āunqm* and the *karda* of *yā vīsāda*, and concluding with *āfrināmi*.

Some centuries later, the texts of the *Āfrīnagān* were again collected by the famous Parsi priest, Dārāb Hormazdyār, who included the texts in manuscripts of his *Persian Rivāyats*. In Dārāb Hormazdyār's time, the practice of the *Āfrīnagān* of *Frawardīgān* days as performed in Iran was to recite the *karda* of *tā ahmī nmāne* (Y 60.2–7).

The *āfrīnagān* of *ardāfrawāsh* in the manner of Iran, in the kingdom of the land of Iran. On the day of *wīdardagān*, the first *āfrīnagān*, which is called the *Ardā Farwad* is this as it has been said in the tradition. (Recite) eight *Yaθā Ahū Vairiiō* (prayers) and three *Aṣəm Vohū* prayers, then the *frauuarāne*, and the *gāh* which it is, then *frasastaiiāēca*, *ahurahe mazdā raēuuatō xvarənanḡhatō* [...] concluding with) *tā ahmī nmāne jamiiārəš yā aṣaonqm* up to *darəgəm haxma* (Y 60.2–7) followed by the recitation of three *Aṣəm Vohū*.

Yet Dārāb was aware that this custom of the Iranians was at variance with the Khorasani practice of five *panthaks* of the priests of India and what he refers to as 'the ancient books of the *Zend-Avesta*'. Later in his manuscript, he gives the text of the *Āfrīnagān* of *Ardā Farvash* and the *Āfrīnagān-e Ruzgār* according to the practice of the Indian priests. Here, he writes that one should instead recite the *karda* of *yā vīsāda*.

(As) the *šnūman* of the *Āfrīnagān* on the day of *Fravardin*, month *Ādar*, they recite the *Āfrīnagān* of *Ardā Farwash*, and also on the day of *Khurshid*, month *Dae*, which is the death anniversary (*rūzgār*) of righteous Zarathushtra, on that day too, they recite the *Āfrīnagān* of *Ardā Farwash*. The *šnūman* is as follows: recite eight *Yaθā Ahū Vairiiō*, three *Aṣəm Vohū*, (and the) *frauuarānē* up to the word *frasastaiiāēca*, then *ahurahe mazdā raēuuatō xvarənanḡhatō* [...] One should recite (Yt 13.49–52 and Yt 13.156–7) *yā vīsāda āuuaiieinti* until the end.

In the ancient books of the *Zend-Avesta*, the *Āfrīnagān* is written in this manner, but in the transmitted tradition (*rivāyat*), which has been enjoined

(by the Iranians), that practice of the first *Āfrīnagān* written above is in accordance with the transmitted tradition (*rivāyat*). Thus we can see that Jāmāspji Minocherji Jāmāspāsā was at odds with ancient Bhagaria practice, and was instead influenced by Iranian ritual practice. His ancestor, the first Dastur Jāmāsp Āsā, had after all been a student of the Iranian priest Jāmāsp Vilāyati, and although he did not adopt the Qadimi calendar, Jāmāsp Āsā gave a *fatwā* to recite *tā ahmī nmāne*, because of Jāmāsp Vilāyati's influence. However, it is to be noted that neither he nor his descendants ever practised it publicly in tradition-bound Navsari. His descendants promulgated his *fatwā* in Bombay, but not in Navsari. They could justify Jāmāsp Āsā's *fatwā* in freedom-loving Bombay, where the influence and power of the Navsari Bhagarsath Anjuman was often challenged. Still, it is clear in this case that the Bhagaria priests of Navsari today continue the ancient practice as attested in the *Nērangestān*.

There are a few important points which need to be stressed in favour of reciting the *karda* of *yā vīsāda* in the *Āfrīnagān* of *Frištāg* (*Firishta*). Whereas in the *Āfrīnagān* of *Arda Fravash* (*Rōzgār*) two more passages (v. 156–7 of Yt 13, *karda* 31) are added at the end of the *karda* of *yā vīsāda*, in the *Āfrīnagān* ceremony, where the *Vadi šnūman* of Ohrmazd beginning with *ahurəm mazdqm* is recited, the *karda* of *yā vīsāda* without the two additional passages is deemed to be appropriate to it. In an *Āfrīnagān* in which the *Vadi šnūman* of Ohrmazd is not recited, a different *karda* is in place. An appropriate example of this is the *šnūman* of *Gāhāmbār* and *Rapiθwin* which have the *Vadi šnūman* beginning with *ahurəm mazdqm*, but this is dropped in the *Āfrīnagān* ceremony, since a separate *karda* of its own is attached to it. The *karda* of *Gāhāmbār* begins with *dātāca aete mazdaiiasna* and that of *Rapiθwin* with *atha zi mraoθ*. The *karda* of *tā ahmī nmāne* is appropriate for the *Āfrīnagān* of *Dahmān* which does not contain the *Vadi šnūman* of *ahurəm mazdqm*. *Dahmān* (Pahl. *dahm* 'a pious person'), when applied to a beneficent spirit, means 'a spiritual being, a divinity': hence the Pahlavi form *dahmān* means 'divinities'. The *Āfrīnagān* of *Dahmān* is dedicated to the day on which it is celebrated together with his or her co-workers (*hamkār*s). It is called the *Āfrīnagān* of *Hamkārā*. It is not to be confused with *Dahm Yazad*, the 33rd divinity enumerated in the *Sī-Rōza*.

The initial words of the *karda* of *yā vīsāda* as mentioned in Yt. 13.49 are *Ašaonqm vanuhiš sūrā spəntā frauuašaiiō yazamaide*. The priests who recite the *karda* of *tā ahmī nmāne* in the *Āfrīnagān* of *Frištāg* say these words after reciting the *Vadi šnūman* of the divinity beginning with *ahurəm mazdqm raēuuanθəm ... yazamaide*. There is nothing in the lesser (*nānī*) *šnūman* which suggests that these words require to be said in the larger (*mōti*) *šnūman*. This means that some priests who follow this practice have begun reciting the *karda* of *yā vīsāda* with the word *ašaonqm*, but, without understanding the significance, they also recite the *karda* of *tā ahmī nmāne*. It is worth noting that the *karda* of *tā ahmī nmāne* does not begin with *ašaonqm ... yazamaide*.

This mistaken practice indicates that they have begun to recite the *karda* of *yâ visâda* in the first line but have jumped to the *karda* of *tâ ahmî nmâne*, when reciting the second line, thereby wrongly amalgamating two prayers in their recitation.

THE PRACTICE OF *ĀTAXŠ-ZŌHR*

The *Ātaxš-Zōhr*, an ancient Iranian ritual, has not merely undergone change but has, through dissuasion, been entirely lost within the Parsi community. The *Ātaxš-Zōhr*, which involves the ritual offering of fat of a sacrificial animal to the fire, is well known from Pahlavi and Persian Zoroastrian sacred literature, as well as from Iranian ritual practice as documented by Mary Boyce during her long stay in the Iranian village of Sharifabad in 1963–4.¹⁵ When Boyce wrote her article ‘*Ātaš-Zōhr* and *Āb-Zōhr*’ in 1966, the custom had almost vanished from living Parsi memory, and only a few elderly Parsis and Iranis could recall that in the early part of the twentieth century, sheep or goats would on occasion be slaughtered by a *mowbed* and the fat offered to the fire specially on the fourth day after death. B. N. Dhabhar, when translating the *Persian Rivāyats of Hormazdyār Framarz*, comments that for this reason some Parsis in Gujarat carried the surname of *bōkrā-kāpu* (goat slaughterers).¹⁶

Yet the ritual of *Ātaxš-Zōhr* seems to have been commonplace in the earlier centuries, so much so that it is referred to not just in ritual literature, but also in popular songs. On the establishment of the Navsari Anjuman Ātash Bahrām in 1765 CE, two brothers from Bharuch, Dosā and Jivā, composed a commemorative song entitled the *Ātašnū Gīt*, ‘The Song of the Fire’, which is still sung today in Navsari on auspicious occasions. In fact, after the present author’s wedding, in 1971, some five to seven ladies came to the family home in Desai Street, Navsari and performed the *pādyāb-kusti* ritual, and began to sing this holy song. With its elaborate splitting of syllables (such that, the word *ātaš* is sung *ā ā ta a š* and so on), the full performance of the ‘Great Song of the Fire’ (*Ātašnū Mohoṭu Gīt*) lasted from five to six hours. In the course of the lyrics of the song, the ladies sang the following words:

Let’s call the shepherd’s son, friend. Bring a pair of he-goats! Come, friends, let’s go to the fire!

Let the he-goat be slaughtered (as *zōhr* for) the Ātash Bahrām. Come, friends, let’s go to the fire.

A number of variations of the *Ātašnū Gīt* exist. In one such variant, the *Ātašnū gīt nāhālū*, the ‘Small Song of the Fire’, usually sung on the day prior to the marriage, the women again sang about the practice of the *Ātaxš-Zōhr*:

O, I asked the poultry man to bring a crowing cock. May the Ātash Bahrām be wakeful always! (That is a crowing cock wakes the *mobed* in time to serve the Holy Fire.)

O, I asked the shepherd to bring a pair of he-goats. May the sacrifice (Guj. *bhōg* = Phl. *zōhr*) be offered to the Ātash Bahrām!

In yet another song, this one composed in honour of the installation of the Dādābhāi Modi Surat Ātash Bahrām in 1823 CE, the *Ātaxš-Zōhr* is again referred to, this time as a ritual to be performed after the consecration of a new Ātash Bahrām.

O, the *ātašni agiyāri* has been built. Call the son of the shepherd. Bring a pair of he-goats!

O, the *ātašni agiyāri* has been built! Sacrifice the goat (as *zōhr* for) the Ātash Bahrām!

During the early nineteenth century, the ritual of the *Ātaxš-Zōhr* seems to have become the subject of controversy. A particularly important source for the religious and social history of the Parsi community is a collection of Gujarati documents relating to the Bhagarsāth Anjuman of Navsari, housed in the Meherji Rana Library and published by the Bombay Parsi Panchayat in 1933, is commonly referred to as *Dastāvējō*.¹⁷ The oldest document dates to the fifteenth century; these are an underutilized and unique treasure trove of information about Parsi priestly practice.¹⁸ Among the documents, a letter has been found written by the Bhagaria Anjuman in the year 1823, wherein, they respond to a letter written by Bhagaria priests in Bombay who complain that the Parsi Panchayat in Bombay has begun to promulgate a new booklet of regulations concerning religious practice, wherein the *Ātaxš-Zōhr* ceremony is omitted:

You sirs have written, 'The members of the Panchāyat of Śri Mumbai have prepared books in order to spread new laws and new practices wherein they have written various matters and these books might perhaps have reached you as well, and you might have (already) found out by reading it.' In your letter, it is written that when a *chahārum* of (expired) souls occurs on the days of Bahman, Mohor, Gosh or Rām, on the dawn of that day, they perform the *zōr* of an animal (*gōsfand*), and its fat is offered to the Pāk Pādshāh Ātash Bahrām Sāheb, or, if there is no Ātash Bahrām, then it is offered to the Ādariān Sāheb. Likewise, it should be offered in the *pātrū*, 'vessel' of fire, the fire vase. The *zōhr* should be offered to the fire resting on the *sarpōsh*, 'covering' (*push*) at the top, (*sar*) [of the fire vase] during the *Āfrinagān* of *Dahm Yazad*, and it should be offered in the *Stum* there. The jaw of the *gōsfand* is offered in *bāj* of *Hōm Yazad*. Thereafter, the ritual tasting (*chāšni*) should be performed by relatives and kin of the deceased, and the dasturs and mobeds. While consecrating the *bāj*, *gōšōdō* should be prepared of the same meat. This has come down to today from our elders since time immemorial, and this practice is being observed even now in Mumbai. Yet, this subject has not been published in (the Panchāyat's) book [...]'¹⁹

It is to be noted that with the discontinuation of the *Hōm Yazad* ritual, the *drōn* ceremony attached to it has also fallen into disuse. These ceremonies were prevalent in Navsari and Bombay until 1823 CE.²⁰ Today the Parsis are unaware of the religious injunction of consecrating the *drōn* in honour of *Hōm Yazad* on the *Chahārom* day.

After giving details of the preparation of the *Ātaxš-Zōhr* ritual, the Navsari priests continue their letter, and accuse certain priests of Bombay of selfishness, implying that they support the Panchayat in the suppression of the *Ātaxš-Zōhr* not out of religious conviction but out of desire for patronage by the powerful Panchayat members. The Navsari priests accuse these priests of Bombay of self-interest and of misleading the *behdins*, by teaching them falsely that the *Ātaxš-Zōhr* is not in accordance with established ritual practice. The Navsari Bhagarsāth Anjuman continued in their letter:

This commendable practice is ancient. It is still steadfastly held on to. And now, those *dasturs* and self-interested *mobeds*, for the sake of their stomachs, teach the *behdins* little of the religion, and these *behdins*, who are ill-informed, unite with the Panchayat members and say improper things, for instance, 'We should not sacrifice a *gōsfand*, and this is not the command of religion.'

The Navsari priests conclude their letter by firmly stating that they will maintain their customs and not succumb to the pressure of the Parsi Panchayat:

Today in Navsari, on the *hamkār* (days) of Bahman, Mohr, Gosh, and Rām, butchers are not authorized to slaughter, but when a *Chahārum* falls on one of those four days, a *gōsfand* should be prepared for the *zōhr* ceremony. And as we have said above, we prepare it as we have written. We have learned this from the *mobeds* (of the past). Therefore, sirs, what we have undertaken has come following the old custom of the Navsari Panthak, and in order to maintain the law and order of the Zoroastrian religion, we are not going to follow the (new) rules made by the disagreeable Panchayat members.

Yet, in taking a stand against pressure from Bombay, it seems that the Navsari priests were fighting a losing battle. As more and more Parsis migrated from Gujarat to Bombay, the community's religious needs were met by priests, who operated outside the ecclesiastical authority of the traditional *panthak* system that had maintained Zoroastrian religious customs and practices for centuries in Gujarat. This decision taken by the Bombay priests to omit the ritual of *Ātaxš-Zōhr* was a result of a prevailing Christian influence and the movement against the use of sacrificial animals by the Church, which in Christian eyes seemed to be a practice reminiscent of ancient Judaic practice.

CONCLUSION

As can be clearly seen, much of the confusion about the correct performance of Zoroastrian rituals has resulted directly from the injunctions of the Bombay *dasturs* who, in order to promote their own independent legitimacy, chose to oppose the centuries old traditions of the Navsari Bhagaria *panthak*. Ironically, it should be noted that many of the Bombay *dasturs* themselves did not participate in high liturgies, after assuming the position of *dastur*. The learned priest Erachji Sohrābji Meherjirānā once said that 'only if the *fatwā*-loving Dasturs of Bombay were to come to the *urvīsgāh* holding the *barsom* could they ever truly understand the importance of ritual.' Still, even in the face of severe opposition from Bombay priests, the priests of Gujarat, and especially the Bhagaria *mowbeds* of Navsari, have maintained their ancient Khorasani practices. To conclude, it is important to state that the study of the Zoroastrian ritual tradition is essential for the correct understanding of the textual tradition; yet by the same token, studying the textual tradition allows one to shed light on the difficult issues arising from religious practice.²¹

NOTES

1. Ms. F7.
2. See M. R. Unvala, *Darab Hormazdyar's Rivayat*, 2 vols (Bombay, 1922).
3. Persian ms. 29.
4. *Harfhā-ye zand* – the Avestan alphabet according to the method learned by the Zoroastrian Priests of India as per ms. 29, fol.108v., *Darab Hormazdyār's Rivāyat*, University of Mumbai Library.
5. Also identified as ms. F4 of the Meherji Rana Library.
6. See Firoze M. Kotwal and Almut Hintze, *The Khorda Avesta and Yasht codex E1* (Iranica 16) (Wiesbaden, 2008).
7. Dastur Hoshangji Jamaspji and Martin Haug, *An Old Zand-Pahlavi Glossary* (Bombay, 1867), p. xlv, n. 1.
8. As noted by Götz König, 'Das Nask Bayān und das Xorde Awesta', in Alberto Cantera (ed.), *The Transmission of the Avesta* (Wiesbaden, 2012), pp. 383–4.
9. Bahmanji Nusserwanji Dhabhar, *The Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz and Others: Their Version with Introduction and Notes* (Bombay, 1932), pp. 595–606.
10. Frāmroz Sorābji Chinivālā, *Khordeh Avasta bā Khshnūm-Tāvil* (Bombay, 1938), p. 20.
11. E. W. West (trans.), 'The epistles of Manuskihar', in F. Max Muller (ed.), *The Sacred Books of the East. Pahlavi Texts*, Part II, vol. 18 (Oxford, 1882), pp. 277–366.
12. B. N. Dhabhar, *Descriptive Catalogue of all Manuscripts of the First Dastur Meherji Rana Library* (Bombay, 1923), pp. 52–7.
13. N. L. Westergaard, *Zendavesta or the Religious Books of the Zoroastrians* (Copenhagen, 1852–4), p. 230, Yt 13.49, note 1.
14. K. F. Geldner, *Avesta, the Sacred Books of the Parsis* (Stuttgart, 1896, 1889), p. 179, n. 1 on Yt 13.49.

15. Mary Boyce, *A Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism*, based on the Ratanbai Katrak Lectures 1975 (Oxford, 1977).
16. Dhabhar, *Persian Rivayats*, p. 261, n.15.
17. *Navsari ni pehlā dastur Meherjirānā library madhēnō Ervadō Jāmāsji Sōhrābjī tathā Jamshēdjī Sōhrābjī Dastur Mēherjirānāē tayyār karēlō asal dastāvējōnī naqālōnō hastalēkh* (Bombay, 1933).
18. To make this resource more broadly available to students of Zoroastrian history, an English translation of the text may be considered by scholars as a future project.
19. *Letter of Bombay Bhagaria priests to the Navsari Bhagarsāth Anjuman concerning Ātash Zōhr (Part I) Document 29, Navsārī ni pehlā dastur Meherjirānā library madhēnō Ervadō Jāmāsji Sōhrābjī ... naqālōnō hastalēkh* (Bombay, 1933), pp. 34–9.
20. See *Yasna* 11.4, *Šnš* 11.4 and *Persian Rivayats* pp. 262–63, n. 4.
21. I would like to thank Professor Almut Hintze, Dr Sarah Stewart, Dr Dan Sheffield, Mrs Firoza Punthakey Mistree, and the patrons of the exhibition, *The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination*, Mr Zubin Mehta and Mr Cyrus Poonawalla, as well as Mr Nusli Wadia, and others.

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BETWEEN ASTRAL COSMOLOGY AND ASTROLOGY

The Mazdean Cycle of 12,000 Years and the Final Renovation of the World

Antonio Panaino

In the present chapter I focus on the origin and development of the chiliadic or millenary doctrine in the Iranian pre-Islamic tradition, from the earliest Avestan attestations down to the Pahlavi sources. The treatment of this main subject implies that we define the concept of time in the earlier Iranian period and that we follow its evolution, which represented a turning point in the theological speculations and liturgical aspect of the Mazdean tradition. It will be necessary to take into consideration the different influences that such an Iranian development may have received in the course of the centuries alongside other ancient prestigious cultures, which were strongly interested in time-reckoning and time interpretation, both for calendrical needs and for the determination of celestial and terrestrial *omina*. These aspects shed light on the most demanding reasons that compel us to frame the specifically Iranian type of cosmic year in the larger context of other related, albeit distinguished and separate, astral traditions. Thus, we should also attempt to follow the evolution of this chronological doctrine in connection with certain other theories of a strictly astrological nature, such as the one known under the Latin designation of the doctrine *de Magnis Conjunctionibus*, which became very influential in late antiquity and in the Renaissance and which was based on the astrological interpretation of never-ending cycles of Saturn/Jupiter conjunctions. This doctrine, probably elaborated in the framework of the Sasanian astrological schools, deeply 'obsessed' by historical astrology, actually assumed an enormous importance in the further esoteric literature of the Middle Ages, representing one of the most famous Iranian contributions to the history of European astral divination.

As is well known among Iranologists, the millenary doctrine that divides the history of the whole creation into two periods of 6,000 years each, and is again subdivided in two further sub-periods of 3,000 years, for a total of

12,000 years¹ of a zodiacal constellation, was expressly formulated only in later sources, as some Pahlavi texts show, as, for instance, the *Bundahišn*. It reflects a kind of theological, but also patently philosophical, distinction of 'existence' into two dimensions, one literally 'mental', *mēnōg*, the latter 'living', *gētīg*. Both these two Pahlavi terms work as nouns and adjectives:² they were derived from a much earlier tradition, being actually attested already in later Avestan texts, which largely preserve a sharp conceptual distinction (but not a direct and antagonistic opposition) between two solely adjectival stems *mainiiauuu*-³ and *gaēiθiia*-.⁴ This double articulation of 'existence' was formally, but not theologically, assessed in the Gāthic tradition (though it is not clearly stated) with a slightly different terminology; there, in fact, we find a clear distinction between *manahiia*-⁵ (cf. Ved. *manasyā*-) and *astuuant*- (Ved. *asthanvānt*-).⁶ If the first stem is equally related to the root *man* 'to think' and to the concept of 'mind', as it was in the case of Young Av. *mainiiauuu*-, the latter, in particular, presents a very archaic way of imagining living, physical reality as something really embodied in the inner force and architectural structure represented by 'bones' (*ast*-). Thus, in Sasanian and post-Sasanian times these two forms of life and existence were surely connected with two different chronological periods: during the first 6,000 years the Mazdean theologians placed a phase that has usually been defined as the *mēnōg* and, after the invasion of the 'living' creation by Ahreman, the *gētīg* states.

Marijan Molé⁷ long ago underlined the very subtle fact that the two sub-periods of the *mēnōg* phase must be, in their own turn, divided not only in terms of time duration (3,000 years each), but also for their *inner quality*. In fact, during the first 3,000 years Ohrmazd and Ahreman (though the latter did so in a reversed or 'implosive' way)⁸ started to dispose of their own ipseities, the first in the form of a bright creation, the latter in the form of a dark and stinking counter-creation. But during the state of stupefaction and temporary collapse suffered by Ahreman, a condition which lasted for the duration of the following 3,000 years, Ohrmazd alone had the actual opportunity to enact the *gētīg* dimension in a *mēnōg*, temporarily 'suspended', state. This remarkable difference explains a number of further evident asymmetries between Ohrmazd and Ahreman; Ohrmazd's creatures are given of mental and living capability, while those belonging to Ahreman are ontologically sterile and correspond to a sort of poltergeist or phantasm, because their living dimension does not properly exist. In fact, in the Mazdean framework evil was thought of as being basically 'mental' (*mēnōg*), although it had the ability to infect and contaminate the bodily reality, which Ahreman desires to destroy. If Ohrmazd is 'life' in both dimensions, mental and living, Ahreman is death alone, which in principle as absolute negation has no proper living state or ontological reality. The two principles could be considered as 'matter' and 'anti-matter'. Where there is one, the other cannot stay or exist. The world's creation corresponds to a trap⁹ in which the melange of these two antagonistic forces is temporarily concentrated in order to produce, on the one hand, the radical elimination of cosmic evil

and, at the same time, in order to avoid the transposition of the fight against evil to a meta-temporal and meta-spatial eternal dimension, where this cosmic conflict would have become never-ending. Another important difference on the qualitative level is the one between 'Eternal Time', named *Zruuan-akarana-* [Pahlavi *Zurwān* (or *zamān*) *ī akanārag*], more precisely 'Time without Beginning', and a 'Historical Time', or 'Time of the Long Dominion' *Zruuan- darəγō.xvaδāta-* [Pahlavi *Zurwān* (or *zamān*) *ī dagrand-xwadāy* or *zamān ī kanāragōmand* 'Bounded Time', or *zamān ī brīn* 'Limited Time'].¹⁰ In this case, we must observe that only Ohrmazd is the master of eternity; he can interrupt the flow of Eternal Time, creating the Time of the Long Dominion, which includes also our Historical Time, as time of human experience and battle. He can fix its duration before it exists, so proposing an agreement to Ahreman, who, being intellectually inferior to him, accepts it and consequently falls asleep after his mistake. Ohrmazd had also the unequal opportunity to display the creation on a double dimension, so that, when Ahreman, finally recovered from his deep stupefaction because of the arousing invocation made in his favour by the whore-demoness Jeh,¹¹ he attacked the earthly world only with a 'mental' army and entered by piercing the galactic sphere and making a hole on its northern side.¹² Although from that very moment Ahreman has polluted the good creation and has produced the 'mixture' (*gumēzišn*), he became at the same time the prisoner of the Limited Time and its physical space. The stars actually closed the hole, making a barrier around the world and imprisoning the *Daēvic* army in it. Contrariwise, Ohrmazd did not enter the world, and he will descend to earth only for the final sacrifice and definitive restoration of the universal, divine and eternal time that will take place only after the complete defeat of Ahreman. It is thus patent that while Ohrmazd and the other Mazdean divinities and entities can enter and eventually escape from Limited Time, as is clear in the texts in the case of *Tištrya* and *Mithra*, Ahreman and his demons are prisoners of limited time and space. It was Kellens¹³ who showed that, according to two parallel passages preserved in the *Tištār* and *Mihr Yašt*,¹⁴ *Tištrya*/Sirius and *Mithra* can enter and exit limited time and the living creation. This means that the creation, as a trap created by Ahura Mazdā, does not compel God and his pantheon to submit to the limits of Historical Time, and that only Ahreman and his denizens are confined within the borders of limited space and time.

From this very short presentation of the data, nobody can deny that Mazdaism has been a sort of 'philosophy of time', in which living beings must behave as warriors in Historical Time, facing the enemy and its negative ontology, but being endowed with a superior force, namely that of the *gētīg* dimension, which makes them ontologically superior to the mental forces of Ahreman, who are sterile and act merely as a psychotic impulse. Human beings are not just sent in time, but are volunteers in this struggle for the triumph of the light of Ohrmazd. The sharp distinction between unlimited and limited time had consequences so deep that it resulted in a long elaboration

about the roots of the cosmic dimension, its origins and its end. In my view the elaboration of this doctrine represents one of the most original and radical innovations developed by the Iranian speculative mind in the course of history. Its definition has determined the organization of a number of theological patterns and schemes of the Zoroastrian liturgies, at least in the ritual synthesis that followed the fusion between the Old Avestan tradition, with its ceremonies, and those belonging to other communities whose priestly language was Young Avestan. When the basic pattern preserved in the extant liturgy was arranged and standardized, the absolute importance of time was radically established. In the first chapter of the *Yasna*, the five daily moments of the sacrifice are carefully divided and worshipped.¹⁵ The same happens for the different phases of the moon, for the days of the month, the seasons of the year and the *gāhānbars*, probably including also all the 365 days of the Zoroastrian year. The ritual must follow and accompany every phase of the day, of the month, of the year until the final renovation of existence. I suggest that the theoretical model of the perfect sacrifice should have been probably the one never-ending, in which a solemn liturgy found its natural conclusion in the installation of a new priestly staff attending to the subsequent ritual, as in an uninterrupted ceremonial chain. Probably, this continuous performance would have been possible only in very few temples because of the large number of ritual priests required, and the expense attached, but there are good reasons to suspect that the continuous reference in the Mazdean texts to the *ratu-s* (that is the orderly masters/prototypes) of the days, months and years also implied a strong practical involvement in their support and protection against the forces of cosmic disorder and evil. If limited time is a fundamental instrument against Ahreman, this tremendous anti-demoniac clock has to be protected and supported until the last second of the battle. Thus, the priests must wind up its mechanism and give the necessary strength to its hands.

Given these premises, it is important to reflect on the origin of such a sharp distinction between eternal and limited time. Although it has been suggested that this kind of Mazdean cosmic year describes a cycle, it clearly appears as a linear representation of time.¹⁶ In the infinite flow of time there is a single, final interruption after the complete defeat of evil, marked by the descent of Ohrmazd, that is not to be repeated and after which infinite time will be restored. In other words, time (in the *gētīg* dimension) is limited *initially* by the invasion of the supreme demon Ahreman into the creation, and *finally* by the descent of the supreme divinity Ohrmazd, which ends *gētīg* time. These events are unique, and cannot be repeated. For these reasons, Mazdean millenarism is in principle completely different from the various schemes of the Brāhmanical *yugas*, which follow one after another in a continuous repetition of different eras. The Mazdean representation of time, which appears as linear, being limited and without cosmic circular repetitions, inevitably involves an inner cyclical dimension, for nature and human life in the *gētīg* world must follow the pattern of the circular movement of oppositions, for example, the processes of

growth and diminution, eating and decomposition¹⁷ occur in any case. Thus, life must be protected and defended by the irrational disruptive presence of evil, in so far as death, in this mixture (*gumēzišn*), becomes necessary as a condition of future life.¹⁸ The only way of controlling the suicidal drive of Ahreman's negative actions is that of supporting and sustaining the natural (cyclical) chain, which makes time determinable and measurable, by means of the sacrifice. For this reason the correct ritual, through its continuous, uninterrupted repetition, enforces the power of the divine natural forces, the already mentioned *ratu*-s of time and creation, and can so guarantee the preservation of the natural and spiritual order.¹⁹ The risk, however, is that Ahreman, defeating the order of the creation and killing life, might also destroy the whole trap of the good creation and escape again into the unbounded universe, and thus invade infinite space-time for ever and ever. The liturgy of the *Yasna* sacrifice, supporting the mechanism of the complete turning cycle of limited time until its end, thus provides a barrier against Ahreman and its chaos. It is in this framework that we must analyse the important presence of the speculations concerning the cycles of Jupiter/Saturn conjunctions; in fact, the planets were considered demons in the Mazdean re-elaboration of the astrological tradition, but exactly according to the patterns of this new discipline: Jupiter was considered as 'positive', while Saturn was seen as absolutely 'negative'. Thus, the continuous conjunctions of the two superior planets show, on the one hand, the never-ending movement of the celestial demons thrown by Ahreman himself into the good creation, and on the other hand the contradictory nature of the fight between the 'negative' Saturn and the 'positive' Jupiter. Furthermore, the stars and planets were set in motion only after Ahreman's invasion of the world; so, the cyclicity of the astral phenomena, as in particular that of the planetary conjunctions, is strictly linked with the *gētīg* dimension. With the final victory over the evil forces, the planets will be destroyed, and the stars will stop their cyclical motion around the earth. Probably, their motion will become spiritual as it was in the period of the *mēnōg* phase, when every millennium was under the temporal governance of one zodiacal constellation, although the sky itself was immobile.

It is difficult to define precisely the period in which such speculation on time was made, because of the absence of external and internal points of references in the extant sources, which themselves cannot be precisely dated. We can only state that Old Avestan literature does not attest such a doctrine, which seems to be, contrariwise, an elaboration of a different school, the one to which we attribute the later Avestan texts.²⁰ Presumably Mazdean millenarism was introduced in a period when the idea of a year made of 12 months of 30 days was well established, because it is mirrored in the idea of 12 millennia which, according to Pahlavi texts, will be placed under the protection of the zodiacal constellations. These patterns are not strictly astrological, being purely symbolical and based on a simple proportional comparison, in which a single month corresponds to 1,000 years. In spite of the fact that the Young Avestan

sources do not quote the whole period exactly stating that the cosmic months are 12 and that each one lasts a millennium, this inference can be based on two main pieces of evidence:

- 1 In the *Vendidad Sade*²¹ a short sentence is well preserved concerning the existence of a millennium (*hazañrō.zimahe* 'one thousand winters'), clearly connected with Yima's kingdom. It is also attested in the *Pahlavi Commentary*,²² and probably belongs to an earlier Avestan genuine tradition.
- 2 The figure of 'thousand years' (*hazañrēm aiβi.gāmanqm*) is also mentioned in the prayer offered by Yima to the goddess Druuāspā in *Yt.* 9,10.

We may introduce a third observation:

- 3 As Gherardo Gnoli emphasized,²³ if we follow the witness collected by Xanthus of Lydia, who placed Zarathustra 6,000 years before Xerxes' expedition (so accepting as correct this figure, and not that of 600), we could also explain its rationale assuming that such a reference contains the implicit witness of a cosmic pattern based on a longer time span of 12,000 years, in which these 6,000 years do not properly concern the birth of the physical (*gētīg*) Zarathustra, but just that of his own *frauuaši-* or *frawahr* in the *mēnōg* period.

Although the terminology is different, we may observe that a significant quotation of periods lasting 1,000 years was already attested, when the Young Avestan language was still current; the direct reference in the *Vidēvdād's* passage to a 'first millennium' (*paoiriieheca* [...] *hazañrō.zimahe*), logically implies the existence of other ones, and this permits us to develop further considerations. The chiliadic doctrine cannot be an invention of late antiquity, but is probably much older: it is reasonable to postulate that its introduction more or less in a period in which the scheme of a luni-solar year of 12 months, each one with an equal number of 30 days, was well defined. Such a pattern was later enforced on the cosmological level by the introduction of a standard zodiac of 12 constellations of equal length. The essential condition, that is the determination of the length of the year at 360 days (that is without the addition of the five days of the epact) must have been current in the pre-Achaemenian period, and it is well documented also in Vedic sources, starting from the *Rgveda*. With regard to the zodiac, though its definitive introduction is generally thought to have occurred in the middle of the sixth century BCE, it has been recently postponed by half a century to the beginning of the fifth, that is around 400 BCE, in Mesopotamia.²⁴ However, this dating concerns the definitive creation of a 'uniform' zodiacal succession, not the basic identification of its 12 constellations, which should be reasonably earlier. Thus, it is also probable that approximately during the same period the innovative calendrical scheme with 365 days (that is with

the addition of the five epagomenal days) was definitively introduced in Iran, probably from Egypt after its conquest. At that time the Young Avestan liturgy, embedding also selected parts of the Old Avestan one, seems to have been based on a calendrical system in which the Egyptian-like pattern was finally adopted,²⁵ although its calendrical premises were altogether compatible also with a round scheme of 12 months of 30 days. Then, we may suggest that when the liturgical synthesis between the older, Gāthic ritual and the later one was concluded, the distinction between the two 'qualitative' dimensions of existence was presented according to the terminology that would be continued also in the Pahlavi tradition; furthermore, the framework of the creation was inscribed in a temporal scheme following the model of the year, but projected in a millenary dimension. The speculative synthesis which emerged from the fusion of, on the one hand, an archaic doctrine of the relation between 'mental' and 'living existences, and on the other hand, the temporal image of the creation as corresponding to a cosmic year of 12 millenary months, produced the powerful intuition of the presence of a deep dialectical game installed between limited, *that is* measurable, time and the two articulations of 'existence': this observation offered a new explanation of the human presence in the world and in history. In order to avoid an extreme emphasis that would exalt the philosophical depth of such a doctrine, it should be pointed out that such a speculation was not strictly theoretical, in its scientific or para-philosophical meaning, but rather that it was part of the theory and pragmatics of ritual. In fact, this 'vision of reality and time led to a new speculative net determining the inner order of the sacrifice, fixing the patterns for regular sacrifice in which the 'orderly masters' of time (that is *the ratu-s*) should have been and were actually worshipped. It is not merely fortuitous that at the end of the world Ohrmazd, acting as a *zōt*, will expel Ahreman once and for all by means of liturgy and sacrifice. Time, ritual and struggle are three weapons connected in an alliance against evil.

To put this in another way, it could be suggested that the intuition of the Limited Time was stimulated by the patent observation that it was essentially subjected to a measure. When one can fix a measure, one has also a limit. It is not by chance that the 'unlimited' time was literally *a-karana*,²⁶ that is, in terms of space, 'without borders, limits, margins', which in a spatial sense assumed the further value of 'endless'. If the Indo-Iranian people had already developed their own earlier speculations on time and shared a certain care for the ritual observation of the various seasonal and daily phenomena, in order to maintain the cosmic order and to protect the regular rising of the Sun every morning, the Mazdean tradition emphasized its own particular (ritual) 'philosophy of time', which was, as previously underlined, also a liturgical re-composition of the unity of the world, of its teleological target, and of its anti-demoniac function. We are not in a position to state whether this kind of elaboration was completely independent of foreign influences. As I noted, a temporal cycle based on 12 periods, each of 1,000 years, presents a strong resonance with the discovery of the zodiac and the re-arrangement of the Mazdean calendar

according to a scheme where at least the months should have been 12, each one with an equal period of days.²⁷ In this way, we are not compelled to assume that this development followed the introduction of the 'late-Achaemenian' Egyptian-like calendrical system, although the presence of months of equal length implies a lunar-solar model more than a simply lunar one. Equally, we must recall also that the zodiac, whose direct attestation is absent in the Avestan sources, might have played only a secondary influence, when the basic scheme had already been established, so that it would be unnecessary for our reconstruction. In any case, since it is difficult to deny that the Old Iranian version of the myth of the star Sirius, Tištriia, reflected a number of Mesopotamian traditions,²⁸ such that we do not find in the Vedic version, it is probable that also the Iranian communities of eastern Iran were slowly touched by certain astral doctrines of western derivation. Certainly, when the (Younger) Avestan priestly school(s) entered western Iran, which is a development that must already have taken place during Achaemenid rule, these specialists of the liturgy would have possessed enough knowledge to master astronomy, calendrical problems and rituals.

We may assume that after the collapse of the Persian Empire, the priestly *collegia* using Avestan as sacred liturgy prevailed on all other groups at that time, and that they formed the basic pillars of the educational system in western Iran as well. Various theological orientations must have existed, for it is unlikely that conformism and orthodoxy prevailed in astral matters, to judge from the diverse opinions expressed in the extant Pahlavi sources. Moreover, the Mazdean priests would have been open to a number of Mesopotamian speculative and divinatory traditions, which were in the following centuries mixed with new elaborations of Greco-Egyptian derivation. Considering the very particular conception of the religious liturgy as it developed in the Mazdean framework, where the ritual is the most important support of order and its temporal frame, it follows that intellectual preoccupation with time speculations would have been reasonably high. Certainly, the Mazdean Wisdom had its own reasons to elaborate and adapt the mixture of astrological doctrines that interpreted the cosmic time machine, whose hands were the Sun, the Moon and the stars. These astral beings preserved their divine status, while their antagonists, the planets, previously ignored, were reduced to demons.

The adaptation of this huge mass of astrological doctrines produced not only a cultural impact on the Mazdean religious ambience, but also remarkable reactions. The Persian world elaborated a special form of astrology, which is usually denominated among specialists of these disciplines as 'historical',²⁹ and that was strictly connected with another, probably genuine, Iranian contribution to the development of the astrological theory of the Saturn/Jupiter conjunctions. These conjunctions were carefully distinguished into four different types, denominated: 'small', 'middle', 'great' and 'mighty' conjunctions. A small conjunction occurs every 20 years or so, and takes place 12 or 13 times in the same astrological 'triplicity'.³⁰ More simply, during a period of

240 or 260 years, these conjunctions take place exclusively in the three signs of Fire (starting, for instance, with the first conjunction in Aries); then, the next conjunction marks a so-called shift of triplicity, because a new series of 12 or 13 conjunctions occurs, but this time these conjunctions occur in the three signs of Earth (beginning with a shift in Taurus); again, the following 12/13 conjunctions occur in the triplicity of Air (shift in Gemini), and, finally, in the one of Water (shift in Cancer). The end of the whole cycle, that is the full completion of four series of 'middle' conjunctions throughout all the four triplicities, was considered a 'great' conjunction, and it occurred more or less every millennium ($4 \times 240 = 960$, but if one cycle was of 260 years the final figure, 980, was very close to an entire millennium), while the 'mighty' one corresponded to a series of four 'great' conjunctions, that is to c. 4 millennia, or to 16 'middle' conjunctions. This shift of triplicity,³¹ corresponding to a 'middle conjunction', was astrologically considered as a very important mark indicating the occurrence of a radical event in human history.³² In the case of a 'great' conjunction it represented a change of religion (or the coming of a new prophet).

The fusion of the earlier cosmic period of 12,000 years with a more sophisticated astrological technique produced certain additional speculations, which, starting with the sequence of the zodiacal 'chronocratories' (or the "temporal period of domination") played by the 12 signs of the zodiac, places the seventh millennium (namely that of Ahreman's invasion and the following 'mixture'), under the protection of Libra, but also under the maleficent influence of the most dangerous and hostile planet, Saturn (Kēwān).³³ It is in this framework that the Hellenistic background of the 'continuous astrology' was produced. This was a particular astrological doctrine already developed, for example by Dorotheus Sidonius,³⁴ in which – as noted by Pingree³⁵ – the value of any *genitura* remains basically significant for the rest of life and has to be compared every year with a new horoscopic diagram (ἀντιγενέσις) at the exact anniversary date of birth. In this intellectual *milieu* we can find other astrological speculations, such as those developed by Vettius Valens Antiochenus,³⁶ for example with regard to the system of the 'lots' (κλήροι),³⁷ the use of the *prorogator*, or ἀφότης, named in Pahlavi *hilāg*.³⁸ The *prorogator* was a very precise point on the ecliptic through which the exact duration of life could be calculated; it was supposed to advance just one degree every year in oblique ascent, thus indicating sudden death, when and if it reaches the point rising on the horizon at that very moment in the framework of the horoscopic *thema*.³⁹ Another significant tool adopted in Sasanian Iran for the calculation of these astrological reports was that of the 'Lord of the year' or ἐνιαυτοκράτωρ, denominated in Pahlavi as *sāl-xwadāy*: this was considered the most important planet in the horoscopic diagram, advancing in the same way of the ἀφότης, but determining the events of the year.⁴⁰ It is also self-evident that the books written by Dorotheus Sidonius, Vettius Valens as well as those of many other Greek astrologers were translated, commented and enlarged by Pahlavi scholars, and, in fact, we still possess Arabic recensions and also later

Greek retro-versions from Arabic showing the patent influence of a Sasanian intermediation.⁴¹

This new branch of astrological doctrine, as previously noted, gave impulse to the elaboration of a very original kind of 'historical' astrology, which, for instance, was expressly forbidden in the Roman Empire,⁴² while it was later accepted in the Arab and Byzantine courts. It is clear that such a tradition was also tentatively adapted to the earlier and simpler Zoroastrian cosmic cycle of 12 millennia, as we can directly deduce from important astrological works such as those composed by a Judaeo-Persian astrologer of the eighth century named Māšā'allāh.⁴³ Thus it can be seen that a strong Sasanian background is patently confirmed in a high number of Arabic astronomical and astrological texts, where we find the presence of a sort of 'continuous horoscopy'. This apotelesmatic method was based upon a number of annual and general predictions determined according to the horoscopes of the individual nativities, and in connection with other relevant data such as the revolutions of the year, the 'chronocratories', and other elements such as the *fardār*, the *intihā*, *et cetera*,⁴⁴ that is a series of sub-periods of human life, each one placed under the direct influence of any single planet.⁴⁵ These techniques had an enormous influence on the evolution of Arabo-Islamic astrology, and on many Medieval Latin texts, which nobody would have suspected of being ultimately of Iranian derivation.⁴⁶ From all these data we can deduce that Sasanian astrologers represented an important social group,⁴⁷ comprising highly educated persons who were able to translate Greek, Syriac and Indian texts, and who were eminently able to use and combine Western and Eastern astronomical doctrines.

The Arabic sources insist on the fact that the Persians of the Sasanian periods had also a certain deep competence in the redaction of astronomical tables, usually denominated as *Zīg*, and of which we know at least three different redactions. The mathematical parameters by which these tables were calculated can be easily related to Indian theories of the planetary motions, which, in their turn, were determined in the framework of larger chronological calculations concerning the duration of the different eras. In some books by Abu Ma'shar and al-Sijzi,⁴⁸ for instance, three different types of cosmic year, based on the planetary revolutions of the five known planets plus those of the two luminaries, are continuously referred to:

- 1 A cosmic year of 4,320,000,000 years, attributed to the Indians.
- 2 A cosmic year of 4,320,000 years attributed to Āryabhaṭa (*Arjabhaz*).
- 3 A cosmic year of 360,000 years attributed to the 'Persians' (*ahl-e Fārs*) and to some 'Babylonians'.

The first system is the one based on the *Paitāmahasiddhānta* of the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*; the second one is that of Āryabhaṭa, connected with the *Mahāyuga*; the third, and in the present discussion most interesting one, is also mentioned by al-Bīrūnī,⁴⁹ who expressly ascribed it to Abu Ma'shar,

although it seems to be closer to the one of the *Old Sūryasiddhānta* of Lāṭadeva, at least in its original version.⁵⁰ According to the last cycle, the flood would have taken place exactly on the night of Thursday 17 February -3101 (= 3102 BCE),⁵¹ at 0° of Aries⁵² in coincidence, from an astrological point of view, with a 'Mighty' Conjunction. But which were the relations occurring between the system of the 'Persians' and the Sasanian *Zīg*? According to Kennedy and van der Waerden,⁵³ the 'Persian' system would have been different in some mathematical parameters from the one adopted in the Sasanian *Tables* reformed under Khosrow I, although in both cases the dating of -3101 would have been taken as the one for the era of the flood. Both scholars have also assumed that the 'Persian System' should have been introduced in Iran before 500 CE and, thus, that it corresponded to the first version of the Sasanian *Zīg*, fixed in the year 450 CE. The parameters of the *Zīg* reformed under Khosrow I would be, contrariwise, according to Kennedy and van der Waerden, very close to the ones elaborated by Āryabhaṭa and this would explain the reason for the actual difference between the new Sasanian *Zīg* with respect to the system of the 'Persians'. Van der Waerden has also tried to use such an argument in order to demonstrate the complete independence of Sasanian astronomy from the Indian one, suggesting, in more general terms, that the doctrine of the Great Cosmic Year of 360,000 years, attributed to the 'Persians' by various Islamic sources as Abu Ma'shar and al-Biruni, would have been directly and originally invented in the Iranian world, albeit probably inspired by a Greco-Hellenistic-Babylonian tradition, and thus, it would have been exported to India. Pingree has rejected such an interpretation of the facts, in my opinion very prudently and correctly, showing the Indian derivation of these enormous temporary cycles that later played a certain role also in the framework of Arabo-Islamic astrology and astronomy. It is also interesting to recall that Abu Ma'shar claimed to have discovered the so-called 'Persian' system in a manuscript ascribed to Tahmūras' times,⁵⁴ so that we may reasonably suspect that such a statement was a fake, created by this astrologer in order to enforce his doctrine of the astrological previsions, by attributing an Indian method taken from the parallel tradition of the *Old Sūryasiddhānta* to an ante-diluvian past, as again Pingree has remarked.⁵⁵

In any case, leaving a more detailed discussion about the technical problems concerning the parameters of the various Sasanian *Zīg* and their ultimate origin to the specialized literature,⁵⁶ we observe that the Iranian astronomers/astrologers were certainly interested in the cosmological speculation elaborated in India, and that they would have had a detailed knowledge of the *yugas* and associated astronomical theories, which were referred to in astronomical treatises, now attested also in Arabic, but certainly, extant also in some unfortunately lost Pahlavi versions. On the other hand, it is difficult to believe that these gigantic periods were elaborated by Mazdean scholars, because the image of time they represented was absolutely in contrast with the one well established in the Persian framework from the earliest times.

The adaptation of the Jupiter/Saturn conjunctions with the chiliadic period reveals a series of very interesting facts, although its actual importance concerned only the *gētīg* phase, in which all the stars and the planets were in motion, while in the previous *mēnōg* phase they were, at least theoretically, presumed to be in a state of immobility, in spite of the fact that any millennium had been symbolically placed under the power of a different zodiacal constellation. The negative influence of the planetary demons became a means to explain the contradictions of human history, and their sequence became a key for the interpretation of future events in the larger frame of the historical horoscopy, in which Sasanian astrologers proved to be highly skilled. Thanks in particular to Arabic sources, we still possess the horoscopes for the enthronements⁵⁷ of the individual Sasanian kings, a practice, which was traditional in the framework of the typically Persian continuous horoscopy.⁵⁸

In conclusion, we can observe that:

- 1 The doctrine of the standard Mazdean cosmic year was certainly already attested in the phase of composition of the later Avestan liturgy.
- 2 It became essential for the organization of the final liturgical synthesis, which reflected an idea of 'time control' as a fundamental means in order to keep in order and maintain the harmony of the cosmos against the forces of evil that were imprisoned in limited time and space.
- 3 The introduction of the cosmic year cannot be definitely attributed to the so-called Gāthic community, because of a complete lack of any direct or indirect supportive evidence; furthermore, the Mazdean pattern does not present fitting correspondences in the Vedic world and it cannot be considered as having been based on or derived from a common hereditary ancestral tradition. On the contrary, Indian speculations produced a very different conception of time, based on a cyclical recurrence of enormous chronological periods that was in absolute contrast with the image of a linear development of time in Iran.
- 4 The particular care for the control and protection of time, as a weapon against Ahreman and its essentially *mēnōg* creatures, stimulated a strong attention for astral phenomena, which produced a series of astronomical tables, but also a further elaboration of the doctrine of the 12,000 years according to a number of new methods belonging to Hellenistic astrology, which, time by time, were also mixed with Indian later elaborations.
- 5 The already attested apotelesmatic methods based on the practice of a so-called continuous and historical astrology found a very fertile ground in Sasanian Iran, which offered to these speculations a very favourable religious and cultural milieu, strongly interested to enforce all those means that might be in condition to control and detect the hidden secrets of time.
- 6 This attitude gave enormous impulse to the elaboration of the doctrine concerning the planetary conjunctions of Saturn and Jupiter, which was

embedded in the millenary tradition, and was also essential for the practice of historical astronomy.

- 7 Other cosmic periods, mostly of Indian origin, although essentially derived from Hellenistic speculations about the planetary cycles, were known in Sasanian Iran, in particular among professional astrologers and astronomers, but it is doubtful whether they played any serious role among ordinary people and in the Mazdean religious community.

NOTES

1. That is, according to a symbolic year in which every month corresponds to a whole millennium placed under the direct protection (or *chronokratoria*, i.e. the power played by a *χρονοκράτωρ*, 'the ruler of [a given periods of] time and life'), on which see Otto Neugebauer and Henry Bartlett van Hoesen, *Greek Horoscopes* (Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society 48) (Philadelphia, 1959), p. 200.
2. Shaked Shaul, 'The Notions "mēnōg" and "gētīg" in the Pahlavi Texts and their relation to Eschatology', *Acta Orientalia* xxxiii (1971), pp. 59–61; Gherardo Gnoli, 'Un particolare aspetto del simbolismo della luce nel Mazdeismo e nel Manicheismo', *AION* (N.S.) xii (1962), pp. 95–128; idem, 'Osservazioni sulla dottrina mazdaica della creazione', *AION* (N.S.) xiii (1963), pp. 163–93.
3. Christian Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (Strassburg, 1904), cols. 1139–40.
4. Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (1904), cols. 479–80.
5. Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (1904), cols. 1133–34; cf. Jean Kellens and Éric Pirart, *Les textes viel-avestiques*, vol. 2: *Répertoires grammaticaux et lexique* (Wiesbaden, 1990), p. 280.
6. Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (1904), cols. 215–16; cf. Kellens and Pirart, *Les textes viel-avestiques*, vol. 2, p. 207.
7. Marijan Molé, 'Le problème zurvanite', *Journal Asiatique* ccxlvii (1959), pp. 431–69, in particular p. 443; idem, *Culte, mythe et cosmologie dans l'Iran ancien: le problème zoroastrien et la tradition mazdéenne* (Paris, 1963), pp. 390–406.
8. Antonio Panaino, 'Ahreman and Narcissus', in Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst, Christiane Reck and Dieter Weber (eds), *Literarische Stoffe und ihre Gestaltung in mittelliranischer Zeit. Kolloquium anlässlich des 70. Geburtstages von Werner Sunderman* (Beiträge zur Iranistik 31) (Wiesbaden, 2009), pp. 201–9; idem, 'The Frog Prince and the Whore', in Antonio Panaino and Andrea Piras (eds), *Studi Iranici Ravennati*, vol. 1 (Indo-Iranica et Orientalia, Series Lazur 1) (Milan, 2011), pp. 17–82, who analyses the meaning of the symbolic description of the 'negative' creation enacted by Ahreman and represented by means of a crude act of self-sodomy.
9. R. C. Zaehner, *The Teachings of the Magi: Compendium of Zoroastrian Beliefs* (London and New York, 1956), pp. 44–5, 49–51.
10. R. C. Zaehner, *Zurvan: A Zoroastrian Dilemma* (Oxford, 1955; repr. New York, 1972), pp. 106–11.
11. Panaino, 'The Frog Prince and the Whore'.
12. And it is exactly from this hole that, at the end of limited time, Ahreman and Āz will be expelled by the creation by means of a most powerful *nērang* pronounced

- by Ohrmazd, acting as a *zōt*, and by Srōš, performing the duties of a *rāspīg*; cf. *Bundahišn* 34, 29–30 (see Fazlollah Pakzad, *Bundahišn: Zoroastrische Kosmogonie und Kosmologie*, vol. 1: *Kritische Edition* (Ancient Iranian Studies, Series 2) (Tehran, 2005), pp. 386–7).
13. Jean Kellens, 'L'ellipse du temps', in Almut Hintze and Eva Tichy (eds), *Anusantatyai: Festschrift für Johanna Narten zum 70. Geburtstag* (Dettelbach, 2001), pp. 127–31. Cf. also Antonio Panaino, 'Short remarks about Ohrmazd between limited and unlimited time', in Alois van Tongerloo (ed.), *Iranica Selecta: Studies in Honour of Wojciech Skalmowski on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (Silk Road Studies 8) (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 195–200.
 14. About the cycle of the star Sirius in ancient Iran see Antonio Panaino, *Tištīrya*, vol. 1: *The Avestan Hymn to Sirius* (Serie Orientale Roma LXVIII, 1) (Rome, 1990), and vol. 2: *The Iranian Myth of the Star Sirius* (Serie Orientale Roma LXVIII, 2) (Rome, 1995).
 15. See Kellens Jean, *Études avestiques et mazdéennes*, vol. 1: *Le Ratauuō vīspe mazišta* (*Yasna* 1.1 à 7.23, avec *Visprad* 1 et 2) (Paris, 2006).
 16. Corbin's reference to cyclical time is in this case misleading (see Henry Corbin, *Temps cyclique et gnose ismaélienne* (Paris, 1982), p. 12).
 17. For a clear focus on these problems see Zaehner, *The Teachings of the Magi*, pp. 71–2, 141–2. Before the final resurrection, as a sort of announcement of its arrival, human beings are said to live without eating, and thus Āz ('concupiscence') will be deprived of its normal sustenance.
 18. This problem is of Indo-Iranian origin; see Antonio Panaino, 'Mortality and Immortality. Yama's/Yima's Choice and the Primordial Incest (Mythologica Indo-Iranica, I)', in Velizar Sadovski and Antonio Panaino (eds), *Disputationes Iranologicae Vindobonenses*, vol. 2 (Sitzungsberichte der philosophisch-historischen Klasse, no. 65) (Vienna, 2013), pp. 47–200.
 19. I must thank my colleague and close friend, Prof. Dr Ithamar Gruenwald (University of Tel Aviv) for a number of very suggestive considerations about this problem.
 20. See Antonio Panaino, 'The age of the Avestan Canon and the origin of the ritual written texts', in Alberto Cantera (ed.), *The Transmission of Avesta* (Iranica 20) (Wiesbaden, 2012), pp. 70–97.
 21. Hermann Brockhaus and Vendidad Sade, *Die heiligen Schriften Zoroaster's Yaçna, Vispered und Vendidad. Nach den lithographierten Ausgaben von Paris und Bombay mit Index und Glossar* (Leipzig, 1850; repr. Hildesheim, 1990), p. 54, between chapters 19 and 20 of the second *fragard*. This passage was excised in Geldner's edition without any reference to its existence; see Karl Friedrich Geldner, *Avesta, the Sacred Books of the Parsis*, vol. 3: *Vendidād* (Stuttgart, 1896), pp. 9–10.
 22. Reichelt also (see Hans Reichelt, *Avesta Reader* (Strassburg, 1911), p. 139) did not refer to this text, but only to the phrases appended to *Vd.* 20 in some mss.; also according to Karl Friedrich Geldner ('Uebersetzungen aus dem Avesta. II. Vendidād 2. 15. 5', *KZ* xxv (1881), pp. 179–212, in particular p. 186; idem, *Avesta, the Sacred Books of the Parsis*, vol. 3: *Vendidād*, p. 10) it did not belong to the original text. No reference is given in Fritz Wolff (*Avesta, die heiligen Bücher der Parsen: Übersetzt auf der Grundlage von Chr. Bartholomae's altiranischem Wörterbuch* (Strassburg, 1910), pp. 321–2) or in Francesco Adolfo Cannizzaro (*Il Vendidad: reso italiano sul testo zendico di C. F. Geldner* (Messina, 1916; repr. Milan, 1990), p. 16); Friedrich

- von Spiegel quoted it (*Avesta. Die heiligen Schriften der Parsen zum ersten Male im Grundtexte sammt der Huzvâresch-Übersetzung herausgegeben*, vol. 1: *Der Vendidad* (Vienna, 1853, p. 12)) only in the edition of the Pahlavi translation (while, in the edition of the Avestan text, p. 9, the Av. quotation is absent).
23. See Gherardo Gnoli, *Zoroaster in History* (Biennial Yarshater Lectures Series) (University of California, Los Angeles 21–25 April 1997), no. 2 (New York, 2000), pp. 43–94 and *passim*.
 24. John Phillips Britton, 'Studies in Babylonian lunar theory: Part III. The introduction of the uniform zodiac', *Archive for History of Exact Sciences* lxiv (2010), pp. 617–63.
 25. See Antonio Panaino, 'Liturgies and calendars in the politico-religious history of pre-Achaemenian and Achaemenian Iran', in Céline Redard (ed.), *La religion des Achéménides: confrontation des sources. Collège de France, jeudi 7 novembre – vendredi 8 novembre 2013* (Paris, forthcoming).
 26. Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (1904), col. 451.
 27. This is the basic scheme of the so-called *saura* months in India; 1 (mean solar) year = 12 *saura* months = 360 *saura* days (of 30 days each); cf. Edward S. Kennedy, 'Ramifications of the world-year concept in Islamic astronomy', in Henry Guerlac (ed.), *Actes du dixième Congrès International d'Histoire des Sciences, Ithaca 26 VIII 1962 – 2 IX 1962*, Proceedings of the tenth International Congress of the History of Science, Ithaca, 26 August 1962 – 2 September 1962 (Paris, 1964), pp. 23–43, in particular pp. 38–9.
 28. Panaino, *Tištrya*, vol. 2: *The Iranian Myth of the Star Sirius* (1995), *passim*.
 29. See now Stefano Buscherini, *L'astrologia storica. La teoria delle congiunzioni di Giove e Saturno e la trasmissione dei loro parametri astronomici* (Indo-Iranica et Orientalia, Series Lazur 11) (Milan, 2013).
 30. The triplicities are: Fire: Aries, Leo, Sagittarius (hot, dry); Earth: Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn (cold, dry); Air: Gemini, Aquarius, Libra (hot, wet); Water: Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces (cold, wet). Cf. Antoine Bouché-Leclercq, *L'astrologie grecque* (Paris, 1899), 160–70. The conjunctions occurring in the same triplicity are 13 and not 12, as more frequently, when the first conjunction of the series takes place in less than 56' 33" 58''' 48'''' (see Keiji Yamamoto and Charles Burnett, *Abu Ma'šar on Historical Astrology: The Book of Religions and Dynasties* (On the Great Conjunctions), 2 vols (Leiden and Boston, 2000), pp. 583–4.
 31. Kennedy, 'Ramifications of the world-year concept in Islamic astronomy', pp. 30–7; Yamamoto and Burnett, *Abu Ma'šar on Historical Astrology*.
 32. David Edwin Pingree, 'Astronomy and astrology in India and Iran', *ISIS* liv, pt. 2/176 (1963), pp. 229–46. About the work of Jāmāsp, in particular on the ms. Paris Arabe BN 2487, see Kennedy, 'Ramifications of the world-year concept in Islamic astronomy', pp. 34–6; Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, vol. 7: *Astrologie – Meteorologie und Verwandtes = bis ca 430 H.* (Leiden, 1979), pp. 86–8.
 33. Panaino, 'Saturn, the Lord of the Seventh Millennium (with a contribution of David Pingree)', *East and West* xlv/3–4 (1996), pp. 235–50.
 34. Cf. David Edwin Pingree, *Dorothei Sidonii Carmen Astrologicum* (Leipzig, 1976).
 35. David Edwin Pingree, 'Indian influence on Sasanian and early Islamic astronomy and astrology', *The Journal of Oriental Research* xxxiv/5 (1964–65, 1965–66), pp. 118–26, in particular pp. 120–1. See also Enrico Raffaelli, *L'Oroscopo del Mondo*.

- Il tema della nascita del mondo e del primo uomo secondo l'astrologia zoroastriana* (Milan, 2001), p. 28.
36. Cf. David Edwin Pingree, *Vettii Valentis Antiocheni Anthologiarum libri novem* (Leipzig, 1986).
 37. David Edwin Pingree, 'Astrology', in Ph. P. Wiener (ed.), *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, vol. 1 (New York, 1973), pp. 118–26, in particular p. 120; idem, 'Indian influence on Sasanian and early Islamic astronomy and astrology'; cf. Bouché-Leclercq, *L'astrologie grecque*, pp. 288–96; Neugebauer and van Hoesen, *Greek Horoscopes*, p. 195. See also Giuseppe Bezza, *Arcana Mundi. Antologia del pensiero astrologico antico*, 2 vols (Milan, 1995), vol. 2, pp. 963–1012.
 38. David Edwin Pingree, *From Astral Omens to Astrology: From Babylon to Bikāner* (Serie Orientale Rome, LXXVIII) (Rome, 1997), p. 49 and *passim*. Cf. Neugebauer and van Hoesen, *Greek Horoscopes*, p. 192.
 39. Bouché-Leclercq, *L'astrologie grecque*, pp. 413–29; Bezza, *Arcana Mundi*, vol. 2, pp. 1013–14.
 40. Pingree, *From Astral Omens to Astrology: From Babylon to Bikāner*, p. 74.
 41. See Pingree, 'Astronomy and astrology in Iran. 1: History of astronomy in Iran; 3: Astrology in Islamic times'; idem, 'Classical and Byzantine Astrology in Sassanian Persia', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* xliii (1989), pp. 227–39; Panaino, *Tessere il cielo. Considerazioni sulle tavole astronomiche, gli Oroscofi e la Dottrina dei Legamenti tra Induismo, Zoroastrismo, Manicheismo e Mandeismo* (Serie Orientale Roma LXXIX) (Rome, 1998); idem, 'Sasanian astronomy and astrology in the contribution of David Pingree', in Gherardo Gnoli and Antonio Panaino (eds), *Kaid. Studies in History of Mathematics, Astronomy and Astrology in Memory of David Pingree* (Serie Orientale Roma CII) (Rome, 2009), pp. 71–99. Cf. Carlo Alfonso Nallino, 'Tracce di opere greche giunte agli arabi per trafila pehlevica', in Sir Thomas Walker Arnold and Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (eds), *A Volume of Oriental Studies Presented to Professor E. G. Browne, on his 60th Birthday (7 February 1922)* (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 345–63.
 42. Frederick H. Cramer, *Astrology in Roman Law and Politics* (American Philosophical Society 37) (Philadelphia, 1954); Patrizio Domenicucci, *Astra Caesarum: astronomia, astrologia e catasterismo da Cesare a Domiziano* (Pisa, 1996). Cf. Panaino, 'Sasanian astronomy and astrology in the contribution of David Pingree'.
 43. Edward S. Kennedy and David Edwin Pingree, *The Astrological History of Māshā'allāh* (Cambridge, MA, 1971); Pingree, 'Māshā'allāh: Some Sasanian and Syriac Sources', in George F. Hourani (ed.), *Essays on Islamic Philosophy and Science* (Albany, 1975), pp. 5–14.
 44. See Kennedy, 'Ramifications of the world-year concept in Islamic astronomy', pp. 26–30.
 45. Kennedy, 'Ramifications of the world-year concept in Islamic astronomy', pp. 26–30.
 46. Pingree with Panaino, 'Saturn, the Lord of the Seventh Millennium', pp. 241–2; Panaino, 'Review of David Pingree and Charles Burnett, *The Liber Aristotilis of Hugo of Sanctalla. London 1997, East and West* xlviii/1–2 (1998), p. 209–13.
 47. Panaino, 'The two astrological reports of the *Kārnāmag ī Ardašīr ī Pābagān* (III, 4–7; IV, 6–7)', *Die Sprache* xxxvi/2 (1996a), pp. 181–98.
 48. Edward S. Kennedy and Bartel Leendert van der Waerden, 'The world-year of the Persians', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* lxxxiii/3 (1963), pp. 315–27, in

- particular pp. 316–17; Pingree, *The Thousands of Abu Ma'shar* (Studies of the Warburg Institute 30) (London, 1968), pp. 28–9; Bartel Leendert van der Waerden, 'The great year in Greek, Persian and Hindu astronomy', *Archive for History of Exact Sciences* xviii (1978), pp. 359–84, in particular pp. 368–70. The vast subject of the world and cosmic year with an overview of the scholarly debate among the most relevant specialists has been presented and critically discussed in Panaino, *Tessere il cielo*.
49. Eduard C. Sachau (ed.), *Al-Birûnî's Chronology of the Ancient Nations* (London, 1879), p. 29.
 50. Pingree, *The Thousands of Abu Ma'shar*, pp. 28–9.
 51. We note that the figure -3101 refers to an astronomical year, which corresponds to the year AD 3102. The actual difference (only for dates before Vulgar Era) between the astronomical computation and the usual one adopted by historians is due to the fact that, according to the first system, the year 1 (BCE) of the Christian calendar corresponds to the (astronomical) year 0; in other words, the year before the number one or +1 is zero (that, contrariwise, is never used in the historical computation, which follows the Christian tradition) and, then, the very year preceding the astronomical year 0 is -1. See van der Waerden, *Erwachende Wissenschaft*. vol. 2: *Die Anfänge der Astronomie* (Basel and Stuttgart, 1968), pp. 13–14; Otto Neugebauer, *A History of Ancient Mathematical Astronomy*, 3 vols (Berlin, Heidelberg and New York, 1975), vol. 3, p. 1068; Jean Meeus, *Astronomical Algorithms* (Richmond, 1991), p. 60.
 52. Kennedy and van der Waerden ('The world-year of the Persians', p. 321) observed that Abu Ma'shar would have calculated the planetary positions for the epoch of the flood between 27° of Pisces and 1° of Aries, while, according to the 'Persian system', the longitudes of the planets were for this dating exactly zero. It seems to be evident to these scholars that the astrologer of Balkh made use for his computations also of other Tables, different from those based on the 'Persian system'. Pingree (*The Thousands of Abu Ma'shar*, pp. 35, 55), on the contrary, has shown that the calculation of the planetary positions was based on the *Brāhmapakṣa*.
 53. Kennedy, 'The world-year of the Persians', pp. 324–7.
 54. Pingree, *The Thousands of Abu Ma'shar*, pp. 1–20.
 55. *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4, 13.
 56. See Panaino, *Tessere il cielo*, and Buscherini, *L'astrologia storica*, with additional bibliography.
 57. David Edwin Pingree, 'Historical horoscopes', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* lxxxii/4 (1962), pp. 487–502, in particular pp. 495–501; *The Thousands of Abu Ma'shar*, pp. 82–93. Cf. already Sayyid Hasan Taqizadeh, 'The early Sasanians: Some chronological points which possibly call for revision', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* xi/1 (London, 1943), pp. 6–51, in particular pp. 8–9 (note 3), and 32.
 58. More precisely these horoscopes were calculated for the vernal equinox of the year in which any Sasanian king was crowned; see Pingree, *The Thousands of Abu Ma'shar*, pp. 82–3. Here, Pingree assumes that the calculations of these historical horoscopes should be dated about the beginning of the Islamic domination, because they agree with the same parameters of the *Old Sūryasiddhānta*. On the other hand, this assumption is not compelling, because that Sanskrit book was already known and used during the Sasanian kingdom of Khosrow I (see again Pingree, *The Thousands of*

Abu Ma'shar, pp. 12–13, and n. 1; cf. Panaino, 'The astronomical conference of the year 556 and the politics of Khosrow Anōšag-ruwān', in *Commutatio et contentio: Studies in the Late Roman, Sasanian, and Early Islamic Near East. In Memory of Zeev Rubin* (Düsseldorf, 2010), pp. 293–306), and in any case the same horoscopic procedure followed an earlier tradition, although, in earlier times, the calculations were made with other mathematical parameters, as, for instance, those used before the second and the third redaction of the Royal Zīgs (Panaino, *Tessere il cielo*, pp. 23–42, *passim*).

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7 REFASHIONING THE ZOROASTRIAN PAST

From Alexander to Islam

Touraj Daryaei

Approximately at the time when Abu Ja'far Mohammad b. Jarir Tabari was compiling his *Tarikh al-Rasul wa al-Muluk*, the High Priest Ādurbād ī Ēmēdān was compiling the *Dēnkard* and, along with other Zoroastrian sages, redacting important Pahlavi texts. The coming of the Abbasids and the establishment of Islam in fact appears to have driven many to look back and write a history of the past according to their communal perspective. For Zoroastrians, the process of writing down the tradition had already begun during the late Sasanian period. It seemed necessary to record the events of the past so that the leaders of the community of the Good Religion would be able to pass them down from their memory to the future co-religionists. This memory included a history that existed in oral and written form. For this sacred Zoroastrian historiography, of which *Dēnkard IV* is the best known source, the two most important polarizing and devastating events which had cataclysmic repercussions were the coming of Alexander of Macedon in the fourth century BCE and that of the Arab Muslims in the seventh century CE. If one is to accept the narrative provided by the *Dēnkard IV* as well as the *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag*, these two historical calamities created dire situations for the Good Religion. These texts state that the first event resulted in the murder of the Magi, and the motley crew of Greco-Macedonians who decimated the memory of the Avesta, and as a result doubt and heterodoxy was brought to fore.¹ Another Zoroastrian reads the event as such (SE 4–5):

pas zardušt dēn āwurd az framān ī wištāsp-šāh 1000 ud 200 fragard pad dēn dibīrih pad taxtagihā ī zarrēn kand ud nibišt ud pad ganj ī ān ātaxš nihād. Ud pas gizistag skandar sōxt ud andar ō drayāb abgand

Then Zoroaster brought the Religion. By the order of King Vištāsp 1200 *fragards* (chapters) in the writing of religious scripture were engraved on golden tablets and written and deposited in the treasury of that fire-temple. And then the accursed Alexander burnt them and threw them into the sea²

The problem of religious uncertainty was so grave that with the coming of the Sasanians, high priests such as Kirdīr in the third century, Ādurbād ī Mahraspandān in the fourth century, had to make journeys to heaven, hell, and meet the deities, while another went through an ordeal with molten metal poured on his chest to establish an 'orthodoxy', as the text relates, if such a thing ever existed.³

The Arabs in turn invaded Ērānšahr and stayed there, where they spread their religion and weakened and enfeebled the Good Religion. Our authors certainly believed that no calamity comparable to this had befallen Ērānšahr and the Zoroastrian religion (*Bundahišn* Chapter 33.21–2):

Ērānšahr pad Tāzigān mānd u-šan ān ī xwēš dād ī ag-dēnīh rawāgēnīd ud was ēwēnag ī pēšenagān wišōbēnīd ud dēn ī māzdēsnañ nizārēnīd nasā-šōyišnīh ud nasā-nigānīh ud nasā-xwarišnīh pad kardag nihād. az bundahišn tā im-rōz anāgīh az ēn garāntar nē mad cē duš-kunišnīh ī awēšān rāy niyāz ud awērānīh ud must-kunišnīh ud wad-dādīh ud wad-dēnīh rāy sēj ud niyāz ud abārig anāgīh mehmān kard ēstēd

Iran was left to the Arabs and they have made that law of evil religion current, much of the customs of the ancients they (have) destroyed and the religion of the Mazdā worshipping religion was made feeble and they established the washing of the dead, burying the dead and eating the dead. And from the primal creation of the material world till today, a heavier harm has not come; because of their evil behavior, misery and ruin and doing violence and evil law, evil religion, danger and misery and other harm have become accepted.⁴

It was now up to Ādurfarrōbāy ī Farroxzādān and Ādurbād ī Ēmēdān and others to retrieve the scattered knowledge and the commentary on the Avesta to bring yet again the lost 'orthodoxy', amidst the rampant heterodox movements. If we follow Patricia Crone's new work⁵ and interpretation on the diversity of religious life on the Iranian Plateau, where people like Sunbādh, Bābak, Ishāq, al-Muqanna, Bihāfariḏh, Ustādhsīs and a host of assorted prophets and migrator's of soul and time existed, one can state that the idea of an 'Orthodoxy' appears to have been in danger for the leaders of the Good Religion, as indicated in the Middle Persian texts.

Indeed, if there was a time to record the events of the past to protect the 'true history' of the Good Religion, it would have been 'now,' amidst the religious chaos on the Iranian Plateau, in the relative calm and protection of the caliph in Baghdad.⁶ Thus, to view the situation through the prism of nationalism, where traditionally these heterodox movements were seen as anti-caliphal, they were actually against the belief of the Zoroastrian high priests in Baghdad, Fars and Kerman.⁷

An added element of concern, which created a necessity to preserve what the Zoroastrian high priests believed to be Iranian tradition, was the Persianization of Islam as it was being transformed into a civilization and spreading beyond the Arabian Peninsula.⁸ De Menasce long ago observed that as Islam was

gaining ground and Iranian epics were being absorbed into Persian literature within a Muslim setting,⁹ there was an anxiety to preserve what was important for Zoroastrianism. Thus, in the ninth century a history or memory of the past was redacted in response to Islam at the same time as Islamic histories were appropriating the histories of the conquered people, be it Tabari's 'History of the Prophets and kings' (*Ta'rikh ar-rusul wa al-mulūk*), Dinawari's 'General History' (*Kitāb al-akhbār al-tiwāl*), Mas'ūdi's 'Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems' (*Muruj adh-dhahab wa ma'adin al-jawhar*), or others who stripped the Zoroastrian character from the Iranian past. One may note, however, that this process had begun in the Sasanian period, certainly by the sixth century CE, when history was put into writing and where a literary tradition existed alongside tradition and retold the stories of the past, where the former was fixed and the latter was fluid.

In this chapter I had originally intended to discuss the way the religious and mythical/historical traditions were used in order to construct a new Zoroastrian historiography.¹⁰ Initially, I had had the assumption that one can say something about Zoroastrianism and history before the sixth century CE and the refashioning of the past. However, now I believe we can say very little about the time before the fifth century CE, in terms of what the Sasanians believed, or what they inherited, in terms of historical knowledge. In fact, we cannot say anything concretely about the historical memory of the Iranian people before the fifth or sixth century CE. Even a scholar such as the Danish historian of Iran Arthur Christensen, whose historicizing tendencies are well known, stated that: 'the vague idea that Persia had been in continual warfare with the Greeks is perhaps the only remembrance which had remained from the Achaemenid times.'¹¹ This means that for the Sasanians, there was not much of a historical memory of the past to grasp.

Let us see what historical evidence there is for the third century with the establishment of the Sasanian Empire, where there seems to be a change in religious ideology, even though our sources are late and scarce. De Jong's remarks regarding our knowledge of early Sasanian historical memory are important and should not be taken for granted. For example, there is the important idea that Iranian history has had a long tradition of fabrication, from the Achaemenid through the Sasanian period. Also, the destruction of the existing memory in place of a new one, for example in the third century CE, is in line with the creation of a new historical memory.¹² I should like to reiterate the now much-discussed notion that in the early Sasanian inscriptions, specifically Shāpur I's at Naqsh-e Rostam, the king of kings could not recount more than three of his ancestors before himself: Ardaxšīr, Pābag and Sāsān.¹³ So, Shāpur I's ancestors beyond this point could not be established, while by the time of the Pahlavi texts such as the *Bundahišn* and Perso-Arabic texts, such as Tabari's, a detailed genealogy had been constructed to give legitimacy to the Sasanian dynasty.¹⁴

Ardashir I's connection to even the king known as Dārāy ī Dārāyān, whose name could be either that of Darius III or, as Oktor Skjærvø has suggested, a conflation of the last Achaemenid king of king's memory with that of the Persis Dārāyan, is to be found in the Pahlavi texts.¹⁵ The *Kārnāmag ī Ardašīr ī Pābagān* ('Book of the Deeds of Ardashir, Son of Pābag') appears to be a late sixth- or seventh-century compilation, and as Frantz Grenet has suggested, it was a reading staple of the late Sasanian or Abbasid court.¹⁶ In this *Kārnāmag*, it is said that Ardashir is from the *nāf ī dārāy šāh* ('scion of king Dārā'), but this is a late source and an epic romance. So we can only turn to the Manichaean Coptic Papyri edited by Heinrich and Koenen, which provides the tantalizing name Dāryaw-Ardaxšahr¹⁷ (Aramaic *rdkšr) for the founder of the Sasanian Empire, connecting Ardashir to Darius.¹⁸ But, even that papyrus is a fifth-century CE work. Then, what do we know of what the early Sasanians knew or said about the past in the third-century CE?

It is in the late fourth century and through the actions of Shāpur II that changes begin to develop in the Sasanian view of themselves and, most likely, of their past. According to the *Chronicle of Arbela*, after 350 CE Shāpur II turned his attention to the East,¹⁹ probably defeated his Eastern foes and established Sasanian domination over the Kūšāns.²⁰ Two Middle Persian inscriptions that recall the Eastern boundary of the Sasanian Empire mention Sind, Sistān, and Turān.²¹ Moreover, Ammianus Marcellinus (23.6.14) lists the provinces of the Sasanian Empire in the East including Margiana, the Bactriani, the Sogdiani, the Sacae, and Scythia at the foot of Imaus (Himalayas); and beyond the same mountain, Serica, Aria, the Paropanisadae, Drangiana, Arachosia, and Gedrosia. Finally, most of the gold coins minted by Shāpur II are from Eastern mints, such as Marv, where the Kušāns also minted gold coins. Also, there exists a large quantity of copper coins from the mints of Sakastān and Kabul.²²

With regard to Zoroastrianism it was also during Shāpur II's rule that the towering figure of the fourth century CE, namely, Ādurbād ī Mahraspandān, is credited with some sort of the codification of the Avesta and the eradication of heresy. According to *Dēnkard* IV, the Zoroastrian priest proved the truthfulness of his doctrine DkM 321–2:

šābuhr šāhān šāh ī hormizdān hamāg kišwarīgān pad paykārišn yazdān āhang kard ud hamāg gōwišn ō uskār ud wizōyišn āwurd pas az bōxtan ī ādurbād pad gōwišn ī passāxt abāg hamāg ōyšan ud-sardagān ud nask-ōšmurdān-iz ī jud-ristagān ēn-iz guft kū nūn ka-mān dēn pad stī dēn did kas-iz ag-dēnih bē nē hilēm wēš abar tuxšāg tuxšēm ud ham gōnag kard

Shāpur, the king of kings, son of Hormizd, induced all countrymen to orient themselves to god by disputation, and put forth all oral traditions for consideration and examination. After the triumph of Ādurbād, through his declaration put to trial by ordeal (in disputation) with all those sectaries and heretics who recognized (studied) the Nasks, he made the following statement: 'Now that we have gained an insight into the Religion in the worldly existence, we shall not tolerate anyone of false religion, and we shall be more zealous.'²³

It appears that there was a great synod or council, in which all 'countrymen' (*kišwarīgān*), probably meaning Zoroastrian theologians, discussed the available Zoroastrian material. It is clear that there were still differences of opinion, because we are supplied with a host of terms for 'different [Zoroastrian] sects' (*jud-ristagān*), such as those of 'different groups' (*jud-sardagān*), and those who 'study the *Nask*' (*nask-ōšmurdān*) of the Avesta.

In the apocalyptic literature, Šāpur II is fondly remembered as the one who arranged the world (*dād ārāyēd*) and made salvation current among the creatures (*boxtagih pad dāmān*) of the world, and Ādurbād is remembered as the restorer of the religion (*dēn-rāst-wirāstār*) against the heretics.²⁴ Šāpur II, with the aid of Ādurbād, attempted to bring about order and doctrinal unity to the Zoroastrian religion. No doubt the threat of Christianity induced the king not only to persecute the Christians, but also to create strong Zoroastrian institutions for his co-religionists.

Therefore I would suggest that in the fourth century, several important developments took place: (1) the Sasanians became familiar (if they were not before), with Avestan or Eastern legends; (2) Zoroastrianism began to be more organized, which was in reaction to Christianity; and finally, (3) Persian became an important language which in time would bring about its spread as the *lingua franca* in Central Asia and greater Khorasan. Thus, by the fifth century, the Sasanian encounter with the East may have resulted in the adoption of Avestan names and titles from the Zoroastrian tradition: Kawād, Kāwūs, Rāmšahr, Kay and then Khosrow are all connected with this tradition. The inclusion of the word *Xwarrah* 'Glory' or 'Fortune' in Sasanian royal propaganda is a further indication of the preoccupation with this mythical past / history. This antiquarianism begins, it is clear, with Khosrow II, whose coinage showed the reuse of past ideas. Something had changed in the ideological orientation of the Sasanians because of events in the fifth century CE. An early Sasanian tradition based on the Achaemenid and Mesopotamian past had given way to an Avestan past for the Sasanian kings and queens. It was not the Achaemenid kings of kings who were emulated, but the Kayanid rulers in the *Kayān Yašt* who provided the mytho-historical background for Sasanians from the fifth century CE onward.

This brings us to the question of the date of the written Avesta (*Pahlavi abestāg*) and its dating, which is a daunting task. Jean Kellens in his recent article on the Achaemenids and the Avesta, states that the term itself and anything such as a book or text is from the Sasanian period. In a sense what we suppose to be the Avesta is a late antique compilation and a late antique text²⁵ of the post-fifth century CE. But if the Avestan alphabet was invented in the fourth century during the reign of Šāpur II,²⁶ then the Avesta too could have been codified because of Šāpur II's encounter with an eastern Iranian world which had kept the ancient tradition alive.²⁷

By the sixth century, when Khosrow I ordered the *Xwadāy-nāmag* ('Book of Lords / Kings') to be written, the oral tradition was partly written down for

posterity, as the history of Iran's past. This past included, as it appears from the *Xwadāy-nāmag*-inspired sources, a mention of tradition in the East which was captured beautifully in the Avesta. Jean Kellens has again made the very important observation that the Avesta provides the mythical history of the Aryā or the Iranians.²⁸ If one looks at the the Avesta with a historical eye, one can deduce that the *Yašts*,²⁹ specifically *Yašt* 5, 10 and 19 among others, provide glimpses of a narrative the Sasanians considered to be their ancient history. These hymns, along with the *Vidēvdād* (Chapter 1) demonstrate a geographical setting for the early Iranians.³⁰ It is significant that the Avesta was given its final form during the late Sasanian period, very close to the time that the national history of the Iranians, the *Xwadāy-nāmag* was also written down.³¹ So, it is no surprise that the *Xwadāy-nāmag* is heavily influenced by Avestan lore, geographically and historically. What is important to note is that this geographical horizon and kings and heroes of the past began to be associated with the Iranian Plateau, its late antique kings, and the Zoroastrian fire temples.³² One can go even further and surmise that many of the Sasanian kings conducted themselves according to the customs of the ancient kings and potentates of the Avestan *Yašt*. In a sense they were playing a part in the Zoroastrian narrative history of the Iranians.

Thus, one can conclude that what we know of Sasanian past history was heavily influenced by the Avestan tradition and was probably reworked and redacted in the fifth and the sixth centuries CE. This reworking was due to the adventures of Shāpur II in the East,³³ which possibly opened the way for new encounter with the eastern Iranian lore that then impacted upon Sasanian and Iranian national history and epic. If this is the case, then one can say very little and must be equally diligent in discussing Sasanian history and that of the Zoroastrian religion before the fifth century CE. One example may suffice here. In the historiography of the Sasanian period composed in the late fifth, early sixth century, Kirdīr, the great priest of the third century who did much for the Zoroastrian religion, was erased from memory. However, Adūrbād, in the fourth century CE was given all the credit at the moment when the Sasanian king and his forces had conquered the East. If we did not have the inscriptions of Kirdīr³⁴ we would have had a completely different notion about Zoroastrianism in the third century CE. In the same vein the plethora of sources from the post-fourth century CE Iran masks the realities of state and religion in the first two centuries of Sasanian rule. Until we find new evidence for the history of Zoroastrianism for the third and fourth century, we must be suspicious of Persian sources about true events. We are still in the dark about the development of Zoroastrianism before the fifth century and will not be able to say what really happened with the development of the Zoroastrian religion in the early Sasanian period. Later Zoroastrianism refashioned the past to suit its purpose to justify its state, while making Alexander's conquest and that of Islam as the two defining moments for its historical apocalypse.

NOTES

1. Fereydun Wahman, *Ardā Wirāz Namag: The Iranian 'Divina Commedia'* (London and Malmo, 1986), p. 191.
2. Touraj Daryaee, *Šahrestāniha ī Ērānšahr: A Middle Persian Text on Late Antique Geography, Epic, and History* (Costa Mesa, 2002), pp. 13–17.
3. For the idea of Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy see now, Khodadad Rezakhani, 'Mazdakism, Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism: In search of orthodoxy and heterodoxy in late antique Iran', *Iranian Studies* xlvii/3 (2014), pp. 1–16.
4. Touraj Daryaee, 'Historiography in late antique Iran', in A. M. Ansari (ed.), *Perceptions of Iran: History, Myths and Nationalism from Medieval Persia to the Islamic Republic* (London, 2014), p. 72.
5. Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge, 2012).
6. Philip G. Kreyenbroek, 'Zoroastrianism under the Sasanians', in K. Rezaia (ed.), *Teachers and Teachings in the Good Religion: Opera Minora on Zoroastrianism* (Wiesbaden, 2013), p. 24.
7. Touraj Daryaee, 'Apocalypse now: Zoroastrian reflection on the early Islamic centuries', *Medieval Encounters* iv/3 (1988), pp. 188–202.
8. For an important and comprehensive essay on the Persian contribution to the world of Islam see Ehsan Yarshater, 'Persian Presence in the Islamic World', in R. Hovannisian (ed.), *Persian Presence in the Islamic World* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 1–125.
9. Jean P. de Menasce, 'Zoroastrian Literature after the Muslim Conquest', in R. N. Frye (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 4 (Cambridge, 1975), p. 543.
10. I have already discussed matters pertaining to Sasanian historiography: Touraj Daryaee, 'National history or Kayanid history: The nature of Sasanid Zoroastrian historiography', *Iranian Studies* xxviii/3–4 (1995), pp. 129–41; also 'Memory and history: The construction of the past in late antique Persia', *Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān, The International Journal of Ancient Iranian Studies* i/2 (2002–3), pp. 1–14 and 'The construction of the past in late antique Persia', *Historia, Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* lv/4 (2006), pp. 493–503.
11. Arthur Christensen, *Les Kayanides* (Copenhagen, 1931), p. 154.
12. Albert de Jong, 'One nation under God?', in R. G. Kratz and H. Spieckermann (eds), *Götterbilder, Gottesbilder, Weltbilder: Polytheismus und Monotheismus in der Welt der Antike*, vol. 1 (Tübingen, 2006), pp. 231–4.
13. Rahim Shayegan, *Arsacid and Sasanians: Political Ideology in Post-Hellenistic and Late Antique Persia* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 21.
14. Touraj Daryaee, 'Ardaxšir and the Sasanians' Rise to Power', *Anabasis* i (2010), pp. 245–6.
15. Oktor P. Skjærvø, 'The joy of the cup: A pre-Sasanian middle Persian inscription on a silver bowl', *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* xi (1997), pp. 102–3; for a dynastic line of Dārāyānids see Rahim Shayegan, 'Nugae epigraphicae', *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* xix (2005), pp. 169–79.
16. Frantz Grenet, *La geste d'ardashir fils de Pâbag* (Paris, 2003), p. 29.
17. A. Henrichs and L. Koenen, 'Ein griechischer Mani-Codex', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* v (1970), p. 121.

18. W. Sundermann, 'Studien zur kirchengeschichtlichen Literature der iranischen Manichäer II', *Altorientalische Forschungen* xiii (1986), pp. 290–1; Michael H. Dodgeon and Samuel N. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars AD 226–63* (London, 1991), p. 354.
19. P. Kawerau (ed. and trans.), *Chronicle of Arbela* (Louvain, 1985), p. 85.
20. Masoud Azarnoush, *The Sasanian Manor House at Hājiābād Iran* (Florence, 1994), p. 1994, p. 14.
21. Richard N. Frye, 'The Persepolis Middle Persian inscriptions from the time of Shapur II', *Acta Orientalia* (1966), pp. 84–5, 85–7; Michael Back, *Die sassanidischen Staatsinschriften* (Leiden, 1978), pp. 490–97.
22. Nicholas Schindel, *Sylloge Nummorum Sasanidarum III/1. Shapur II. Kawad I./2. Regierung; III/2. Katalogband* (Vienna, 2004), p. 26.
23. Shaki, 'The Dēnkard account of the history of the Zoroastrian scriptures', pp. 117–19.
24. Carlo C. Cereti, *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* (Rome, 1995), 3.25, pp. 86, 152.
25. Jean Kellens, 'Les Achéménides et l'Avesta', *Estudios Filológicos* cccxxvii (2012), p. 551.
26. Karl Hoffmann, *Aufsätze zur Indoiranistik, vol. 1* (Wiesbaden, 1975), pp. 274–87; Jean Kellens, 'Avesta', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/avesta-holy-book>.
27. Albert de Jong, 'The culture of writing and the use of the Avesta in Sasanian Iran', in É. Pirart and X. Tremblay (eds), *Zarathushtra entre L'Inde et L'Iran: Études indo-iraniennes et indo-européennes offertes à Jean Kellens à l'occasion de son 65e anniversaire* (Wiesbaden, 2009), p. 40.
28. Jean Kellens, 'Les Airiia-ne sont plus des Āryas: ce sont déjà des Iraniens / Ir. Airiia-only means "Iranian"', in G. Fussman, J. Kellens, H.-P. Francfort and X. Tremblay (eds), *Āryas, Aryens et Iraniens en Asie Centrale* (Paris, 2005), p. 237.
29. For the *Yašts* see Prods O. Skjærvø, 'Hymnic composition in the Avesta', *Die Sprache* xxxvi (1994), pp. 217–20.
30. For discussion of *Ērān-Wēž* see the classic article by Benveniste and Dumezil; also, D. N. MacKenzie, 'Ērān-Wēž', in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, available at <http://www.iranica.com/articles/eran-wez>.
31. For the study of Iran's national history see Theodore Nöldeke, *Das iranisches Nationalepos* (Berlin, 1920); E. Yarshater, 'Iranian National History', in E. Yarshater (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 3(1) (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 359–480; Shahpur A. Shahbazi, 'On the *X'adāy-nāmag*', *Papers in Honor of Professor Ehsan Yarshater* (Acta Iranica 30) (Leiden, 1990), pp. 208–29.
32. See the important article by Matthew Canepa, 'Building a new vision of the past in the Sasanian Empire: The sanctuaries of Kayānsih and the great fires of Iran', *Journal of Persianate Studies* vi (2013), pp. 64–90.
33. For Shāpur's invasion see Rahim Shayegan, 'On the rationale behind the Roman Wars of Šābuhr II the Great', *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* xviii (2004), pp. 111–33.
34. Philippe Gignoux, *Les quatre inscriptions du mage Kirdīr* (Leuven, 1991).

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PART III

TRADITION AND CULTURE

ON THE IMAGE OF ZARATHUSTRA

James R. Russell

Although the records of Iranian and classical antiquity abound in references to Zarathustra, there is no indigenous or foreign visual image of the Prophet labelled with his name, or certain to be an intended depiction of him, that is known before the Italian Renaissance. That is not because we lack for visual imagery and iconography in the Zoroastrian tradition in antiquity. The recent discoveries of Sogdian Zoroastrian religious art, ranging from ceramic ossuaries found in Central Asia to monumental nephrite bas-reliefs on Chinese-style tomb-couches and ossuaries unearthed at the terminus of the Silk Road at the ancient Han capital of Chang'an (modern Xi'an), have enriched the iconographic record considerably, but they have not yielded an identifiable image of the Prophet. It was already long known, before these momentous discoveries, that Armenia had shrines called *bagink'* – this loaned term was shared with various Iranian lands – containing images of the *yazatas* (in the round, one supposes, rather than in mere relief). Anthropomorphic sculptures in the Arsacid era were influenced in style by Greco-Roman art, as was, indeed, the Buddharupa in India. The cyclopean platforms and statues in the round of king Antiochus of Commagene and the Iranian gods at the *hierotherion*¹ 'sacred funerary depository', on the summit of Nemrut Dagħ from the first century BCE, in south-eastern Anatolia, afford a sense of both the artistic style and scale of the Zoroastrian monuments that existed in the Arsacid period before the Christianization of the Armenians and of neighbouring religiously Iranized peoples such as the Cappadocians. There are also bas-reliefs, at Nemrut Dagħ and at nearby Arsameia on the Nymphaios, where the king or a royal ancestor (Antiochus claimed descent from both the Achaemenids and the Macedonians) is shown shaking hands with a god, for instance, Mithra, or receiving from him a large ring, sometimes adorned with trailing ribbons. The statues in the round, on their great pedestal or throne, that face the ceremonial space with its fire altar at the far end on the levelled summit of Nemrut Dagħ are gigantic; the reliefs that flank the processional ways of the sanctified space are on a much more human scale. It will be seen presently that Zoroastrians have used the



Figure 6 The east terrace of Nemrut Dag, Commagene



Figure 7 Nemrut Dag, Commagene: *Syndexios* of Mithras and Antiochus. J. R. Russell provides scale



Figure 8 Nemrut Dag, Commagene: *Syndexios* of Mithras and Antiochus, without author



Figure 9 Mithra, Arsameia on the Nymphaeion, Commagene

standard image of Mithra to represent the Prophet Zarathustra (Figs 7, 8 and 9).

The ring or diadem that the god holds out to kings on the Commagenian and Iranian reliefs is thought to be the sun-like divine glory, Av. *xvarənah* (Phl. *xwarr*, Arm. *l-w p'ark'*, etc.) – a mark of heavenly sanction and favour that is bestowed on just and rightful rulers and taken away from wicked ones. Sometimes it is envisioned, both in a Pahlavi text and on a Greco-Bactrian coin, as a bird or ram. The symbol of a winged disc surmounted by a man (actually, a man rising from a ring that girdles him) was borrowed by the Achaemenians from Urartu and Assyria and ultimately was a symbol of the Egyptian Sun-god. It ceased to be employed in pre-Islamic Iranian art after Alexander, but it is noteworthy that it has come back as a popular national symbol in modern Iran and as a religious emblem of Zoroastrians everywhere. Individual components of this symbol, such as a disembodied pair of wings, or the ring, remained in use and there can be little doubt they signified holiness and dominion, for why else would art of an official and propagandistic purpose employ them? In the absence of a written contemporary explanation, however, their exact meaning remains disputable. They are visible symbols but they embody abstractions, qualities not naturally found on earth in physical form. For Zoroastrians they are representations of realities believed to belong to the *mēnōg*, 'spiritual' world, in the forms of *gētīg*, 'worldly' objects that have some analogous function here. The ring might then, perhaps simultaneously, have been intended to be symbolic of an object on a mundane and visible level as well, the diadem (Middle Persian *didēm* or *pusag*, Sogdian *'fs'k* (pronounced *əfsē*), Armenian loan-word *psak*). This was very much part of royal adornment in the material world; so in art it need not be just a symbolic representation, but a depiction also from life. The diadem was tied around the crown at the time of coronation: I shall adduce medieval Armenian evidence presently that suggests that this was how the object seems to have been understood more than a millennium later, in the context of a fairly similar religion, within the orbit of the Iranian world and by artists strikingly close in other ways to the ancient Iranian sculptors. At the ceremony of investiture the king was not fully enthroned until this tying on of the diadem was completed. In the Arsacid era, where key positions were parcelled out to the noble clans, a noble house held in hereditary perpetuity the office of coronant. In Parthian Iran proper the Sūrēn clan, masters of the Saka province Sagastān (modern Seistan), were 'crown-bestowers' (Persian *tājboxš*). This is one of a number of epithets of Rostam, himself a *sagzī*, Saka, in the *Shāhnāme* of Ferdowsi. The Armenian historian Movsēs Xorenac'i, who lived centuries before the Persian epic poet, knew him and his steed by older forms of their names; and by the older form, *sagčik*, of his ethnic designation. But a form for his title is unfortunately not attested. In Armenia only a Bagratuni *naxarar*² might be *t'agadir* 'coronant'. On the reliefs, the divinity hands the ring to the king, and does not slip it over his crowned head. So if it is an investiture scene, it is a symbolic one, and one in

which Ahura Mazdā, 'a spirit *even* among spirits' as Zoroastrian texts stress, is visible. So the scene is a metaphor, or an event in the *mēnōg* world parallel to our own in life, as heaven celebrates the coronation as it proceeds on earth, much as the great *fravaši* spirits do battle over earthly armies, or following it, in death. Staying in Commagene for a moment, it is noteworthy that Mithra appears there, several times, with the same tell-tale radiate nimbus behind his head, just as he does over a century before and at the other end of the Iranian world, in Bactria, and just as he will do on a Sasanian relief at Tāq-e Bostān near Kermanshah, in western Iran. It is a mark that makes it certain that an image represents this divinity embodying many aspects, the light of the Sun being among them. This does not mean that Zoroastrian iconography was thoroughly systematic and stable over time and space; but some of it clearly was. This is important to remember for what will come later.

Another relevant consideration has to do with the overt setting of all the scenes I have mentioned, except perhaps for the Sasanian one: they are *funerary*. The king meets and greets the divinities, and is seated with them, in the next world. That is reasonable: all Zoroastrians are to encounter a triumvirate of judges of their earthly deeds, Mithra, Rašnu and Sraoša at the time of judgement three days after earthly death; and the blessed then sup with them, too – the *Hādōxt nask*, which is the Avestan foundation of the famous book of the righteous Virāz, describes the scene. Sasanian coins name the monarch as one *ke čīhr az yazdān*, 'whose seed is from the gods'; and Ammianus Marcellinus has the long-lived, mighty Sapor (Shāpur II) introduce himself vaingloriously as 'Partner of the Stars, Brother of the Sun and Moon' (*particeps siderum, frater solis ac lunae*). So perhaps the kings might have been thought to see the gods, to whose number they belonged, not only after death but while they were still alive. In Rome a similar belief is manipulated as a device employed ironically to ridicule a particularly hubristic emperor: at the full moon, in accordance with his claim to be on equal footing with the gods, Caligula used to invite Luna to his bed. 'Did you not see her?' he demanded once of Aulus Vitellius (himself later to become emperor). 'No,' replied the latter tactfully, 'only you gods can see one another.'

The Sasanian relief at Tāq-e Bostān near Kermanshah with its portrayal of Mithra, to be considered presently, is always called an investiture, like a similar, earlier one of Ardashir I at Naqsh-e Rostam. Ten out of the 28 known Sasanian rock reliefs are, or are presumed to be, investiture scenes. The ancient Iranians and Armenians were sticklers for form – there was a *darandarzbed*, Arm. *handerjapet* – and as his title suggests, he was in charge of matters of protocol at court that included vestments. So, as I suggested above, the scene of a god handing the ring of glory or diadem of legitimacy (or whatever it was) to the king might have been a symbolic representation, or even a parallel ceremony in the *mēnōg* or spiritual world, of what was going on down in the *gētīg*, or material one, at coronation time. As was just mentioned, in Armenia the only way an Arsacid became king was for the *t'agadir*, 'coronant' – this

was a hereditary office of the Bagratuni clan and nobody else could do it – to tie the diadem around the crown. Sasanian ceremony may have differed, even considerably; but to be certain we deal in fact with the royal investiture it might be helpful to see features of the ceremony like a throne, a coronant, and so on. But we do not: the newly minted monarch meets the god Ahura Mazdā, and both are on foot or horseback. Ardashir's steed tramples the fallen Ardavān; Ohrmazd's, a humanoid with gorgon locks generally taken to be Ahreman, who the *Bundahišn* tells us is in abasement in hell (which must be very far down) (Fig. 10). And if the god and king are in a room at the top, why are they mounted? One supposes a king could ride his horse anywhere he pleased (and one remembers, again, Caligula's mount, who became a senator). In Armenian epic the magic horse of the heroes stands in a smallish cave at Van for eternity with Little Mithra on his back; and water trickling down the rock is believed to be the animal's urine. But would the Sasanians risk having the king's horse relieve itself in the grand, carpeted throne room? The visual shorthand of an enemy trodden upon, with its roots in Assyrian art, became standard for Sasanian triumphal propaganda. Armenian preserves an ekphrastic epithet, a word crystallized in amber from Parthian days, as it were, for the particular humiliation to which these defeated foes are subjected: *smbakakox*, 'trampled underfoot by hooves'. Could this not have been intended as a scene of the just king's welcome into the next world, rather than as a rite of investiture? (One is reminded that to this day, funerary monuments and dirges depict and describe Kurdish heroes riding their horses into the Otherworld.) That is another point to keep in mind, as we explore the subsequent artistic record.

So far, then, we have portrayals in Iranian art of both men and gods, and



Figure 10 Naqsh-e Rostam, Sasanian relief of Ohrmazd and Ardashir I

at least one of the latter, Mithra, looks much the same wherever we find him, suggesting that the viewer was expected to recognize him without the help of an inscribed caption (such as the multi-lingual one identifying Ohrmazd at Naqsh-e Rostam, for instance). The iconoclast Sasanians seem to have removed from the *bagin*-temples and destroyed statues in the round of *yazatas*, replacing these with fire altars, in the course of their reforms after coming to power. They felt no hesitation in portraying divine and supernatural beings – Ohrmazd, the goddess Anāhitā, the Daēnā (the embodiment of one's spiritual virtue, whom one meets on the bridge into heaven after death or in a vision of the afterlife) – on bas-reliefs, since nobody worshipped the latter. But nobody labelled as Zarathustra is identifiably portrayed anywhere; and indeed no Achaemenian, Parthian Arsacid, or Sasanian official inscription mentions the Prophet by name. That is not because they were not Zoroastrians (they said they were) or because they had any compunction about mentioning the Prophet (the legends about whom multiplied in the period). The most we can surmise from silence is that the context simply did not call for his mention. Though the reciter of the Zoroastrian credo, the *Frāvarānē*, identifies himself in Avestan as *zaraθuštriš*, and the Prophet's name is attested in pre-Islamic Iran in widely varying local forms – Sogdian *zrušc*, for instance – that may attest to local *zands* as well, the name given to the Good Religion in inscriptions is 'Mazdā-worship' (*dēn ī mazdēsn*). Fifth-century Armenian sources likewise call it *deni mazdezn*, using an older, Arsacid pronunciation of the designation. This is not surprising or disturbing: Christ in both name and image pervades Christendom – and the religion founded by his followers came to bear his name within two short decades after his death. But that is because he is God and his life is divine epiphany. (And for all that, Christians in the Iranian world were called just as often Nazarenes, since Christ's family hailed from Nazareth in Galilee, or *tarsagān* '(God)-fearers'.) The founders of the Abrahamic faiths were all men, not divinities, and canonical images of them are not *de rigueur*. Muslims do not call themselves Mohammedans; some Jews toyed once with being euphemistically Mosaic (*musavī* in the Near East) since the various forms of *yahūdi* were used derisively by anti-Semites. It did not stick; though the polite *kalimī* survives in Persian. Zarathustra brought the Good Religion: he was *patgāmbār* 'messenger', *waxšwar* 'bearer of the sacred word', and even 'enlightener' (finite verb *rōšnēnid*), the latter title appropriated by the cult of the patron saint of Armenia, Gregory *lusaworič* 'the Illuminator'. But he was not a divine being or an immortal like Christ; nor was he even a political and military leader like Moses or Mohammed. He was a priest, a visionary, and the perfect man.

Still, there is one ancient portrait painting, more precisely, one of a pair, which, in the opinion of some scholars, was intended to depict Zarathustra, although there is no inscription identifying the figure and the suggestion remains purely a hypothesis that, indeed, several generations have deprecated. But it is a suggestion, it may be argued, that is not altogether unfounded or audacious. Indeed it is less so than much of the speculation that passes for



Figure 11 Twin portraits, Dura Mithraeum, after colour restoration

scholarship in the Iranian field. The fresco was found in the Mithraeum of Dura-Europos (it was fortunately removed from Syria and is safe in the art museum of Yale University) and dates to the early third century CE – that is, to a time shortly before the destruction of the city by the forces of Shāpur I (Figs 11 and 12) Dura (this is its old Aramaic name, just meaning a fort; Europos was a Macedonian add-on) was a walled fortress-city on the Euphrates frontier of the Roman Empire with the Parthians and, later, the Sasanians. The population was heterogeneous: Jews, Christians, Greco-Roman pagans, worshippers of sundry local Syrian gods, polyglot speakers of Parthian, Persian, Aramaic, Arabic, Greek and Latin. The Mithraeum was dedicated, obviously, to an Iranian deity, in a region steeped in Iranian Zoroastrian culture and tradition on two sides, not-yet-Christian Arsacid Armenia to the north (where Mithra was so important that he survives as the apocalyptic folk hero Mher, mentioned above)³ and Parthian Iran to the east; so it makes sense that there is a much stronger religiously Iranian flavour to the art there than one finds in Mithraic temples in Rome, or in the City of London or in the recesses of Hadrian's Wall for that matter. For instance, there is a fresco decoration on the arch over the portraits and cult niche, and contemporary with the portraits, of alternating



Figure 12 One of the portraits shown in Figure 11, without restoration



Figure 13 Fire altars and cypresses, Dura Mithraeum

fire altars and cypresses that we do not find anywhere else in Mithraic art (Fig. 13). The permanently blazing fire particularly sacred to the Parthians and to their Arsacid kings (hence its designation in Greek as *Asaak*, that is, **Aršak*, by Isidore of Charax in his *Stathmoi Parthikoi*, 'Parthian Stages'), that of Burzēn Mihr 'Mithra the Lofty', was enthroned in Khorasan, near the famous cypress of Kāshmar that was believed to have been planted by Zarathustra himself. (It was cut down on the orders of the Arab caliph Mutawwakil in CE 861: but by the time the trunk of the poor murdered tree was conveyed to Baghdad, the Muslim tyrant was dead.) So the repetition of the two juxtaposed images in the shrine of a god adopted from the Iranians, across the river from Parthia, seems more than a fortuitous pairing of generic 'oriental' images of the time. Dura's Mithraeum went through stages of repair and enlargement as with Mithraea elsewhere, except that, unlike the builders working on the Londinium temple at the Walbrook near the present-day Bank of England, the Mithraists of Dura did not have to deal with rising damp. The edifice began as the modest wing of a house, was enlarged, and finally took the form of a basilica rather than the standard *spelaeum* ('cave'; cf. our Armenian Mher on horseback again). The founder was a local Syrian legionary, that is, a soldier of Rome: 'Ethpeni the *strategos*, son of Zabde'a the chief of the archers of Dura'. But it is quite certain the rich frescoes were not painted by soldiers but by professional artists. The style of the Mithraeum is the same as that of the Synagogue of the town; for all we know, the same contractors were hired to decorate the sanctuaries.

Large portraits of two men in white sacerdotal garb flank the cult niche with its carven tauroctony scene and dedications. They stare straight ahead, hold slender ebony staffs, and are seated on fine carven armchairs. Franz Cumont, the pioneer of Mithraic studies, wrote confidently in the excavation report co-authored with Mikhail Rostovtzeff, pioneer of the study of Parthian art:

There is no doubt [...] that the persons represented in the paintings of Dura must be regarded as the *magi*, or prophets, those who were the authors or the interpreters of the several books (*logoi hieroi*) of Mithraism. Since Zoroaster was regarded as the originator of the Mithraic mysteries and Osthanes was his most famous pupil, we may speculate that the two *magi* of Dura are to be identified with those two great Iranian prophets.⁴

Recent scholarship has tended to dismiss this hypothesis and more cautiously to propose that the portraits are not of Zarathustra and another Iranian magus at all, but of prominent donors to the temple in the garb of the local Palmyrene pagan clergy,⁵ so we may be looking at Ethpeni, the fairly remote founder, dressed up for lodge night, or one of his wealthy successors, but not Zarathustra. One might counter that Palmyrene, Hatrene and Edessene pagan priests all looked a lot like Parthian ones, since Iran set the fashion for sacerdotal garb in Syria. (It has been argued that even the *mikhnasayim* 'trousers' worn by the *kohanim* of the Temple of Jerusalem were an innovation from

Persia.) One might object also that a relief in the temple depicts donors quite differently accoutred, looking like the Roman soldiers they were, and names them as Zenobios, Iariboles and Barnaadath – Syrians all. And if the men in the two frescoes were brethren, so to speak, of the Mithraic lodge, then why not name them in captions, with the usual epithets *nama*, *renatus*, and so on? It has been said of modern American Jews that we have an edifice complex (*sic!*), which involves not just building more synagogues than necessary but affixing a plaque naming a donor to every pew, water fountain and doorknob in them. The Mithraists seem to have suffered from an earlier form of the same malady, though one grants the average Mithraic congregation was quite small and its members were more likely to know the others mentioned in inscriptions. But the portraits' gaze fixed at us in their frontal Parthian way, noble, uncaptioned.

Between the third century and the end of the First World War, when Dura was rediscovered, the Armenians were baptized, invented an alphabet that exists unchanged to this day, and created a unique Christian civilization. In 1915 Turkey, which occupies nine tenths of historical Armenia, tried to put an end to that by systematically exterminating its Armenian population in the first genocide carried out by a modern state on its own citizens. The word 'genocide' was coined years later to describe that event, which at the time the Turks called simply *jihād*. Turkey's ally, Germany, both helped and learned, and was to put its experience to use scarcely a generation later, in the Holocaust. The terminus of the Armenian death marches, where the survivors were left to starve in the desert void, or were burnt in caves, was Deir ez-Zor. Officers of the liberating French Army in Syria discovered Dura just nearby, on the banks of the Euphrates, and France sponsored the subsequent digs. So a photograph of 1932 (Fig. 14) shows two latter-day sages, Franz Cumont and Mikhail Rostovtzeff, at the site in the hieratic garb of the European savant, in front of the newly excavated frescoes and cult niche. (The Dura Synagogue frescoes went to the National Museum at Damascus, then safe under French control; the deal was that Rostovtzeff got the Mithraeum for Yale.) One might compare either of the Dura figures to a portrait, probably taken from life or very nearly so, in the scene of the Adoration of the Magi in the Armenian manuscript called the *Echmiadzin Gospel* (Erevan Matenadaran 2374) (Fig. 15). The miniature was done most likely in the Sasanian period, and was later bound into the manuscript. The latter is dated to 989 CE, when Zoroastrians were still very visible in Iran and surrounding lands in any case and an Armenian viewer would still have no trouble identifying their Magi. The magus of the Armenian manuscript has richly coloured clothes; but he is a traveller, a wealthy and powerful guest showering riches on the Son of God. The similarly attired priest from Dura is in white – but he, like an officiating *mobed* or *dastur* in gleaming white vestments in an *agiari*, is in a temple after all, not on a diplomatic mission.

Let us suppose the two figures were intended to be magi. What are their ebony canes for? 'Median diviners also divine with rods', declare the *Scholia in Nicandri Theriaca* (613, with reference to Dino); and Albert de Jong,



Figure 14 Cumont and Rostovtzeff at the Dura Mithraeum

commenting on the classical sources, notes that these staffs might have been confused at time with the long, thin bundle of the *barsom* – the ritual *fascēs* held by a magus on a gold plaque from the Oxus treasure, and wielded by Ohrmazd and Mithra on the Sasanian rock reliefs. The Dura figures grasp tightly furled scrolls, too, in their left hands. Mani, a contemporary of the paintings and nominally a Parthian, who modestly advertised himself as the seal of the prophecies of Christ, the Buddha and Zarathustra, *in manu validissimum baculum tenebat ex ligno ebenino, Babylonii vero librum portabat sub ala sinistra*, according to the *Acta Archelai* – that is, ‘he held a stout ebony staff in his right hand and had a Babylonian book tucked under his left arm’. His book might have been a fashionably novel codex, but the iconographic shorthand for ‘book’ was still a scroll (we still use the Latin word *volumen*, too). In the classical world Zarathustra, thanks to the resemblance of part of his name to Greek *astēr*, ‘star’, was regarded in the main as the inventor of astrology and the author of many books, voluminous ones, on the subject. This accorded with the general association of the Magi with divinatory and other occult sciences. They gave their name to our word ‘magic’ after all. But Zarathustra had another, more venerable image, and one that would have justified depicting him with a scroll. The Zathraustes, that is, Zarathustra, of Diodorus Siculus (1.94.2) was pre-eminently a *nomothetēs*, a lawgiver. He had received the laws from



Figure 15 Adoration of the Magi, *Echmiadzin Gospel*

the *agathos daimōn* 'good spirit' (or *epitykhes noēma*, 'fortunate mind' of the *Greater Alcibiades* 1.122A), that is, the *aməša spənta* (Holy Immortal) Vohu Manah of the Zoroastrian pantheon. So it is proper that the putative magus at Dura hold a *volumen* as well as a staff – a book as well as a magician's wand.

As for the other figure, whom Cumont took to be Ostanēs, Diogenes Laertius, discussing the *Lydian History* of Xanthus, states that 'six thousand

years passed from the time of Zoroaster up to the crossing of Xerxes, and that after him there had been many Magi in succession, Ostanes, Astrampsychus, Gobryas and Pazatas, until the conquest of the Persians by Alexander'.⁶ (One should keep in mind that Lydia, in central Anatolia, had been a satrapal centre of the Achaemenid administration, with a large Zoroastrian population that remained long after the fall of the dynasty.) Ostanes is elsewhere hailed as the greatest of the magi and discoverer of the proper invocations of the seven planetary divinities. He wrote mainly on magic and alchemy; Zarathustra, on astrology. Lactantius Placidus, a scholiast on the poet Statius, writes, 'Ostanes reports that among the Persians the sun is called by the proper name Mithra', which is true, if not particularly esoteric, information; and various books are attributed to him, of which only one is named, by the pagan Phoenician scholar Philo of Byblos: the *Octateuch*, which deals with the qualities of the supreme deity.⁷ As for the name, Ferdinand Justi advances no etymology (s.v. Austanes) but cites an Armenian Ostan: this would be the form closest to a hypothetical Iranian one. This is a weak link, though: the latter word, certainly an Iranian loan, means 'royal palace' and exists in classical and later Armenian usage and toponymy, but is found as a proper name only once, in a colophon of the fifteenth century.⁸ There are no Iranian references to a person named *Ostan; so even if Zarathustra is depicted at Dura, and there is no real reason why he should not have been, Ostanes is a figure who on present evidence existed in classical sources, might or might not have belonged to Mithraic tradition (for which we have no books, only some inscriptions, Latin hexameters, and maybe one page of the ritual for the religion's fourth degree of initiation, that of Leo), and is unknown to Zoroastrian tradition.

Why should Zarathustra be depicted together with anybody else in the first place? He had a royal patron, Vištāspa, to whom he speaks directly in the *Gāthās*; and the latter's sagely adviser at court, Jāmāspa, is a hero of the faith. Some Parsi devotional pictures show the Prophet and another person, generally identified as the Kayanian hero Lohrāsp, with a blazing fire on its altar between them. This scene may have been inspired by the obverse of Sasanian coins, though, where armed warriors flank a sacred fire, and was then reinterpreted in a ritual sense, in which case the Prophet would perhaps be the officiating priest of the *Yasna* ceremony, the *zōt* (who holds the *barsom*); and his counterpart, the *rāspī*. The Avestan *Ahuna Vairya* prayer, which, as we shall see presently, Zarathustra wielded with such great power, itself probably refers to his own pastoral and soteriological role and mission. It extols righteous holders of spiritual and temporal authority, the *ahu* and *ratu*; so a dual portrait, with its aesthetic symmetry, might also suggest this complementary balance of functions.

The paintings at the temple to Mithra at Dura, then, may or may not include a portrayal of the Iranian prophet as the devotees of the most iconographically stable and familiar of the *yazatas*, Mithra(s), imagined him. Their contemporaries in the Greco-Roman world thought of Zarathustra as an astrologer,

but also as a great lawgiver. What about the people dwelling on the far side of the Euphrates frontier, in the lands where his faith was known and practised? Two centuries after the destruction of Dura-Europos, and about 125 years or so after the baptism of the Armenian Arsacids, the historian and clergyman Elišē (Elisaeus) *vardapet* mentions *mecn Zradeštn*, 'the great Zradešt' and the *awrēns zradaštakan*, 'Zoroastrian laws' (again the *nomothetēs*, 'lawgiver', with a book!), in his chronicle of the Armeno-Sasanian war of 449–51 CE. This was the conflict, culminating in the Battle of Avarayr, in which forces under the commander-in-chief St Vardan Mamikonean resisted the attempt of the Sasanian Yazdagerd II and his prime minister Mihrnarseh to re-impose Zoroastrianism upon the recently Christianized Armenian nation. Though Prof. Robert W. Thomson wrote that Elišē most likely lived a century later, Prof. Nina Garsoian has argued convincingly on the basis of Sasanian epigraphic evidence that the Armenian historian was an eyewitness to these events. And although there is much rhetorical elaboration in the manner of the age, the text of his *History* is rich in contemporary information about Persian Zoroastrian beliefs and practices; and the letters and rescripts are paraphrases true to the style of the originals, maybe even translations of documents. And the vocabulary of the official formulae, the words that describe the Persian religion, most often do not even require translation, since Armenian was and is steeped in Middle Iranian loans, not least in the area of religion. Several manuscripts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries offer fascinating marginal glosses of the name of the Iranian prophet, given also in the form *Zradešn*, as *karewor uxt* 'mighty (or, significant) covenant' or *bun bank* 'fundamental words'. It is impossible to tell how old these two explanations are, but three of the four terms used in them are, not unexpectedly, Iranian loans themselves, and *uxt*, 'covenant', literally 'something spoken' probably either interprets the element *dešn* as *dašn*, an Iranian loan-word meaning 'covenant', or else echoes the Middle Iranian form *Zarduxšt*, whose intrusive *x* would suggest to a speaker of Parthian or Middle Persian such an interpretation. (The *dašn* word is still a household one in Armenian *Dašnak*, the colloquial designation for a member of one of the nation's most notorious political party, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, *Hay hetap'oxakan dašnakc'ut'iwn*.) The first element of the name of Zarathustra, *Zra-*, might have been understood as deriving from *zawr*, 'power' (also an Iranian loan in Armenian). It is a theologically good, if philologically inaccurate, understanding of the Prophet's name, which contains in fact *uštra-*, 'camel', just as the names of most of his family and contemporaries have to do with the domestic animals so valued by the pastoral, nomadic society of the most ancient Iranians.⁹

But the understanding of Zradešt, Zradešn, or Zarduxšt as 'mighty covenant' is consonant with native beliefs about the Prophet in a way animal names no longer were for an urbane, sophisticated Iranian world far removed from the life of the Prophet's semi-nomadic, stone age people. For the structure and content of Zarathustra's revelation was and is pre-eminently connected by

classical Iranian tradition, not only to dime-store miracles such as healing the sick or raising the dead (the fourth-century Armenian P'awstos Buzand mentions an itinerant Christian holy man who raised the dead 'and did still more wonderful things' though we are not told what those tantalizing feats of thaumaturgy were), but to the radically new dualist doctrine he preached in his hymns, to the words themselves of those hymns, to their mental and physical power, and to their ethical and moral message. He was a priest and *maqθran*, one who wove together and recited audible ritual formulas of power and truth, mantras – the Avesta is one entire holy mantra, one *maqθra spānta*. The mountain where the Prophet's colloquies with Ahura Mazdā took place is called after them the *spāntō frašnā*, 'sacred questionings'. The Zoroastrian credo in *Yasna* 12 to which one referred above draws its authority from the doctrines and revelations given 'in all the questionings, all the meetings at which Zarathustra and Ahura Mazdā conferred together' (*vīspaēšu frašnaēšu, vīspaēšu hanjamanaēsu, yāiš āpərəsaētəm Mazdāscā Zaraθuštrasčā*). The great Iranists of the twentieth century took up anew the study of Zarathustra's hymns, in the decades after Henning had decried the disintegration of Avestic studies; and in the main their work has shown, through judicious use of the comparative method and relation of the *Gāthās* to Vedic, Hellenic and Celtic poetry, how these foundational texts of Zoroastrianism can be understood as very sophisticated religious poems. Prof. Martin Schwartz in particular has demonstrated in his groundbreaking studies how the *Gāthās* themselves are intricately composed words, vast symmetrical structures and encodings; and often, one might add, they are themselves about the spiritual, mental and physical power of words, poetry upon poetry. Schwartz's insights in many respects are founded in those of Saussure's studies of what the great French Swiss linguist called the hypograms of Latin poetry. These patterns are not products of the fertile imagination of modern savants, but are the bones and sinews of ancient poetics.¹⁰ In *Yasna* 28.5 the Prophet declares he will by great pronouncement ward off harmful creatures. In *Yasna* 31.1 he pronounces 'speech never heard [hitherto]'. Prof. P. O. Skjærvø in his series of studies of the epic substructure of the Avesta (and of the transmission of this epic and mythological material into the subsequent Manichaean literature in various Middle Iranian languages) has justifiably compared to Homeric feats of brute strength the episode in the *Vidēvdād* in which the Prophet casts two stones, each the size of the house, at the Destructive Spirit; and the structure, themes, and language of oral heroic epic indeed suffuse the Avestan corpus. The great Russian Iranist and scholar of the *Gāthās* Prof. Ivan Mikhailovich Steblin-Kamensky notes rightly, though, that the use of this image may be a metaphor: in *Yašt* 17.20, the Destructive Spirit complains that the Prophet is assaulting him with the *Ahuna Vairya* prayer, 'fighting as though with a stone the size of a house'.¹¹ The great spiritual war of Zoroastrian dualism is of course between cosmos and chaos, as in Greek conceptions of physics and cosmology; but *aša* and *druj* have a moral dimension and semantic distinction beyond this. They are Truth/

Righteousness ('Order', favoured by some recent students of the religion, seems a peculiarly vapid misunderstanding of the great moral force that *Aša vahišta*, *Aša sraēšta*, 'O best Truth, O most beautiful Truth!' represents) and the Lie. It is by spirit and word, not by mere brute strength, that the Prophet fought evil; and his words were and are deeds.¹² If, then, an ancient Mithraic artist were to attempt to portray Zarathustra, he might well dress him in Persian priestly garb and place a staff in one hand and the scroll of the lawgiver, the prophet, the sage, in the other, as at Dura. He is the bringer of the powerful covenant.

We find a parallel to that Armenian gloss at the other end of the Zoroastrian world, in India – suggesting, perhaps, a common exegetical strand, or *zand*, in both regions. In her discussion of the depiction of Mithra on the bas-relief of Tāq-e Bostān, to which we will turn presently in greater detail, Martha Carter suggests that the great *yazata* is shown standing on a lotus flower because the symbol was used to signify a contemporary political connection of the Sasanians with the Kushans.¹³ Perhaps so, for in the sixteenth chapter of the *Bundahišn* it is rather the goddess of the waters Ābān who is associated with the lotus (Phl. *nīlōpal*), while Mihr presides over all *wiškōfagān* – 'blossoms' – generally. So the lotus is not his particular flower. The lotus is fairly common in Ancient Iranian art, and Achaemenid kings are depicted holding the flower in their left hands, perhaps to enjoy its fragrance. But the lotus was in the Indian Subcontinent and in regions influenced by its Buddhist iconography especially so potent and universally recognized a marker of sanctity that Christians in western China were to make of it the base of the Cross in images on bas-reliefs. The Armenians co-opted the Sasanian symbol of twin wings, to support the Holy Sign on their own early Christian monuments: a parallel co-optation of an earlier religious framing device to new purposes. So it is not beyond the realm of possibility that a lotus on a Sasanian relief might have had political overtones.

Carter discusses briefly, in conjunction with her theory, the famous *magavans* – Zoroastrians of the region of Sind. According to the *Bhaviṣṣya Purāṇa* (139.44) the *magas* were descended from a sage of the Mihira clan in Śakadvīpa, literally the Island of the Sakas/Scythians – that is, from an Iranian noble family such as the Mihrānids, from Sagastān/Sistān. The daughter of the sage, the legend continues, married the Sun god (this would be the Indian Sūrya). Their son, founder of the Maga sect, was named Jaraśabda, that is, Zarathustra. The association with the sun and light would accord with the Zoroastrian tradition, found in the seventh book of the *Dēnkard* and elsewhere, that the home of the parents of the Prophet blazed with light before his birth. Classical and Iranian traditions affirm that he laughed at birth, and the *Zartušt-nāmeḥ* brings together the two details: *be-khandīd chun shod ze mādar jodā; / darrakhshān shod az khandeh-ye u sarā*, 'He laughed as he left his mother's womb / And from his laughter shone the room.' As to the Prophet's name in this Puranic tradition, Jaraśabda, it seems an arbitrary, deliberate kind of form. One can render Zarathustra in various ways in Indic languages, Parsi Gujarati Jarthošt for example; so perhaps making Indic *śabda*, 'word', the

second part of the Prophet's name was translation from an Iranian form where the same was perceived, whether it contained something like *uxt* 'speech' or *dašn* 'covenant'. That is what apparently produced the Armenian gloss. Given the importance of the identification of Zarathustra as a lawgiver, the parallel may not have been fortuitous, but reflected instead a widespread exegetical tradition. The manuscripts containing the Armenian gloss are very late, copied a full millennium after Ehišē wrote his history of Vardan, but so indeed is the entire Zoroastrian manuscript tradition itself, and so is that of India. The conservatism of Armenian tradition and its long and intimate acquaintance with Iran and Zoroastrianism speak in favour of an authentically old exegetical line, yet coincidence and late invention are also possible.

So we may have a tradition in which Zarathustra was regarded mainly as the bringer of a powerful covenant, as a lawgiver. A furled scroll could have signified such a role to Zoroastrians of the late Parthian Arsacid period, to which the Zoroastrian Pahlavi books assign the first attempts to codify the Avestan corpus in writing. One sacerdotal figure in the Mithraeum of Dura-Europos, then, could be Zarathustra; the other, either the Ostanēs of classical legend or perhaps even the sage Jāmāspa of native Iranian tradition. One does not insist that Cumont and Rostovtzeff were right in their identification; but they were not necessarily wrong. Palmyrene priests? Donors? The things that you're liable to read in the Bible (or Near East art historical writing), it ain't necessarily so ...

Let us now consider the relief of Mithra at Tāq-e Bostān, from the late fourth century (Fig. 16). It belongs to a complex of reliefs on the cliff face and in rock-cut vaults near a spring emptying into a pool, in the Zagros highlands near Kermanshah, on the old Baghdad-Khorasan road. It would have been, thus, a pleasant rest stop and place of pilgrimage and veneration for travellers in antiquity. There is no problem of identification of Mithra himself, even though the scene as a whole lends itself to various interpretations. The basic iconography of the god, as we have already noted, is widespread and stable as that of no other in the pantheon; and he appears in Sasanian Iran too, on a coin of Hormizd I in the late third century, that is, about a hundred years before this rock relief. The *yazata* appears behind a king who is receiving the beribboned ring from Ahura Mazdā, and extends the *barsom*. Mithra stands on a lotus; the king and the supreme God, on the extended, prostrate corpse of a bearded Roman emperor. The latter can be none other than the fourth-century Julian the Apostate, whom Shāpur II defeated; but there has been much debate about the identity of the king treading upon him. Some scholars¹⁴ identify him as Ardashir II, who reigned for four years after Shāpur and could scarcely have killed poor Julian a second time, so if it is indeed he, then the victory over the powerful enemy is meant somehow to accrue to his benefit, as a good deed of his predecessor – probably also a close relative – whose merit he is meant to inherit. Carter would have the lotus signify the success of Sasanian policy in eastern regions. Poor dead, defeated Julian had gone on campaign



Figure 16 Mithra, Shāpur II (?), and Ohrmazd, Tāq-e Bostān

proclaiming the protection of Sol-Mithras, so some interpreters of the scene have suggested that showing Mithra himself blessing the Sasanian who crushed the audacious Roman aggressor was a propagandistic retort; and indeed this is the only ancient Iranian use of Mithra in a scene legitimating royal power.¹⁵ That argument seems far-fetched: when the Sasanians sacked Bethlehem, they left a fresco of the three Magi unharmed because the visitors to the newborn Christ looked so much like their own priests, quite understandably. One doubts the same Sasanians would have gone out of their way to disparage worshippers of one of their own gods and make the insult a key point of a major bas-relief, however different the Mithraic religion was from mainstream Zoroastrianism.

It is a striking sculpture, whatever its overtones; and it serves as the basis for most modern Parsi depictions of the Prophet Zarathustra¹⁶ (Fig. 17). There are 13 rays on the nimbus at Tāq-e Bostān; in Parsi depictions there are 11 or 12, perhaps because the Western Christian superstition about 13 as an unlucky number had entered Parsi consciousness. The Prophet holds the *barsom*, or a knob-stick, or a flaming torch, or a cow-headed mace, or is shown as an *imago clipeata* 'portrait on a round shield' (Figs 18 and 19). A priest in the course



Figures 17–19 Modern Parsi depictions of Zarathustra

of ordination sleeps with a mace under his pillow; and it hangs with a sword in the fire temple to signify the battle against evil. The Sasanian Mithra has a low-cut, heavily embroidered collar that shows off his powerful shoulders; the Parsi Zarathustra's white shirt comes up to his neck, like that of an officiating priest. There is an image of Zarathustra that was frequently used a century ago but is now rare, that portrays him holding a bow and standing in the open country before a fire altar (Fig. 20), while a stylized winged figure hovers in the sky facing him: this is taken from an early engraving of the tomb of Darius I. Other recent Parsi depictions of Zarathustra show him in simple, priestly garb, as on a medal to be worn by a believer (Fig. 21); and he is always, in all Zoroastrian art, bearded. (So is Mithra at Tāq-e Bostān and so are the figures in the frescoes of the Dura Mithraeum.) And there are portrayals of the Prophet, as noted earlier, with another figure (e.g. Fig. 22). The obvious questions are the ones one cannot confidently answer, though there may be documentation that one has simply been unable to find. Were the early Parsi artists fully aware that the figure that served as their model for Zarathustra was Mithra; and if so, why did they choose him? Mithra's very name means 'covenant'; and one tradition, possibly widespread, finds a word for the covenant in the Prophet's name. Zarathustra was the perfect man, the *teleios anthrōpos*; and Mithra is the most human of the *yazatas* – a quality that figured, most likely, in the evolution of the soteriological religious fraternity of the Mithraists. Mithra is a *yazata* also associated very closely with the sun; and the Parsis in Gujarat adopted a local symbol of the Hindu sun god Sūrya – the sun rising (or, if one is in western India, setting) over the sea as an emblem of their own faith. So a picture recognized as that of Mithra might have been co-opted as an icon of Zarathustra.

We know at least that Zoroastrians in the early modern period, before any

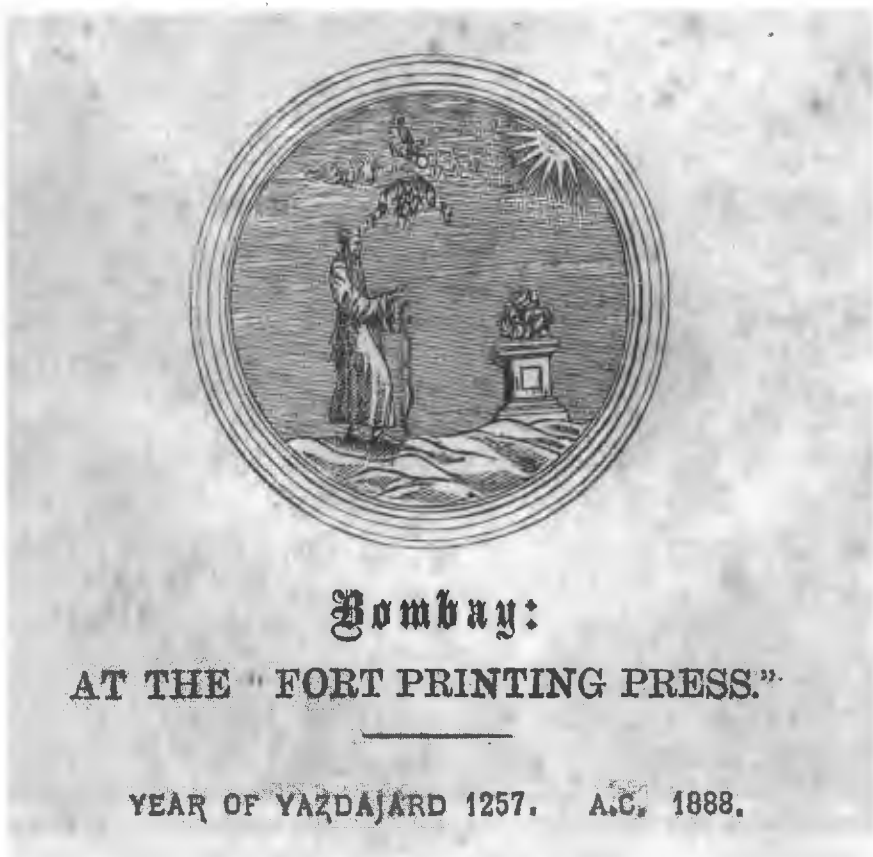


Figure 20 Modern Parsi depiction of Zarathustra holding a bow



Figure 21 Medal with Zarathustra, India, silver, early twentieth century (?).
 Collection of J.R. Russell



Figure 22 Zarathustra and 'Lohrāsp'

encounter with Western archaeological and philological research, preserved an image of Mithra that seems very much like the standard iconographical type: in the seventeenth century Šabī Dastur Anushirvan Marzban of Kerman beheld in a dream the *yazata* Mihr with a luminous face. The vision is described in Persian verse in a *rivāyat*, or religious responsum:

Dastur Nushirvan told me, 'This is a secret hidden amongst the good and bad alike. Now, one night as I was deep in slumber, I beheld one whose face was like the Sun, from whom wafted the fragrance of musk and rose water; languorous was that ambergris perfume. I opened my mouth and spoke to him: Who are you? Tell me your name. He said: Know that I am the god Mithra, who by the gracious command of the Knower of the Hidden am the keeper of all covenants. I am the guide in the material and spiritual worlds. I shattered the works of Ahreman; I work enmity against the demons and Satan [...]'¹⁷

Between the Mithra of Sasanian and earlier ages, whose appearance seems to have been remembered in indigenous tradition, and the appropriation in modern Zoroastrian art of that image for the portrayal of the Prophet Zarathustra, lies the entire era of the growth of the Western tradition, in which Zarathustra was at first but dimly remembered. Gemistos Plethon revived the classical image of the Persian astrologer-mage for the Italian Renaissance; and Raphael portrayed Zarathustra among the great philosophers of antiquity in his *School of Athens*, painted in the Stanza della Segnatura of the Vatican for Pope Julius II (1503–13) (Fig. 23). He is shown with Ptolemy and Euclid, but opinion seems to be divided,



Figure 23 Raphael, *The School of Athens*



Figure 24 *The School of Athens*, details

though, about which figure represents him. Vasari identifies him as 'Zoroastre, Re de' Battriani', King of the Bactrians; so he may be the man in the radiate royal crown (not unlike Mithra's nimbus) with his back turned to us. This figure holds a terrestrial globe and there are tiny pseudo-oriental characters on the hem of his golden mantle (Fig. 24). But if the star-studded globe represents Zarathustra's profession of astrology, then he is the sage in white facing the crowned figure and the viewer, with Raphael hovering nearby.¹⁸

Raphael had several precursors, the most prominent of whom was Giusto de Padova (d. c. 1397 CE), who painted a fresco on the right wall of the Capella di' Sant' Agostino of the Eremitani of the philosophers of antiquity seated beneath the figures embodying their particular arts and sciences. A German traveller a century later described the painting and it was also copied in a contemporary manuscript. The latter shows Zarathustra seated below a figure embodying Dialectic (*Dialectica*), who holds a serpent in each hand (Fig. 25). Zarathustra's identification as a dialectician would have been based on the grounds of his dualistic philosophy. The other non-Christian prophet of such contemporary schemata of arts and virtues paired with their human proponents or opposites is Mohammed. But his dualism is of another sort: in the *Inferno* of Dante the Arab tears himself down the middle as punishment for having rent in twain the body of the Church; and he is the human antithesis of *Fides*, 'Faith'. Dialectic is lodged between the two other subjects of the medieval curriculum of studies called the *trivium*, *Grammatica* and *Rhetorica*. The Prophet's name is given in the rather garbled form Cereastes, and he is clothed in a rose-coloured hood, with yellow undergarments and a blue and red mantle. He is writing unintelligible characters on a page he holds at right angles to himself. Karl Dannenfeldt describes these as 'undoubtedly intended for oriental script'.¹⁹ Although most of the other philosophers in the scene are also scribbling away at books, I think this is still an argument for identifying the crowned figure with his back to us and a line of oriental-style writing on his mantle in *The School of Athens* as Zarathustra, even though the figure in Raphael's painting holds a terrestrial globe rather than the expected celestial one. At Padua it is Ptolemy, not 'Cereastes'/Zarathustra, who is the proponent of astrology; so Raphael a century later might have made the same identification, and we need not force upon Zarathustra the star-studded globe or the profession of astrology either.²⁰

In conclusion, one offers some final reflections on the question. Much is made of the need to protect the environment and to curb the diminution of species, whose diversity is an ecological necessity and whose destruction by human agency is a moral wrong. The same may be said of languages, which are disappearing at a rate proportional to the extinction of plants and animals. The Zoroastrians are a small people, defined not by land or language or even cultural unity, but by a common devotion to a unique conception of the cosmos and its meaning, radically and irreconcilably different from any other, that was in antiquity of extreme power and influence. This revelatory conception



Figure 25 Giusto of Padua's Zarathustra, Ambrasian codex, fol. 3r

belonged to a single man, whose elusive image one has pursued here, across millennia, monuments and texts. Surely the study of such an unusual heritage deserves to be continued: one taught it at Columbia, only to see the century-long history of Zoroastrian studies there come to an end. It is now at an end at Harvard as well, and at Berkeley. But the study of ancient Iran ought not to be eclipsed by subjects of greater topical practicality, whose value may prove to have been ephemeral. I come to this field, also, quite specifically and unapologetically as an Armenologist. I speak for the ancient and continuous testimony of a people that, unique among the non-Muslim peoples of the Near East, have never surrendered for any period of time any salient aspect of their identity, their sovereign right to be themselves, claiming their native land, pursuing their political aspirations, preserving their language and script, and defending their faith. The Armenian perspective, even in the consideration of so seemingly distant a topic as the image of Zarathustra, is valuable, and students of antiquity, particularly Iranists, ignore it to their own detriment. The river that flows through the Armenian capital, Erevan, is called the Hrazdan: it takes its name from Frāzdānu, the river on whose banks Zarathustra converted king Vishtāspa to his new religion. No other city, neither the one through which the Thames flows, nor the one above the mighty Hudson, can boast such a mark of hoary nobility. In an appendix I would then adduce some further Armenian evidence to approach questions concerning the iconography of the Sasanian reliefs that have come up in this discussion.

APPENDIX

A stone capital from K'asał of the fifth or sixth century shows the Armenian king Tiridates the Great, the first royal convert to Christianity, holding a staff in his right hand and a ring in his left; the ring ought to remind one of the one bestowed upon the Sasanian kings of the period, and its survival in early Christian Armenia suggests the durability of certain religious emblems of royalty (Fig. 26).²¹ It does not, however, bear an inscription. The medieval Armenian cemeteries of Julfa in Nakhichevan and of various sites in Arc'ax (Mountainous Karabagh) have numerous tombstones depicting in bas-relief the activities and pleasures of the noblemen who rest beneath them. They depict hunting and feasting and riding on horseback. No other mode of transport for a nobleman was imaginable, and one has already observed that the ancient belief that one's faithful mount bears one to the Otherworld endures amongst the Iranians of modern Armenia – the Yezidi Kurds. So important was the equine image that such funerary monuments, which Armenians carved for themselves as well, are called in Armenian *jiak'ar*, 'horse stones'. The Armenian tombs have been compared sometimes to the massive grave monuments of Bogomil princes of the same period in Bosnia; and there is abundant evidence to suggest that Armenian sectarians of the Byzantine period, resettled in the Balkans, brought



Figure 26 Tiridates on a capital from K'asał



Figure 27 Gndevank' tombstone

their beliefs and culture to enrich the homelands of the Southern Slavs. In the Kievan period, the Iranian-flavoured art of the bas-reliefs of the Armenian Church of the Holy Cross on Ałt'amar Island, Lake Van, seems strongly to have influenced the bas-reliefs of the churches of Rus', at Vladimir and other sites.²² One Armenian tombstone from Gndevank' bears this epitaph: *Ays ē hangist paron Avak'in, or karčawrawk'ēlav, ēar andarām psakn ... t'v. RŽŽ* 'This is the resting [place] of lord Awag, whose days were short; he took the unwithering diadem in (1567 CE)'²³ (Fig. 27). The relief depicts a man holding in his right hand the reins of a saddled horse; in his left, he has a round, ring-like object. To his left a hunter aims an arrow at a fleeing mountain goat. The reference to the diadem (Armenian loan-word *psak*; see above), though of course a standard Christian formula, still explains what the sculptor meant the ring-like object to be. No Sasanian bas-relief does this. But we do have both *pusag* and *didēm* in Parthian funerary hymns as the ring-wreaths the righteous will receive after death.²⁴ A funerary inscription of 1318 CE from Noravank' reads, *Gelahrašn Pułtayin, or eritasard hasaki yet yolov k'aj mrc'manc'tigaxoc'eal zant'aramn ankalaw zpsak* 'Of Pułtay of wondrous beauty, who at a young age after many brave tournaments was pierced through by a javelin and received the unwithering diadem.'²⁵ The tombstone of *melik' Mirjan* from Brnakot', 1551 CE, shows a man standing on a prostrate figure: he holds the Cross in his right hand and a ring-like object in his left (Fig. 28).²⁶ Although a scholar who has discussed this image believes the fallen man to be a revered ancestor; and the ring, a wine cup viewed from above – it seems more likely that this funerary scene celebrates the nobleman's defeat of an enemy and his triumphant reception in Heaven with Cross and diadem; it would then be a remote echo of the Sasanian reliefs, such as the ones at Naqsh-e Rostam and Tāq-e Bostān. A tombstone from Šōš in Arc'ax (Fig. 29), possibly of the noble *melik' Šahnazarean* clan and *circa* seventeenth century, depicts horsemen flourishing aloft rings that even trail ribbons behind them in pure Sasanian style, though their weapons are more up to date – a rifle is neatly carved nearby.²⁷ The rings are diadems, then; and the hard data of Armenian texts must be taken into account in any discussion of the Iranian monuments, despite their distance in time. These scenes take place, not at court or here, but in the next world: one must consider the possibility that the scene at Naqsh-e Rostam is not an 'investiture', but a vision of the first Sasanian king in the otherworldly House of Song, the *rōšn garōdmān* of Ahura Mazdā, the dead body of his enemy solid proof of his kirbag, his meritorious action – and a guarantee of salvation. Let us return to the Armenian relief. There are amphorae of wine and a feast is about to begin. A seated *gusan* ('bard, minstrel', a well-known Parthian loan in Armenian that is discussed in far more detail in the Armenian texts than in any Iranian ones) indicates that their glorious, diademed entry into the *gerezman* is to be taken quite literally. For that Armenian word for the tomb (heaven is *draxt*, a forest of trees) derives from a north-western Middle Iranian descendant of the Avestan *garō damāna*, 'house of song', that designation of the Otherworld of the righteous coined by



Figure 28 Bīnakot' tombstone



Figure 29 Tombstone from Šōš, Arc'ax

Zarathustra himself. Zarathustra, the singer of the *Gāthās*, the bringer of the mighty covenant and the good law, not the pernicious 'Superman' of diseased modern fantasy but still the most godlike of men. Zarathustra, whose image seems to be settled once and for all amongst his followers as that of the Mithra,



Eleven-headed Guanyin standing in a landscape surrounded by selected illustrations and quotations from the Lotus Sutra, hanging scroll; ink and colour on silk. Reportedly retrieved from Dunhuang, dated 985 CE. Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop, 1943.57.14, © President and Fellows of Harvard College



Twin portraits, Dura Mithraeum, with colour restoration



Adoration of the Magi, Echmiadzin Gospel



Raphael, *The School of Athens*, details



Limoges Casket showing the Three Wise Men. © Trustees of the British Museum



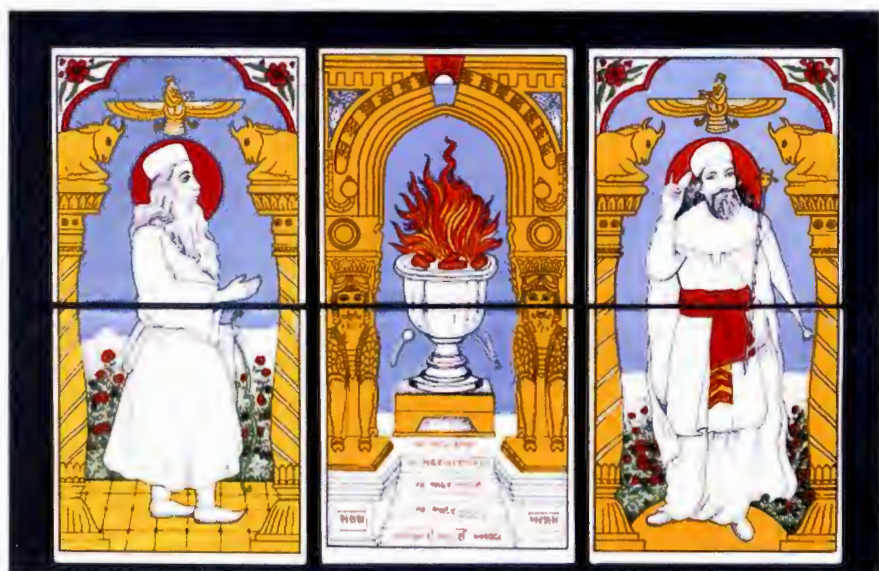
Tiles of the Takieh of Mo'aven ol-Molk, Kermanshah, Iran, with scenes from Achaemenid and Sasanian reliefs, including Mithra with radiate crown and *barsom* described in the Persian inscription as Zarathustra. © V.S. Curtis



Tiles of the Takieh of Mo'aven ol-Molk, Kermanshah, Iran, with scenes from Achaemenid and Sasanian reliefs, including the Bisotun relief of Darius with winged figure above the captured 'rebel kings'. © J.E. Curtis



The Farvahar. Painting by Aida Foroutan. © Aida Foroutan



Set of tiles from Mumbai showing Lohrāsp, the holy fire and the Prophet Zarathustra. © Trustees of the British Museum



The Soltikoff plate (photo courtesy Bibliothèque Nationale de France)



Mosaic from Ravenna, Domus of Stone Carpets, mid sixth century (left, spring; front, summer; right, autumn; back, winter)



The Ābrēzagān festival on a painting from Panjikent, Temple I, northern chapel, seventh century (M.M. D'iakonov, 'Rospisi Piandzhikenta i zhivopis' Srednei Azii', in A.Iu. Yakubovskii, M.M. D'iakonov (eds), *Zhivopis' drevnego Piandzhikenta* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1954), pl. XIV)



The Navjote (initiation ceremony)



A painting titled 'Yellow Camel' by Tajik artist Farrukh Khujaev

the most human of the gods, whose name in Persian, Mihr, has expanded from covenant or treaty and come to embrace friendship, love and the Sun's light. Mihr lives still in Armenia as a hero in a cave, Mher, the once and future king. But that story is for another time; and our present study is ended.

NOTES

1. The term seems to be Antiochus's invention.
2. Iranian **naxwadāra*-, 'holder of the prime (position)'; the form is attested in the Parthian period in Greek form as *nohodares*.
3. See James R. Russell, 'The Epic of Sasun: Armenian apocalypse', in Sergio La Porta (ed.), *The Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 41–77.
4. See F. Cumont and M. I. Rostovtzeff, 'The Mithraeum', in M. I. Rostovtzeff, P. E. Brown and C. B. Welles (eds), *The Excavations of Dura-Europos (Preliminary Report for 1933–34 and 1934–36)* (New Haven, 1939), pp. 62–134.
5. Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, vol. 3 (Leiden, 1991), p. 489.
6. Albert de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 322, 392, 398–9.
7. Boyce, *History*, vol. 3, pp. 493, 555–8.
8. H. Ačaṙean, *Hayoc'anjanunneri baṭaran* [Dictionary of Armenian proper names] (Beirut, 1972), vol. 4, p. 193.
9. J. R. Russell, 'The Name of Zoroaster in Armenian', *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* ii (1985–6), pp. 3–10, repr. in J. R. Russell, *Armenian and Iranian Studies* [=AIS] (Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies 9) (Cambridge, MA, 2004), pp. 57–64.
10. Ancient Armenian poetry seems hypogrammatically to encode the name of the Zoroastrian *yazata* Vahagn (Av. *Vərəθraγna*) into a hymn dedicated to him and into related mythological texts, for instance. See J. R. Russell, 'Magic mountains, milky seas, dragon slayers, and other Zoroastrian archetypes', *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* (N.S.) xxii (2008 [2012]), pp. 57–80. On these features of Saussure's poetics see most recently Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Dark Tongues: The Art of Rogues and Riddlers* (New York, 2013).
11. I. V. Steblin-Kamenskii, *Gaty Zaratushty* (St Petersburg, 2009). I am grateful to Dr Firuza Abdullaeva for her gift of her copy of this precious volume.
12. William Blake, an angry biblical exegete, insisted that words are deeds, and Christ's power was nothing to Caesar's if it is not so; W. H. Auden, in his elegy for Yeats, mused: 'For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives / In the valley of its making where executives / Would never want to tamper / flows on ... / ... it survives, / A way of happening, a mouth.' Then Wm. S. Burroughs declared, 'The purpose of writing is to make it happen.'
13. Martha L. Carter, 'Mithra on the Lotus: A study of the imagery of the sun god in the Kushano-Sasanian era', *Monumentum Georg Morgenstierne*, vol. 1 (Acta Iranica 21) (Leiden, 1981), pp. 74–98.
14. For instance, K. Tanabe, 'Date and significance of the so-called investiture of Ardashir II', *Orient* xxi (1985), pp. 102–21. On the other monuments at the site,

- see Johanna Domela Movassat, *The Large Vault at Taq-i Bustan: A Study in Late Sasanian Royal Art* (Lewiston, 2005). She considers the scene with Mithra to represent the triumph of Shāpur II over Julian.
15. See Dominique Hollard, 'Julien et Mithrā [sic!] sur le relief de Tāq-i Bostān', *Sources for the History of Sasanian and post-Sasanian Iran, Res Orientales* xix (2010), pp. 147–63. The scene is discussed also by Barbara Kaim, 'Investiture or Mithra: Towards a new interpretation of so-called investiture scenes in Parthian and Sasanian art', *Iranica Antiqua* xlv (2009), pp. 403–15, who takes the image of the god to represent the covenant itself rather than the divine being. She suggests the ring being proffered to the king by the god on various reliefs be identified as a *dydymy*, 'diadem' (p. 406).
 16. I am grateful to Dr Daniel J. Sheffield for his (unpublished) paper, 'Picturing prophethood: KRCOI Zarātushtnāma Manuscript HP 149 and the origins of Portraits of the Prophet Zarathustra', which deals in fascinating detail with the Parsi adoption of the Mithra figure from Taq-e Bostan.
 17. A story which tells of the vision of Dastur Anushirvan Marzban of the god Mithra in a dream and of its truths, published in M. R. Unvala, *Darab Hormazyār's Rivāyat*, vol. 2 (Bombay, 1922), pp. 206–7, discussed by J. R. Russell, "'Sleep" and "Dreaming" in Armenian', in J. Greppin (ed.), *Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Armenian Linguistics* (Delmar, 1992), pp. 155–6 (repr. in J. R. Russell, *Armenian and Iranian Studies* (Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies 9) (Cambridge, MA, 2004), pp. 485–6).
 18. See Marcia Hall (ed.), *Raphael's 'School of Athens'* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 53; and Arnold Nesselrath, *Raphael's School of Athens* (The Vatican, 1996), p. 17.
 19. Karl H. Dannenfeldt, 'The pseudo-Zoroastrian oracles in the renaissance', *Studies in the Renaissance* iv (1957), pp. 20–1. I am greatly indebted for this reference to my colleague Christina Maranci, Professor of Art History at Tufts University, Medford, MA.
 20. See Julius von Schlosser, 'Giusto's Fresken in Padua und die Vorläufer der Stanza della Segnatura', *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, vol. 17 (Vienna, 1896), p. 37 and esp. Tafel IV (of the Ambrasian codex, fol. 3r); on 'Mahumet', see p. 21. I express my deepest thanks to three Harvard colleagues for their help in finding this rare publication: Lukas Klic (Berenson Library, I Tatti), Kenneth Peterson (Widener Library), and Emily Weirich (Fine Arts Library).
 21. See J. R. Russell, 'The Scepter of Tiridates', *Le Muséon* cxiv/1–2 (2001) (repr. in J. R. Russell, *Armenian and Iranian Studies*, op. cit.), pp. 187 and 212 plate 1.
 22. See J. R. Russell, 'Iranians, Armenians, Prince Igor, and the lightness of Pushkin', *Iran and the Caucasus* (forthcoming).
 23. Hamlet Petrosyan, "'Manuk" kerparə uš mijnadaryan hay tapanak'arayan k'andakum (XV–XVIII darer)' [The image of the 'lad' in late medieval Armenian funerary reliefs], in S. B. Harut'yunyan and A. A. K'alant'aryan (eds), *T'ux Manuk: nstašrjani nyut'er* [The Dark Lad: conference papers] (Erevan, 2001), p. 74 and plate 2.
 24. For a full discussion of these see P. O. Skjærvø, 'Reflexes of Iranian oral traditions in Manichean literature', in D. Durkin-Meisterernst, C. Reck and D. Weber (eds),

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25. Petrosyan, "Manuk" kerparə uš mijnadaryan hay tapanak'arəyin k'andakum (XV–XVIII darer), p. 45.
26. Petrosyan, "Manuk" kerparə uš mijnadaryan hay tapanak'arəyin k'andakum (XV–XVIII darer), p. 77 and p. 78 plate 3.
27. Russell, 'The Scepter of Tiridates', op. cit., pp. 194–5 and p. 214 plate 3.

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ANCIENT IRANIAN MOTIFS AND ZOROASTRIAN ICONOGRAPHY

Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis

A number of symbols that appear in the art of ancient Iran in the Achaemenid, Parthian and Sasanian periods can be associated with the Zoroastrian religion. The most prominent of these symbols is the winged figure which was borrowed by the Achaemenid Persians from Egyptian and Assyrian art. In ancient Persian art, the winged symbol often appears above the head of the king or hero (Fig. 30a, b), as seen, for example, on reliefs, coins and the cylinder seal of Darius the Great (522–486 BCE).¹ The *farvahar* or *fravashi* symbol, as it is known today, originally represented Ahura Mazdā in the early Achaemenid period, or it may have been a representation of the *xvarənah/farnah/khwarrah/farr* or 'Kingly Glory'. There are also examples of a winged symbol without a human figure, as seen on seals.² Shapur Shahbazi and Peter Calmeyer have argued that the winged figure in the ring stood for the Kingly Glory *farr ī kayāni*, while Abolala Soudavar sees the winged figure as Ahura Mazdā and the winged disc as the symbol of the *xvarənah*, the *xvarənah* being the solar radiance of Ahura Mazdā.³ According to Malandra the Avestan *xvarənah* 'embodies the concept of good fortune'. Modern Zoroastrians regard the *farvahar/fravashi* as the immortal spirit of each human being that defends the material world against evil.⁴ In Zoroastrianism the *fravashis* have three roles. In the Avesta they represent warriors that fly down from heaven to protect the material world that is in danger of harm by the *daēvas*. Second, they are seen as ancestor spirits, and thirdly they are regarded as guardian spirits.⁵

In Achaemenid art worshipping scenes with the sacred fire that are possibly related to an early form of Zoroastrianism, are common. Here the worshippers often wear a soft hat with neck and chin guards and earflaps, and they hold *barsom* rods in either one hand or both hands.⁶ In the Oxus Treasure a similar head cover is worn by a number of male figures who may be priests (Fig. 31a). They hold *barsom* sticks in their right hand.⁷ At Persepolis such soft headgear, which also provides a chin cover that could easily be pulled over the mouth, is worn by servants or priests sometimes carrying bowls and animals.⁸ The mouth cover (*padam*) protects the fire from being polluted by human breath. A sacrificial scene on the Daskyleion relief depicts two priests with soft headgear who



Figure 30a Royal seal of Darius the Great © Trustees of the British Museum



Figure 30b Bisotun relief of Darius the Great © J. E. Curtis



Figure 31a Oxus Treasure gold plaque showing a priest (?) holding *barsom*. © Trustees of the British Museum



Figure 31b Oxus Treasure disc showing the royal falcon. © Trustees of the British Museum

are holding *barsom* in their hands. Their mouths are clearly covered while they are about to sacrifice a ram and a bull.⁹

In the early Hellenistic period evidence for an ancient Iranian and Zoroastrian-related iconography comes from rock reliefs with worshipping scenes, including Dokan-ei Davud Qizqapan, where we find a standing male figure holding *barsom* bundles or holding a bow and flanking the sacred fire. In each case the mouth is fully covered.¹⁰ Similar worshipping figures are also found in Persis in south-western Iran dating to c. 290 BCE when the local Frataraka rulers, who were probably under Seleucid supremacy, re-introduced a royal and religious iconography on their reliefs and coins which was Achaemenid inspired. Figures carved onto two reliefs found below the Terrace at Persepolis in 1923/4 show figures in worshipping pose carrying sacred *barsom* rods.

The iconography on both obverse and reverse of the Frataraka coins suggests Zoroastrian connotations.¹¹ The figure on the obverse wears a soft hat with chin guard, very similar to that shown on the reliefs of Persepolis, some of the gold plaques of the Oxus Treasure and on the Daskyleion relief (see above). On the obverse and reverse of the Frataraka coins it seems as if the chin cover can be extended and pulled over their mouth serving as a *padam*. This mouth cover is worn by priests, both in ancient times and today, in order to protect the sacred fire from being polluted by their breath.

There are also other religious scenes and details on these early third-century BCE coins that could suggest Zoroastrian connections:

- 1 On the reverse, the winged symbol features prominently above a sacred building in front of the worshipping king: cf. the *xvarənah* or Ahura Mazdā symbol on Achaemenid reliefs.
- 2 On the reverse, the king has his right arm raised towards the sacred building and holds a bow in his left hand: cf. Bisotun and Naqsh-e Rostam.
- 3 On the reverse, a falcon/eagle perches on the royal standard or *drafsh*. This bird of prey, which also appears on top of the hat of the king on the obverse, may represent the Vereгна bird which is associated with the kingly glory.¹² Achaemenid-period images of birds of prey often holding a ring in their claws and probably symbolizing the glory of the king can be seen on a stone plaque in Egyptian blue found at Persepolis and circular gold plaques from the Oxus Treasure (Fig. 31b).¹³

The coinage of Persis under Parthian rule, that is from c. 140 BCE onwards, adopts an iconography which is clearly in accord with Zoroastrian rituals: in front of a fire-holder stands a male figure – priest/king – who carries in one hand sticks, that are probably a *barsom* rod. The motif of the fire and worshipper continues into the first century CE, but is then abandoned and replaced by a series of divine and royal symbols: the star and moon crescent – creations of Ahura Mazdā – a diadem, a bird of prey, and the bird holding a diadem in its beak (Fig. 32a, b). These are all symbols associated with the *xvarənah* and the glory of the king.¹⁴ This iconography suggests a link between kingship and the

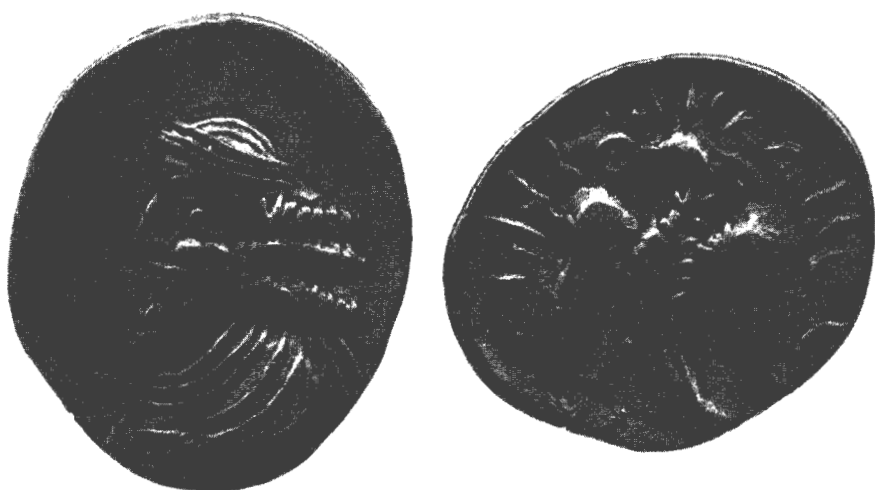


Figure 32a, b Silver coin of Persis, southern Iran, of which the obverse shows the royal falcon with a ring in its beak. © Trustees of the British Museum

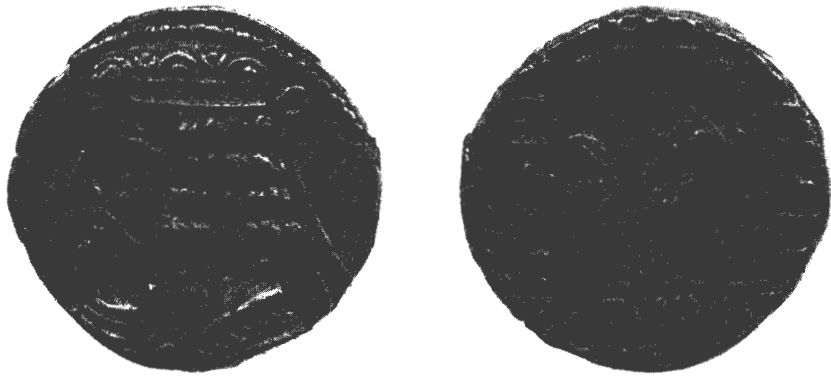


Figure 33 Silver coin of the Parthian king Vologases I. © Trustees of the British Museum

Zoroastrian religion in the mid- to late Parthian period and the star is perhaps associated specifically with the *yazata* Anahita.¹⁵

The Parthian king Vologases I (51–78 CE) enjoyed a high position in the Zoroastrian religion. According to the *Dēnkard* (Middle Persian: ‘Acts of Religion’), a tenth-century compendium of Zoroastrian beliefs and customs, Vologases instructed all the provinces of his empire to preserve versions of the Avestan books and teachings, both in oral and written form, which had been dispersed as a result of Alexander’s pillage and looting in the late fourth century BCE. On his silver tetradrachms, Vologases I usually receives a diadem from a female deity on the reverse of his coins (Fig. 33); she could be either Anahita or Ashi. Both *yazatas* are closely associated with the *xvarənah* or ‘Divine Glory’ of the King, as are the *yazatas* Mithra and Verethragna, who together with the falcon (Veragna bird) are described as protectors of the *xvarənah* in various *Yašt*s.¹⁶



Figure 34a, b Silver coins of the Parthian kings Orodes II and Phraates IV. © Trustees of the British Museum



Figure 35a, b Bronze coin of Elymais, southern Iran showing the royal falcon with a diadem in its beak. © Trustees of the British Museum

In Parthian-period iconography, the bird of prey, which is perhaps the Avestan Vereгна, plays an important role as a symbol of kingship in the Zoroastrian tradition and is therefore closely associated with the *xvarənah* or Kingly Glory. The bird appears on coins of Arsaces I where it is placed on the reverse by the archer's feet, and particularly on the obverse of coins of Phraates IV, where it is shown behind the king's head holding a diadem, a wreath or a ring in its beak (Fig. 34a, b).¹⁷ The reverse of bronze Arsacid coins and Elymaian coins of the first to third centuries CE often shows a bird of prey holding a diadem in its beak (Fig. 35a, b).¹⁸ On the Elymaian rock relief of Hong-e Azhdar (Hong-e Nowruzi) birds of prey holding a ring in their beak appear around the mounted local king and the standing figure; birds of prey also appear as throne supports on the relief of Tang-e Sarvak and mythological birds appear below the throne of Artabanus IV on a stela from Susa.¹⁹ On Kushan coins of the first century CE Orlagno, the equivalent to Iranian Verethragna, has a bird of prey crowning his hat (Fig. 36a, b, c, d), and Pharro,



Figure 36a, b, c, d Kushan gold coins showing the divine beings Orlagno (Verethragna), Pharro (Khvarrah) and Druvaspa. © Trustees of the British Museum

the personification of *xvarənah* of Kingly Glory, also appears on some Kushan coins with wings on his hat (Fig. 36c). Birds of prey feature prominently in the art of first-century BCE Commagene and in the Parthian-period art of second to early third-century CE Hatra. On coins of Artavasdes III of Armenia birds decorate the square tiara of the king, and a bird holding a diadem is placed behind his head (Fig. 37a). Tigranes of Armenia (83–69 BCE) also wears a square tiara with neckguard and ear flaps, and two birds of prey and a central star decorate his royal hat (Fig. 37b). A fragment of a bird of prey survives at Nimrud Dagħ as part of the Dexiosis relief, and birds of prey appear on the tiara of Antiochus I.²⁰ In 66 CE King Tiridates of Armenia was sent by his brother, the Arsacid king Vologases I (51–78 CE), to Rome in order to put an end to the escalating dispute between Parthia and Rome. According to Cassius Dio,²¹ the Armenian king Tiridates travelled overland in order not to pollute water, one of the seven Zoroastrian holy elements. He seems to have made a great impression on Nero and Rome when he arrived there accompanied by 1,000 white horses and a huge entourage. Tiridates took off his crown to receive it from Nero, 'his god'. It is suggested that this historical visit, which was remembered by generations in Rome, may have served as the inspiration behind the story of the visit of Magi in the Gospel of Matthew dating to the first century CE.²² Members of the Armenian royal house were most probably followers of Zoroastrianism and the Iranian *yazatas*. Mithra (Armenian Mihr/Mher) and Verethragna (Armenian Vahagu) in particular enjoyed great veneration in Armenia until Christianity became the official religion of this region in 301–3 CE. It was probably here that Roman soldiers first came into contact with Mithra/Mihr. Through Armenia the veneration of Mithra spread to the west where it became popular as the cult of Roman Mithras.²³

Arsacid kings were associated with certain Zoroastrian traditions, such as the calendar used at Nisa, and the lighting of a fire at the coronation of each king.²⁴ In the *Parthian Stations* of Isidore of Charax, the Greco-Roman geographer of



Figure 37a, b Silver coins of Artavasdes and Tigranes of Armenia. © Trustees of the British Museum

the first century BCE and first century CE, we read that an ever-burning fire was kept at Ashaak,²⁵ which was probably somewhere in Khorasan. Worshipping scenes with the sacred fire are found in the art of the Parthian period include a second-century relief on an isolated rock at Bisotun in western Iran where the Arsacid king Vologases IV (147–91) stands next to a fire altar.²⁶ From Elymaian Bard-e Neshandeh comes a relief (now in the National Museum of Iran in Tehran), where two different groups of worshippers appear on either side of a burning fire.²⁷ To the left stands a royal figure with tiara/*kolāh* and diadem clad in elaborate belted tunic, trousers and a long-sleeved coat, who is followed by courtiers; to the right there is a figure dressed in the Elymaian flared belted tunic and trousers with a twisted sash over his shoulder. He has his hand raised over the fire and he is accompanied by two male figures.

The motif of the sacred fire as a symbol of the Zoroastrian religion reappears on coins of Ardashir I (Fig. 38a, b) (224–40 CE), the Sasanian king of kings who rises to power in Pars and successfully overthrows the Arsacid Artaban (Artabanus) IV. Here, we find a combination of Zoroastrian and royal iconography: the sacred Zoroastrian fire, which also serves as the ever-burning fire of the king, is combined with the Achaemenid platform throne, a symbol of kingship.²⁸ The coin iconography of Ardashir firmly unites religion and kingship and, as described by de Jong, ‘from the beginning of the Sasanian empire, the Zoroastrian religion was part of a new imperial project’.²⁹ Ardashir’s rock reliefs show him in the presence of Ahura Mazda. At Naqsh-e Rostam he receives a diadem as a symbol of kingship from Ahura Mazda to commemorate his victory over Artaban IV.³⁰ Here, both king and Ahura Mazda are on horseback. On the so-called investiture scenes at Firuzabad a fire altar separates the new king of kings from the Wise Lord; both figures are standing, as they also do on the relief at Naqsh-e Rajab near Persepolis (Fig. 39a, b). Ardashir and his immediate successors are described in their inscriptions and coin legends as the ‘Mazdā-worshipping Lord’.³¹ The Sasanian king is chosen by Ahura Mazda as the ruler par excellence and he is blessed with a nature/essence that is divine (*ke čīhr az yazdān*). He is not a god, but enjoys divine support. Sasanian coins retain the motif of the sacred fire throughout the



Figure 38a, b Sasanian silver coin of Ardashir I. © Trustees of the British Museum



Figure 39a Relief of Ardashir I at Firuzabad, Iran. © G. Herrmann



Figure 39b Relief of Ardashir I at Naqsh-e Rostam, Iran. © G. Herrmann

Sasanian period albeit with slight modifications, and the fire remains the most characteristic feature of Zoroastrianism even after the collapse of the Sasanian Empire and the emergence of Islam as the new religion of Iran. The portraits of the Sasanian kings Khosrow II and Yazdgerd III continued on Arab-Sasanian silver coins and some bronze coins, and the Zoroastrian sacred fire continued on the reverse. Bronze coins from south-western Iran, particularly the province of Fars but also further west at Susa had an iconography which included strong connotations with the Avestan concept of the *xvarənah*. Here, motifs such as a diademed Pegasus, a ram and the radiate nimbus are common.³² In the region south of the Caspian Sea, the Ispahbads of Tabaristan who claimed descent from the Sasanian kings, continued with the Sasanian coin iconography and the Zoroastrian fire throughout the Umayyad period and up to the beginning of Abbasid rule at the end of the second century Hijri.³³ Here even the dates on the coins followed the Post-Yazdgerd era calendar which is based on the solar calendar and started on the first solar year after the death of Yazdgerd III in 651 CE.

The art of Christian Europe used ancient Iranian and Zoroastrian motifs for the depiction of scenes of nativity and the Adoration of the Magi, where the Wise Men or Three Kings are usually portrayed in full Persian attire, that is a floppy hat, the Parthian trouser suit and cloak and a diadem.³⁴ The etymology of the word *magi*, which is derived from Greek *magos* (plural *magoi*) goes back to Old Iranian *magu*, meaning a priest in general and a Zoroastrian priest in particular. The word *magush* appears on clay tablets from Persepolis of the time of Darius the Great (522–486 BCE) where Persian priests – both Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian – received rations for religious ceremonies. It also occurs in the Old Persian version of the Bisotun inscription of Darius dating to c. 519 BCE where the Persian king of kings refers to ‘one man, a Magian [*magush*], Gaumata by name.’³⁵ Herodotus³⁶ in the middle of the fifth century writes that the Magians, whom he describes as Medes had to be present in acts of sacrifice, and that according to the customs of the Magians, the Persians did not bury their dead bodies, but exposed them to birds and dogs. Xenophon,³⁷ who had direct contact with the Persians in the fifth century BCE, describes the *magi* as authorities for all religious matters.

The Three Wise Men are shown in two different scenes on a magnificent enamelled reliquary casket from Limoges in France, c. 1250, in the British Museum (Fig. 40). In the top register the Magi or Three Kings are on horseback following the first king who is pointing with his right index finger towards a star on his left. The scene below shows them on foot presenting their gifts to the infant Jesus and his mother, the Virgin Mary. In both scenes the Magi wear the elaborate Parthian trouser suit. In the nativity scene, the first one, who is kneeling and showing submission, has both hands covered. This was a sign of piety and respect in the ancient world, including ancient Persia. This gesture is common in the Iranian and Zoroastrian traditions, where exposed hands must not be seen in the presence of a higher being or a



Figure 40 Limoges Casket showing the Three Wise Men. © Trustees of the British Museum

king, and to this day it is common for priests to cover their hands in certain religious ceremonies.³⁸

We find Zoroastrian connotations also in the coin inscriptions of Mughal India issued during the reign of Emperor Akbar (1556–1605). Traditionally, the Mughals had close cultural and political links with their western neighbours, the Safavids of Iran, and Persian was the court language of India. In 1592, a Zoroastrian priest from Kerman was sent by the Safavid ruler Shah Abbas to the court of Akbar to put together a Persian lexicon.³⁹ The Mughal Emperor Akbar, who was fascinated with all religions and ancient traditions, came into contact with the Parsis in Surat. After a meeting with a Zoroastrian (Parsi) priest from Navsari in Gujarat, he became interested in the Zoroastrian faith, and in 1579 Akbar abolished the *jizya* or tax on infidels.⁴⁰ In 1583 he introduced the *Ilahi* or 'divine' calendar which also appears on his coins (Fig. 41a, b, c, d). This was a solar Persian calendar with Zoroastrian month names after the *amaša spəntas* and the *yazatas*. These are the same month names that Reza Shah would introduce in 1925 (see below).



Figure 41a, b, c, d Mughal gold coins of Akbar with Zoroastrian month names. © Trustees of the British Museum

The *Ā'yn-e Akbari*⁴¹ describes Akbar's encounters with the Zoroastrian faith as follows:

Fire worshippers also had come from Nausari in Gujarat, and proved to his Majesty the truth of Zoroaster's doctrines. They called fire-worship 'the great worship', and impressed the emperor so favourably that he learned from them the religious terms and rites of the old Pārsis, and ordered [...] to make arrangements that sacred fire should be kept burning at court by day and by night, according to the custom of the ancient Persian kings, in whose fire-temples it had been continually burning; for fire was one of the manifestations of God, and 'a ray of His rays'.

Some of the symbols and representations that are nowadays associated with Zoroastrianism found their way into the religious iconography in the nineteenth century, when a growing interest in ancient Persia attracted many travellers from Europe and also Parsi India. Iranians, both Muslims and Zoroastrians, also became interested in their ancient past and as a result copies of pre-Islamic motifs of 500 BCE–651 CE appeared in stone, plaster, glazed bricks and tiles and were also applied to the inside and the facades of royal, public and private buildings. The ruins of Persepolis, one of the capitals of the ancient Persian Empire from 500 to 300 BCE, were widely reproduced on Iranian stamps and tiles. A set of stamps, for example, issued in the late Qajar period in the early twentieth century has the winged symbol prominently displayed above the throne-bearer relief of Darius the Great (522–486 BCE) at Persepolis.⁴² The Takieh of Mo'āven ol-Molk in Kermanshah, western Iran, which dates to the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, includes in its splendid tile decorations scenes copied from Achaemenid and Sasanian reliefs, and also Parthian and Sasanian coins. A tile copying the image of the standing Mithra from the relief of Shāpur II at Tāq-e Bostān (Fig. 47) is described in the accompanying Persian inscription as *tasvir-e zardosht* (the image/picture of Zarathustra) (Fig. 42a). In another panel of this splendid late Qajar tile work, we find the image of the winged figure, the *farvahar* (Fig. 42b). The Persian inscription describes the figure as a divine being.⁴³



Figure 42a Tiles of the Takieh of Mo'aven ol-Molk, Kermanshah, Iran, with scenes from Achaemenid and Sasanian reliefs, including Mithra with radiate crown and *barsom* described in the Persian inscription as Zarathustra. © V. S. Curtis

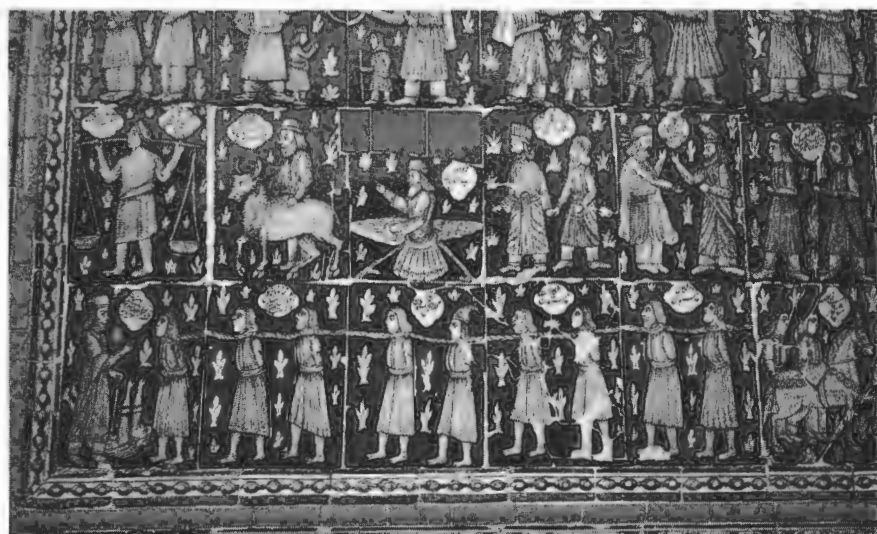


Figure 42b Tiles of the Takieh of Mo'aven ol-Molk, Kermanshah, Iran, with scenes from Achaemenid and Sasanian reliefs, including the Bisotun relief of Darius with winged figure above the captured 'rebel kings'. © J. E. Curtis

A Qajar-period tile from Shiraz or Tehran in the British Museum shows the legendary King Jamshid as a seated Achaemenid king (Fig. 43). This scene is copied from audience reliefs at Persepolis where King Darius and his son King Xerxes are shown seated on a throne and surrounded by courtiers. A Persian inscription below the royal throne reads Jamshid-e jam. Here, the image of a fifth-century BCE Persian king is used to portray the legendary King Jamshid of the *Shāhnāme*, who introduced the Festival of *Nowruz* /New Year and whose name is also associated in Persian with the ruins of Persepolis-Takht-e Jamshid. He is the Avestan Yima Khshaeta, the radiant, the king par excellence who lost his glory or *farr* when he sinned – it flew away in the shape of a bird.⁴⁴

Ancient Iran and Zoroastrianism were celebrated by the two Pahlavi shahs of Iran (1925–79), who with the help of many Iranian intellectuals created an ancient Iranian artistic vocabulary which included the ‘Neo-Persepolitan’ style of architecture. Both the aristocracy and the elite passionately promoted the glories of pre-Islamic Iranian art and culture. One of the aims was to show to the outside world that Iran was not an Arab country and that the culture and



Figure 43 Qajar tile from Shiraz or Isfahan showing the legendary King Jamshid. © Trustees of the British Museum

language were Persian and not Arabic. In 1934 Iran became the official name of the country and an active campaign began to undermine the term *Persia*,⁴⁵ which was only the name of the province of Fars and a term favoured by foreign countries going back to the ancient Greeks. For the Iranian intellectuals of the early twentieth century, *Persia* was an imperialistic and derogatory name for the land of Iran and Reza Shah requested formally that the international community referred to the country as Iran only.⁴⁶ In 1925, Iran also changed its calendar which has continued to this day. The lunar Hijri calendar and Arabic month names referring to the 12 zodiac signs were replaced with the solar Hijri calendar (*Khorshidi/Shamsi*), the 12 months were given Zoroastrian names, and the Iranian New Year, *Nowruz*, officially commenced on the Spring Equinox that is on 21 March. The Society for National Heritage, *Anjoman-e Āsar-e Melli*, was founded with the specific tasks of protecting the history of Iran in the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods and preserving and documenting antiquities and other monuments.⁴⁷ Reza Shah was born in the Caspian province of Mazandaran and had adopted the family name “Pahlavi”, meaning Parthian.⁴⁸ His role model was Kemal Atatürk in Turkey, and like Atatürk, he embarked on the modernization of the country, but at the same time both Reza Shah and his son, Mohammad Reza Shah, took great pride in the glories of the ancient past. From now on Pahlavi Iran emphasized the importance of ancient traditions and, as part of its promotion of ancient Persia, actively encouraged excavations both by Iranian and foreign teams. These excavations had the task of bringing to light the splendours of the distant past. Reza Shah, for example, visited the sites of Susa and Persepolis several times between 1928 and 1937⁴⁹ (Abdi 2001: 60–2).



Figure 44 Pahlavi banknote of Reza Shah showing the *farvahr* in the centre.
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Under Reza Shah, the *farvahar* continued to play an important role as an ancient religious and national symbol and as such it appeared on stamps and banknotes (Fig. 44), and it decorated the facades of many contemporary public buildings. To this day, the winged figure appears prominently at the top of the magnificent Bank-e Melli (National Bank of Iran) building in Khiāban-e Ferdowsi, built like many other public buildings in the early Pahlavi era in Neo-Persepolitan style. The *farvahar* symbol is still visible on two famous (originally Zoroastrian) high schools – the Firuz Bahram for boys and the Anushirvan Dadgar for girls. Other buildings with prominent *farvahars* include fire temples in Yazd, Kerman and Tehran. The old Parliament building or Majles in Baharestan Square was also built in Neo-Persepolitan style. Banknotes issued by the Bank-e Melli early in the reign of Reza Shah show the winged symbol, for example, on 10- and 50-rial notes dated to 1311/1932, 1315/1936 and 1317/1938 respectively.⁵⁰ The ruins and reliefs at Persepolis and the tomb of Cyrus the Great were also popular motifs on these early banknotes.⁵¹ The tomb of Cyrus became one of the hallmarks of the celebrations in 1971 when Mohammad Reza Shah commemorated the 2,500th anniversary of the Persian Monarchy. The stone mausoleum appeared on banknotes and stamps, and Persepolitan themes continued to remain popular on banknotes issued under this monarch in the form of audience scenes, reliefs, ruins, and small objects dating to the Achaemenid, Parthian and Sasanian periods. One of the banknote series issued by the Bank-e Melli shows the cylinder seal of Darius the Great (522–486 BCE) in the British Museum. The Persian king standing in his chariot is shown in the Near Eastern tradition as a royal hunter. The *farvahar* appears presiding over the hunting scene and protecting the king as royal hunter. Such banknotes were issued in the 1940s, 1950s and up to the 1970s.⁵²



Figure 45 *The Farvahar*. Painting by Aida Foroutan. © Aida Foroutan

In modern Iran the *farvahar* is associated with Zoroastrianism, but particularly since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, it has also become a symbol of national identity for Muslim and non-Muslim Iranians. It is worn by young and old regardless of their religious affiliation. The *farvahar* features prominently on modern cards printed for Nowruz, the Iranian New Year at the Spring Equinox on 20/21 March (1st Farvardin). Here, scenes from Persepolis with the *farvahar* taking prime position are immensely popular. The winged symbol appears here sometimes above the traditional Nowruz tray, the *haft sin*, and at other times it features prominently on or above reliefs from ancient Persepolis. The *farvahar* is also popular as a symbol of Iranian national identity amongst modern Iranian artists, both in Iran and in exile. An oil painting in vibrant colours by the artist Aida Foroutan, for example, shows the winged figure turning to the right, with one hand holding a ring of power and the right hand raised towards the light and sky (Fig. 45). Gold coins in straight lines and dispersed through the field symbolize the wealth and splendour of a lost world. The clear lines of the wings suggest order and righteousness, and the long blue and purple lines radiate light and promise. The predominantly red, blue, green and yellow lines stand in sharp contrast with the dark shades usually associated with modern Iran.

Tiles showing ancient Iranian scenes have retained their popularity to this day, both in Iran and in India. In India, both Qajar-period tiles, such as the one with the enthroned Jamshid (Fig. 43) and modern tiles are kept in fire temples and many Zoroastrian households. They are regarded as items of a religious significance. For example, a set of six polychrome tiles in the British Museum from modern Mumbai show three different scenes (Fig. 46): the holy fire in the centre and two standing figures clad in white, one in profile and the other in frontal pose. All three themes are clearly associated with Zoroastrianism: the sacred fire is flanked by the legendary Shah Lohrāsp, the father of King Vishtāspa. The Prophet Zarathustra stands on the right. The winged figure, the *fravashi/farvahar* hovers above the head of both figures.

In the Zoroastrian tradition Vishtāspa was the patron of Zarathustra. Lohrāsp and his son also feature prominently in the *Shāhnāme*, or *Book of Kings*. On first-century CE Kushan coins, which depict and name a series of Iranian/Zoroastrian divine beings (*yazatas*) on the reverse, there is the image of a bearded rider figure holding a diadem with long ties in his right hand (Fig. 36d). The name in the accompanying Bactrian inscription, ΛΡΟΟΑCΠΙΟ, has been identified with the Middle Persian name *lwhl'sp/Lohrāsp* who in the Avestan tradition is the father of Vishtāspa, the patron of Zarathustra. It has been suggested by Boyce⁵³ that this name appears on these Kushan coins with a 'Δ' thus attesting the name as ΔΡΟΟΑCΠΙΟ, meaning Druvaspa – 'possessing sound horses'. The Bactrian name on the Kushan gold coins clearly begins with 'Λ' and not with 'Δ', but as according to Professor Almut Hintze⁵⁴ Bactrian 'regularly corresponds to Avestan 'dr', ΛΡΟΟΑCΠΙΟ could represent



Figure 46 Set of tiles from Mumbai showing Lohrāsp, the holy fire and the Prophet Zarathustra. © Trustees of the British Museum

the Bactrian dialect form corresponding to Avestan *Druvaspā*.⁵⁵ *Druvaspā* is a female divine being in the Zoroastrian tradition, but it is not unusual to depict female divine beings with a beard on Parthian coins⁵⁶ and depicting a male divine being, for example the Iranian *Tir*, as a female goddess on Kushan coins.⁵⁷

On the Mumbai tile, Shah Lohrāsp appears in profile and on the far left. He wears a long white belted robe and tight trousers, pointed shoes, and his head is covered with a white cap. A red halo is seen behind his head. He holds a bow in his left hand and his bent right arm has the hand stretched and pointing to the central scene with the burning fire. Lohrāsp's pose and outfit is similar to that of King Darius on the late sixth-century BCE rock-relief of Bisotun. Darius, who commemorates at Bisotun his triumph over the rebel Gaumata, also appears in profile wearing a long dress. He holds a bow in his left hand and his right hand is raised towards the winged figure above, who is facing the king. He describes his kingdom in the inscription at Bisotun as follows:⁵⁸

Ahuramazda bestowed the kingdom upon me; Ahuramazda bore me aid until I got possession of this kingdom; by the favour of Ahuramazda I hold this kingdom.

In his inscription at Naqsh-e Rostam⁵⁹ Darius writes:

Trained am I both with hands and with feet. As a horseman I am a good horseman. As a bowman I am a good bowman both afoot and on horseback. As a spearman I am a good spearman both afoot and on horseback.

On the right side of the set of tiles in the British Museum there is a male figure in full frontal pose and facing the viewer. This is the image used for Zarathustra. His head is covered with a white cap and two diadem ties are clearly visible. A red halo appears at the back of his head. His outfit consists of a belted knee-length tunic, baggy trousers, a shoulder cloak and a cover over his shoulder and chest. A wide red *kamarband* with long ends is tied around his waist. He holds the bull-headed mace of Feridun (Avestan *Thraetaona*) in his left hand and has his other arm bent and the left hand raised towards the winged figure above his head. Zarathustra's pose and outfit are clearly borrowed from the Sasanian relief of Shāpur II at Tāq-e Bostān near Kermanshah in western Iran. Particularly striking is the similarity between the imaginary Zarathustra and the *yazata* Mithra at Tāq-e Bostān (Fig. 47), but the radiate crown of Mithra, clearly visible on the relief at Tāq-e Bostān, was understandably omitted when this image of Zarathustra was created in the nineteenth century [cf. Fig. 42b]. Other examples of the nineteenth-century image of 'Spitaman Zarathustra', on the other hand, do include one of Mithra's symbols, namely the lotus flower below his feet.⁶⁰ It is fair to say that all three figures on the Sasanian fourth-century relief seem to have evoked the imagination of Zoroastrians in the nineteenth century who were keen to create an artistic genre for their religion.

The burning holy fire and its fire-holder (Persian *ātašdān/āfrinegān*) in the centre on the Mumbai tiles (Fig. 46) derive from a mixture of Achaemenid and Sasanian iconography, as seen on stone reliefs, coins and seals. Also present are a tong and ladle still used in fire rituals. The Gujarati inscription on the steps leading to the sacred fire refers to various legendary fires.

The three images on the Mumbai tiles – the king, the prophet and the fire in the centre – appear within a framework derived from the architecture of ancient pre-Islamic Iran. Here, columns with bull protomes and *lamassu* – half-bull, half-human figures – allude to the glories of the ancient past and the ruins of Persepolis. At the same time, the human-headed bulls symbolize the sacred bulls or *varasya*, the source for the sacred *gomez* or ritual urine. The arch above the sacred fire reminds us of the Gate of All Nations at Persepolis, but the decorations of concentric circles and diadem ties at the bottom of the arch suggest a parallel with the large Sasanian *eyvan* of Khosrow II at Tāq-e Bostān near Kermanshah in western Iran. This architectural framework with all the details is found on the entrance of some fire temples, including the Modi Atesh Behram in Surat and Manekji Navroji Sett fire temple in Mumbai, which was originally built in 1733 with the ancient Iranian elements introduced in 1891.⁶¹

In conclusion, Achaemenid and Sasanian art provided a wealth of inspiration for modern Zoroastrian iconography. This iconography was mainly



Figure 47 Sasanian relief of Shāpur II at Tāq-e Bostān with Mithra on the far left. © G. Herrmann

created by Indian Zoroastrians who encountered their Persian heritage first second-hand through the accounts of European travellers to Iran in the nineteenth century, and later by undertaking visits to the ancestral homeland. They saw sketches of the majestic ruins of Persepolis, the tombs of the ancient Persian kings, the impressive rock reliefs of Bisotun, Naqsh-e Rostam and Tāq-e Bostān. A new iconographic vocabulary was created and adopted, which to this day is seen as wholly Zoroastrian. In many cases, for example, the images of Shāh Lohrāsp and the Prophet Zarathustra were originally not necessarily Zoroastrian symbols but motifs associated with ancient Iran and its royal art in the pre-Islamic period.

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10

EXTRACTS FROM A CALENDAR OF ZOROASTRIAN FEASTS

A New Interpretation of the 'Soltikoff' Bactrian Silver Plate in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

Frantz Grenet

The object I am going to discuss would certainly have been included in the exhibition *The Everlasting Flame* held at SOAS in October–December 2013, if its relevance to the Zoroastrian heritage had been fully recognized just a few months before, in time to obtain it as a loan. This silver plate (diameter 25 cm, with an annular foot) has been kept since 1843 in the Cabinet des Médailles of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (Inv. 56.366) (Fig. 48). It was



Figure 48 The Soltikoff plate (photo courtesy Bibliothèque Nationale de France)



Figure 49 Central motif (photo courtesy Bibliothèque Nationale de France)

acquired from Prince Soltikoff and was probably found in the Northern Ural, like many Sasanian and peri-Sasanian plates acquired in this period and later by museums, especially the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg. This assumption is substantiated by the Turkish runes and fantastic figures which were scratched on its surface by its last owners, who obviously belonged to Turkish tribes which inhabited that region. It has been traditionally known as the 'Anāhītis plate,' according to the old and incorrect assumption that most nude or half nude female figures on Sasanian dishes depict or symbolize Anāhītā, goddess of the Waters.¹

In fact the central motif (Fig. 49) shows a lady in transparent dress, wearing a pearl necklace and seated on a griffin, which combines animal elements from both the earth and the air. To the earth belong the lion's body and the goat horns; to the air belong the beak of a bird of prey and the wing, whose base is hardly visible on the right shoulder; the tail ends with a palm-leaf and thus refers to the realm of plants. The upper and lower axes are marked by an identical figure combining a moon crescent and the bare head of a young



Figure 50 Left pair (photo Samra Azarnouche)

man. Four dancing pairs are evenly distributed around the inner surface of the dish. Among the eight characters, six have long plaits covered by a veil or ornamented by floating ribbons: they are certainly women. This is probably also the case of the two other characters, who have short uncovered hair but are also dressed as women.

I shall now describe these eight figures. For reasons that will appear subsequently, I proceed anticlockwise and take as a starting point the pair to the left



Figure 51 Lower pair (photo Samra Azarnouche)



Figure 52 Right pair (photo Samra Azarnouche)

(Fig. 50). The character on the left of this pair holds a lotus flower in one hand and a bird in the other, apparently a falcon. The woman who faces him holds an incense burner. Of all the characters she is the only one who is clearly not dancing, for her feet are covered with folds at the bottom of her dress. In the space to her right there is a cup.

In the second pair (Fig. 51) both women have transparent upper clothes showing their breasts. The one to the left makes what is either a salutation or an auspicious gesture with her palm, while the one on the right presents a bowl whose contents are indicated by a series of small punched circles. The astral symbol is set between them, at head level.

In the third pair (Fig. 52) the character on the left, with short curly hair, holds a staff or a spear in his right hand, and a torch in his left hand (the wavy lines of the flames are visible). The woman facing him presents a cup held in her right hand, while the left hand holds the base of a goatskin, which rests on her shoulder.

The fourth pair (Fig. 53), at the top of the composition, comprises two women. The one on the left makes a salutation or respectful gesture with her pointed finger and the other one holds a bucket. The astral symbol reappears between them.



Figure 53 Upper pair (photo Samra Azarnouche)

The first elaborate comments on this plate were presented in 1971 by Prudence Harper,² who identified the Greco-Roman models of the composition. The woman seated on the griffin recalls Ceres on a griffin, or Dionysus on a panther. In the latter case one can compare, among other examples, the well-known Badminton sarcophagus where Dionysus on his panther is surrounded by four standing figures symbolizing the seasons.³ On some other images, for example a mid sixth-century mosaic from Ravenna (Fig. 54), the seasons are dancing. This is how Prudence Harper proposed to interpret the dancers on our plate, though she did not go into any detail.

In 1986, Boris Marshak offered a more detailed study in a section of his masterly book on oriental silverware.⁴ Firstly, he pointed to some North Indian influences in the costumes with their long shawls recalling saris, as well as in the thick plaits of the ladies and in the various dance steps which do not correspond to those found on Sasanian dancing scenes.⁵ Moreover, he identified one character as symbolizing the festival of the Khurshid-Ādar-jashn which according to al-Biruni was particularly popular in Tokharistān, the ancient country of Bactria in northern Afghanistan: 'it is one of the feast-days of the people of Tokharistān, and it is a custom of theirs based on the fact that at about this time the season altered and winter set in'.⁶ Consequently he attributed the plate not to Sasanian Iran but to Tokharistān, which was exposed to Indian influences in all periods including the Sasanian one. As for the central figure, he compared a plate (Fig. 55) found at Tomys in the Ural and now in the Hermitage.⁷ Here the decoration consists of fish and plants, symbolizing various



Figure 54 Mosaic from Ravenna, Domus of Stone Carpets, mid sixth century (left, spring; front, summer; right, autumn; back, winter)



Figure 55 The Tomys plate, northern Iran (?), sixth to seventh century, Hermitage Museum (K. V. Trever, V. G. Lukonin, *Sasanidskoe srebro. Sobranie Gosudarstvennogo Ėrmitazha*, Moskva, 1987, No 106)

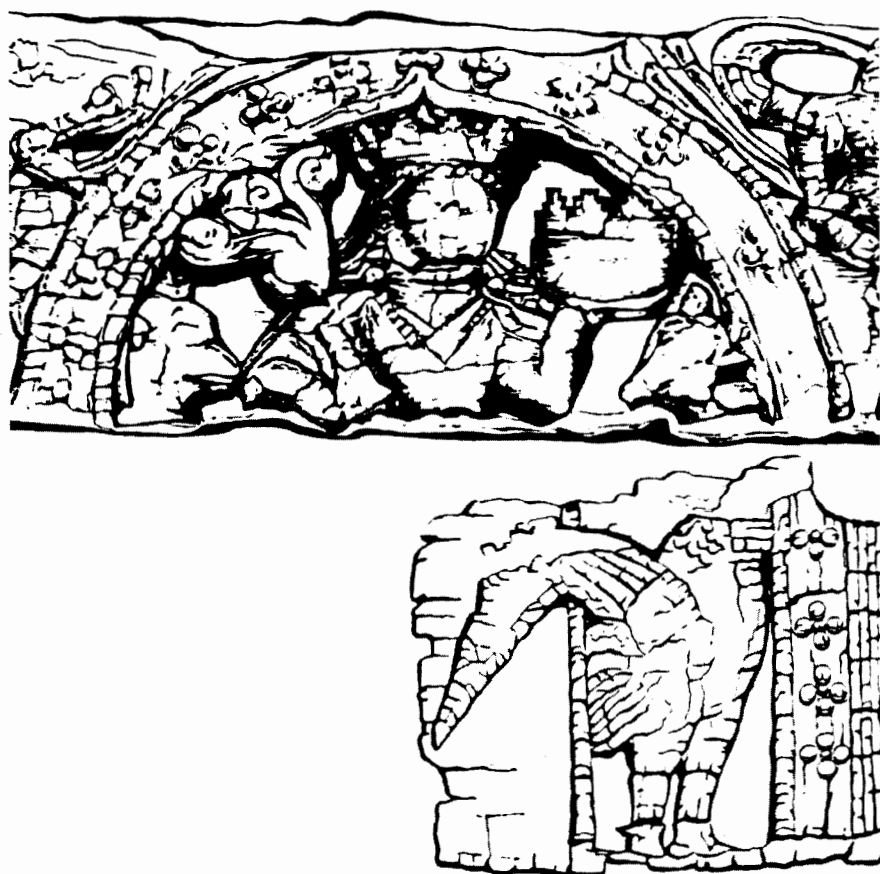


Figure 56 Wooden panel from Kujruk-tobe, seventh to eighth century
(document F. Grenet)

tiers of the earth, while the lady plays the flute and rides a pacific griffin which, like the one on our plate, is a combination of a lion, a goat, a bird, and has a plant tail. According to Marshak this figure should be interpreted as an 'allegory' of the earth rather than as a particular goddess. It can be noted, however, that on the wooden panels from Kujruk-tobe (Fig. 56), near Otrar on the Syr Darya, a goddess seated on a griffin throne holds an ossuary and should therefore be identified as Spandarmad, the goddess protectress of the earth, who, according to the *Iranian Bundahišn* (34.5), at the time of the Last Judgement hands over to Ohrmazd the bones which have been entrusted to her.⁸ Marshak's main contribution to the explanation of this plate was his recognition of the dancing pairs not merely as general symbols for the seasons but as personifications of Zoroastrian festivals, carrying specific attributes associated with them.

Below I shall present the details of his interpretation, but first it is necessary to sum up briefly our present knowledge of the Zoroastrian calendar in eastern Iran, during the period sixth to seventh century to which Harper and Marshak have attributed the plate on stylistic criteria. This knowledge has recently progressed a lot, thanks to the study of dating formulas on Bactrian documents from the kingdom of Rōb by François de Blois and Nicholas Sims-Williams.⁹ Here, as everywhere in the Iranian world, because of the missing quarter of a day in the calendar year, the months had receded by eight or nine positions from the original seasonal point they had occupied at the time of the creation of the calendar in the Achaemenid period. This implies, for example, that Nowruz, having moved backward by three quarters of a year, now fell in June or July instead of March (Fig. 57). We also know that, contrary to the practice in Sogdiana and Chorasmia, in Tokharistān the calendar reform introduced

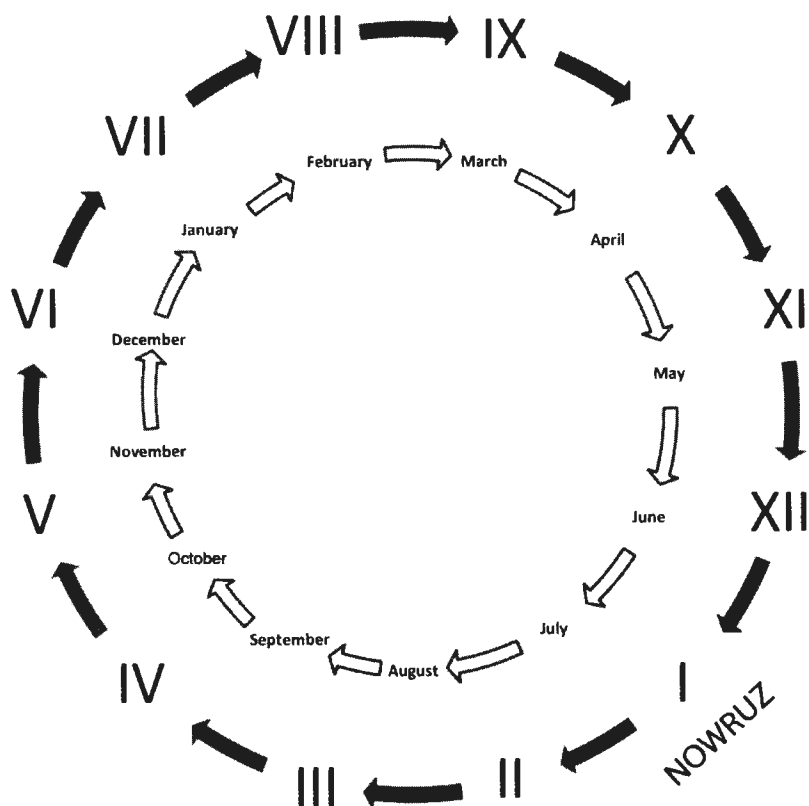


Figure 57 Diagram of the Zoroastrian calendar in the seventh century (the months are indicated in Roman numerals and not by their names)

in about 470 under the Sasanian king Pērōz had been officially adopted.¹⁰ This reform did not change the succession of the months, but pushed forward Nowruz and the main festivals by eight months, thus re-establishing their initial position in the solar year. Unfortunately the reform failed in two respects. First, as no further correction was attempted until the eleventh century, the calendar year re-started at once to move ahead of the solar year. Second, people tended to keep to their former habits, and the new dates of festivals were not generally accepted: some of them remained in the place they had occupied before the reform, others were duplicated at an eight-month distance, various solutions being adopted in the different regions. This chaotic situation is still reflected in the most detailed account we have of Zoroastrian festivals in the post-Sasanian period, that of al-Biruni in his *Chronology*, composed in various stages during the first half of the eleventh century. It follows that when we try to link the depiction of a festival with a particular time of the year we have to take into account four possibilities: pre-reform date, post-reform date, duplication, or a purely seasonal festival independent from the structure of the calendar.

Let us now return to Marshak's interpretation (Fig. 58). He considered that this figurative calendar had to be read anticlockwise (with which I agree), and he took as a starting point the pair at the bottom which he assumed to represent Nowruz, celebrated at its pre-reform date in early summer, hence



Figure 58 Marshak's interpretation of the Soltikoff plate

their light clothes. According to him, the astral symbol associated with this pair is not linked to the solstice nor to the equinox but simply symbolizes Nowruz. In the same way, the identical symbol in the opposite position would indicate the festival of Mihragān which took place six and a half months later and, here, would be symbolized by the bucket containing water mixed with *haoma*. Between Nowruz in summer and Mihragān in winter there is the late autumn festival of Khurshid-Ādar-jashn, which according to al-Biruni was the main fire festival in Tokharistān: it is here indicated by the character holding a torch. Following Mihragān, the last pair is associated with two spring festivals. One is the Jashn-e Nilufar, a festival which in al-Biruni's time occurred in the beginning of the fourth month (Tir), but which was probably not attached to a fixed calendar date and coincided with the seasonal blossoming of the water lilies in June.¹¹ Still, according to Marshak, the other spring festival would be Sade, the second great fire festival, occurring 50 days and 50 nights before Nowruz, hence its name meaning 'the hundredth'. According to medieval descriptions, Sade was celebrated with bonfires where birds and various animals covered with pitch were released.¹² Marshak recognized an allusion to this practice in attributes distributed between both characters of the pair: to the left, the bird, and to the right the incense burner (which he interpreted as a fire-holder instead). At this point the calendar cycle is complete.

While admitting that Marshak's contribution has definitely put the interpretation of these images on the right path, and accepting several of his identifications, I have to express some points of disagreement. At first glance, it seems strange that Nowruz occupies the bottom position, with the dancers being seen upside down. Also, some of his interpretations of specific attributes are far from being straightforward: there is no particular reason to associate a bucket of water either to Mihragān or to the *haoma* ritual, for in this ritual the mixing of *haoma* with the water takes place in the pestle where the *haoma* twigs have been crushed. Also, the symbols supposedly representing the festival of Sade are not convincing (Fig. 50): the closed object held by the woman on the right is hardly a fire-holder, and the bird opposite is probably a falcon, which does not at all recall medieval descriptions or images of this festival, where the fire is lit in the open and the birds released are pigeons or peacocks.¹³ Therefore I propose to recognize this pair as the true depiction of the New Year festivals, instead of the following pair as Marshak would have us believe. Indeed the falcon is mentioned in connection with Nowruz in medieval descriptions: in the *Mahāsin al-nayruz wa al-mihrijān*, now reattributed to the ninth-century author al-Kisrawi, it is stated that in Sasanian times a white hawk was set free on each day of the Nowruz cycle; in the *Nowruz-nāme* conventionally attributed to Omar Khayyām, and in al-Qazwini's *Cosmography* (thirteenth century), a hawk is listed among the offerings which were presented to the king by the chief of the Magi or another dignitary on the first day of Nowruz.¹⁴ As in the period to which our dish belongs Nowruz fell in June or early July, the water-lily flower could actually indicate the Jashn-e Nilufar which occurred in

June, as proposed by Marshak. As for the lady to the right, there are two reasons for associating her with the Frawardīgān, the festival for the dead which was held in the ten days preceding Nowruz. First, she does not dance and she is the most modestly dressed of all characters, with her long veil and her feet covered, which seems appropriate if she is linked with the commemoration of the dead. Second, what she holds is in fact an incense burner and, according to al-Biruni, during the Frawardīgān 'they fumigate their houses with juniper so that the dead can enjoy the smell'.¹⁵ A difficulty could arise from the fact that al-Biruni associates the Frawardīgān celebrated in Persia not with the 'Nowruz of the Kings', the Nowruz celebrated at the date it occupied before Pērōz's reform, but with the reformed 'Nowruz of the Magi' which occurred eight months later. In Sogdiana, however, the country just to the north of Tokharistān, Nowruz was consistently celebrated at its ancient date, and Zoroastrians of Tokharistān might well have followed this custom. On our dish this pair is preceded by a cup, which al-Kisrawi and the *Nowruz-nāme* mention as being also presented to the king on the day of Nowruz; it is also an attribute of Yima considered as the king who established Nowruz.

Moving on anticlockwise, we find the pair in summer clothes (Fig. 51). According to al-biruni the major festival which then marked the end of summer was Tiragān, celebrated at its pre-reform date on 13 Tir. He mentions that a special dish made of unground wheat and fruits was consumed on this occasion.¹⁶ I propose to recognize it in the bowl presented by the lady on the right. So, now, the astral symbol can no longer symbolize Nowruz as Marshak would make it, but must be associated with the late summer festival. Consequently it is the autumn equinox which closes the summer, in the same way as the symbol at the other end of the dish is the spring equinox. This is consistent with the fact that the symbols are identical (if they were meant to depict the solstices they would be contrasted), expressing the equal distribution between the night figured by the moon crescent and the day figured by the young man. I owe to Antonio Panaino the important additional remark that in the figure I identify with the spring equinox the young man is facing right, the direction corresponding to the rising sun in the Iranian orientation system, while in the autumn equinox he faces left, the direction of the setting sun, which is consistent with them inaugurating the increase and the decrease of days respectively.¹⁷

For the following pair (Fig. 52), I fully agree with Marshak's identification of the Khurshid-Ādar-jashn symbolized by the torch, but contrary to him I consider it as the only fire festival shown on the dish. This is in fact the only festival for which the reformed date (on 1 Shahrēwar, 100 days before the 'Nowruz of the Magi') was accepted in the milieu where the dish was executed, presumably because this festival, which aimed at 'spreading the warmth (in order) to keep off the attacks of all that is obnoxious to the plants in the world',¹⁸ had to occur in a *cold* month. Marshak did not comment on the attributes of the lady in front: a cup and a goatskin. They clearly allude to wine drinking.



Figure 59 The Ābrēzagān festival on a painting from Panjikent, Temple I, northern chapel, seventh century (M.M. D'iakonov, 'Rospisi Piandzhikenta i zhivopis' Srednei Azii', in A.Iu. Iakubovskii, M.M. D'iakonov (eds), *Zhivopis' drevnego Piandzhikenta* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1954), pl. XIV)

They indicate the winter festival of Mihragān (pre-reform date, on 16 Mihr), the only occasion when, according to the testimony of Ctesias,¹⁹ the king appeared drunk in public, a custom which according to Mas'ūdī (§ 3503) still existed under the Sasanians and was revived by the caliph al-Ma'mūn.²⁰

We are now left with the last pair, for which the only attribute is a bucket (Fig. 53). This is just a water bucket and it alludes to Ābrēzagān, the 'water spilling festival', which took place on the last day of the eleventh month (Wahman) and when people threw water at each other.²¹ This festival is mentioned as taking place on exactly the same date by Chinese travellers at Samarkand in the early seventh century, and I have proposed elsewhere to recognize it in a wall painting from Temple I at Panjikent (Fig. 59).²² As suggested before, the astral symbol here stands for the spring equinox marking the end of winter. The yearly cycle can now start again with Frawardīgān and Nowruz.

I shall now try to place the distribution of these figures in the calendar as well as in the solar year more precisely (Fig. 60). Each pair symbolizes a group of three months, not exactly corresponding to what we consider the limits of the four seasons. In pinpointing the system in the solar year we have two clues: first, the seasonal festival of the water lilies took place in June independent of the movements of the calendar and is here closely associated with Frawardīgān

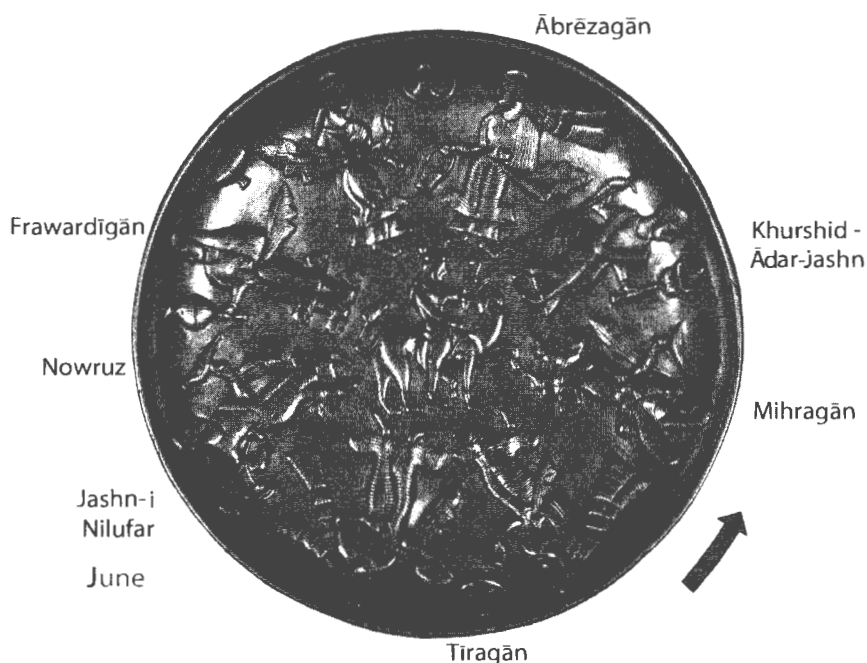


Figure 60 Interpretation of the Soltikoff plate: the Zoroastrian festivals

and Nowruz; second, the summer clothes of the next pair represent the period that follows. As Marshak considered that group to correspond to Nowruz, he put this festival in July and, accordingly, he dated the object to the period when the New Year fell at this time, that is the second half of the sixth century. If in fact Nowruz belongs to the previous block of months, as I have tried to show, we should consider a slightly later stage in the history of the calendar. Supposing Nowruz occurred before June, it would lead us to the eighth century, which seems too late from the stylistic point of view. Supposing it occurred after June, it would push the following block of months after the summer, though the corresponding dancing pair clearly wears summer clothes. Taken altogether, Nowruz in June seems to be the best option, which leads us to a period between the last quarter of the sixth century and the end of the seventh century.

If we now assume that the equinoxes depicted in the middle of the second and fourth pairs of dancers occurred around the middle of the periods they symbolize, the system can be reconstructed as follows (Fig. 61):

- 1 The first group comprises the twelfth, first and second months of the Zoroastrian calendar and, at that time, corresponds roughly to May-June-July; it includes the Frawardīgān, Nowruz and the water lilies festival.
- 2 The second group comprises the third, fourth and fifth months and

- corresponds roughly to August–September–October; it includes the autumn equinox in the middle and Tīragān at about the same time.
- 3 The third group comprises the sixth, seventh and eighth months and corresponds roughly to November–December–January; it includes the Ādar-jashn at the very beginning (on 1 Shahrewar) and Mihragān in the middle.
 - 4 The fourth group comprises the ninth, tenth and eleventh months and corresponds roughly to February–March–April; it includes the spring equinox in the middle and Ābrēzagān at the very end (on 30 Wahman).

If this reconstruction is correct, the period when the dish was produced can be narrowed down to the second half of the seventh century. This is precisely the date which Prudence Harper had proposed 40 years ago on stylistic grounds.

To conclude, this document provides fundamental evidence for the existence and status of Zoroastrianism in Tokharistān in the period between the fall of the Sasanian empire and the completion of the Arab conquest of the region. I do not intend to deny the importance of Buddhism in Tokharistān



Figure 61 Interpretation of the Soltikoff plate: relation of the figures with the Zoroastrian months and the solar year

at that time, nor the protection it continued to enjoy from many rulers, but I would like to suggest that this has sometimes been over-estimated, due to the overwhelming proportion of texts, monuments and images issued from this religion. Zoroastrianism was still largely taught orally and produced fewer images (often indistinguishable from their Hindu models in the East), and has thus left fewer tangible traces. On the dish discussed in this paper, the depiction of festivals reveals strict Zoroastrian observance while the choice of some symbols seems to indicate a court milieu: the falcon and cup presented to the king at Nowruz, or the allusion to public wine drinking at Mihragān. The very high quality of execution, though quite different from dishes previously produced in the Sasanian royal styles, also supports this assumption. At the same time, we can better appreciate how al-biruni is a safe guide in identifying the festivals and their symbols, in their regional diversity.

NOTES

1. Mathilde Avisseau-Broustet, *Les Perses sassanides. Fastes d'un empire oublié* (224–642) (Paris, 2006), no. 47. I wish to thank Mathilde Avisseau-Broustet, Director of the Cabinet des Médailles, for her authorization to examine the plate and to take close-up photographs, and also Samra Azarnouche who joined me on this occasion and who provided pertinent observations and prepared figs 53–6, 60–1, 63–4.
2. Prudence O. Harper, 'Sources of certain female representations in Sasanian art', in *La Persia nel Medioevo* (Rome, 1971), pp. 503–5.
3. Reproduced by Harper, pl. III.
4. Boris Marshak, *Silberschatze des Orients. Metallkunst des 3.-13 Jahrhunderts und ihre Kontinuität* (Leipzig, 1986), pp. 270–4.
5. He compared especially the female dancer on the plate from Liash (Tajikistan), which he considered was produced in the Hephtalite Empire under a combined Indian and Sasanian influence: pp. 268–9, fig. 181 (for a better image see *Oxus. 2000 Jahre Kunst am Oxus-Fluss in Mittelasien* (Zurich, 1989), no. 49).
6. Al-Birūnī, trans. C. E. Sachau, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations: An English Version of the Arabic Text of the Athār-ul-Bākiya of Albīrūnī* (London, 1879), p. 207 (text p. 222). From here onwards reference will be made generally to the section 'On the festivals in the months of the Persians' (pp. 199–219, text pp. 215–33). The last edition of the Arabic text, by Parviz Azkāyī, *Āthār al-bāqiya* (Tehrān: Mirāth-e Maktub, 1380/2001), more complete than the text used by Sachau, does not contain any addition relevant to our purpose.
7. *Les Perses sassanides*, no. 49 (Boris Marshak).
8. Frantz Grenet, 'Note additionnelle sur les panneaux mythologiques du palais de Kujruk-tobe (Keder)', *Studia Iranica* xxi/1 (1992), pp. 46–8, pl. VI.
9. François de Blois, 'The Persian calendar', *Iran* xxxiv (1996), pp. 39–54; Nicholas Sims-Williams and François de Blois, 'The Bactrian calendar', *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* x (1996 [1998]), pp. 149–65; N. Sims-Williams and F. de Blois, 'The Bactrian

- calendar: New material and new suggestions', in D. Weber (ed.), *Languages of Iran: Past and Present. Iranian Studies in Memoriam David Neil MacKenzie* (Wiesbaden, 2005), 186–96.
10. For this reform see de Blois, 'The Persian calendar', pp. 46–8; Mary Boyce, 'Further on the calendar of Zoroastrian feasts', *Iran* xliii (2005), pp. 1–38, especially pp. 13–14; for its attribution to Pērōz's reign, see Antonio Panaino, 'Quelques réflexions sur le calendrier zoroastrien', in Ph. Huyse (ed.), *Iran. Questions et connaissances*, vol. 1 (Studia Iranica, cahier 25) (Paris, 2002), 221–32, especially p. 225; additional arguments by Frantz Grenet, 'Religions du monde iranien ancien: les calendriers zoroastriens, le *Sih-rōzag*', *Annuaire EPHE, Sciences religieuses* cxix (2010–11 [2012]), pp. 67–72, especially p. 70.
 11. Al-Bīrūnī, trans. Sachau, p. 205 (text p. 220); it is considered to be of recent origin, which might indicate that it was a popular festival not recognized as part of the obligations according to the Zoroastrian calendar.
 12. Texts gathered in Arthur Christensen, *Le premier homme et le premier roi dans l'histoire légendaire des Iraniens*, vol. 1 (Stockholm, 1918), pp. 164–82. See also Simone Cristoforetti, *Il natale della luce. Il sada tra Baghdad e Bukhara tra il IX e il XII secolo* (Milan, 2002).
 13. See e.g. a miniature in Al-Bīrūnī, *al-Athār al-bāqiya*, fol. 73r (BNF, Manuscrits arabes 1489), available at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8406161z/fl.item>.
 14. Henri Massé, 'Le "Nauruz-nāmē" de Omar Khayyām', *Annales de l'Institut d'Études Orientales de l'Université d'Alger* iii (1937), pp. 238–65, especially pp. 246, 254; Simone Cristoforetti, 'Le *nawrūzi* selon le *Nawrūz-nāma*', *Eurasian Studies* vi (2007–8), pp. 71–95, especially pp. 79–82, 86; Simone Cristoforetti, *Umar ibn Ibrāhīm al-Khayyām. Il libro del Capodanno (Nawrūznāma)* (Milan, 2015); *Zakariya Ben Muhamed Ben Mahmūd el-Kazwīnī's Kosmographie*, trans. Hermann Ethé (Leipzig, 1868), pp. 164–5.
 15. Al-Bīrūnī, trans. Sachau, p. 210 (text p. 224).
 16. Al-Bīrūnī, trans. Sachau, p. 205 (text p. 220).
 17. See Antonio Panaino, 'A Sogdian wind between Paris and London', in P. B. Lur'e and S. R. Tokhtašev (eds), *Commentationes iranicae. Sbornik statei k 90-letiiu Vladimira Aronovicha Livshitsa* (St Petersburg, 2013), pp. 295–307, especially pp. 303–5.
 18. Al-Bīrūnī, trans. Sachau, p. 207 (text p. 221). According to Mary Boyce this festival was inherited from the original festival of Sade, whose name was subsequently attached to another fire festival ('Further on the calendar of Zoroastrian feasts', pp. 5–6, and with more detail Mary Boyce, 'The two dates of the feast of Sada', *Farhang-e Irān Zamin* xxi (1354/1976), pp. 25–40).
 19. In Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists* 10.45.
 20. Mas'ūdī, *Les Prairies d'Or. Traduction française de Barbier de Meynard et Pavet de Courteille, revue et corrigée par Charles Pellat*, vol. 5 (Paris, 1997), p. 1399. See Albert de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin literature* (Leiden, New York and Cologne, 1997), pp. 371–7.
 21. Al-Bīrūnī, trans. Sachau, p. 215 (text p. 228).
 22. Frantz Grenet and Samra Azarnouche, 'Where are the Sogdian Magi?', *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* xxi (2007 [2012]), pp. 159–77, especially p. 164 with n. 27.

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THE *DĒNKARD* AND THE ZOROASTRIANS OF BAGHDAD

Albert de Jong

Sources for the history of the early Islamic world are numerous and diverse, and require collaboration between specialists of various disciplinary backgrounds. Although it would be wrong to regard the available sources as mainly religious, the literatures of various religious communities and traditions form an important subcategory of the totality of the textual production of the early Islamic world. These are often divided over different languages: for Christians, the chief language was Syriac, for Jews Aramaic, for Mandaeans Mandaic, and for Zoroastrians Middle Persian. It must be assumed that most educated members and representatives of these communities acquired the ability to read and write Arabic, the chief language of the new Arab-Islamic polity and its cultured and learned world.

For Christians and Jews, there is a considerable amount of evidence to support that assumption: there is a huge literature in Christian Arabic, starting already in the eighth century. Arabic developed into the language of choice for at least some of the Christian churches.¹ The Copts, it is well known, continued to write in their own Coptic language somewhat longer than the Christians of Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Iran. Among these Near Eastern Christians, the speed with which they supplemented their writings in Syriac with a written literature in Arabic has differed over the various denominations, with especially the Church of the East embracing it very quickly. There is an equally impressive amount of Judaeo-Arabic literature, parts of which remained, however, on a parallel track compared to Christian Arabic literature, because they were largely written in the Hebrew script – and therefore less immediately available to non-Jewish users of Arabic.²

It is characteristic of both enormous corpora of texts (in Christian Arabic and Judaeo-Arabic) that they cover not only those genres that would seem to be specific to their users as members of religious communities, but also more 'secular' subjects, such as regional history, *belles lettres*, and the sciences. There is considerable evidence, therefore, for the *participation* of Jews and Christians in the artistic and the learned world of the caliphate. Obviously, the specific subjects of liturgy and of holy texts were partly exempt from this rule: Hebrew

and Aramaic always retained their primary importance for the Jewish liturgy and for specific subjects of Jewish legal and religious writings. Likewise, most Christians retained the liturgical languages to which they had become used, and many continued to consult the Bible in the early translations (into Syriac and Coptic, for example) that had given rise to these liturgies.

Little of this (with the exception of the liturgical specificity) seems to have applied, at first sight, to Zoroastrians or Mandaean. The bulk of Mandaean literature was composed after the Arab conquests, although it clearly incorporates earlier materials.³ All of this literature is in Mandaic, which not only is a community-specific variety of Aramaic (showing considerable overlap with Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, with some marked specificities), but which also employs its own characteristic script.⁴ This usage, without a doubt, goes back to the Sasanian period, when the various religious communities jostling for space and attention in Sasanian Mesopotamia converged in the *language* in which they all wrote – Aramaic – and became specific in the *script* used for writing down this language: Jews continued to use the square ‘Hebrew’ script, Christians and Manichaeans preferred the Syriac script, and Madaeans (as mentioned above) used their own Mandaic variety of the Aramaic script. There is no evidence for the use of Arabic by Madaeans in the early Islamic period. As is well known, the Madaeans switched to Arabic as a spoken language only fairly recently in their history,⁵ and the use of Arabic for the current writing of community texts is wholly dependent on this momentous change in their communal traditions. Knowledge of Arabic can, of course, be assumed for practical purposes – in dealing with the outside world – but there is very little evidence for the importance of Arabic for the specific religious needs of the Madaean communities.

The Zoroastrians, too, had their own language of liturgy (Avestan), as well as a complicated system and body of texts (the *Zand*) with which they made sense of it, on which they based their theology and their legal, ritual and practical decisions.⁶ Competence in both these areas was vested in their priests, and largely in these priests alone, for whom (as in the case of the Madaeans) access to these sources – whether in their memories or, increasingly, in written form – was an important cause of their prestige and also of their income. Many priests were maintained by the state in the Sasanian period, and a large and complicated hierarchy had been built up largely as a result of this imperial sponsorship.⁷ This hierarchy was based on a distinction between priests who were administrators, judges, scholars and teachers, on the one hand, and priests who were masters of ritual, on the other. Both, it seems, had their own separate (but interlocking) hierarchy, but the teaching priests (*hērbēd*) were less capable of performing the rituals, and the ritual priests were less often invoked for guidance and education. After the Arab conquests, it is clear that this system slowly collapsed, because it became unaffordable for the communities.

These communities were obliged to adapt, moreover, to a situation that was entirely new for them. For Jews, Christians and Madaeans, the change

of rulers was more or less just that: they were communities that had, earlier, accommodated to an existence as a tolerated community in an imperial context dominated by Zoroastrian rulers. They should not immediately be seen as 'minorities' in a numerical sense – certainly in Sasanian Mesopotamia the evidence suggests that Jews and Christians formed the majority of the population – but they were socially and politically underprivileged compared to Zoroastrianism. For the Zoroastrians, however, the Arab conquests must have been far more incisive, because they cut away the financial, political and legal foundations of their religious institutions. The recently published Middle Persian documents from Tabaristan, from the eighth century, show that some of these institutions (in this case, the legal ones) survived the Arab conquests, as one would have predicted.⁸ In the late ninth century, however, in the writings of the high priest Manušcihr, it is clear that the system that had been inherited from Sasanian times was no longer felt to be applicable.

We thus face the situation that alongside the fabulously voluminous Islamic writings in Arabic, we possess large corpora of sources for Christians and Jews of the early Islamic period, but only very restricted collections of evidence for Zoroastrians (and Mandaeanes). The biggest problem scholars face in writing the history of Zoroastrianism is often claimed to lie in the lack of relevant Zoroastrian sources for long stretches of that history. That problem is, of course, real and the concerns of scholars expressing despair at this situation are fully justified. Alongside this problem, however, there is another factor that may be equally damaging, but has only rarely been discussed. This is the fact that those who study the communities with whom the Zoroastrians interacted at any point of their history have far too many sources at their disposal. Scholars working on Islamic, Jewish and Christian sources have, as a consequence, often been tempted to believe that what they find in their copious sources is all they need to know; and should there be anything that arouses their curiosity, they are bound to look for it in the same corpus of texts they have been trained to access. This has bestowed a strongly insular quality on these collections of sources, and as a result, on these communities themselves. It is only with the less documented religious traditions and communities that scholars have felt forced to gather as much evidence as possible, from all sources available.

Such attempts to gather all the available evidence have yielded surprisingly little for the history of Zoroastrianism.⁹ There are, of course, abstract discussions of 'Zoroastrianism' as a system of thought and practice in the Islamic genre of literature that deals with the religions of the Islamic world and the inner divisions of Islam.¹⁰ This is a genre, however, that has become notorious for its topicality (its reliance on a skeletal representation of religions in terms of a small number of intellectual or literary tropes). As heir to the classical genre of philosophical doxography, this textual genre reduces religions and religious thinkers to a series of propositional statements. As heir to the early Christian genre of heresiography, moreover, it pits the endless diversity of such propositional statements of its opponents against the single truth embodied in the

tradition defended and acknowledged by the author of the work in question. This makes it very difficult to move from this genre of literature to the 'facts on the ground' of *any* religious community: since information is endlessly recycled (most often in the present tense, as if it described actually existing systems and communities, which is by no means always the case), a timeless, 'essentialist' view of religious diversity and interaction is propagated by these texts. If we leave these texts aside, however, information on real-life Zoroastrians in Arabic literature becomes shockingly sparse. Many scholars have therefore jumped to the conclusion that Zoroastrians themselves had rapidly become a rarity in the early Islamic world, especially outside those parts of the Islamic world that yet other scholars have declared to be (linguistically) 'Iranian'. This linguistic definition of 'Iran' as covering an area where Iranian languages are or were spoken excludes, for example, Iraq, even though Iraq had been a part of the various Iranian empire for more than a millennium at the time of the Arab conquests, and when was considered by many to have been its central area: *del-e irānshahr*.

The great scholar Josef van Ess, for example, writes the following about Iraq and the Zoroastrians of Iraq after the Arab conquests:

We can leave them [that is, the Zoroastrians – AdJ] aside here. There has been hardly any interaction with them in Iraq; they had disappeared from there very quickly after the rise of Islam.¹¹

Similarly, in another groundbreaking study on early Islamic history, Robert Hoyland writes about the Zoroastrians:

Zoroastrian lore continued to be transmitted, and in the ninth century it began to be set down; but it represented the literature of an already moribund society and so was concerned with preserving the glorious traditions of the past, not recording the decadence of the present. And except for question-and-answer collections, which frequently discuss such issues as apostasy and relations with non-Zoroastrians, this literature is largely inward-looking, concentrating on the life and heritage of its own community.¹²

There is much that is questionable in both these statements.¹³ They represent a type of historiography that works towards the eventual, that is known, outcome: the marginalization and then disappearance of Zoroastrian communities from almost all the territories of the Islamic world. This is not just a familiar story, it is one that any interested outsider is likely to learn from almost all overviews of the history of Zoroastrianism they can consult.

Much of this work is rooted in the tacit assumption that the early Islamic world can adequately be represented as a 'meeting place' of various communities, or cultures: the ones that were already there, namely Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians, or in an alternative scenario Iranians, speakers of Aramaic, Armenians *etc.*, and also the new one that was destined to replace them, or at the

very least to marginalize them: the Muslims, or the Arabs. A small slice of that history actually seems to have worked this way: this is the history of conquest and battle, where meetings (if one could call them that) actually took place. For the post-conquest early Islamic world, however, such a scenario seems inadequate, to say the least.¹⁴ It is not just that the numbers of Muslims who were not Arabs complicates the picture (for those focusing on the encounter of 'ethnic' communities), or that many of those who wrote in Arabic actually spoke Persian or another Iranian language as their first language: rather, this scenario is inadequate on more principled grounds, in so far as the Zoroastrians did not *meet* the new polity, they *were a part of it*. This may sound banal and innocent, but the experience of historians of Hellenistic Judaism has shown, decisively, that it has far-reaching consequences. In that field, a silent revolution has taken place in which scholars have gradually distanced themselves from the traditional image of the Jewish community 'encountering' Hellenistic culture in favour of a new one regarding the Jewish community as part of the Hellenistic world and of Hellenistic culture.¹⁵ If done properly, this should therefore have an impact on the history of the Hellenistic world as much as it does on that of Judaism. It should bring together specialists who used to be divided even institutionally, in this case classicists and historians of Judaism. It should attempt, finally, to avoid or confront the often unstated prejudicial notions that somehow seem to have attached themselves to particular subjects. In the case of Hellenistic Judaism, this brings into focus the obviously theological division of the ancient world into Jews, Christians and 'pagans' (the last being those who were not Jews and were not yet Christians), or the abundant and enthusiastic use of the equally theological and un-historical notion of 'monotheism', as something Hellenistic Judaism had *contributed* to the world.

It is not difficult to find the same problems in the writing of the history of the early Islamic world, especially for someone with an interest in Zoroastrianism. In fact, Hoyland aptly summarizes mainstream opinion on the subject, because he – like most others – tacitly assumes that the extant Pahlavi books are a fair representation of the textual production of the Zoroastrians in early Islamic times. Even if this were the case, it would still be difficult to recognize that production, as he described it, in terms of 'preserving the glorious tradition of the past', rather than 'recording the decadence of the present' (whatever that means). There are several interlocking problems here – for none of which, it should be noted, Hoyland is to be blamed, for none of them were produced by specialists in Arabic literature or in Islamic history. It is the purpose of the remainder of this chapter to isolate some of these problems on the basis of a concrete example: the Zoroastrian community of Baghdad, which has been almost erased from historical memory.

The first problem we have to address is the notion of the 'ninth-century books' as the metonymical indicator of all of Middle Persian literature. Although H. W. Bailey did not invent it, he certainly more or less canonized the concept with his highly influential *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century*

Books (which in reality did not restrict its interests either to 'Zoroastrian problems' or to those Pahlavi books that really date to the ninth century).¹⁶ The impression has grown, accordingly, that all of Middle Persian literature dates to the ninth century. This has effectively robbed Zoroastrianism of much of its history. Not only are there Pahlavi texts that are older than the ninth century, there are many that are younger – sometimes *much* younger: the *Rivāyat* of Ēmēd the son of Ašwahišt belongs to the tenth century, the *Rivāyat* of Farrōbāy-Srōš to the eleventh; the final redaction of the *Bundahišn* is generally dated in the twelfth century. Some of these later texts have often been discarded as uninteresting and scholars have focused instead on the possibility of retrieving Sasanian traditions from these 'ninth-century' books. This has turned out to be difficult, chiefly because there are no reliable techniques, or there is no method, to separate Sasanian from post-Sasanian traditions in Middle Persian texts. There is no traceable project in these texts of preserving the 'glories of the past' – let alone the glories of the Sasanian empire. One of the reasons for this seems to be the fact that the Zoroastrians of the early Islamic period did not care very much for the Sasanians, and show very little evidence of looking back to the Sasanian period as a high-point of their religion. As a matter of fact, they do not look back very much at all. There was, of course, no denying the historical importance of some of the former kings of Iran, especially the first three (Ardashir I, Shāpur I and Hormizd I), celebrated in the *Kārnamag ī Ardašir ī Pābagān*, and Khosrow I. Zoroastrians used an era, furthermore, that marked the end of the Sasanian dynasty, but otherwise there is little evidence that the Sasanians were warmly remembered as a family, or considered important for present concerns. The Zoroastrian era does not have to be an indicator of attachment to the Sasanians either. Unlike the Parthians, the Sasanians (with some exceptional cases) did not have an era of their own, but reverted to the system of counting by regnal years of the living king; this is what the Zoroastrians continued to do, but since there had not been a king after Yazdegird III, they continued to count his 'regnal' years.

This seems to have been different for those Iranians who had become Muslims, for whom the connection with the mythical past could no longer automatically persist in their practice of the Iranian religion. The project of 'preserving' Sasanian traditions was much more a Muslim ('national') project than a Zoroastrian one. Of course, the Zoroastrians have preserved a wealth of Sasanian traditions in their Middle Persian texts, but this was not because they belonged to a more glorious period of their history, but because they were (or could be) seen as parts of the 'revelation' (*dēn*) itself, or of the teachings of the 'first teachers of the religion' (*pōryōtkēšān*), a notion much developed in later texts. This relative (un)importance of 'Sasanian' traditions for Zoroastrian and for Muslim Iranians can be seen as the second problem.

A third problem, that can be mentioned here only briefly, is the fact that the history of Zoroastrianism that has been written almost entirely consists of

a history of Zoroastrian texts, and the way different corpora of texts, thought to represent either different religions or different stages of the religion, relate to each other. There are two problems here: the first is that this skeletal history based on Zoroastrian texts has been used for the interpretation of (actually datable) references to Zoroastrian beliefs and practices in non-Iranian texts, which has led to many interpretations that are either anachronistic or anachronistic, or both.¹⁷ The second problem is similar, but concerns material evidence, the evidence of non-literary textual sources, and of the development of ritual practice, knowledge of which has grown considerably in the past few decades, but has again often been interpreted on the basis of the development of Zoroastrian texts (rather than forcing scholars to reconsider this way of writing the history of Zoroastrianism).¹⁸

Many of these problems have come together in the tragedy that has befallen the Zoroastrians of Baghdad – who have been almost completely forgotten. They are only very infrequently mentioned in Arabic literature. They make an appearance every now and then, as individuals who come to the city either to fulfil administrative duties or to be executed, but they never appear as a community. There is hardly any evidence for their daily lives or for their institutions in Baghdad, even though the city had a *darb al-majūs*, a ‘Zoroastrian quarter’.¹⁹ This is not unique: Jewish sources on Jewish institutions in Baghdad are much more abundant than Muslim sources on these same institutions. Famously, of course, the Mandaean are *never* mentioned in Arabic literature, even though they were in Iraq before the Arabs came, and have lived alongside them up to the present: they were noticed immediately by the thirteenth-century Dominican friar Riccolando da Monte di Croce, as a friendly and inviting community that made regular appearances in Baghdad to sell their produce on its markets, as well as by generations of Western missionaries since the seventeenth century.²⁰

It is not surprising, therefore, that specialists of Arabic literature and of Islamic history have failed to notice the existence of a Baghdadi Zoroastrian community. It is much more surprising that Iranists have equally failed to notice it. Instead, they have stubbornly reproduced the idea that in the ninth century, Pars was the only remaining intellectual stronghold of Zoroastrianism – even though there is a wealth of evidence for Zoroastrians in Rayy and Qom in Media, in Sistan, in Khorasan, etc. To this list, Baghdad must certainly be added, not just as a centre of Zoroastrianism, but as one of the dominant places for Zoroastrians in the ninth century, and beyond.

By Zoroastrian standards, the evidence is fairly extensive. There are four passages in Middle Persian that explicitly mention or use Baghdad as a town where Zoroastrians could be found. These range from the incidental (Baghdad appearing in a list of cities), through the topical (the debate between the apostate Abālīš and the leader of the faithful, Ādur-Farrōbāy son of Farroxzad), to the absolutely decisive (the calendar text and the colophon of the *Dēnkard*). We shall review these four passages here briefly.

ŠAHRESTĀNĪHĀ Ī ĒRĀNŠAHR

In the small text on *Important cities of the realm of the Iranians*,²¹ the last city to be named is Baghdad. This text, the structure of which is not entirely clear, gives a general survey of Iranian (and some non-Iranian) cities of special importance, with reference to founders, to prominent people who were born there, occasionally to important structures (fire temples) that could be found there, and to connections with the epic tradition. The sentence on Baghdad is difficult, but it may read thus:

The city of Baghdad was built by Abu Ja'far, 'he who is confirmed in victoriousness' [that is al-Manṣūr – Adj], who was [also] called Abu Dawāniq'.²²

This reading requires an emendation, and therefore the precise historical value of the reference to the title of the founder of the city must remain questionable, but its importance for the present paper lies in the fact that the city of Baghdad finishes this catalogue of cities that meant something to the Zoroastrians of the period.

GIZISTAG ABĀLIŠ

The little book on the 'accursed Abāliš' and his debate with Ādur-Farrōbāy the son of Farrozzad, the 'leader of those of the good religion' (*hudēnān pēšōbay*), has been the source of much confusion.²³ Scholars have speculated about the name of the protagonist, about the question whether or not he converted to Islam (he did not), and about the historical reality underlying the text. The text is very short and tells the story of a certain Day-Ohrmazd, who goes to visit a fire temple to get some food, is snubbed by the resident priests and leaves the temple in an angry mood. He is approached by a stranger who fuels his anger, as a result of which the demon Xēšm ('Anger') enters his body and he loses his faith. He wanders around debating religion with Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians, and finally makes his way to Baghdad, to the court of the caliph al-Ma'mūn. The caliph organizes a debate between Abāliš and a *mowbed* (the oldest manuscript of the text here has a lacuna),²⁴ who answers a number of questions that Abāliš poses to the satisfaction of the caliph and his *qāḍī*, following which Abāliš is chased out of court. It is only in the final sentence of the book, according to the oldest manuscript, that the *mowbed* who answered the questions is identified with Ādur-Farrōbāy, but this identification has often been used for the dating of that *hudēnān pēšōbay*.

It is the great merit of Josef van Ess to have identified the most likely source for this narrative: a popular story known from various Arabic sources and at least one Persian source, about a *zindīq* (or a 'dualist') called Abu 'Ali (the most likely source of Abāliš' name) who debated religion at the court of the

caliph.²⁵ For our purposes, the text shows two things: first of all, it shows the presence of the *hudēnān pēšōbay* (if the identification of the unnamed *mowbed* with Ādur-Farrōbāy is upheld) at the caliphal court. In the second place, it shows the adaptation for a Zoroastrian audience of a meaningful and well-known narrative from an Islamic, most likely Iraqi, context. Both aspects are firmly supported by the other two sources to be discussed, which take us into eleventh-century Baghdad.

THE *PAHLAVI RIVĀYAT OF FARRŌBĀY-SRŌŠ* ON THE CALENDAR REFORM OF 1006/8

The mysterious little collection of questions and answers that have been published under the title *Pahlavi Rivāyat of Farrōbāy-Srōš* have been almost wholly neglected by historians of Zoroastrianism.²⁶ This is surprising, since it may well be one of the very few eleventh-century Middle Persian texts in existence. That date is secured by the first question, which is also the one that is relevant for the present article. It concerns yet another change made to the Zoroastrian calendar: the transfer of the five intercalary days that complement the twelve 30-day months from the period following the month of Ābān to the period after the month Spandarmad. This intervention is known from at least two Muslim sources, who date it to the year 1006, whereas the Middle Persian text dates it to 1008.²⁷ This is a question asked by the Zoroastrians of Khorasan (Abaršahr in the text), one of whom was not convinced of the necessity of the calendar reform attributed to Farrōbāy-Srōš, who is called a *mowbed*, but is also possibly referred to as the then *hudēnān pēšōbay*. The *hāwīšt* (student) in question refused to change his ritual practice, but received a letter from a certain Abu Miswar Yazdān-pādār, son of Marzbān, from Baghdad, who defended the justness of the decision. Still unconvinced, the *hāwīšt* refused to submit to Abu Miswar's authority, since he was (only) a 'man of the government' (*mard ī sultānig*). As usual, the answer is less easy to understand than the question, but the *mowbed* defends Abu Miswar, calling him a 'teacher' (*awistād*) and urging the propriety of the (minor) calendar reform. In his learned discussion of this passage, Francois de Blois writes of the *mowbed* that he 'evidently resided in Fārs',²⁸ but the evidence does not really support this. It seems to be one example of the general rule that scholars believe all meaningful Zoroastrian intellectuals to have held on in Pārs. If the *mowbed* was the *hudēnān pēšōbay* of his time, however, it is much more likely that he, like Abu Miswar, resided in Baghdad, for that is where the caliphs, following the Sasanian example, expected the leaders of the recognized minorities to reside. There is not even a hint of amazement about the fact that decisions about the practice of Zoroastrianism could have been prepared in Baghdad, which allows us to assume that there was indeed a tradition of doing so. This is fully supported, moreover, by the final and most important passage to be considered.

THE COLOPHONS OF THE *DĒNKARD*

The *Dēnkard* is a very special text within the corpus of Zoroastrian writings.²⁹ It is not only by far the most extensive text to have been preserved, but it is also clearly the most sophisticated example of what leading Zoroastrian intellectuals were capable of producing.³⁰ It is surprising, therefore, that the very important colophons found in the single manuscript B have never been published properly.³¹ The manuscript was written in the year 1020 CE in Baghdad, by the Zoroastrian scribe Māh-Windād Narīman son of Bahrām. This is not, obviously, the manuscript that survives; the further colophons show that the 1020 manuscript was copied in the fourteenth, sixteenth and finally in the seventeenth century. It is the 1659 copy that actually survives, but it is the first colophon, belonging to the 1020 manuscript, that is of interest to us. The scribe mentions that he had found the manuscript he copied in the province of Asorestān, in the 'fortunate, prosperous, fragrant, pleasant, welcoming, glorious city' of Baghdad and he mentions the fact that he found the manuscript in the *diwan* that was associated with the court of the *hudēnān pēšōbay*. He did not find it in good condition, but in a ruinous state. A part of the colophon describes the history of the text, to which various generations of leaders of the Zoroastrians had contributed much of their time and effort. The colophon is extremely difficult to interpret, and in its history of the text it is certainly influenced by the closing chapter of *Dēnkard III* (Dk. 3.420), which equally deals with the history of the texts and describes the efforts of Ādur-Farrōbāy son of Farrōxzād in assembling the text, the calamity that happened during the time of his son Zarātušt, which resulted in the destruction of the *divān* or the court of the *hudēnān pēšōbay*, and the efforts of Adurbad son of Ēmēd to reassemble it.

All of this, it seems, took place in Baghdad, for that is the most likely seat of the *hudēnān pēšōbay*. That office itself is a major problem; we do not know when it was instituted and we do not know when it ended, but it falls in line with the efforts of some of the Abbasid caliphs to have the leaders of the various religious communities close by in Baghdad: the exilarch, the catholicos and, presumably, the *hudēnān pēšōbay*. We only know of a few persons who held this latter office, however. Manušcihr, the leader of the Zoroastrians of Pārs in the late ninth century, is vague about the existence of the *hudēnān pēšōbay*,³² but he makes his appearance, as we have seen, in the eleventh century (and once more seemingly in Baghdad). The 'calamity' that happened with Ādur-Farrōbāy's son Zarātušt is equally unknown. The only reference we have to it, apart from the *Dēnkard*, is found in a particularly difficult passage in an exceptionally difficult text, the second *Epistle of Manušcihr*. In that letter, Manušcihr blames his brother Zādspram, who had suggested an abbreviated version of the major ritual of purification, the *barašnūm*, not so much for his ritual invention, but for the fact that he did not have the authority to make that decision. He compares Zādspram's activities with the calamity that happened in

the time of Zarātušt the son of Ādur-Farrōbāy. E. W. West interpreted a name in the passage, interestingly, as a word meaning 'club-footed' and guessed that Zarātušt had a club-foot, but hid it under his garments;³³ this would mean that he was not fit for the priesthood, but acted as priest and leader of the faithful nonetheless. That is certainly not what the passage means; one could guess, at the moment, that the problems were caused by the appointment of Zarātušt, who may have had himself appointed by the Muslim rulers, without consulting the Zoroastrian communities. His candidacy seems to have been supported by the Zoroastrians of Kerman and Rayy, but rejected by other communities and it therefore threatened to split the Zoroastrian community, leaving a vacuum in spiritual authority, but awaiting detailed philological work on the *Epistles*, this must all remain a guess.

These four passages are all that can be assembled on Baghdad in Pahlavi literature. It may not seem to be very much, but in light of the paucity of Zoroastrian sources generally, it is certainly meaningful. It shows a number of important things.

The city of Baghdad mattered to the Zoroastrians of the eighth to the eleventh century. Some of them regarded it as theirs. The city of Baghdad was the seat of the *hudēnān pēšōbay* (whose activities are only recorded there). It had a Zoroastrian *divān* associated with the residence of the *hudēnān pēšōbay*. There, the manuscript of the *Dēnkard* was assembled, dispersed, reassembled, dispersed again, and found and copied in the year 1020. The *Dēnkard* and *Gizistag Abālīš* are most likely the product of Baghdadi Zoroastrians. This allows us to understand several features of these texts better: the knowledge of Arabic and Islamic traditions in these texts is unparalleled in almost all other works. *Gizistag Abālīš* is based on a popular story from the time of al-Ma'mūn and is filled with a spirit of protection expected from that caliph. Parts of the *Dēnkard* show familiarity with Islamic discussions, especially with the Mu'tazila, and contain quotations from the Qur'ān. They reflect, again, a sense of protection in discussing and rejecting freely all sorts of Islamic ideas. It has often been assumed that this is based on the fact that no Muslim would be able to read Pahlavi, but this argument can no longer seriously be upheld. A barrier that still needs to be torn down is caused by the opposite idea: that no Zoroastrian would care to acquire knowledge of Arabic. These two sources certainly demonstrate that this, too, is untenable.

The *Dēnkard* in particular reflects what can be considered Sasanian court traditions, which one can best postulate as having been produced in circles of court priests in the capital of the Sasanian Empire, Ctesiphon. It seems particularly significant that the subjects of kingship, rulership, and other matters of state play a prominent role in the *Dēnkard* and are barely even mentioned in most other Zoroastrian texts, especially in those texts of which we know that they were produced in Pārs. The *Dēnkard* is, therefore, in every sense a product of the Zoroastrians of Iraq.

NOTES

1. See the second volume of G. Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* (The Vatican, 1947).
2. A useful discussion of the linguistic behaviour of Jewish intellectuals in the relevant period and region is R. Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven, 1998).
3. There is, to date, no history of Mandaean literature. Some of the texts in Mandaic go back to the third century CE (as argued by T. Sävje-Söderbergh, *Studies in the Coptic-Manichaean Psalm-Book: Prosody and Mandaean Parallels* (Uppsala, 1949)), but the two texts that have been studied most extensively (the *Ginza* and the *Book of John*) show clear evidence of a final redaction in early Islamic times. The other Mandaean texts are often held to be younger. See J. J. Buckley, *The Great Stem of Souls: Reconstructing Mandaean History* (Piscataway, 2005), for an attempt to derive the history of the Mandaeans from the most extensive historical sources we have, the colophons of Mandaean manuscripts.
4. H. Gzella, *A Cultural History of Aramaic: From the Beginnings to the Advent of Islam* (Leiden, 2015), pp. 330–81 (with an extensive discussion of Mandaic on pp. 361–6).
5. Writing in the 1930s, E. S. Drower already remarked: 'All instruction, and all the legends, were given to me in Arabic, with an occasional Mandaean word, for the *raṭna* (spoken Mandaean) is falling into disuse in Iraq, and Arabic is spoken generally by Mandaeans all over the country.' See E. S. Drower, *The Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran: Their Cults, Customs, Magic, Legends, and Folklore* (Oxford, 1937), p. xxii. By 1975, spoken Mandaic had become a dead language for the Iraqi Mandaeans (S. Alshairi, 'Die irakischen Mandäer in der Gegenwart' (Diss., Hamburg, 1975), p. 75). Neo-Mandaic has survived in Iran, however, with only a few hundred speakers, but some signs of vitality.
6. S. Shaked, 'Scripture and Exegesis in Zoroastrianism', in M. Finkelberg and G. G. Stroumsa (eds), *Homer, the Bible, and Beyond: Literary and Religious Canons in the Ancient World* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 63–74; A. de Jong, 'The culture of writing and the use of the Avesta in Sasanian Iran', in E. Pirart and X. Tremblay (eds), *Zarathushtra entre l'Inde et l'Iran. Études indo-iraniennes et indo-européennes offertes à Jean Kellens à l'occasion de son 65e anniversaire* (Wiesbaden, 2009), pp. 27–41.
7. For what follows, see the indispensable contributions of Ph. Kreyenbroek, 'The Zoroastrian priesthood after the fall of the Sasanian Empire', in *Transition Periods in Iranian History. Actes du symposium de Fribourg-en-Brisgau* (Paris, 1987), pp. 151–66; 'The *Dādestān ī dēnīg* on Priests', *Indo-Iranian Journal* 30 (1987), pp. 185–208; and 'On the Concept of Spiritual Authority in Zoroastrianism', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 17 (1994), pp. 1–15.
8. The documents were published by Ph. Gignoux, 'Une archive post-sassanide du Tabaristān (I)', in R. Gyselen (ed.), *Objets et documents inscrits en pārsīg* (Bures-sur-Yvette, 2012), pp. 29–96; Ph. Gignoux, 'Une archive post-sassanide du Tabaristān (II)', in R. Gyselen (ed.), *Documents, argenterie et monnaies de tradition sassanide* (Bures-sur-Yvette, 2014), pp. 29–71. They contain references to 'judges', but are especially important in highlighting the role of a *hērbed* in a legal capacity.
9. In spite of this, there are, of course, attempts to reconstruct a history on the basis of the evidence thus gathered. See for example, J. K. Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation:*

- Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elites in Medieval Iranian Society* (New York, 1997).
10. For which, see G. Monnot, *Islam et religions* (Paris, 1986); J. Waardenburg, *Muslims and Others: Relations in Context* (Berlin, 2003); and now especially J. van Ess, *Der Eine und das Andere. Beobachtungen an islamischen häresiographischen Texten* (Berlin, 2011).
 11. 'Aber sie können wir hier beiseite lassen. Mit ihnen hat man sich im Irak kaum abgegeben; sie waren dort nach dem Aufkommen des Islams sehr bald verschwunden.' J. van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1991), p. 425.
 12. R. G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw it: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, 1997), pp. 242–3.
 13. See for example M. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton, 1984), who stresses (pp. 300–5) the gradual disappearance of Zoroastrianism from Iraq (attributing most of it to conversion to Christianity), and the reappearance of Zoroastrians in Iraq (but not necessarily 'local' Zoroastrians) in the Abbasid period.
 14. Many of the problems are clearly shown in S. Bowen Savant, *The New Muslims of Post-Conquest Iran: Tradition, Memory, and Conversion* (Cambridge, 2013).
 15. Landmark studies in this respect are J. N. Lightstone, *The Commerce of the Sacred. Mediation of the Divine among Jews in the Graeco-Roman World* (Chico, 1984); E. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley, 1998); S. J. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley, 1999).
 16. H. W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books* (Oxford, 1943; repr. Oxford, 1971).
 17. See A. de Jong, 'Armenian and Georgian Zoroastrianism', in M. Stausberg and Y. Vevaina (eds), *The Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 119–28, p. 120.
 18. Much work still needs to be done here, but for iconography we now at least have M. Shenkar, *Intangible Spirits and Graven Images: The Iconography of Deities in the Pre-Islamic Iranian World* (Leiden, 2014), which clearly shows many of the problems.
 19. Even this is barely known; it is recorded in the *Kitāb al-Ansāb* of al-Samʿānī under *al-majūsī*, to explain that family name. See the edition of al-Samʿānī's *al-Ansāb* by A. U. al-Bārūdī (Beirut, 1988), vol. 5, p. 205.
 20. Riccoldo's travel book was newly edited by R. Kappler, *Riccoldo de Monte Croce. Pérégrination en Terre-Sainte et au Proche Orient* (Paris, 1997); see also R. George-Tvrtković, *A Christian Pilgrim in Medieval Iraq: Riccoldo da Montecroce's Encounter with Islam* (Turnhout, 2012). For the encounters between Mandaean and missionaries see E. Lupieri, *The Mandaean: The Last Gnostics* (Grand Rapids, 2002), pp. 61–126.
 21. T. Daryaee, *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr: A Middle Persian Text on Late Antique Geography, Epic, and History* (Costa Mesa, 2002).
 22. Thus A. de Jong, 'The Beginning and the End of the Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* lxxi (London, 2008), pp. 53–8.

23. The text was first edited by A. Barthélémy: *Gujastak Abalish. Relation d'une conférence théologique présidée par le calife al-Ma'moun* (Paris, 1887), and then by H. F. Chacha: *Gajastak Abālīsh* (Bombay, 1936).
24. This is the manuscript K20, edited in facsimile by A. Christensen, *The Pahlavi Codices K20 & K20b* (Copenhagen, 1931), text on fol. 148v.
25. J. van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra. Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*, vol. 3 (Berlin, 1992), pp. 203–4. In the Persian text (*Bayān al-adyān*, ed. M. T. Dāneš-Pažūh (Tehran, 1997), pp. 42–3), the name of the 'dualist' is not mentioned.
26. The text was edited and translated by B. T. Anklesaria, *The Pahlavi Rivāyat of Āturfarnbag and Farnbag-Srōš* (Bombay, 1969).
27. For all of this, see F. de Blois, 'The reform of the Zoroastrian calendar in the year 375 of Yazdgird', in C. G. Cereti and F. Vajifdar (eds), *Ātaš-e dorun: The Fire Within. Jamshid Soroush Soroushian Memorial*, vol. 2 (n.p., 2003), pp. 139–45.
28. de Blois, 'Reform of the Zoroastrian calendar', p. 143.
29. J. de Menasce, *Une encyclopédie mazdéenne: le Dēnkard* (Paris, 1958).
30. This is especially true of the third book of the *Dēnkard*, trans. J. de Menasce, *Le troisième livre du Dēnkard* (Paris, 1973).
31. Only, in fact, by Darab Dastur Peshotan Sanjana, *The Dinkard*, vol. 19 (Bombay, 1928), pp. 95–108 (text), and pp. 67–74 (translation).
32. In the introduction to the *Dādestān ī dēnīg* 11, he feigns to reject undue praise to him as 'leader' of the faithful, since there may still be a 'leader of the faithful' around somewhere.
33. E. W. West, *Pahlavi Texts*, Part II (Oxford, 1882), p. 329.

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12

FRIENDSHIP IN THE PAHLAVI BOOKS

Jamsheed K. Choksy

The anonymous author of the *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 'Middle Persian Treatise Accompanying the [Book of] Religious Judgments', who was probably writing between the late ninth to early tenth centuries CE, observed: 'Those things in which moderation is not necessary are knowledge, friendship and virtuousness' (*ān tis kē paymānīgih nēst dānāgih ud dōst(ih) ud kirbag(ih)*, 62.18).¹ This important adage was ascribed by its writer, as were many other wise words, to the renowned fourth-century chief priest or high magus Ādurbād ī Māraspandān and his teacher Mihr Ohrmazd.² Yet 'moderation' (*paymānīgih*), with its more philosophical aspect 'the mean' (*paymān*), was a central aspect of late antique and medieval Zoroastrianism. Defined in the late ninth- or early tenth-century *Dēnkard*, 'Acts of the Religion', as 'not committing either excess or deficiency' (*frēhbūd ud abēbūd ne kunēd*, 6.D1c), it would be called 'the road to the House of Song [that is, paradise or heaven]' (*rāh ī ō Garōdmān*) and equated to the 'Mazdean religion' (*dēn ī Mazdēsn*) itself (*Dēnkard* 6.172; compare *Dēnkard* 3.57).³ So why was the concept of friendship (Old Persian *dauštar*-, Middle Persian *dōst* > *dōstih* > New Persian *dust*, *dusti*) of such importance to Zoroastrian writers in the period between the fall of the Sasanian Empire and the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate that it warranted even dispensing with 'moderation' (*paymānīgih*)?⁴

Those six centuries, from the murder of the last Sasanian king Yazdegird III in 651 until the death of the last Abbasid caliph al-Mustaʿsim in 1258, witnessed not just a transfer of political power from Zoroastrian to Muslim hands but also the expansion of Islam at the expense of Iran's ancient religion. Pahlavi documents from that period preserve and elaborate the Iranian art of advice or wisdom literature (Middle Persian *handarz*), placing goodwill and affection within religious and social contexts relevant to 'those of the Good Religion' (*wēh-dēnān*) as Mazdā-worshippers or Zoroastrians referred to themselves in their texts. Persistence and change in Zoroastrian ideas of friendship toward co-religionists, the faith itself, and even non-Zoroastrians permeated those writings and now provide us glimpses into how values facilitated communal

life under the adverse conditions of the mid-seventh through to mid-thirteenth centuries.

'And who is my friend?' (*u-m kē dōst?*) asked the anonymous ninth-century author at the beginning of the *Čīdag Handarz ī Pōryōtkēšān*, 'Select Counsels of the Ancient Sages'.⁵ The question is wholly appropriate for all times, yet it was especially important from the mid-seventh century onward because for the first time in almost a millennium Iran had been overrun completely by foreigners. These newcomers, Arab Muslims, held their god to be triumphant – and thereby claimed religious superiority alongside their political ascendancy, i.e. because the Arabs had succeeded in conquering Iran, they proclaimed that the Arabian monotheistic divinity Allāh had prevailed over the Iranian supreme divinity or 'Wise Lord' Ahura Mazdā. Islam was in the process of turning the hitherto widespread Zoroastrianism into a minority belief. So it was more appropriate than ever for those Iranians who remained loyal to Zoroastrianism that the response in the *Čīdag Handarz ī Pōryōtkēšān* reinforced their faith: 'my friend is Ahura Mazdā (*u -m dōst Ohrmazd*, 9).⁶ This particular friendship was not regarded as one-directional, however. Replying to questions from the Zoroastrian laity, compiled in the ninth-century *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, '[Book of] Religious Judgments', Manuščihr ī Juwānjamān, the High Priest of Fars and Kerman, emphasized that Ahura Mazdā is willingly 'the beneficent creator who is the friend to his own creation' (*dādār ī xwābar kē dōst ō xwēš dām*, 2.11). Manuščihr then added, as guidance to his fellow Zoroastrians who were feeling the increasing burden of the Muslim yoke, 'freedom [comes] from the friendship of the Creator' (*āzādīh az dōstīh ī āfurāg*, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 2.12).⁷

The notion of *dōstīh* was intended to provide 'connection' (*paywand*) via the formation of 'bonds' (*mehr*) not just of camaraderie but of love – hence *mehr* was employed most frequently to denote 'love' – between Ahura Mazdā, individuals, and groups to unite the Zoroastrian community. By overlap of usage between *dōst* and *mehr*, as in the contemporary Manichaean Middle Persian religious literature, in Pahlavi too the range of meaning for *dōst* was gradually extended to mean both 'friend' and 'lover', and *dōstīh* consequently also came to be employed for both 'friendship' and 'love'.⁸ Yet the primary meanings of *dōst* and *dōstīh* remained 'friend' and 'friendship', respectively, as is the case in New Persian where the words are generally used not only individually but in compounds to express friendship and companionship more frequently than love.⁹ Incidentally, both the centrality and the extension of meaning for *dōst* and *dōstīh* can be compared to two similar terms, Avestan *fraē-* (*fray-*), and Middle Persian *ayār*.¹⁰ Essentially all these terms denoted ties that bound persons together in the best way. So *dōstīh*, 'friendship', or free-willed associations based on affection and benevolence, served as 'very essential fortitudes' (*drubušt-tar abāyēd*) for medieval Iranian society and for each Zoroastrian's life. The Middle Persian phrase just quoted comes from the *Handarz ī Ōšnar*, 'Counsels of Ōšnar', a collection of sayings dating from the sixth to ninth centuries but as so much in the Zoroastrian tradition it is

attributed retrospectively to an ancient origin which, in this case, was to a Kayanian wise man (*Handarz ī Ōšnar* 24).¹¹

Like the unknown authors of the *Čīdag Handarz ī Pōryōtkēšān* and the *Handarz ī Ōšnar*, well-known Zoroastrian writers of the medieval Islamic period also commented on the different facets of friendship. Among them was Ādurbād ī Ēmēdān, who reconstructed and wrote down the extant version of sixth book of the *Dēnkard* during the late ninth century or early tenth century. In his role as a High Priest seeking to preserve and render relevant the traditions of his Sasanian predecessors, Ādurbād ī Ēmēdān extolled the virtues of true friendship among the followers of Ahura Mazdā. According to Ādurbād ī Ēmēdān's words in the *Dēnkard*, 'friendship is good [that is, best]' (*dōstīh weh hast*, 6.127), and 'friendship is goodness [itself]' (*dōstīh wehīh*, 6.B14.11).¹² Friendship even had its own scent (lily) and colour (white), as recounted by a courtier in response to a question from the Sasanian king of kings Khosrow I (r. 531–579) recorded in *Xusrō ud Rēdag*, 'Khosrow and the Page': 'The scent of the white lily is like the scent of friendship' (*sōsan ī spēd bōy ēdōn čiyōn bōy ī dōstīh*, 79).¹³ So friendship's colour matched that of purity and priestly vestments and its aroma ensured purification in medieval Zoroastrian praxis.¹⁴

The *Mēnōg ī Xrad* '[Book of the] Spirit of Wisdom', another anonymous Zoroastrian catechism dating from the ninth or tenth century, utilized religious fraternalism to make the point of friendship forming lasting bonds: 'a virtuous brother is the best friend' (*dōst brad ī nēk wēh*, 14.10).¹⁵ Friendships between Mazdā-worshippers, it was hoped, would bind the community together in the face of grave social and confessional adversity.¹⁶ Authors of the ninth-century *Pahlavi Texts* even reproduced a saying attributed to Ādurbād ī Māraspandān that 'an old friend is like an aged wine, which becomes better and more suitable for consumption by rulers the more mature it is'.¹⁷ Indeed the existential benefits of having friends were extolled in the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* with the words 'all kinds of worldly peace and joy [come] from the man who is a wise friend' (*hamāg ēwēnīg āsānīh rāmišn ī čiyōn gētīgīhā az mard ī dōst ī dānāg*, 30.17).¹⁸

Yet the Zoroastrian priests of Muslim Iran also had to address directly the stresses their compatriots were experiencing. So, as their religious leader, Ādurbād ī Ēmēdān encouraged medieval Zoroastrians by writing in the *Dēnkard* that 'the [true] friend is revealed in hard times'.¹⁹ That High Priest urged his flock to persevere against adversity by being 'each person's friend, for this is [the test of] your character' because 'well-charactered life [arises] through friendship of people'.²⁰ Indeed, whether it was to be extended to the Mazdā-worshipper or even to the Allāh-worshipper, Ādurbād ī Ēmēdān claimed 'friendship for humanity [occurs] without sinfulness'.²¹

Stressing the nexus between faith and goodwill, Ādurbād ī Ēmēdān went on to urge that 'the law of Ahura Mazdā [requires] friendship of humanity'.²² This notion of extending 'friendship to humanity' (*mardōm dōstīh*) was attributed in the *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* to the Sasanian magian sage Mihr Ohrmazd, who reportedly stated that all persons, even those who

were believed to have been led astray by Angra Mainyu or Ahreman, the 'Angry Spirit' or devil, into following other faiths and harming Zoroastrians, could be saved.²³ Following Mihr Ohrmazd in the *Pahlavi Rivāyat*, the Islamic-era Zoroastrian author advised that 'friendship for humanity is [demonstrated by] him/her for whom the benefit and wellbeing of all good people is just as necessary as his/her own'.²⁴

But times had been changing rapidly. By the ninth century, as statistics of name shifts reveal, the majority of urban dwellers in Iran had become Muslims.²⁵ Conversion to Islam generated increasing urgency of needing to discern carefully who intended goodwill toward Zoroastrians and who did not. Consequently in that period of Islamic ascendancy, Middle Persian words attributed anachronistically to the legendary ancient sage Ošnar spoke of ignorant individuals as those who 'do not distinguish between friend and foe'.²⁶ So, 'discernment' (*wizīdārih*) was essential.²⁷ Not surprisingly Ādurbād ī Ēmēdān also cautioned Iranians, possibly those spreading Islam while pretending to be Zoroastrians, that 'one who acts duplicitously makes few friends'.²⁸

Islam was making inroads among rural Zoroastrians during the ninth century.²⁹ Consequently Ādurbād ī Ēmēdān, who was probably well aware of the declining number of his co-religionists, would go so far as to point out to fellow Zoroastrians that 'the friend in religion is with [you] here and there—in both [worlds]'.³⁰ The *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg's* unidentified author commented that 'all persons who are believers [in the Zoroastrian religion] will be friends and benevolent to one another'.³¹ Ādurbād ī Ēmēdān added that 'connection with religion is through love', thereby stressing the theme of remaining steadfast to one's beliefs in the face of alternate ones.³²

Ādurbād ī Ēmēdān warned his fellow countrymen 'the person who is without friendship for the good is without goodness, and the person who is the friend of goodness for the sake of the good has goodness'.³³ So, for Ādurbād ī Ēmēdān, *dēn* 'religion' – in his case specifically Zoroastrianism – was the basis of all good relationships. Therefore, Ādurbād believed it most important that each Mazdā-worshipper needed to 'take one's own soul as a friend', or in other words not go astray from the religion, and thereby ensure his or her salvation.³⁴ Moreover it was suggested in the *Hērbedestān*, 'Priestly Code', probably compiled in the ninth century and redacted about 100 years later, that an individual who should engage in religious studies and priestly pursuits is one who 'is the soul's best friend'.³⁵

Zoroastrian writers from the ninth to thirteenth centuries even urged their co-religionists that one of each individual's three greatest duties was to 'turn an enemy in to a friend' by promoting his or her well-being.³⁶ Indeed, faced with what Ādurbād ī Ēmēdān regarded as irreligious times filled with evil and apostasy, that High Priest advised 'people should expend much effort each day for increasing love and friendship greatly in the world so that perhaps it will become possible to destroy all evil through this love and friendship'.³⁷ Yet the

medieval magi also displayed prudence by cautioning that old enemies do not make good new friends.³⁸

Ultimately, medieval Zoroastrian authors believed that friendship provided certitude for the soul especially during irreligious times by bonding together essential societal units, and therefore they wrote that 'This too is revealed, the souls of the righteous ones will arrive together [in heaven] with one another as friend and brother, father, son, and [other] relative, and wife and husband.'³⁹ Manuščihr added in his *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* that each good soul would encounter 'the righteous who are in heaven who have been his ... friends and are of the same religion.'⁴⁰ But those exegetes concluded that the souls of the sinful, including Iranians who were apostates from Zoroastrianism through choosing Islam, would reach Hell alone to face the terror of demons for 'no friend is a friend to him/her.'⁴¹ It is asserted in the 'Selections of Zādspram' (a Zoroastrian priest in Sirkan during the ninth century and brother of Manuščihr), that in the last days those wicked souls will cry out to the holy ones asking why their friends could not guide them correctly away from sin and suffering: 'why did that friend not keep me worthy [while] on the Earth?.'⁴²

The passages cited and analysed indicate that *dōst* and *dōstīh*, 'friends' and 'friendship', covered major aspects of medieval Zoroastrian life. Friendship was regarded as essential between correlative religionists, with God and, when possible, even between persons of different faiths. In each instance, friends were expected to offer their friendship not in limited quantities but bountifully. By extension, therefore, friendship could, and at times did, turn into *mehr*, 'love', with friends showing love to one another. Even when not sharing love, friends were seen as intrinsic to networks of support, assistance and companionship while alive and after death. Deployed wisely, friendship was believed to hold out even the possibility of turning enemies into friends. At least, true Zoroastrians were expected to try to sway others from evil paths – just as Ahura Mazdā sought to do with Angra Mainyu in the first encounter between the two primordial spirits according to the ninth-century compilation of *Bundahišn*, '[Book of] Primal Creation'.⁴³ Angra Mainyu rejected that offer, saying: 'I will convert all your creatures to unfriendliness of you [and] to friendship of me'.⁴⁴ Those words would have held extra meaning for medieval Zoroastrians who were witnessing Muslims behave similarly. But the cosmogonical passage also offered hope, because rejection of friendship owing to hostility was said to lead to inevitable failure as is thought to await Angra Mainyu at the end of time.⁴⁵

Yet success or failure between friends and with offers of friendship notwithstanding, *dōstīh* was held up as a core aspect of identity formation and communal persistence across the centuries, and in life and after-life, through the words in the various Pahlavi books by recourse to previous and contemporaneous wisdom. Consequently, 'moderation' (*paymānīgīh*) was not regarded as a limitation on friendship as it was on most other aspects of corporeal and spiritual existences. Rather, 'friendship for the worship-worthy spirits [that is, Ahura Mazdā and the other good spiritual beings]' (*yazdān dōstīh*) and

'friendship for creation/creatures' (*dām dōstīh*) were essential 'good deeds' (*kirbag*) according to Ādurfarrōbay ī Farroxzādān, the Zoroastrian leader who defended the faith in debates and began compiling the *Dēnkard*, 'Acts of the Religion', during the first half of the ninth century.⁴⁶

NOTES

1. Bamanji N. Dhabhar (ed.), *The Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādistān-ī Dīnik* (Bombay, 1913), p. 197.
2. See further Alan V. Williams (ed. and trans.), *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 2 pts (Copenhagen, 1990), pt. 2, pp. 257–9, to whom I am grateful for bringing this passage to my attention.
3. Dhanjishah M. Madan (ed.), *The Complete Text of the Pahlavi Dinkard*, 2 vols (Bombay, 1911), pp. 46, 510, 569. See also *Dēnkard* 6.38–43 in Madan (ed.), *Pahlavi Dinkard*, pp. 480–1. The section divisions of *Dēnkard* book 3 follow those by Jean de Menasce (trans.), *Le troisième livre du Dēnkard* (Paris, 1973). The section divisions of *Dēnkard* book 6 follow those by Shaul Shaked (ed. and trans.), *The Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages (Dēnkard VI)* (Boulder, 1979). On moderation also see the beginning of *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 62.18 in Dhabhar (ed.), *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādistān-ī Dīnik*, p. 197, together with Williams (ed. and trans.), *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, pt. 2, p. 108. A detailed discussion of the Zoroastrian parameters of moderation was provided by Robert C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (London, 1961), pp. 279, 286–90.
4. This chapter draws upon and augments my 'Friends and friendships in Iranian society: Human and immortal', *Iranica Antiqua* xlvī (2011), pp. 251–88.
5. Maneck F. Kanga (ed.), *Čitak Handarž ī Pōryōtkēšān: A Pahlavi Text* (Bombay, 1960), p. 1.
6. Kanga (ed.), *Čitak Handarž ī Pōryōtkēšān*, p. 3.
7. Tahmuras D. Anklesaria (ed.), *Datistan-i Dinik* (Bombay, 1899), pp. 13–14. More recently see Mahmoud Jaafari-Dehaghi (ed. and trans.), *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, pt. 1 (Paris, 1998), pp. 44–45.
8. Mary Boyce, *A Word-List of Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian* (Leiden, 1977), p. 37.
9. See for example Henrik S. Nyberg, *A Manual of Pahlavi*, pt. 2: *Glossary* (Wiesbaden, 1974), p. 65; David N. MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*, rev. edn (London, 1986), pp. 26–7; Aliakbar Dehkhoda, *Loghatnāme*, vol. 7 (Tehran, 1993–4), pp. 9883–90; Francis J. Steingrass, *A Comprehensive Persian–English Dictionary* (New Delhi, 1981), p. 544.
10. See Christian Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (Strassburg, 1904; repr. Berlin, 1979), pp. 1016–17; MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*, p. 15, respectively. Note that *ayār* had the additional meaning of 'helper' as an extension from and essential quality of 'friend' and *fraē-*, *fray-* stretched from 'friendship' to 'holding someone dear' to 'love'; on the latter consult also Ilya Gershevitch, *The Avestan Hymn to Mithra* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 129, 261.
11. Bamanji N. Dhabhar (ed.), *Andarj-ī Aōshnar-ī Dānāk* (Bombay, 1930), p. 3.

12. Madan (ed.), *Pahlavi Dinkard*, pp. 500, 550, respectively.
13. Jamshedji M. Unvala (ed. and trans.), *The Pahlavi Text 'King Husraw and His Boy'* (Paris, 1921), p. 32.
14. See further Samra Azarnouche (ed. and trans.), *Husraw ī Kawādāgān ud Rēdag-ē* (Paris, 2103), pp. 157–158.
15. Peshotan Sanjana (ed.), *The Dīnā ī Maīnū ī Khrat* (Bombay, 1895), p. 29.
16. The moral aspect is discussed further in Philip G. Kreyenbroek, 'Morals and society in Zoroastrian philosophy', in B. Carr and I. Mahalingam (eds), *Companion Encyclopedia of Asian Philosophy* (London, 1997), pp. 46–63.
17. *dōst (ī) kahwan owōn homānāg čiyōn may (ī) kahwan ka harw čand kahwantar pad xwarišn ī šahryārān wēš wēh ud sazāgtar šāyēd*, 1.101: Jamaspji M. Jamasp-Asana (ed.), *The Pahlavi Texts* (Bombay, 1913), pp. 66–7.
18. Anklesaria (ed.), *Datistan-i Dinik*, p. 62; Jaafari-Dehaghi (ed. and trans.), *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, pp. 96–7.
19. *dōst andar widang paydāg*: Madan (ed.), *Pahlavi Dinkard*, p. 478; cf. *Handarz ī Ōšnar* 37, Dhabhar (ed.), *Andarj-ī-Aōšnar-i Dānāk*, p. 4.
20. *harw kas dōst bāš u-t ēd xēm ... xēm zīndagīh az mardōmān dōstīh*: *Dēnkard* 6.3, 6.239, Madan (ed.), *Pahlavi Dinkard*, pp. 474, 525, respectively.
21. *mardōm dōstīh a-wināhih*, *Dēnkard* 6.E45e: Madan (ed.), *Pahlavi Dinkard*, p. 589.
22. *dād ī ohrmazd mardōm dōstīh*, *Dēnkard* 6.114, duplicated at 6.E45h: Madan (ed.), *Pahlavi Dinkard*, pp. 497, 589, respectively.
23. Dhabhar (ed.), *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādistān-i Dinik*, ch. 62.7 p. 195; Williams (ed. and trans.), *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, pt. 1, p. 223.
24. *mardōm dōstīh ān bawēd kē sūd ud nēkih ī harw wehān ēdōn abāyēd čiyōn ān ī xwēš* ch. 62.25: Dhabhar (ed.), *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādistān-i Dinik*, p. 199; Williams (ed. and trans.), *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, pt. 1, p. 227.
25. See Richard W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period* (Cambridge, MA, 1979), pp. 16–32, 43–63; Jamsheed K. Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation: Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elites in Medieval Iranian Society* (New York, 1997), pp. 76–86.
26. *dōst ud dušmen nē-šnāsēd*, *Handarz ī Ōšnar* 40: Dhabhar (ed.), *Andarj-ī-Aōšnar-i Dānāk*, p. 5.
27. *Dēnkard* 6.99: Madan (ed.), *Pahlavi Dinkard*, p. 493, S. Shaked (ed. and trans.), *The Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages (Dēnkard VI)* (Boulder, 1979), pp. 38–9.
28. *xwad dōst kam windēd kē dōih kunēd*, *Dēnkard* 6.C13: Madan (ed.), *Pahlavi Dinkard*, p. 556; Shaked (ed. and trans.), *The Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages*, pp. 150–1.
29. On conversion of rural Zoroastrians to Islam see Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation*, pp. 86–93.
30. *ke pad dēn dōst ēdar ud ānōh harw dō abāg*, *Dēnkard* 6.165: Madan (ed.), *Pahlavi Dinkard*, p. 508; Shaked (ed. and trans.), *The Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages*, pp. 64–5.
31. *harw mardōm dēn-burdār be bawēd ēk ō did dōst ud hu-čašm bawēnd*, 48.52, Dhabhar (ed.), *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādistān-i Dinik*, p. 149; Williams (ed. and trans.), *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, pt. 1, p. 181.

32. *paywand ī dēn pad mihr*, *Dēnkard* 6.240: Madan (ed.), *Pahlavi Dinkard*, p. 525; Shaked (ed. and trans.), *The Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages*, pp. 94–5.
33. *ke weh dōstih nēst abē-wehīh nēst ud ke wehīh rāy wehān dōst abē-wehīh ast*, *Dēnkard* 6.124: Madan (ed.), *Pahlavi Dinkard*, p. 499; Shaked (ed. and trans.), *The Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages*, pp. 50–1.
34. *ruwān ī xwēš pad dōstih kunēd*, *Dēnkard* 6.252: Madan (ed.), *Pahlavi Dinkard*, p. 528; Shaked (ed. and trans.), *The Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages*, pp. 98–9.
35. *ruwān dōst-tōm*, 1.1–2; compare 1.3: Firoze M. Kotwal and James W. Boyd (ed.), *Ērbadistān ud Nirānistān: Facsimile Edition of the Manuscript TD* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 1r–1v; and Firoze M. Kotwal and Philip G. Kreyenbroek (eds and trans.), *The Hērbedestān and Nērangestān*, vol. 1, *Hērbedestān* (Paris, 1992), pp. 26–7.
36. *ān ī dōshmān dōst kardan*, *Supplementary Texts to the Šāyest nē Šāyest*, 'The Proper and the Improper', 20.6; Firoze M. Kotwal (ed.), *The Supplementary Texts to the Šāyest nē Šāyest* (Copenhagen, 1969), p. 83; duplicated in *Dēnkard* 6.322: Madan (ed.), *Pahlavi Dinkard*, p. 546; Shaked (ed. and trans.), *The Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages*, pp. 128–9.
37. *rōz rōz ō abzāyīdan mardōmān ranj abēr burdan kū pad (gē)hān and mihr ud dōstih ōh abzāyēm čē abdom-iz harw druz pad ēn mihr ud dōstih be-šāyēd absihidān*, *Dēnkard* 6.242; Madan (ed.), *Pahlavi Dinkard*, p. 526.
38. As recorded in *Pahlavi Texts* 1.100: Jamasp-Asana (ed.), *Pahlavi Texts*, p. 66.
39. *ēn-iz paydāg kū ruwān ī ahlawān ēk abāg did ōh rasēnd dōst ud brād ud pid ud pus ud xwēšāwand ud zan ud šōy*, *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 36.3: Dhabhar (ed.), *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādistān-ī Dīnīk*, p. 113; Williams (ed. and trans.), *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, pt. 1, p. 147.
40. *ahlawān ī andar wahišt kē-š ... dōst ud ham-dēn ... būd hēnd*, 30.8: Anklesaria (ed.), *Datistan-i Dinik*, p. 60; Jaafari-Dehaghi (ed. and trans.), *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, pp. 94–5.
41. *nē dōst ōy dōst*, *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 10.3: Dhabhar (ed.), *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādistān-ī Dīnīk*, p. 26; Williams (ed. and trans.), *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, pt. 1, p. 65.
42. *čim ān dōst kē-m pad zamīg arzānīg ... nē dāšt*, *Wizīdagihā ī Zādspram*, 35.42: Behramgore T. Anklesaria (ed. and trans.), *Vichitakiha-i Zatsparam* (Bombay, 1964), p. 160; Philippe Gignoux and Ahmad Tafazzoli (eds and trans.), *Anthologie de Zādspram* (Paris, 1993), pp. 136–7, 307.
43. *Bundahišn* compiled by, among others, the magus Farrōbay Dādagih, and redacted in the year 1078: Tahmuras D. Anklesaria (ed.), *The Būndahishn* (Bombay, 1908), p. 5.
44. *be hāzēm harwisp dām ī tō ō a-dōstih ī tō (ud) dōstih ī man*, *Bundahišn* 1.22: Anklesaria (ed.), *Būndahishn*, p. 5.
45. *Bundahišn* 1.24–5: Anklesaria (ed.), *Būndahishn*, pp. 5–6.
46. *Dēnkard* 5.9.13 Madan (ed.), *Pahlavi Dinkard*, p. 443. The section divisions of *Dēnkard* book 5 follow those by Jaleh Amouzgar and Ahmad Tafazzoli (eds and trans.), *Le cinquième livre du Dēnkard* (Paris, 2000).

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LITERARY INTEREST IN ZOROASTRIANISM IN TENTH-CENTURY IRAN

The Case of Daqiqi's Account of Goshtāsp and Zarathustra in the *Shāhnāme*

Ashk Dahlén

The *Shāhnāme* (Book of Kings) of Abu 'l-Qāsem Ferdowsi (940–1020 CE) is generally considered the Persian national epic *par excellence* and enjoys an iconic status in Iranian literary culture. In medieval times it played a decisive role in the renaissance of the Persian language across the Iranian world and had an enduring influence on the flourishing of Persian literature and art. The *Shāhnāme* was not a unique phenomenon, and its authors – Abu Mansur Daqiqi (d. 976/977), succeeded by Ferdowsi – drew on an existent oral and written tradition, albeit for the most part in prose, which had utilized more ancient Sasanian materials. The aim of this chapter is to examine the image of the ancient Iranian prophet Zarathustra in the *Shāhnāme* based on a close reading of the story about the Kayānian king Goshtāsp written by Daqiqi (and continued by Ferdowsi). Initially the issue of Daqiqi's social background and religious affiliation will be discussed and in the conclusion the thematic properties of the poem will be considered briefly in the light of Iranian historical and epic traditions. As Daqiqi relates, it was during Goshtāsp's reign that Zarathustra introduced his religion in the Iranian cultural sphere, with the support of the king's son Esfandiyār. Goshtāsp was forced to go to war to defend the faith against king Arjāsp of Turān and suffered the loss of his brother Zarir in battle. These are celebrated events in the early history of Zoroastrianism that have been expounded upon throughout the centuries in different versions.

The narrative framework of Daqiqi's account coincides with that of the *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* (Memorial of the Zarēr Family), a Middle Persian fragment of epic verse originally composed in Parthian in north-eastern Iran and slightly transformed in the middle Sasanian period.¹ Although the *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* is the only surviving specimen of ancient Iranian epic in Middle

Persian, its thematic origin, according to Émile Benveniste (1932) dates back to the Achaemenid period, as testified by a romantic legend preserved in the *Deipnosophistae* of Athenaeus on the authority of Chares of Mytilene.² The fact that Daqiqi's account is more archaic in certain respects, and is more elaborate than the Pahlavi text as far as its themes are concerned, indicates that there existed multiple versions of the story and that Daqiqi most likely had access to other oral or written sources, perhaps going back to an Avestan original that is no longer extant.³ It is likely that Daqiqi mainly consulted the *Shāhnāmeḥ-ye Abu Mansuri*, a Persian rendition of the *Xwadāy-nāmag* (Book of Kings), a compendium of legendary and historical traditions compiled at the end of the Sasanian period (c. 620 CE). Although it is the case that, except for the preface, the *Shāhnāmeḥ-ye Abu Mansuri* has been lost, the narrative similarity of Daqiqi's text to that of the *Ayādgar ī Zarērān* proves that it was an almost exact continuation (except for its poetical temperament and linguistic features) of the Middle Persian traditions.

DAQIQI'S LIFE AND WORK

Abu Mansur Daqiqi is celebrated as one of the most important figures in early Persian literature but datable events of his life are very scanty. According to Mohammad 'Owfi's (d. 1242) *Lubāb al-Albāb* (Quintessence of Hearts) his personal name was Mohammad ebn-e Ahmad and his patronymic Abu Mansur.⁴ Daqiqi was a native of Khorāsān, probably born in Tus or Balkh, although Samarkand is also mentioned as his birthplace in later biographical works. His social background is not known but one of his lyric poems refers to its author as a noble (*āzādeh-zād*), which attests to an aristocratic ancestry.⁵ Like many Iranian dignitaries and learned individuals of the early medieval period, Daqiqi probably belonged to the provincial landed gentry (*dehqānān*) or was descended from this class. The *dehqāns* clung to national customs and traditions more than any other class and were favoured by the ruling Sāmānid dynasty, which attempted to revive Sasanian culture. His social milieu and class consciousness had in this case a decisive impact on the national spirit of his work, since the *dehqāns* played a significant role in the transmission of the heroic as well as romantic epics of ancient Iran.

To judge from his preserved literary production, Daqiqi entered service as a court poet in his youth at the Sāmānid court of Mansur I, son of Nuh (r. 961–76), in Bokhārā. A career as a court poet was the obvious choice in his period for someone with literary talent, and so he wrote panegyrics praising this king and other Sāmānid princes. The fragments of a *qasideh* in praise of Mansur I include a declaration of the king's divine legitimacy and a comparison of his glory to that of the Achaemenids.⁶ Daqiqi soon earned success at the court and won distinction for his panegyrics and mastery of various lyrical forms. As 'Owfi explains, he took the pen-name Daqiqi after having been

recognized for his 'perfectionism in meaning' (*deqqat-e ma'āni*) and 'stylistic tenderness' (*reqqat-e alfāz*).⁷ In Bukhara he probably made the acquaintance of many princes and men of letters and learning, one of the most notable being the Sāmānid historian and vizier Abu 'Ali Mohammad Bal'ami. Later he also served as a court poet under Mansur I's son and successor Nuh II (r. 976–997), who is praised in a *qasideh* containing traditional panegyric images in a rudimentary form. In between the above-mentioned Sāmānid patrons, he also tried his fortune at the court of the Chaghānid (Āl-e Mohtāj) dynasty north of Termez. Daqiqi is highly celebrated by later authors for his effusive panegyrics in praise of the Chaghānid king Fakhr al-Dowleh Abu Mozaffar, patron of the poets Monjik and Farrokhi Sistāni.

To judge from his biographers, Daqiqi must have written much lyrical poetry that no longer survives. Only about 350 scattered distichs in the conventional forms *qasideh* (ode), *ghazal* (lyrics), *qet'eh* (fragments), and *masnavi* (rhyming couplets) have survived. Gilbert Lazard collected the existing poetry and published it in 1964 along with a French translation and a short biographical introduction. Daqiqi's poems had previously only existed in the form of scattered examples in anthologies, dictionaries, and treatises on rhetoric. The most important anthology is Mohammad 'Owfi's *Lubāb al-Albāb*, composed in the first quarter of the thirteenth century (c. 1221), which also includes some meagre biographical details. The earliest extant dictionary is Abu Mansur Asadi Tusi's *Loghat-e Fors* (Persian Lexicon) in which verses of some 78 poets are cited. Following his predecessors Rudaki (d. 941) and Shahid Balkhi (d. 935),⁸ who were masters of all the poetic genres, Daqiqi's lyrical poetry includes panegyrics, profane poems on nature, love and wine, and moral admonition and advice, but also rare examples of satire, depictions of the physical milieu, and descriptions of psychological thoughts and feelings. According to Jan Rypka he was possibly the first poet to use a pen-name (*takhallos*) at the end of his *ghazal*, a custom that only later came into general use.⁹

The Sāmānid dynasty took great interest in Iranian national history and entrusted a rendition of the *Shāhnāme* to Daqiqi who undoubtedly must have been considered the most distinguished of its court poets. The poet laureate set out in 976 on the commission of Nuh son of Mansur to compose a version of the entire epic, deliberately starting with the coronation of Goshtāsp and the advent of Zarathustra. Daqiqi was the second Persian poet to put the *Shāhnāme* into verse, but the work of his precursor Ma'sudi Marvazi has been lost except for some fragments. His principal source was a copy of the prose *Shāhnāme-ye Abu Mansuri* that was kept in the Sāmānid court library in Bukhara, but since this work has disappeared it is difficult to judge how closely Daqiqi follows his archetype. Daqiqi's labour remained in progress, with only a thousand distichs having been composed, when in 976 (or early 977), he was cruelly assassinated by his Turkish servant, considered by some modern sources to be his favourite.¹⁰ The reason for the poet's untimely death is not known, but it seems plausible that the murder had religious or moralistic

motives, as the poet openly had dared to praise Zarathustra and pursued an epicurean lifestyle not untypical of the atmosphere of the medieval Persian courts with their stylish elegance, decadent pursuits, and dark intrigues.

Daqiqi's rhetoric paved the way for Ferdowsi, who copied his predecessor's narrative method, using the same metre, and who paradoxically must be considered the cause of the former's reputation as an epic writer. While the invention of the 11-syllable *motaqāreb* metre with four metrical stresses cannot be attributed to Daqiqi (it can be traced back to Parthian times), he made a major contribution to its formation and inspired the composition of many later heroic works that continued using the same metre. The first Persian works to adopt the metre were Rudaki's *Sindbādnāmeḥ* and Abu Shakur Balkhi's *Āfarin-nāmeḥ*, which only have been preserved in fragments. Although Ferdowsi admired Daqiqi's talent as panegyrist and considered him a forerunner (*rāhbar*) he frankly criticized his style and diction as dry and considered it inappropriate for the literary genre and purpose of the *Shāhnāmeḥ*. Ferdowsi writes:

When this book fell into my hands	my hook was angling for the fish!
به ماهی گراينده شد شست من	چو اين نامه افتاد در دست من
I glanced at the verses and they appeared weak.	Many distichs seemed defective to me.
بسی بیت ناتندرست آمدم	نگه کردم این نظم سست آمدم
I have recited from them here so that the king	may know how defective verses sound. [...]
بداند سخن گفتن نابکار [...]	من این زان بگفتم که تا شهریار
Unless you have talent as fluent as a stream	lay not your hand on the book of kings! ¹¹
میر پیش این نامه ی خسروان	چو طبعی نباشد چو آب روان

Although Daqiqi's style is monotonous and inferior in poetic imagination compared to that of Ferdowsi, who brought the national epic to perfection, Theodor Nöldeke found the above criticism ungenerous and unfounded.¹² Arguing that Ferdowsi's narration is not uniform throughout the work, he concluded that the poet included Daqiqi's verses to handle a sensitive issue (the rise of Zoroastrianism), which could have provoked accusations of heresy.¹³ Olga Davidson claims however that Ferdowsi's criticism of his preceding rival should not be taken literally but as a competitive gesture typical of oral poetics.¹⁴ There are different explanations for the stylistic discrepancies between the work of the two poets, such as the fact that Daqiqi died at a young age without the opportunity for revision, and also his presumed effort as a historian to remain faithful to his sources. In contrast to Ferdowsi, who was more concerned with

literary effect than accuracy, Daqiqi's narrative is rapid, sometimes even abrupt, with imagery not nearly as varied and profuse as that of his successor. He never indulges in any moral or philosophical reflections of a personal nature, and the portrayals of the physical settings and battle scenes are minimalistic. It is also important to observe that Ferdowsi did not criticize the formal qualities, namely prosody and rhyme, of Daqiqi's epic but only its rhetorical and aesthetic merits. Unfortunately he has not left a judgement on any other poet's work that would allow us to compare his criteria of aesthetics.

DAQIQI'S RELIGION

Daqiqi's religious faith has, despite his Muslim name, been a matter of dispute among scholars for more than a century. As Ahmad Tafazzoli demonstrates, a Muslim personal name is not in itself proof of any religious beliefs, since numerous prominent Iranian scholars and officials converted to Islam during the early Islamic period in order to maintain their means of livelihood but practised Zoroastrianism in secret.¹⁵ Mohammad Mo'in and Zabihollah Safā have also shown that career-seeking non-Muslims sometimes adopted or were given Muslim names.¹⁶ Regarding this, Shapur Shahbazi argues that Daqiqi's Muslim name cannot be relied on since it is reported by late or weak authorities (the earliest of whom lived over 250 years after Daqiqi).¹⁷ In the narrative poem *Tārikhnāmeḥ-ye Herāt* (History of Herat), which has been attributed to the poet, there is a eulogy of Mohammad, 'Osmān and 'Ali, which can be regarded as evidence of a formal Sunni creed.¹⁸ But many scholars such as Nöldeke and Shahbazi have argued that Daqiqi was a Zoroastrian by birth or a Zoroastrian convert because of the praising references to Zarathustra in his lyrical poetry.¹⁹ Although some of these verses are fragmented and ambiguous, they are collectively a testimony to his deep admiration for the ancient Iranian religion. The very fact that he began his epic with the episode of the coming of Zarathustra can also be considered evidence of his profound reverence for the Iranian prophet. The most famous Zoroastrian 'confession' is the following pair of verses where he praises the Zoroastrian religion (*kish-e zardoshti*) as one of the four things most dear to him in life:

Daqiqi has chosen four qualities

of all good and evil things in the world:

بگیتی در ز خوبیها و زشتی

دقیقی چار خصلت برگزیدست

Ruby-coloured lips and the sound of the lute!

Old red wine and the Zoroastrian religion!²⁰

می چون زنگ و کیش زردهشتی

لب ببیجاده رنگ و ناله چنگ

Zoroastrianism is not a pure metaphor (*este'āreh*) or figurative expression (*majāz*) in this poem since the religion of Zarathustra only later became a

symbol of libertinism in Persian poetry. The intimate and personal tone of the poem, as well as its note of realism, indicates that Daqiqi here expresses his genuine spiritual belonging. This is further confirmed by the fact that no other Persian poet contemporary to him adopts Zoroastrian themes or articulates similar ideas that could be interpreted metaphorically. As Shahbazi has remarked, the four 'qualities' that the poet has 'selected' are concrete expressions of his ideology concerning the four principal aspects of life, namely family, profession, habits and religion.²¹ His family relationship is represented by the lips of his consort and his artistic profession by the lute. Medieval Persian poets mostly sang their poems with musical instruments, and the Iranian custom of drinking wine has already been referred to above. Apart from this fourfold division, the general philosophy of the poem is very Zoroastrian, as the poet, in accordance with Zoroastrian teachings, presumes the existence of a fundamental antithesis between good and evil that governs all things. Lazard, who has edited Daqiqi's lyrical poetry, is more sceptical because of the ambiguities he believes characterizes the verses referring to Zoroastrian elements.²² Lazard mentions that the first four verses of the *ghazal* cited below have been attributed to the Ghaznavid poet Abu al-Majd Sanā'i as well. In my view, the stylistic consistency of this poem with his other lyrical poems confirms that these verses are by Daqiqi and not by the later homiletic poet Sanā'i:

Rise and light the fire of Zoroaster!

بنشین و برافگن شکم قاقم بر پشت

Many a person turned away from
Zoroaster, but once more

ناچار کند روی سوی قبله زردشت

I am no longer cold, because from the
fire of separation

آتشکده گشتست دل و دیده چو چرخشت

If I put my hand on my heart, from my
burning heart

انگشت شود بی شک در دست من انگشت

Oh your face is like a garden and the
entire garden is violet.

خواهم که بنفشه چمن از باغ تو یک مشت

The one who killed you, killed you and
gave birth to me.

و آن کس که ترا زاد ترا زاد و مرا کشت

Sit and put the ermine clothing on your
back!

برخیز و برافروز هلا قبله زردشت

they return voluntarily to the fire of
Zoroaster!

بس کس که ز زردشت بگردید و دگر بار

the heart has become a fire temple and
the eyes have become wine!

من سرد نیام که مرا ز آتش هجران

my fingers will no doubt become
charcoal!

گر دست بدل بر نهم از سوختن دل

I yearn to pick a bunch of violets from
your garden.

ای روی تو چون باغ و همه باغ بنفشه

The one who gave birth to you, bore
you and slew me!²³

آن کس که ترا کشت ترا کشت و مرا زاد

This poem can be interpreted as a description of winter, friends gathering around a hearth-fire, but it can also be considered a description of a spiritual assembly devoted to worship in front of the holy fire. The fire is twice referred to as 'the prayer direction of Zoroaster' (*qebleh-ye Zardosht*), an expression which is also introduced by Ferdowsi in the *Shāhnāme* after the discovery of fire by king Hushang and the establishment of the *sadeh* festival.²⁴ The use of the Arabic word *qebleh* is significant since it demonstrates, despite its Islamic mark, that the poet is attentive to the symbolic status of fire in Zoroastrianism as an object of devotion and not as an object of worship. The last two distichs are presumably addressed to Zarathustra and highlight the question of life and death within the cosmic conflict between good and evil. According to a Middle Persian legend, which is reproduced in the *Shāhnāme*, Zarathustra was martyred in Balkh when a Turānian army invaded and plundered the city. This is alluded to with the words 'killed you' (*torā kosht*). The embedded meaning is that the poet, by embracing Zarathustra's teachings, has been given new life, which is attested to by his statement above that many people have turned to Zarathustra 'once more' (*degarbār*). This verse has important consequences since it provides evidence for the 'reversion' of Iranian Muslims to the faith of their ancestors. In the final verse Daqiqi anticipates his own death with the words 'slew me' (*marā kosht*). The phrase 'the one who gave birth to you' is ambiguous, but could refer to Zarathustra's tribe, which persecuted him and denounced his teachings, if we consider a religious motive to lie behind the poet's death.

In relation to the question of Daqiqi's religious beliefs, two distichs are of explicit interest regarding his alleged knowledge of Middle Persian. In the first verse he states that he wants to encounter someone 'having the nature of Zoroaster' (*zardoshtvār*) and recite the Zand, that is the commentaries of the Avesta, to him by heart:

How I wish to meet someone having the
nature of Zoroaster!

I could recite to you from memory the
Zand!²⁵

که پیشت زند را خوانم از بر

یکی زردشت وارم آرزویست

The word *zardoshtvār* is a rendering of the Avestan *zarathushttrōtēma*, which is a religious term that occurs in the *Fravardin Yašt*.²⁶ According to Henrik S. Nyberg it refers to the highest religious authority of the early Zoroastrian community.²⁷ In the later Middle Persian literature, however, it denotes a high-ranking priest who has accomplished the most ideal among all the virtues of the priests, namely the complete memorization of the entire Avesta.²⁸ In the second distich the poet imagines himself on a high mountain one day reciting the *Khordeh Avestā* (Little Avesta), which is a collection of Zoroastrian prayers, and *Ayārtak*, a sort of Pahlavi commentary of the Avesta.²⁹ Although Rypka rejects on uncertain grounds the idea that Daqiqi knew Middle Persian these verses indicate that he must have had an elementary knowledge of that

language.³⁰ Since learned Iranians continued to read and write Middle Persian for a couple of centuries after the Arab invasion, it would not be surprising if he had access to written sources, such as the *Dēnkard* (Acts of Religion) and the *Bundahišn* (Primal Creation), as well as a living oral tradition. The fact that some archaic characteristics of Daqiqi's epic are found in the *Dēnkard* – a tenth-century religious compendium that draws on more ancient material – but are omitted in the *Ayādgar ī Zarērān* suggests that more extensive priestly sources were available to the poet.

There is one couplet fragment among the surviving poems of Daqiqi which affirms his Zoroastrian faith if it is read in a literal and non-contextual sense. The couplet belongs to a *masnavi* in the *motaqāreb* metre not found in the *Shāhnāme* and provides evidence that the poet wrote epic poetry beyond those verses preserved in Ferdowsi's work. It is cited among other fragments by 'Owfi, who claims that Daqiqi composed 20,000 epic verses.³¹ Although this figure probably is an exaggeration, given that Hamdollāh Mostowfi puts the number at 3000, Ferdowsi apparently limited Daqiqi's contribution to 1,000 verses.³² The poet declares explicitly in this particular couplet that a person who does not follow Zarathustra's way has no entrance to paradise:

By God! He will never see heaven,

who does not follow the path of
Zoroaster!³³

کسی کو ندارد ره زردشت

بیزدان که هرگز نبیند بهشت

Because of its isolation, it is difficult to deduce if the above statement was uttered by the poet himself or by a person in the poem. Although the fragment probably belongs to the *Dāstān-e Goshtāsp* it is impossible to construct its original narrative context in any conclusive sense.³⁴ Whereas Lazard summarizes his brief discussion on Daqiqi's religion by stating that the poet, formally speaking, was a Muslim, perhaps a Zoroastrian convert, who held the wisdom of his ancestors in higher regard than the decrees of Mohammad, Shahbazi concludes that the poet's love for ancient Iran and its prophet 'turned him into an enthusiastic adherent of Zoroaster', adding that 'his Muslim background and untimely death prevented him from acquiring a deep knowledge of the rites and observances of that faith'.³⁵ Some authors have claimed that Daqiqi's pro-Zoroastrian attitude is more of a patriotic veneration of ancient Iran,³⁶ or purely a product of the Sasanian cultural tendencies promoted by the Sāmānid dynasty.³⁷ Hans H. Schaeder even claimed that Daqiqi's Zoroastrian confessions were simply devices for conforming with the formal aspects of prosody arguing *in absurdum* that 'the Iranian poet may accept any meanings in order to compose a successful rhyme'.³⁸

The views of Schaeder and Rypka are undoubtedly incorrect since Daqiqi's proclamations, voiced in the heart of a Muslim society, are unique for his own period. No other medieval poet is as sincere and as bold in venerating

Zarathustra as he. He is alone among his contemporaries in using an extremely respectful language when referring to the Iranian prophet. This characteristic is also reflected in Daqiqi's account of the rise of Zoroastrianism in the *Dāstān-e Goshtāsp* where he glorifies Zarathustra as 'the truthful prophet' (*payghāmbār-e rāstguy*) and 'the bringer of fortune' (*khojasteh pay*). The general impression given by the poet's work is that his religious preferences lay within an Iranian Zoroastrian universe untainted by Islamic and Semitic influences.³⁹ Daqiqi (as well as Ferdowsi) intentionally avoids the assimilation of Iranian Zoroastrian and Biblical-Qur'ānic mythology, customs and legends, unlike many of his contemporaries (Tabari, Bal'ami, Mas'udi, etc.) who reconciled the Persian and Islamic traditions by creating common genealogical links and expurgating un-Islamic material. This ideological divergence is particularly evident if we compare Daqiqi's description of Zarathustra with that of Tha'labi Nishāpuri, who based his rather hostile account of the Iranian prophet on the *Shāhnāme*-*ye* *Abu Mansur*, that is, on the same principal source as Daqiqi.

THE COMING OF ZARATHUSTRA

Daqiqi's literary reputation rests largely on his epic on the rise of Zoroastrianism which is preserved for posterity by Ferdowsi in the *Shāhnāme*. Ferdowsi reveals that he incorporated his predecessor's verses into his own work because of a vision, but this claim is probably a mere poetic figment.⁴⁰ Daqiqi gives a fairly full account of Goshtāsp, detailing his accession, his conversion to Zoroastrianism, his family and courtiers, and the beginning of his wars with the Turānians. It is important to emphasize that his narrative in many respects reflects a legendary, rather than historical, representation of Zarathustra. His account traditionally forms part of the third book of the *Shāhnāme*, which deals with the semi-legendary period stretching from the reign of Lohrāsp to the life of Qobād, the father of Ardashir I, founder of the Sasanian dynasty. The most dramatic and perhaps most influential event in this part is the tale of the seven labours (*haftkhvān*) of the armour-clad hero Esfandiyār, who eventually is slain by Rostam. Daqiqi's account of Goshtāsp and Zarathustra is however of particular interest because of its religious contents. The references in the Avesta to the kings and heroes of the epic are sufficient to demonstrate that the legend already existed in its essential outlines when the former work was composed. The most ancient elements of the *Shāhnāme* in fact comprise the old Iranian myths as recalled in the *Gāthās* and the *Yāsts*, the oldest part of the Avesta. The *Yāsts*, a collection of 21 hymns, contain older material than the *Gāthās* though composed in Younger Avestan. It is reasonable to assume that the tale of Goshtāsp was performed by minstrels at his own court in the form of lays in the Avestan tongue, and continued to be celebrated at Zoroastrian courts, since it was linked with the establishment and survival of the faith. As such, it was handed down orally from generation to generation and, like many

Iranian legends and semi-historical stories, was not committed to writing until the Sasanian period.⁴¹

Zarathustra appeared in the eastern part of the Iranian cultural sphere during the reign of the semi-mythic king Goshtāsp (Av. Vishtāspa),⁴² son of Lohrāsp (Av. Aurvat.aspa) and the last ruler of the Kayānian dynasty. In Arthur Christensen's view, Goshtāsp, who is a most important personality in the *Gāthās*, must be considered a wholly historical figure and the religious tradition knows of no other early patron of the faith than him.⁴³ Christensen has in fact argued for the historicity of the whole Kayānian era, which is reflected in the fact that the narrative mode of the *Shāhnāme* becomes less mythical and supernatural with less involvement of the deities.⁴⁴ Nevertheless it is difficult to know whether the accomplishments attributed to Zarathustra are more or less historical facts, or legends that came to be identified with him. According to the *Gāthās*, Zarathustra had been persecuted in his homeland and found refuge with King Goshtāsp, who believed in him and supported him in the spreading of the new faith. He is mentioned four times by the Prophet, who addresses him as Kavi. The exact status of Goshtāsp is undetermined but, according to Christensen, his title was intimately connected with rulership among the eastern Iranians.⁴⁵ The *Yāsts* also mention the struggle of Goshtāsp and Zarir/Zarēr (Av. Zairivairi) of the House of Naotara against Arjāsp (Av. Arəjat.aspa), the king of the Hyōns (Av. Hyaona), who are labelled 'followers of falsehood' (Av. *dragvant*).⁴⁶

It is generally agreed, based on linguistic evidence, that Zarathustra and his associates belonged among the eastern Iranians, that is, to those tribes that settled in the regions on the eastern Iranian plateau. Attempts to find their exact location have proved inconclusive because of the scarcity of geographical references in the Avesta, the mythic element in traditional Iranian cosmography, and the incongruities of the later sources.⁴⁷ The Bactrians claimed that Goshtāsp, like other Kayānian kings, had his court in Balkh and that he was mainly active in Bactria, whereas the Parthians asserted that he had erected their sacred fire Borzin-Mehr on Mount Rivand in Khorāsān. The Parthian version gained wide credence through pilgrims, and became dominant in the late Middle Persian commentaries on the Avesta, whereas the Bactrian claim is attested in the early Islamic period but most fully set out in the *Shāhnāme*.⁴⁸ As to the date of Zarathustra, scholars are divided between those who put him in the seventh or sixth century BCE. (Henning, Gnoli, West)⁴⁹ and those who maintain a much earlier dating, around 1200 BCE. (Boyce, Kellens, Hintze).⁵⁰ The lack of accurate information in the Avesta means that the date cannot be decided with certainty, but merely established within approximate chronological limits. Mary Boyce puts the date between 1500 and 1200 BCE based on the fact that the language of the *Gāthās* is approximately as archaic as the related dialect in which the Rig-Veda hymns were composed, and because Zarathustra must have lived before the time of the great Iranian migrations into the land that came to be named after them (that is Iran).⁵¹

The *Dāstān-e Goshtāsp* is a literary work that cannot exclusively be treated as a historical source. It belongs to the heroic genre and was written with a specific purpose and for a specific audience. The present study is nonetheless interested in the extent to which its literal descriptions correlate with versions of the coming of Zarathustra found in the Old Avesta and the later Zoroastrian tradition. The narrative background to Daqiqi's account is given by Ferdowsi in the preceding chapter of the *Shāhnāmah*. Goshtāsp's relationship to his father Lohrāsp was far from amicable, and while still a boy, the prince, dissatisfied with his position at the court, demands to be named heir to the throne. When his demand is refused, he secretly leaves Iran and ends up in Rome (Rum), where he lives incognito until he becomes the lover and husband of the emperor's daughter Nāhid ('Venus').⁵² He successfully undertakes great quests in Rome and it is here that a similarity can be seen with the romantic story of Zariadrēs in the history of Alexander. In the Zoroastrian tradition, Goshtāsp's wife is mentioned by the name of Ātusā (Av. Hutaosā) of the Naotara clan.⁵³ Since Nāhid cannot be a misreading of Hutaosā, they must be different personages. As Lohrāsp had decided to spend the rest of his days in the Nowbahār temple in Balkh he invites his son back to Iran promising to resign the throne in his favour.⁵⁴ Goshtāsp returns triumphantly to his home-country with his Roman bride and is reconciled with his father. According to Ferdowsi, Daqiqi's account begins as he is acclaimed as the new ruler of Iran.

Having succeeded to his father's throne, Goshtāsp is celebrated as possessing, like Zarathustra himself, the divine glory, which here corresponds to the concept of royal fortune. In the *Shāhnāmah* the concept of royal glory (*farr-e shāhanshāhi*) is a fundamental motif of Iranian kingship. It is presented as a divine investiture and a hereditary dynastic charisma belonging to the Iranian kings. Not long after Goshtāsp's coronation Zarathustra appears at the Kayānian court in Balkh.⁵⁵ In Daqiqi's account the spirit of Zarathustra is metaphorically connected with a great tree bearing the immortal fruit of wisdom, with many branches spread far and wide:

Its leafage precepts and its fruitage
wisdom.

کسی کز خرد بر خورد کی مرد

A tree right fortunate and named
Zoroaster,

کز آهرمنی دست گیتی بشت

How shall the one die who has eaten
such a fruit?

همه برگ او پند و بارش خرد

who cleansed the world from evil
deeds.⁵⁶

خجسته پی نام او زرد هشت

The motif of the cosmic tree is very ancient and is the common patrimony of many Indo-European peoples. In the Iranian tradition the tree can be a symbol of the Prophet himself (that is the supreme man), of the world, and of the Bounteous Immortal (Av. *spəntəm aməshəm*) Vohu Manah (Good Mind).⁵⁷

Zarathustra's connection with the tree is also present in the ancient legends according to which he plants a cypress that is at the same time himself (see below). The notion that the advent of Zarathustra 'cleansed the world from evil deeds' reflects the idea expressed in the *Yāsts* that evil had to flee from the face of the earth when Zarathustra was born.⁵⁸ In the variant reading of the Moscow edition the final line of the above passage captures the very essence of Zarathustra's cosmic function in the struggle between good and evil:

the slayer of the malignant Ahriman.⁵⁹

که آهرمن بدکنش را بکشت

Although the meaning of this verse is similar to the expression 'cleansed the world from evil deeds' in Khāleqi Motlaq's version, the description of Zarathustra as the 'slayer' of Ahriman (the evil spirit) more explicitly conveys the notion that the Prophet embodies the triumph of good over evil at the end of time. According to the *Gāthās* (30.3; 45.2) good and evil are absolute (but not symmetrical) antitheses, and have distinct sources, with evil trying to destroy Ahura Mazdā's creation, and good trying to sustain it. In contrast to the Abrahamic conception of God, Ahura Mazdā is all good, and no evil originates from the creator. The opposition between the spirits of good and evil is the great drama of choice dominating the life of man and the destiny of the world. Although there is no mention in Daqiqi's account of Zarathustra's early career or his denunciation of the ritual practices of the old religion, it is clear that he has received a revelation and the gift of preaching.⁶⁰ The Prophet considers himself a visionary and publicly proclaims his new religion to Goshtāsp, inviting him to follow his teachings:

He addressed the Kayānian king: 'I am I will guide you to wisdom.'⁶¹
a prophet!

سوی تو خرد رهنمون آورم

به شاه کیان گفت پیغامبرم

Zarathustra is presented by the poet in accordance with the Avesta as a prophet who advocates wisdom and goodness.⁶² In Zoroastrianism the highest praise is given to wisdom (*kherad*) both as the predominant cosmic force in the universe and as innate human wisdom or good judgement. The centrality of wisdom is reflected in the fact that Mazda – which is generally taken to be the proper name of the highest deity of worship – means 'wisdom'. The above reference to wisdom can hence be interpreted according to both meanings. In Daqiqi's account, Zarathustra invites the king to learn about the path and religion of God (*rāh o āyin-e uy*). The poet generally refers to Zoroastrianism by its traditional Zoroastrian name the 'good religion' (*din-e behi*) and identifies it as opposed to the religion of 'falsehood' (*drug*).⁶³ Zarathustra imagined humanity as divided into two opposing parties, and the term 'good religion' (*vañuhī daēnā*)⁶⁴ is adopted in the *Gāthās* as the communal expression of the faith.⁶⁵ The epithet

'good' is in accordance with the Zoroastrian triad of goodness in 'thought, word, and deed,' and with the Gāthic description of Ahura Mazdā as the father of 'good thinking'.⁶⁶ The conflict between Zarathustra's associates (the Avestan people) and their enemies (the Turānians), who remained faithful to the old religion, is given cosmic dimensions in Daqiqi's account, and is perceived as constituting a dynamic phase in the dualistic struggle between good and evil.

According to the *Shāhnāme*, Zarathustra claims before Goshtāsp to have received a revelation in the presence of the one supreme Creator through which he was taught the principles of the good religion. In the words of Turānian king Arjāsp, as he summons and informs the priests about Zarathustra's appearance, the Prophet had been brought into the immediate presence of God by means of what appears to have been a heavenly journey:

He says: 'I have come down from
heaven.

ز نزد خدای جهان آمدم

I have beheld the Lord in paradise.

من این زند و استا همه زو نبشت

I have come down from the master of
the world.

همی گوید از آسمان آمدم

I have beheld the *Zand-Avesta* in His
writing.⁶⁷

خداوند را دیدم اندر بهشت

Daqiqi's description of the Zoroastrian God and His creation of heaven and earth (*āsmān o zamin*) are in accordance with the description in the *Gāthās* of Ahura Mazdā as the creator of the skies, the earth, the plants and the waters.⁶⁸ As illustrated in the conversion of Goshtāsp, he presents Zarathustra's religion as a faith based on wisdom and free will. It is a faith that demands adherence by conscious choice. The Prophet is described as an ethical dualist who instructs people to make the right choice between good and evil:

'Reflect and act according to the
religion.

خرد برگزین از جهان و سخن

Learn the teachings of the good religion

که بی‌دین ناخوب باشد مهی

Choose wisdom and [good] speech in
this world.

نگر تا چه گوید برآن کار کن

since governance is not well without
faith!⁶⁹

بیاموز آیین و دین بهی

The basic opposition between good and evil is projected onto all spiritual and mundane levels where the two poles are opposed. Sovereignty cannot be separated from conformity with the Zoroastrian faith. It is significant that in Daqiqi's version the Prophet believes in the sacred foundation of governance, even stating that secular power has no worth without divine authority. The notion of the equally indispensable roles of the supreme religious authority

(Zoroastrianism) and the temporal power (monarchy) is not a genuine Avestan idea, but replicates later Sasanian concepts of religion and kingship, which indicates that in this respect Daqiqi's original sources belonged to that period.

Goshtāsp immediately embraced Zarathustra's religion and assembled his family, ministers, physicians, governors and generals, who all collectively converted to the new faith. Among the first converts were his father Lohrāsp and his brother Zarir, but there is no mention of the conversion of his wife Ātusā and his eldest son, the crown-prince Esfandiyār, who became a zealous champion of the Zoroastrian faith. The *Yašts* narrate that Ātusā was influential in Goshtāsp's conversion and according to tradition she herself was the first convert to Zoroastrianism.⁷⁰ In the *Shāhnāme*, the conversion ceremony is described as assuming the sacred 'girdle' (*kusti*) but there is no mention of other Zoroastrian ritual practices in this passage apart from the veneration of fire.⁷¹ The custom of the girdle goes back to the Indo-Iranian initiation ritual where men put on a woven cord as a sign of their membership in the religious community. The symbolism of the cord was made more elaborate over the centuries, and still today Zoroastrian men and women wear the cord at the time of initiation and for their daily prayers. From the *Shāhnāme* it is not apparent on what grounds Goshtāsp accepted the faith, but it seems probable that he was persuaded by the priority given by Zarathustra to wisdom (which is stressed by Daqiqi). The advent of Zarathustra was in any case so transformative that as a result of his glory (*farr*) evil disappeared from the hearts of the wicked, the seeds were cleansed from all defilement, and the graves (*dakhmeh-hā*) were covered by spiritual radiance.⁷² It is significant that in one ancient manuscript version (London, dated 1276) Zarathustra is portrayed as a healer, who cured the new believers from different illnesses, since this view reflects the priestly tradition as embodied in the *Dēnkard* and other Pahlavi works.⁷³

After his conversion Goshtāsp dispatched his troops throughout the provinces and sent Zoroastrian priests (*mowbadān*) to propagate the faith and set up fire temples throughout the kingdom. Although it is impossible to reconstruct the early spread of Zoroastrianism from a historical point of view, Zarathustra probably played an active role in organizing the new society and establishing religious practices and norms of conduct. The spread of the religion was most likely the work of numerous individual missionaries going from one community to another. Daqiqi's account is in accordance with the general notion in the *Yašts* that Goshtāsp, by adopting Zarathustra's religion, helped to pave the way for righteousness in the world.⁷⁴ However, in contrast to the later Pahlavi literature, his principal interest is not the spread of the faith throughout the seven regions (*haft keshvar*) but the heroic battles fought by Goshtāsp, his brother and his sons against the Turānians. From a thematic point of view this feature shows that he draws heavily on the royal tradition with its interest in the protection of the homeland and the victorious battles of the Kayānian dynasty. As Daqiqi relates, Zarathustra then built the fire temple Borzin-Mehr in the city where Goshtāsp had his court. The tradition of the historical foundation of this

fire temple is lost in antiquity, but that it was established in north-eastern Iran is suggested by its Parthian name Borzēn ('Exalted'). The precise location of the fire is not known, but according to Zoroastrian tradition it was enthroned on Mount Rivand (Av. Raēvant) in a dependency of Nishāpur (in former Parthian territory). Since Daqiqi had previously referred to Balkh as Goshtāsp's capital, the story here takes an unexpected Parthian turn.

The Borzin-Mehr seems to have been the most glorious fire among the Parthians and was considered by posterity as a sacred fire of the highest grade (MP *ātaxš ī wahrām*) along with the fires of Farrōbāy and Goshnasp. According to later Pahlavi sources such as *Bundahišn* (18.2-7) the Borzin-Mehr was associated with Zarathustra and Goshtāsp, and was believed to have been brought into existence by, and to have burned in front of Ahura Mazdā. This is reflected in Ferdowsi's words in the continuation of the *Dāstān-e Goshtāsp* that the Prophet 'brought a container for burning incense out of heaven.'⁷⁵ In the Sasanian period the Borzin-Mehr was downgraded with respect to the two great western Iranian fires, but it nevertheless retained its fame and glory in the three-fold political and ecclesiastical division of Iran between the Parthians, the Persians and the Medes. The Persian fire of Farrōbāy and the Median fire of Goshnasp were held to represent the priesthood and the warriors, while the guardianship of the lowly third estate of society, that is the classes of herdsmen and farmers, was relegated to the Borzin-Mehr. This threefold division is envisaged in the *Kārnamag ī Ardašīr ī Pābagān* (The Acts of Ardashir son of Pābag) where Pābag sees in a dream that the great sacred fires are burning in the house of Sāsān, which is interpreted as a sign that the sovereignty of the world will come to Sāsān or a member of his family. As Boyce explains, the real character of Borzin-Mehr has been forgotten in history and it is not known how long it remained under Islamic rule: 'It may be safely assumed that the fire was a great centre of pilgrimage, even after the fall of the Arsacids; but how long its priests were able to preserve it in the Islamic period is not recorded.'⁷⁶

As Daqiqi relates, Zarathustra then planted a cypress sapling before the temple portal saying that this 'noble cypress' (*sarv-e āzādeh*) had been 'divinely sent from heaven' (*ze minu ferestād ze man khodāy*).⁷⁷ The word for heaven (*minu*, MP *mēnōg*) has the etymological meaning 'spiritual' or 'of the spirit' and refers more generally to the spiritual world or a spiritual state as contrasted to the physical world or a physical condition (*giti*, MP *gētīg*) in the Zoroastrian tradition. Daqiqi's reference to a transcendent origin of the cypress has important cosmic implications because the *mēnōg* creation is immune to the assaults of Ahriman.⁷⁸ There is, however, no mention of a sacred cypress in the Avesta, and the legend seems to have developed under the influence of the myth about the Borzin-Mehr. In the *Shāhnāme*, the straight-stemmed tree is called Kāshmar after its alleged location on Mount Rivand in the Nishāpur Mountains. Arabic sources provide historical evidence of the existence of a sacred cypress in Kāshmar that flourished majestically until 861 when it was desecrated in accordance with an edict of the Abbasid caliph al-Motavakkel.

The caliph, according to Tha'labi Nishāpuri, ordered his governor in Khorāsān to have the cypress cut into pieces and sent to Baghdad to the profound grief of the local Zoroastrians. He was not however able to see the tree himself, because he was assassinated before the convoy reached the capital.⁷⁹ It is evident from the geographical shift in the narrative from Balkh to Kāshmar that Daqiqi fitted together the rival Bactrian and Parthian claims about the centre of Zarathustra's activities, probably already present in his sources, into a continuous narrative, leaving incompatibilities unresolved.

In Daqiqi's account, the cypress essentially has a symbolic importance for the foundation of the Zoroastrian religion but it also acquires a cosmic function as the spiritual tree of the good spirit that helps the believer 'to ascend to heaven' (*z-injā be minu gerāy*).⁸⁰ This cosmic significance is also reinforced by the poet's assertion that Zarathustra 'bound the demon in fetters' at the temple (*bebast andar u div rā*).⁸¹ The allusion to a demon should be interpreted as referring to the general personification of evil, since there is no mention of a specific demon in this passage. The foundation of a new cosmic order by Zarathustra therefore signifies the replacement of disorder and chaos by peace and stability. The planting of the cypress is more specifically a memorial of Goshtāsp's conversion to Zoroastrianism, since Daqiqi mentions that the Prophet placed an inscription upon the tree to proclaim that his first convert had embraced the new faith. As the cypress matured, Goshtāsp erected over it a magnificent palace with large vaulted halls made of gold and precious stones. The king then declared it an official place of pilgrimage and invited peoples of all nations to embrace Zoroastrianism and to visit the holy shrine and marvel at the cypress.

THE RELIGIOUS WARS BETWEEN IRAN AND TURĀN

In Daqiqi's account, the fire temple Borzin-Mehr soon became an object of devotion and pilgrimage as people were attracted to the new faith. Zarathustra played a key role in the social reconstruction and material rebuilding of the Iranian realm, advising Goshtāsp on spiritual as well as mundane matters. At this stage, Arjāsp of Turān, fearing the growing strength of Iran, enters the narrative and demands tribute (*bāzh*) from Goshtāsp. In the *Shāhnāme* the Turānian kings and their armies are often depicted as representatives of the cosmic evil spirit (Ahriman) and there is a general tendency in Iranian national history to regard them as the natural foes of the Iranians. However, the Turānians (Av. Tūriya) are an Iranian people from the standpoint of the Avesta. The conflicts between the Avestan people and some of the Tūriya are mentioned in the *Fravardīn Yašt*, which suggests that the oppositions resulted from Zarathustra's proselytizing in Turānian regions.⁸² The matter of tribute must be considered an anachronism since there is no mention of Iran's vassal relationship to Turān in other sources. In Daqiqi's account, Zarathustra

advises Goshtāsp to reject Arjāsp's demand for tribute and defend Iran's independence:

The sage Zoroaster told the Kayānian king:

که در دین ما این نباشد هژیر

that you should pay tribute to the ruler of China.⁸³

نه اندر خور دین ما باشد این

'It is not in accordance with our faith

به شاه کیان گفت زردشت پیر

This is unauthorized in our religion!⁸⁴

که تو باز بدهی به سالار چین

In this respect Daqiqi's representation of Zarathustra reflects the royal tradition in Iranian national history with its emphasis on patriotism and the protection of the homeland. The Prophet's instruction, as the poet relates, had a deep impact on Goshtāsp, since the loyal king consented to his advice. This is the last time Zarathustra speaks in the *Shāhnāme*.

Arjāsp, who already was annoyed at what he considered a betrayal of the old faith, was brought news by a 'valiant demon' (*narreh divi*) of the intentions of the Iranian king.⁸⁵ This demon is absent in the *Ayādgar ī Zarērān*, but is referred to as 'the demon of wrath' (*xēšm dēw*, Av. Aēšəma) in the *Dēnkard* which gives an extensive legendary biography of Zarathustra.⁸⁶ In the Zoroastrian tradition, the demons (Av. *daēvas*) play an important role in the existential drama and are responsible for cosmic and corporeal destruction as well as moral and social corruption. According to the *Yašts*, Aēšəma has the position of helper and messenger of the evil spirit (Av. *angra mainyu*) but his role is secondary since evil is not considered a creative force in the cosmic order.⁸⁷ As is evident from Daqiqi's description, the term *narreh divi* can be interpreted metaphysically as meaning a distinct demon, but it can also be understood psychologically as the function and quality of that demon realized in man. In the same passage of the *Dēnkard* it is also mentioned that when Goshtāsp had embraced the new religion, the demons of hell were troubled and 'the demon of wrath' rushed to the 'wicked Arjāsp' inciting him to war. This is reflected in Daqiqi's words that the Turānian ruler had 'the demons for servants' and hence 'was doomed to chains'.⁸⁸ Although the royal tradition operated with concepts animating the priestly tradition, the fact that Daqiqi mentions a demon in this context unmistakably reflects his religious orientation and suggests that he had access to a more archaic, priestly version of the story.

It is significant that Arjāsp takes to the sword at the instigation of a 'demon', since war is considered fundamentally evil in Zoroastrianism. It is associated with the evil spirit (Ahriman), who is ignorant and wholly malign, in contrast to peace, which is related to Ahura Mazdā. In his study on the concepts of war and peace in Iranian traditions, Bo Utas demonstrates that the Zoroastrian view, as expressed in the *Gāthās*, insists that 'peace' (or at least 'concord') is something morally good and desirable in itself, while 'war' (or 'discord')

is something morally bad and worthy of blame'.⁸⁹ This religious conception survives in Iranian national history writings as shown by many central passages relating to war and peace (*jang o āshti*) in the *Shāhnāme*.⁹⁰ In Daqiqi's account, the disapproving attitude to war is reflected in the fact that Goshtāsp's trusted adviser and vizier Jāmāsp (Av. Jāmāspa) is disheartened (*nayāmad khvosh*) when Goshtāsp asks him to teach him the strategies and tactics of war, even though Jāmāsp knows that the enemy is approaching.⁹¹ It is also exhibited in the poet's words after having counted the losses on each side in the second war between Iran and Turān in which Iran was victorious: 'Shun, if you can, such ill scenes evermore'.⁹²

Arjāsp is filled with contempt for Zarathustra and reacts fiercely to Goshtāsp's refusal to pay the tribute. In a letter addressed to Goshtāsp he threatens to resume the ancient struggle between the two nations if the Iranian king does not abandon Zoroastrianism, return to the old faith, and pay tribute in compliance with his demands. He praises the kings of the Kayānian dynasty and offers bribes, but threatens to lay the whole country waste if Goshtāsp is misled by the 'old charlatan' (*pir-e jādu*), referring to Zarathustra.⁹³ Arjāsp's line of reasoning suggests that the cause of his indignation is not the issue of the tribute, but Goshtāsp's conversion and the rapid spread of Zarathustra's doctrines. This account of the conflict, which is found in the *Dēnkard*⁹⁴ but is absent in the *Ayādgar ī Zarērān*, is in accordance with the Gāthic view that the followers of the old religion did not gently acquiesce in the new religious authority claimed by Zarathustra. Resenting the establishment of the new faith, Arjāsp bitterly laments:

'All have freely embraced his religion

جهان شد پر از راه و آیین اوی

He has established himself as a prophet
in Iran

به کاری چنان یافته و سرسری

The world has become filled with his
cult!

گرفتند از او سر به سر دین اوی

by such obscene methods and reckless
words!⁹⁵

نشست اندر ایران به پیغامبری

When Arjāsp's letter is delivered to the Iranian court by his brother, the warrior champion Biderafsh, Goshtāsp assembles Zarathustra and his court ministers to take counsel with them on the issue. The Iranian king is firm in his belief in the new religion and claims his own superiority over Arjāsp by virtue of his noble descent from Iraj, the youngest son of Fereydun. An interesting aspect of Daqiqi's version is that it is Goshtāsp's brother Zarir and son Esfandiār (Av. Spāntōdāta), not Zarathustra or Jāmāsp, who give the definite response after the king has spoken, declaring their readiness to go to war if Arjāsp does not surrender to Goshtāsp and embrace Zarathustra's teachings.⁹⁶ Although Zarathustra is mentioned by name he is placed entirely in the periphery of the dramatic events that unfold. The remainder of Daqiqi's verses contains

a detailed description of the religious war between Goshtāsp and Arjāsp. Goshtāsp consents to the will of Zarir and Esfandiyār and sends envoys to Arjāsp rejecting his demands. This tension is the beginning of a series of armed confrontations between the two countries. The *Dēnkard* and the *Shāhnāmeh* concur that the war was fought in defence of the new faith, which is also indicated by the epithets given to the Turānians in these sources.⁹⁷ According to the *Ayādgār ī Zarērān*, however, it is the pious Zarir who initiates the battle and is instrumental in the Iranian victory.

Arjāsp invades Iran with his Turānian army and the two armies meet on a field not far from the Oxus, which in Daqiqi's times was regarded as the traditional boundary between Iran and Turān.⁹⁸ In the first battle, three of Goshtāsp's sons are killed in quick succession along with many of the greatest warriors of Iran. The commander-in-chief Zarir is slain in a single combat along with Gerāmi, the son of the court minister Jāmāsp, by Biderafsh, who captures the royal standard of Kāveh and brings a severe defeat on the Iranians. In contrast to the *Ayādgār ī Zarērān*, which records the battle as a mythic event of a single day, Daqiqi describes a prolonged campaign and gives accounts of letters, speeches and single combats at greater length. In the second battle the Turānians are defeated by the intervention of the great champions Esfandiyār and Nastur/Bastvar (Av. Bastavairi), the son of Zarir, who recaptures the standard of Kāveh and turns a hopeless struggle into complete victory. Arjāsp and his army flee the field and a massacre of the defeated Turānians is halted by the young champion Esfandiyār. At this stage the *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* ends with Esfandiyār capturing and punishing the Turānian king, but Daqiqi continues the story. The rendering of the battle is similar in both sources. The only difference is that the Daqiqi attributes the killing of Biderafsh to Esfandiyār, not to Nastur, which explains why Goshtāsp – who had promised the crown and his daughter Homāy in marriage to the one who repelled the Turānian invasion – married Esfandiyār to his daughter in Daqiqi's version. The fact that Daqiqi mentions the practice of next-of-kin marriage (MP *xwēdōdah*) proves that he does not avoid bringing up features of Zoroastrianism that could directly offend his Muslim audience.

In Daqiqi's account, Goshtāsp returns to Balkh after the battles and receives embassies with rich gifts from the emperors of Rome and India. He stops short, however, of yielding the crown to Esfandiyār, assuming that his son is as ambitious for the throne as he was. Instead he sends him on a tour of the provinces and even as far as the Mediterranean and the Indian subcontinent to help spread Zoroastrianism. Esfandiyār carries out this mission successfully, converting the rest of the Iranian realms:

When they learned about the good
religion from him

they received its teachings and customs.

گرفتند ازو دین و آیین اوی

چو آگه شدند از نکودین اوی

They burned the idols on the mountains and kindled fires instead of worshipping idols.⁹⁹

به جای بت آذر برافروختند

بتان از سر گاه می سوختند

In this passage the conversion ceremony is described as assuming the sacred girdle (*bebastim kosti*) but it is also mentioned that the new Zoroastrians received a prayer formula (*bāzh*, Middle Persian *wāz*, 'utterance of consecration').¹⁰⁰ According to Boyce the concept *wāz* was used as a Middle Persian equivalent of the Avestan *maθra* (incantation), which was bestowed to give inspiration, faith and happiness.¹⁰¹ The rite consisted of protecting an action by 'taking the *wāz*' and it was performed in silence so as not to break the power of the holy words. On his return Esfandiyār reports to his father on the prosperity that has been established across the country and is promoted to governor of Khorāsān for his religious and worldly achievements. He salutes the peace and tranquillity in the kingdom referring to the shadow of the invisible Homā, the mythic bird of fortune, which is said to be auspicious:

'I made the world special by divine glory.

I have spread Homā's shadow throughout the realm.

به کشور برافکنده سایه همای

جهان ویژه کردم به فرّ خدای

Men no longer fear each other.

No one in the world is without gold and silver.

به گیتی کسی بی زر و سیم نه

کسی را بنیز از کسی بیم نه

The world has become luminous like paradise.

The world is restored and the fields are tilled.¹⁰²

جهان گشته آباد و هر جای کشت

فروزنده گیتی به سان بهشت

Even if this description is an example of the hyperbole so typical of epic writing it gives a picture of a harmonious social order liberated from evil. As Daqiqi relates, 'the world wagged on awhile with matters thus and evil was lost'. Evil did, however, make itself manifest as Gorazm, an old warrior who is ill-disposed towards Esfandiyār, accuses the crown-prince of planning to seize the kingdom and depose his father. In the words of Jāmāsp, 'a demon (*div*) had led the king astray'.¹⁰³ Esfandiyār is publicly reprimanded but obeys his father out of loyalty to the religion and monarchy. He is chained and imprisoned in the mountain fortress of Gombadān. The monarch's decision brings misfortune on Iran. Goshtāsp departs to Zābolestān to invite the ruler of Nimruz to Zoroastrianism and is received with protracted hospitality by Zāl and Rostam, who readily accept the new faith. Their conversion is significant since it makes them compatible with the Zoroastrian tradition in the *Shāhnāme*, and also reflects Daqiqi's religious orientation and his effort to assimilate the Sistānian

tradition into the national one. Since the poet had mentioned earlier that the rest of Iran was converted to Zoroastrianism by Esfandiyār, this account indicates that he probably had access to another priestly version of the story. Taking advantage of the king's absence and Esfandiyār's confinement, Arjāsp sends a vast army headed by his son Kohram against Iran.

At this point Daqiqi's account ends and Ferdowsi's continuation begins. Kohram captures Balkh, which was left defenceless, and executes the retired Lohrāsp. The city's palaces and fire temples are plundered and set afire. The Zoroastrian priests and (according to the traditional reading) Zarathustra himself is massacred in the midst of the bloodbath.

CONCLUSIONS

A close reading of the *Dāstān-e Goshtāsp* demonstrates that Daqiqi is heavily influenced by Zoroastrian religious and ethical concepts. He presents Zoroastrianism in accordance with the Avesta as a monotheistic religion that emphasizes the dualistic struggle between good and evil. Zarathustra is portrayed as a prophet who advocates wisdom and goodness. He is the founder of the 'good religion' (*din-e behi*) and his revelation, as contained in the Avesta, is praised by Daqiqi. Using the metaphor of a tree he portrays the Prophet's coming as like that of a great tree, bearing the immortal fruit of wisdom, with many branches spread far and wide. This favourable description of Zarathustra is far from the conventional Muslim view and stands in sharp contrast to contemporary Arabic sources (Tabari, Tha'labi Nishāpuri, etc.) that denounce him as a false prophet and describe his teachings as based on a collection of superstitions. In Daqiqi's account he is a charismatic leader and eloquent orator, who guides Goshtāsp and his associates to God. As far as Zarathustra's character is concerned, he is represented as a wise, benevolent, and truthful person. Influenced by the royal tradition of the Sasanian period, the poet also emphasizes his strong sense of patriotism and social consciousness. His religious instructions are intended to promote the protection and welfare of Iran, not least in relation to its Turānian enemy. Daqiqi's reliance on Sasanian sources is also evident in the fact that Zarathustra is presented as advocating religion and kingship as comparable counterparts.

Given the Zoroastrian theme of the coming of Zarathustra, it is important to observe that there are no substantial 'concessions' in Daqiqi's account to the Muslim audience beyond linguistic and stylistic elements. There are for instance none of the inserted Qur'anic or Biblical quotations or references that are so common in the Arabic renderings of Iranian national history. On the contrary, the poet consciously brings up features of Zoroastrianism that could directly offend his Muslim audience. This feature acquires special significance if we take into consideration some of his lyrical poems that bear resemblance to Zoroastrian confessions. In comparison with the priestly tradition it is

significant that Daqiqi concentrates on the life of the historical Zarathustra and does not attempt to idealize the Prophet. Whereas the Zoroastrian biographies in the Middle Persian literature refer to an ideal and attempt to situate the Prophet in the realm of legend, Daqiqi's description is much more sparse and largely corresponds to the scanty historical facts known from the old Avesta. Zarathustra lived for many years after Goshtāsp's conversion, but little is known of his life either before or after this crucial event. The poet's account is more closely related to the genre of history than the genre of romance, where miracles and fantastic events abound, since the qualities and actions attributed to Zarathustra only sporadically correspond to what is found in myth.

Many streams of tradition – religious, royal, and heroic – converge and cross-influence each other in various ways in the *Dāstān-e Goshtāsp*. The traditions differ in emphasis and in their evaluation of individual events and characters. Apart from the three major traditions of the Iranian national epic, Daqiqi draws on historical material from his own period, as illustrated in his description of the originally Parthian legend of the Borzin-Mehr and the cypress of Kāshmar, which flourished in a dependency of Nishāpur until 871. The poet largely keeps to the royal tradition even if he is heavily influenced by the priestly tradition as regards details concerning the coming of Zarathustra and the conflict between Iran and Turān. His reliance on the priestly tradition is illustrated by his description of the causes of the war as well as the function of the 'valiant demon', which is identical to the 'demon of wrath' (Av. Aēšəma) of the Zoroastrian tradition. It is important to observe that the poet consciously adopts these features to lend the story a religious dimension, and his allusions to material contained in the priestly tradition are not just perfunctory references to the religious subject matter. Daqiqi's reliance on the royal tradition must however be considered highly conventional, since it includes very little innovative or imaginative thinking in comparison to Ferdowsi. The royal tradition also comprises a strong heroic component, since the Kayānian cycle embodies the literature of the most notable heroic age in the Iranian tradition. This feature is reflected in the tone and the rhetoric of the epic, which are more heroic than religious.

Daqiqi's royal orientation is not only reflected in the subject matter of the story but also in his sympathetic description of the virtues of the devout king Goshtāsp and the heroic prince Esfandiyār. Daqiqi's glorification of the individual hero in the person of Esfandiyār stands in sharp contrast to the *Ayādgār ī Zarērān*, which portrays Zarir and Gorazm as equal champions. The pre-eminent role given to Esfandiyār suggests – if it was not a product of the poet's own imagination – that his main source must have been an assumed *Esfandiyār-nāmeḥ* that commemorated the role of Esfandiyār as a national champion and martyr of the faith over the other Iranian heroes of the Kayānian House. The importance given to Esfandiyār conforms to a general tendency in heroic epics to concentrate heroism into a single warrior; but it also reflects the high esteem in which Goshtāsp's son was held in the priestly imagination

during the Sasanian dynasty that claimed descent from Zarathustra's patron. It is also significant that Rostam is entirely peripheral in Daqiqi's account. He is only mentioned as he receives Goshtāsp in Sistān and embraces the Zoroastrian faith at his invitation. To sum up, Daqiqi's narrative of the advent of Zarathustra is largely in agreement with the Zoroastrian tradition of the late Sasanian period and was instrumental in setting the Prophet's role in the *Shāhnāme* as the messenger of the faith in the cosmic struggle between the forces of good and evil.

NOTES

1. Its Parthian origin is generally supposed to be confirmed by the many Parthian words, phrases, and grammatical patterns found throughout the text, but Bo Utas has convincingly argued that the text lacks clearly Parthian elements alien to ordinary Pahlavi. See Bo Utas, *Manuscript, Text and Literature: Collected Essays on Middle and New Persian Texts* (Wiesbaden, 2008), p. 19.
2. Émile Benveniste, 'Le mémorial de Zarēr, poème pehlevi mazdéen', *Journal Asiatique* ccxx (1932), pp. 245–93.
3. Evidence from the *Shāhnāme* indicates that Daqiqi consulted the *Dēnkard*, the largest extant Middle Persian work, which consists of a compilation of the millennial Zoroastrian tradition. Book seven of the *Dēnkard* describes Zarathustra's revelation and the conversion of the Kayānian king Goshtāsp, which is followed by a description of the war between Goshtāsp and the Turānian king Arjāsp. According to Nyberg this account forms the 'prehistory' of certain episodes in the *Ayādgār ī Zarērān*. See Henrik Samuel Nyberg, *La Biographie de Zarathustra dans le Dēnkard*, *Momentum H.S. Nyberg*, vol. 1 (Leiden, 1975), p. 517.
4. Mohammad 'Owfi, *Lubāb al-Albāb* [Quintessence of Hearts], 2 vols, ed. Edward G. Browne (London, 1903), vol. 2, p. 11.
5. Gilbert Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans (IX^e–X^e siècles). Fragments rassemblés, édités et traduits*, 2 vols (Tehran and Paris, 1964), vol. 2, p. 142.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
7. 'Owfi, *Lubāb al-Albāb*, vol. 2, p. 11.
8. There is no doubt that Daqiqi considered these two poets as his guides and inspirers, referring to Balkhi as 'master' and Rudaki as 'the architect of all literary disciplines'. In one line Daqiqi imitates Rudaki's famous image of the blossoming ('flower-like') face of the wine-drinker. Cf. Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans*, vol. 2, pp. 156, 161, 150.
9. January Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, written in collaboration with Otakar Klíma, Věra Kubíčková and Felix Tauer (Dordrecht, 1968), p. 99.
10. Daqiqi's death must roughly speaking have taken place in 976 since Ferdowsi commenced his work on the *Shāhnāme* in about 977.
11. Abu 'l-Qāsem Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh* [The Book of Kings], ed. Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh (et al.), 8 vols (New York, 1987–2008), vol. 5, p. 175.
12. Theodor Nöldeke, *Das Iranische Nationalepos* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1920), p. 20.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
14. Olga Davidson, *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings* (Ithaca, 1994), p. 20.

15. Ahmad Tafazzoli, *Saṣanian Society: 1, Warriors; 2, Scribes; 3, Dehqāns* (New York, 2000), p. 58.
16. See Mohammad Mo'in, *Mazdāyasnā va ta'sīr-e ān dar adabiāt-e pārsi* [Zoroastrianism and its Influence on Persian Literature], preface by Henry Corbin (Tehran, 1948), p. 316; Zabihollāh Safā, *Tārikh-e adabiāt dar irān* [Literary History of Iran], vol. 1 (Tehran, 1366/1987), p. 409. Among the many individuals of whom there is no uncertainty as regards their Zoroastrian faith are the physician 'Alī son of 'Abbās Majusi and the astronomer Ma'mun Yahyā son of Mansur. The famous prose writer and chancery secretary ebn-e Moqaffā', who was executed for heresy by the caliph al-Mansur in 759, was probably a Manichean and wrote a short treatise in defence of Manichaeism.
17. Shapur A. Shahbazi, *Iranian Notes 1-6: Papers in Honor of Professor Mary Boyce* (Leiden, 1985), p. 507.
18. Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans*, vol. 2, p. 171. There are examples of images from the Islamic tradition in Daqiqi's lyric poems, especially his *qasidehs*, which testify to an elementary knowledge of Islamic hagiography and notions of the hereafter. These panegyrics cannot necessarily be considered examples of personal beliefs since they were addressed to Muslim patrons and lack conviction. In some cases, one even gets the impression that Daqiqi wants to distance himself from the Islamic tradition, referring to Mohammad as 'that Arab man' (*ān mard-e tāzi*) or contrasting the worship of 'the Arabs at the Ka'ba' to the Iranian veneration of the fire. Cf. Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans*, vol. 2, pp. 144, 152, 153, 161.
19. Nöldeke, *Das Iranische Nationalepos*, p. 18; Shahbazi, *Iranian Notes 1-6*, pp. 505-10. For similar views, see Mojtabā Minovi, *Ferdowsi va she'r-e u* [Ferdowsi and His Poetry] (Tehran, 1967), p. 64; Davidson, *Poet and Hero*, p. 23.
20. Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans*, vol. 2, p. 165.
21. Shahbazi, *Iranian Notes*, p. 507.
22. Gilbert Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans (IX^e-X^e siècles): Fragments rassemblés, édités et traduits*, 2 vols (Tehran and Paris, 1964), vol. 1, p. 34.
23. Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans*, vol. 2, p. 175.
24. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 1, p. 30.
25. Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans*, vol. 2, p. 162.
26. James Darmesteter (ed.), *Le Zend-Avesta*, vol. 2: *La loi (Vendidad); L'épopée (Yashts); Le livre de prière (Khorda Avesta)* (Paris, 1892), 13: 21.
27. Henrik Samuel Nyberg, *Irans forntida religioner* (Uppsala, 1937), p. 333.
28. Marijan Molé (ed.), *La Légende de Zoroastre selon les textes Pehlevis* (Paris, 1967), 5: 88.11.
29. Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans*, vol. 2, p. 155.
30. Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, p. 152.
31. 'Owfi, *Lubāb al-Albāb*, vol. 2, p. 33.
32. Daqiqi's contribution includes 1,015 distiches according to Khāleqi-Motlaq's edition and 1,009 in the Moscow edition prepared by E.Ė. Bertels et al.
33. Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans*, vol. 2, p. 173.
34. The above verse fits, for instance, very well into the passage where the two Iranian heroes Zarir and Esfandiyār respond to Arjāsp's declaration of war against Iran stating that he who rejects 'the way and good religion' (*rāh o din-e behi*) must be slaughtered. See Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 5, p. 95.

35. Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans*, vol. 1, p. 35; Shahbazi, *Iranian Notes*, p. 510.
36. Hans Heinrich Schaeder, *War Daqiqi Zoroastrier?: Festschrift Georg Jacob zum siebzigsten Geburtstag* (Leipzig, 1932), pp. 288–303.
37. Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, p. 153.
38. Schaeder, *War Daqiqi Zoroastrier?*, p. 295.
39. The Zoroastrian orientation of the *Shāhnāmah* is most dramatically illustrated by the absence of the Muslim term Allāh for the concept of ‘God’ and the general use of the Persian word Khodā (Lord), which is compatible with the Zoroastrian Ahura. Daqiqi also adopts the Middle Persian words Yazdān and less frequently Ōrmazd for God. See Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 5, p. 90.
40. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 5, p. 75.
41. Mary Boyce, ‘Zariadrēs and Zarēr’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* xvii (1955), pp. 463–77.
42. With the normal development of Middle Persian *wi-* into *gu-*, the name became Goshtāsp in Persian. The most probable explanation of the name is ‘whose horses are let loose (for the race)’.
43. Arthur Christensen, *Les Kayanides* (Copenhagen, 1931), p. 26.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 27ff.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
46. Darmesteter, *Le Zend-Avesta*, 5: 108–17; 9: 30.
47. Frantz Grenet, *An Archaeologist’s Approach to Avestan Geography, Birth of the Persian Empire*, ed. Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis and Sarah Stewart (London, 2005), pp. 29–51.
48. Bactria, as Boyce argues, was attested earlier, since Arabic sources (Ṭabari and Maṣ’udi) on the authority of the *Xwadāy-nāmag*, insist that Goshtāsp’s court was in Balkh. See Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrianism: Its Antiquity and Constant Vigour* (Costa Mesa, 1992), pp. 11–12.
49. Walter Bruno Henning, *Zoroaster: Politician or Witch-Doctor?* (London, 1956), p. 37ff.; Gherardo Gnoli, *Zoroaster in History* (New York, 2000), p. 164; Martin L. West, *Hellenica: Selected Papers on Greek Literature and Thought*, vol. 3: *Philosophy, Music and Metre, Literary Byways, Varia* (Oxford, 2013), p. 105.
50. Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, vol. 1: *The Early Period* (Leiden, 1975), p. 3ff.; Jean Kellens, ‘Considérations sur l’histoire de l’Avesta’, *Journal asiatique* cclxxvi/2 (1998), pp. 512–13; Almut Hintze, ‘Zarathustra’s time and homeland: Linguistic perspectives’, in Michael Stausberg and Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina (eds), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism* (Malden, MA, 2015), p. 38.
51. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, p. 3. The Avestan ending *aspa* (‘having horse’) in the names of Lohrāsp, Goshtāsp, Arjāsp, and Jāmāsp must refer to a chief element in the tribal culture of the later Kayānians, in relation to the previous generation of Kayānian rulers who bore the title Kay (Av. Kavi) in the sense of ‘king’, namely Kay Kāvad, Kay Kāvus, and Kay Khosrow.
52. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 5, p. 78.
53. Darmesteter, *Le Zend-Avesta*, 15: 35.
54. The Nowbahār temple was according to Daqiqi dedicated to sun worship. Although it was known as a fire temple in the Zoroastrian tradition, for a long period it was a Buddhist temple and the name is likely to be from the Buddhist Sanskrit *nava-vihāra* (‘new monastery’).

55. The reference to Balkh as the capital of Goshtāsp is made in the later passage, where the Turānian envoys arrive at his court. See Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 5, p. 93.
56. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 5, pp. 79–80.
57. Mo'in, *Mazdāyasnā va ta'sīr-e ān dar adabiāt-e pārsi*, p. 340.
58. Darmesteter, *Le Zend-Avesta*, 17: 19; 19: 81. Cf. Molé, *La Légende de Zoroastre*, 5: 2; 7: 4.63.
59. Evgenii È. Bertels et al. (eds), *Shāhnāmeḥ-ye Ferdowsi: matn-e enteḡādi (Šāch-nāme Kritičeskij tekst)*, 9 vols (Moscow, 1960–71), vol. 6, p. 68.
60. There is no mention in Daqiqi's verses of Zarathustra's age when he arrived at Goshtāsp's court. According to the *Dēnkard* he began to preach at the age of 30 and was received by the patron 10 years later. See Molé, *La Légende de Zoroastre*, 4: 1. This account is also confirmed by the Pahlavi text *Vizidagihā ī Zādspram* [Anthology of Zādspram] written by the ninth-century Zoroastrian scholar and author Zādspram.
61. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 5, p. 80.
62. Schaefer claims that the description of Zarathustra as a prophet (*payghāmbār*) reflects the Islamic concept of divine messenger (*rasul*). This view is incorrect since Zarathustra appears in the *Gāthās* as well as the Zand literature as a prophet rather than a philosopher or a lawgiver. See Schaefer, *War Daqiqi Zoroastrier?*, p. 295.
63. Daqiqi refers to Zoroastrianism as the 'pure religion' (*din-e pāk*) and Ferdowsi twice calls it the 'religion of God' (*din-e yazdān*). Cf. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 5, p. 117, and vol. 8, p. 160.
64. Stanley Insler translates this term as 'good conception', that is 'the good vision of a world ruled by truth and good thinking'. See Stanley Insler (ed.), *The Gāthās of Zarathustra* (Leiden, 1975), 53.1, footnote.
65. *Ibid.*, 53.1–4.
66. *Ibid.*, 47.2.
67. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 5, p. 86.
68. *Ibid.*, 44: 4. Cf. S V: 80. From this verse it is evident that Daqiqi had an incorrect understanding of the difference between the Avesta and its late Middle Persian commentaries, e.g. the *Zand*. The compound construction *Zand-Avesta* (which appears as *zand o ostā* in the *Shāhnāmeḥ*) became prevalent in the early Islamic period, and it is not clear if Daqiqi made any distinction between them.
69. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 5, p. 80.
70. Darmesteter, *Le Zend-Avesta*, 9: 26.
71. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 5, p. 81.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 81. The notion that the graves were covered by spiritual light could be considered a Muslim influence since any place for the dead is considered impure and a potential pollutant according to Zoroastrian beliefs.
73. Molé, *La Légende de Zoroastre*, 7: 5.9–10.
74. Darmesteter, *Le Zend-Avesta*, 13: 99; 19: 93.
75. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 5, p. 352.
76. Mary Boyce, 'Ādur Burzēn-Mihr', in Ehsan Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 1(2) (London, 1983), p. 473.
77. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 5, p. 83.
78. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, p. 230.

79. Sa'id Nafisi, 'Sarv-e Kāshmar [The Kāshmar Cypress]', *Sālnāmeḥ-ye donyā* [World Annual Review] iii (1326/1948), pp. 164–9.
80. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 5, p. 83.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
82. Darmesteter, *Le Zend-Avesta*, 13: 37–8.
83. The terms 'China' and 'Chinese' are used as synonymous with Turān and Turānian in the *Shāhnāmeḥ* and reflect notions and conditions of the late Sasanian period when Mongol and Turkish nomads began to threaten Iran's north-eastern frontier.
84. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 5, pp. 84–5.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
86. Molé, *La Légende de Zoroastre*, 7: 4.87.
87. Darmesteter, *Le Zend-Avesta*, 10: 93; 19: 46.
88. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 5, p. 79.
89. Utas, *Manuscript, Text and Literature*, p. 42.
90. For quotations and references to Ferdowsi, see Utas, *Manuscript, Text and Literature*, pp. 31–46.
91. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 5, p. 107.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
94. Molé, *La Légende de Zoroastre*, 7: 4.77.
95. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 5, p. 87.
96. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
97. Molé, *La Légende de Zoroastre*, 7: 4.87.
98. In the *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* the district of Marv is proposed by the Iranians as the meeting-point for the battle.
99. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 5, p. 154.
100. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
101. Boyce, *Zoroastrianism: Its Antiquity and Constant Vigour*, p. 136. Cf. Insler, *The Gāthās of Zarathustra*, 28.5; 43.14.
102. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, vol. 5, pp. 155–6.
103. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

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PART IV

MODERNITY AND MINORITIES

THE SACRED ARMOUR OF THE *SUDREH-KUSTI* AND ITS RELEVANCE IN A CHANGING WORLD

Shernaz Cama

The UNESCO *Memory of the World* Programme was established in 1999 with the aim of preserving and documenting world heritage. Towards the end of the twentieth century, this programme of protecting intangible culture became essential as the world seemed to be moving towards a mono-cultural norm. Dato Habibah Zon of Malaysia explained the need for this programme, stating:

While at one level, people the world over are creating memories [...] be it sound recordings, film, videotape, photographs or computer based documents, [and] the output of the present century alone is probably greater than the total output of all previous centuries put together; ironically and tragically, it is being lost faster than ever before.¹

Such memory is part of an *intangible cultural heritage*, and it is both traditional and contemporary, for it binds together inheritance from the past with living practices of today. It is very often inclusive, for much of humanity shares these expressions. On the Central Asian Steppes, the Indo-Iranian peoples had lived together and created a symbolism, which displays their common ancestry, even after several millennia. Symbols drawn from pastoral life reflected their closeness to the elements; fire for warmth, water as a source of nourishment and stars that guided from above. All these remain objects of veneration in their cultures today. Two branches remain closely knit, the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European family, that is the Vedic Hindus, and their Iranian Zoroastrian neighbours. The sacred thread of the Vedic Brahmins, the *janoi*, and the Zoroastrian sacred thread or *kusti* share many similarities reflecting their historical links. The Prophet Zarathustra, Zoroaster to the Greeks, therefore knew of this common sacred cord which binds these two cousin

cultures. Legend has it that when he left home to seek Ahura Mazdā, the Wise Lord, all Zarathustra wanted from his priestly father Pourušaspa, as his share of property, was the sacred cord his father wore as a girdle.

While the craft of weaving is of course an ancient and almost universal part of the 'memory of the world,' weaving is also a key metaphor in Zarathustra's *Gāthās*:

'O Asha, unto Thee shall I weave Hymns,
And unto Vohu Manah as ne'er before,
And unto Mazda Ahura as well;
Then, by Your Grace, Your boundless Xšaθra too,
Shall Armaiti increase within our hearts;
Come at our call and grant us Perfect Bliss'.
(*Yasna* 28.3, *Ahunavaiti Gāthā* 1.3)²

Zarathustra states he will 'weave my hymns for Thee alone' (*Yasna* 43.8, *Uštavaiti Gāthā* 1.8). Throughout classical literature, famous weavers have recounted the story of their civilizations in their tapestries, be it Homer's Penelope and Helen or, as Skjærvø points out, Ferdowsi in his *Shāhnāmeḥ*.³

In the *Gāthās*, Zarathustra weaves not the story of a civilization but a way by which to create a fabric symbolizing a new approach to life. He weaves harmony and devotion not just for man but for the entire cosmos. The Prophet promises to work towards strengthening this divine fabric.

It is a promise that all those who follow his path must fulfil. Therefore, at the heart of Zoroastrianism lies a doctrine of the interdependence and unity of man and creation. Man's choice of the true path of 'truth, righteousness' (Avestan *aša*; cognate with Vedic *ṛta*) makes him a fellow worker (Pahlavi *hamkār*) with the Beneficent Spirit (Avestan *spənta mainyu*). Zoroastrianism places great responsibility on man: in his actions lies salvation. Zoroastrianism has been called 'the religion of action,'⁴ since for the Zoroastrian, all human beings have within themselves an *uruuan*, often translated as 'soul', but whose literal meaning 'the chooser', conveys its significance more accurately. Complete freedom is given to the individual;

'Hear with your ears the Highest Truths I preach
And with illumined minds weigh them with care,
Before you choose which of the two paths to tread. [...]
Deciding man by man, each one for each [...]'.
(*Yasna* 30.2, *Ahunavaiti Gāthā* 3.2)

Cosmic truth and harmony ensure justice, but this can only be possible when there is no exploitation or degradation of creation. While in the twenty-first century we are still struggling to achieve human rights, in the Bronze Age, Zarathustra had already spoken of the rights of plants and animals, and of reverence for, and nurture of, all life. This law of *aša* is essential for balance

and well-being. Zoroastrian theology stresses the harmony of both the spiritual and material (Pahlavi *mēnōg* and *gētīg*) aspects of creation. The rituals of the religion are then concerned with the creation of a protective shield to preserve life from destructive evil, be it the daily *kusti* ritual performed by an individual or the ancient *Yasna* liturgy performed by highly trained priests. This liturgy of the *Yasna* is the act of sacrifice performed to help strengthen the world of *aša* and spiritually energize all the seven creations.

This chapter examines the circular nature of both of these rituals. The ritual practice of tying the *kusti* around the body is believed to create a personal circle of protection around the individual in daily life. In the *Yasna*, for which water is drawn from a well before dawn, the liturgy binds together all the seven creations through prayer and ritual, before the circle is completed with the spiritually consecrated water being finally poured back into the well, thereby strengthening each new day. Zarathustra's entire teachings are traditionally summed up in three principles every Zoroastrian child learns – *Humata, Hūxta, Huvaršta*, 'Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds'. Because deeds are the most important, the knot of the sacred girdle or *kusti* is made at a time in the prayer when the word '*šiiiaoθananqm*' or 'actions/deeds' is pronounced. Zoroastrians gird themselves up to be soldiers of the Lord, the best service to God being service to His creation. Such links between the priestly liturgical ceremony of the *Yasna* and the daily ritual performance of tying the *kusti* (*kusti bastan*) are seen in the *Pahlavi Texts* as acts binding together man and the cosmos.⁵ An individual starts the day with *kusti* prayers, facing sunlight: the *Yasna* 'awakens' the fire of mental and physical illumination, driving back the negative forces of darkness, disorder and ignorance. One is believed to work at the micro-level of the individual, the other at the macro-level of the cosmos.

According to the *Sad Dar Bundahishn*, 'The first person who set the wearing of this sacred thread girdle was Jamshed'.⁶ The *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* explains that while the sacred thread girdle, 'was worn before the coming of Zarathustra the Spitaman', it was he who provided the religious formula the *Nērang ī kustīg* with which to tie it. The text also describes its partner garment, the *sudreh* or sacred shirt, as 'destructive of the power of destruction ... obstructive of the way to sin'.⁷ Over the millennia the *sudreh* and *kusti* have become key symbols of the Zoroastrian faith: they are garments of identity as well as symbolically 'sacred armour', originating from perhaps as long ago as the Bronze Age, they are still believed to protect Zoroastrians and bind them to their faith in the world today.

In the *Yasna* ceremony, water is drawn by two priests from a well before dawn. In a complex liturgical service, all the elements are brought together while the 72 chapters of the *Yasna* text are chanted. The ritual includes the *Haoma* ceremony and, ultimately, the priest representing man, gives back to nature the now-consecrated, strengthened and purified water. Besides references to the *Yasna* in ninth- and tenth-century CE *Pahlavi Texts* such as the *Dēnkard*, *Bundahišn*, *Dadestān ī Dēnīg* and *Šāyest Nēšāyest*, the classical Greek historians Herodotus and Strabo speak of it. 'The requisites were spread on a

matting or bed of grass ... the Magians touch it with slender rods and chant an incantation ... holding a bundle of slender rods of tamarisk'.⁸

Unlike the Hindu *Yajña*, the Zoroastrian *Yasna* can only be performed between sunrise and noon in *Hāwān gāh*. Performed on behalf of and in aid of all beneficent creation, two priests who spread purity (*Yaozdathragar Mowbeds*),⁹ start the day by helping increase righteousness. Zarathustra composed a definite liturgy for it, from which we have the *Gāthās* and the *Yasna Haptan̄hāiti*, 'the worship of the seven sections', both of which, along with brief *manthras*, were memorized and handed down through oral tradition from the very beginning of the faith. These texts together form the *Staota Yesniia*, 'words of praise and worship', unchanged across millennia. The Avestan term used for the 72 chapters of the *Yasna* text, namely *hāiti*, holds linguistic significance for the *kusti* ritual: Avestan *hāiti* comes from the root *hā*, to bind as in English 'bundle'. The 72 threads woven together to make up the *kusti* are cut with an ivory knife by a priest when the weaving is complete. These threads of the *kusti* are therefore taken to symbolize the 72 chapters of the *Yasna*: it is as if, with the tying on of the *kusti*, Zoroastrians ritually bind themselves with the liturgy of the faith.¹⁰ In the *Yasna*, the material *gētīg* and spiritual *mēnōg* worlds meet in a Fire Temple, a place of light and radiance, which symbolizes the abode of Ahura Mazdā. The event has cosmological significance, evoking the whole story of creation. In Zoroastrian cosmology, at the end of time, the power of Ahura Mazdā will defeat evil. At the time of *Frashokereti* all will be 'made wonderful'. Through this ritual time advances towards infinite perfection.

The natural items consecrated by the *Yasna* include the leaf of a date palm, the *aiβiiānhana*, the twig of a pomegranate tree, or *urvarām*, the fresh milk of a goat, *jivam*, the sacred bread, *darun*, *goshudo*, clarified butter or ghee, and *haoma*, the twig of the *haoma* plant. The consecrated water or *zōr* and fire in the *afarganiyu*, fed with sandalwood and incense, are essential for this complex ritual. Fire Temples often have date palms growing on their premises as the tree is needed in many rituals.¹¹ The word *aiβiiānhana* from Avestan *aiβi*, Sanskrit *abhi* 'towards' and *yānhana*, which is derived from the verb *yāh* 'to gird' denotes a girdle, a bond or a tie. The main idea of the *aiβiiānhana* is therefore unification (Fig. 62). The same word is used in the Avesta to refer to the girdle that is later called the *kusti*. Just as it is believed that the *kusti* unites into a circle of harmony all those who wear it, so the strips of the leaf of the date palm unite the *barsom* signifying the coming together of all nature.

The principal ritual in the *Yasna* is the preparation and celebration of the *haoma*. The *haoma* sacrifice has been seen as the sacrifice of a god, dying in order to preserve creation.¹² In this part of the *Yasna*, the *Havanim*, a metal or stone mortar, is used and the twigs of the *Haoma* are pounded with the pestle. When struck, this ritual apparatus makes a deep, ringing sound, which is believed to exorcise evil.¹³ The *Yasna* ceremony continues, with the *darun* being prepared and the pounding of the *haoma*. The ritual gesture of striking the pestle against mortar and various parts of the table is supposed to drive



Figure 62 The *aiḡiiāḡhana* (tie, girdle)



Figure 63 The *māhrui* ('moon-faced' metallic stands)

away Ahreman. Similarly, in the *Nērang ī kustīg*, the person bows and raises the *kusti* to his forehead at the name of Ahura Mazdā, but dashes the string sharply downwards to the left when mentioning Ahreman. 'May Ahura Mazdā be Lord and Ahreman unprevailing, kept far away, smitten and defeated!'¹⁴

The *māhrui*, 'moon-faced' metallic stands, are also called *barsom-dān*, since the *barsom* twigs are placed upon them (Fig. 63). The word *barsom* is from Avestan *barəsman*, which is formed from the root *barez*, Sanskrit *barh*, 'to rise'.¹⁵ The *barsom*, a symbol of God's vegetable creation, is placed on the *māhrui*. It is believed that the moon aids fertility, so this symbolically increases growth. For about a thousand years, instead of twigs, metallic wires have been used. According to the *Bahman Yašt*, the *barsom* part of the ceremony is believed to be as old as Zarathustra himself.¹⁶

As the ceremony develops, a strip of the leaf of the date palm (*aiβiiānhana*) is used to tie the *barsom*. The dedication or *Khshnuman* to Kshathra Vairya is made while tying the metal *barsom*: *xšaθrahe vairiiehe aiiōxšustahe marəždikāi θrāiiō.driyaouue xšnaoθra yasnāica vahmāica xšnaoθrāica frasataiiaēca*, 'for the pleasure, worship, adoration, propitiation and glorification of the *aməša spənta* Kshathra Vairya presiding over metal; for mercy and nourishment of the poor'.¹⁷ After a dedication to Ahura Mazdā, the priest recites the *Yaθā Ahū Vairiio māθra* or *Ahunvar*. Each time he utters the word *šiiiaoθananəm*, he ties the palm cord into a reef knot.¹⁸ In the *Nērang ī kustīg*, it is very similar. *Šāyest Nēšāyest* confirms that:

the priest washes the twigs with water and ties them together with a *kustik* or girdle formed of 6 thread like ribbons split out of a leaflet of the date palm; this girdle [...] is secured with a right handed and left handed knot, exactly as the *kustik* or sacred girdle is secured around the waist.¹⁹

During the *kusti* ritual recitation, the participant holds his hands together, contemplating Ahura Mazdā's glory and at the word 'action' a loose reef knot is tied, concentrating on good thoughts, words and deeds. The double knot is completed behind the individual as the last word of the prayer is uttered.

The *Yasna* ceremony thus reaffirms in detail the Zoroastrian belief in *asha*. Both the physical environment and spiritual state are energized daily in this ritual. But the *Yasna* is complex and its holistic vision needs to be explained not just in a liturgical ritual but to all Zoroastrians in their daily routine: each man or woman who follows the religion is taught that each aspect of being has a spiritual core worthy of protection. The *kusti* ritual is part of a daily routine to provide protection to the individual, becoming, in effect, an individual's sacred armour. The Zoroastrian, in undergoing the *Navjote*, when he or she puts on the sacred garments, is seen as becoming, as it were, a soldier of Truth (*aša*) in defence of harmony and against evil, and is worn in all life-cycle rituals. The *agharni* ceremonies for pregnancy, birth and post-natal ceremonies all have a definite role for these sacred garments. For a Zoroastrian the *Navjote*

is literally a 'new birth' in life and celebrates a beginning of the individual's spiritual maturity. From this time onwards each child takes on responsibility for his/her thoughts, words and deeds for the rest of their lives. The *Šāyest Nēšāyest* (4.7) indicates that 'until 15 years of age, there is no sin ... of running about uncovered', signifying that the ceremony must be done some time before puberty.²⁰ In the *Navjote* ritual the initiate undergoes a *nahn*, a ritual bath of purification, chews pomegranate leaves symbolic of immortality, and tastes *taro*, bull's urine, which cleanses from within. The familiar fertility symbols of the ritual, such as the silver tray (*ses*) with rice, rose petals, the fire in a censer and the *divo* or lamp, are all secondary: the symbolic centre of the ceremony is the putting on of the sacred garments, *sudreh* and *kusti*.

The priest leads the child in the recitation of the *Din-no-kalmo* 'Confession of Faith', and as the priest and child recite the *Ahunvar mąthra*, at the utterance of the word *šiiiaoθananąm*, the priest ceremoniously invests the child with the sacred *sudreh* and with this investment of the 'garment of the good mind', the main ceremony begins. Child and priest, in ritual *paiwand* 'connection', begin to recite aloud the *kusti bastan* or *Ahuramazda Khodae* prayer. At the words *manashni*, *gavashni*, *kunashni*, the priest and child make two interconnected loops in the *kusti*. According to oral tradition, this gesture is to remind the initiate of the two interdependent worlds, physical and spiritual. Then, as they



Figure 64 The *Navjote* (initiation ceremony)

say the words *xšnaoθra ahurahe mazdā*, the priest, encircles the *kusti* twice around the child's waist, and ties it with two reef knots. The *aiβtiān̄hana* is complete. Finally the *Fravarāne* or 'Declaration of Faith' is recited, as the child declares *jasā mē avan̄he mazdā*, his allegiance to the Zoroastrian *Din* (*daēnā*), whilst holding on to the *kusti* 'sacred girdle' (Fig. 64).

Marriage is a sacrament when new sacred garments are worn by the bride and groom to signify the new life into which they are entering together. At this stage, for reasons of symbolism, both partners put on new *kustis*. In Parsi tradition a special *sudreh*, hand-stitched by the bride or her mother, and richly decorated with handmade lace, is proudly worn by the bride under her white wedding sari. Again, as soldiers wearing the armour of the faith they begin their marriage together. Finally, at death, this sacred armour is the person's only material accompaniment into the spiritual world. Either at the *Dakhma* or at the *Aramgah*, after the final *nahn* bath of purification, the body is dressed only in an old *sudreh*: *kusti* prayers are then recited by the family members as one of them ties an old *kusti* around the body. In this way the sacred armour is believed to protect the material body for one last time, warding off evil that might hinder the progress of the soul at the critical time just after death.²¹

Just as the *Yasna* has many intricate symbolic details accompanying its ritual, so the *sudreh* and *kusti* are also invested with much symbolism. The *sudreh* is a loose, white muslin tunic with very short sleeves. The *Dadestān ī Dēnīg* (ch. 40) emphasizes that it must be perfectly 'pure white and single, with one fold', because *Vohu Manah*, the good mind, 'which is innermost' is also 'the one creature who was first'.²² It is a traditionally held belief that the *sudreh*, made of cotton fibre, represents the plant world and its nine parts symbolically represent the 9,000 years of the mixed state of the material world (*Pahlavi gumēzišn*) which is the period of life and time span of this mortal condition.

The most important part of the *sudreh* is the *girebān* 'holder', or *kiseh-ye kerfeh*, 'purse of merit', which is made in the form of a one square inch bag or purse that is positioned above the heart. It is intended to remind Zoroastrians not just to fill their purses with money but also with merit. Over the years, the *sudreh* has gone through a process of metamorphosis: originally worn as a symbol of identity, it used to be clearly visible, particularly in men's and women's clothing in India. Today, except on religious occasions, it remains completely hidden. The *sudreh* has been reduced considerably in length especially in the women's garment, and the sleeves are very much shortened; the *sudreh* is also often tucked or folded beneath a blouse. The *girebān* remains intact, and each Zoroastrian child is taught that he or she must fill the 'purse of merit' with at least one good deed daily to fellow human beings and the Good Creation:

'[...] I have taught

That action, not inaction, higher stands,

Obeying then, His will, worship through deeds [...]'

(*Yasna* 46.17, *Uštavaiti Gāthā* 4.17)

The nurturing of life and a willingness to protect the seven regions of the earth (Pahl. *haft kišwar ī zamin*), are tenets engraved on the heart of each Zoroastrian. When the garment of Vohu Manah is firmly in place, it is believed that the Zoroastrian better understand that the path of righteousness (*asha*) alone provides happiness and dispels doubt and evil. Crafts are thus an integral part of intangible culture, and spinning and weaving are some of humankind's most ancient skills. *Kusti* weaving is an ancient craft, which continues through the memory of the weavers down to the present day. Weaving the *kusti* is a sight still common in the *vads* of Navsari and other Parsi settlements as well as among traditional Zoroastrians in Iran.²³ It is pertinent to note how closely the oral traditions of the weavers fit into the explanations given about the symbolism of these garments in the *Pahlavi Texts*. There are several possible etymologies of the term '*kusti*', but most likely it is related to Pahlavi *kust* – 'direction or side', that is what points out the proper direction, and thus together with the *sudreh* it is the 'direction finder' showing a Zoroastrian how to proceed on the path of life. Wearing the *kusti*, according to the *Dadestān ī Dēnīg*, becomes 'a token and sign of worship ... of great assistance is this belt, which is called the *kustīg*, that which is tied on the middle of the body'. It helps 'keep thought, word and deed confined from sin' – it protects all creation for 'the destroyer ... faced the barricade and rampart of ... the girdle of good works'. 'The star-studded girdle ... terrifies the demons and fiends'. 'One is to gird it in the neighbourhood of the heart and on the middle of the body ... so also the place of the sacred thread – girdle is between below and above'. The moderation and balance that the *kusti* brings is highlighted, for it is this positioning which makes it the creator of harmony.²⁴

The *Dadestān ī Dēnīg* tells us that the six strands are supposed to symbolize the six seasonal festivals (Pahl. *gāhānbār*). The 12 threads in each strand symbolize the 12 months as well as the 12 words of the *Aṣəm Vohū maθra*. Oral tradition sees a symbolic correspondence of the 24 threads in each string with the 24 *Kardaks* or sections of the *Visparad*, and of the 72 threads in the whole string with the 72 *hā's* or chapters of the *Yasna*.²⁵ Oral traditions recorded from the weavers state that the hollow middle of the *kusti* symbolizes the sky or atmosphere and tells the weaver to protect all that the atmosphere surrounds.²⁶

After weaving, the *kusti* is turned inside out in a complex process; it signifies that we have come into this world for the sake of the other world and we have to go back with our work completed. Held in the middle and tied around the waist, the *kusti* signifies that the wearer should walk the middle path in all worldly and religious action. The four reef knots remember the Creator who is One, Zoroastrianism the true religion, Zarathustra the Prophet sent by God, and the wearer who must perform good deeds. The *Sad Dar* (ch. 10) also speaks of the four knots made while tying the thread:

The first knot is that which preserves constancy [...] the second is [...] that which gives attestation that it is the good religion of the Mazda worshippers [...] The third

knot gives attestation to the mission of the just Zarathust the Spitaman [...] the fourth knot is that which gives assurance that I should think of good, speak of good, do good.²⁷

The *kusti* is made from lamb's wool or white camel's hair, and its material is taken to represent the animal world. As white wool is considered an emblem of innocence and purity, the *kusti* reminds a Zoroastrian of the purity which must be maintained as far as possible. Wool, being a good absorbent, is believed to 'absorb' the positive vibrations or effects caused by prayer. Myth and weaving techniques fit in conveniently together, for wool is essential to the weaving process: for practical reasons, cotton cannot be used in the weaving of the *kusti*, because cotton has a tendency to curl and tangle, and in warm climates knots in cotton cannot easily be undone. When a *kusti* is broken, a Zoroastrian can no longer wear it because, except for the reef knots, the *kusti* should not have any other knotting, nor can it be stitched throughout the length. *Kusti* weaving is one of the most difficult of weaves to do, because out of the 72 threads the weaver has to make a long and narrow hollow tube from 3 to 6 yards in length and perhaps just half an inch in width. The average *kusti* of 4½ yards, is called a *mapni kusti* (Guj., 'measured *kusti*'). In India, only lamb's wool is used for this weaving and is now imported from Australia in clean, shrink proof bundles called Guj. '*fara*'. The *kusti* loom or Guj. *sal* was always an important part of a Zoroastrian household. Earlier, women from the priestly class alone wove *kustis*, however, due to the diminishing boundaries between the priestly *Athornan* and lay *Behdin* classes, women of the laity have also started weaving *kustis* for economic benefit. *Kusti* making, once an inherited skill passed down through the generations and learnt by observation, has now become a specialized craft.

While richer homes had *kustis* made to order, the finer the better, in the late nineteenth and twentieth century, Parsi schools across India, for example the Sir J. J. Primary School, Malesar, Navsari or Gamadia School, Bombay, held *sudreh* and *kusti* making classes. Many of the older generation of Parsis in Gujarat recall the Gandhian teacher Burjorji Framji Bharucha (BFB) of Navsari who, in the 1930s and 1940s ran BFB classes in *kusti* and *sudreh* making, *toran* making, cross stitch, satin stitch and *topi* making in Parsi areas of Gujarat. BFB classes treated *kusti* weaving and *sudreh* making as developmental activities and were precursors of the cottage industry movement of India. In an interview in Gujarati, Katy Sorabji Patel stated: 'We learnt *kusti* weaving at Parsi School ... the BFB *Mahila Vishram* (women's industrial) classes in Motia Phalia, Navsari were *udyog* (developmental).'²⁸

The spinning (Guj. *oon kantwanu*) is the first step in the making of a *kusti* (Fig. 65). Most women start the process with a little prayer. The wool is spun into fine yarn with the help of a drop spindle (Guj. *chaaterdi*). Two spindles of single yarn are then twisted to form a strong and uniform yarn known as *durry* which is used for weaving. The process of double plying (Guj. *val*



Figure 65 Spinning wool for the *kusti* (sacred thread)

dewanu) and is done on a bigger spindle (*chaaterdo*). On a walk in the Parsi *vads* of Navsari in 2013 it was still possible to see women effortlessly spinning on their verandahs with their *chaaterdis* and *chaaterdos*, chatting with their neighbours. It belies the skill required to spin the extremely fine yarn, for this seemingly casual activity is integral in determining the thickness of the *kusti*. Some women only specialize in providing spun yarn to the weaver. According to an admirable old custom, the spinner gives the weaver enough yarn for two *kustis*. The weaver in turn, after weaving them, presents one *kusti* to the spinner and keeps one for her own sale. Thus, no money is exchanged in the making of the sacred cord and the exchange remains just and equitable. The actual process of *kusti* weaving is carried out on the loom (Guj. *jantar*). This original long loom is called the *joonu* (old) *jantar* and is still used in Iran, weaving while sitting on the floor. In India it was modified and a stool added so it became the rideable (Guj. *ghoriwalu*) *jantar*, allowing a weaver to sit comfortably. Used in India even today, it has gradually been replaced since c. 1930 by a new flexible adaptation of the *jantar*, which can be folded to fit into smaller modern homes.

The 72 warp threads are stretched in a continuous circle for weaving and are kept under tension with the help of various pulleys. An additional adjustable pulley (Guj. *gargari*) is hung on the warp in order to provide the required tautness while weaving. The actual process is rhythmic, as nimble hands lift

small shafts, while the weft (Guj. *naru*) is passed with one hand, the yarn gently beaten into place with a beater (Guj. *kateli*). Only after years of practice can a weaver master the exact force (Guj. *thok*) required while beating. At the end of weaving, the *kusti* is removed from the loom in a complete loop. It is handed over to a priest to be cut and consecrated. To consecrate the *kusti*, the priest recites a *Nirang* for cutting the thread, followed by the *Yaθā Ahū Vairiō maθra*. While reciting it, he cuts the *kusti* in two parts at the word *šiiiaoθananqm*, just as in the *Yasna* ceremony when he tied the date palm at this word. On completing the *Ahunvar*, he utters in *bāj* that is in a suppressed voice, the brief Pazand formula of *Sarosh Asho Tagi Tan Farman* and completes the *bāj*.

For the cutting of the *kusti* loop, the priest uses a special knife made of ivory. Those weavers who sent the *kusti* to a priest used to pay a small token fee or *sagan*. Today, this practice has almost disappeared and the weavers themselves cut it while praying the *Nirang*. The *kusti* is now turned inside out (*kusti otlavanu*) with the aid of a needle (Guj. *suioo*): the operation is the most difficult part of the whole process, as if any of the threads are loose, they can become entangled with needle and the whole *kusti* has to be discarded. Symbolically it shows how human endeavour in this world affects spiritual progress and requires focused attention. Most women heave a sigh of relief when the needle emerges at the other end, because they know their *kusti* is now ready for completion. The loose threads or *lars*, as we have read in the *Pahlavi Texts*, are divided and plaited to create a tubular finish. This process of plaiting the threads (Guj. *lar guthuvanu*) is done at both ends of the *kusti* (Fig. 66). The final stage is of washing, and then the *kusti* is placed on a muslin cloth with a small vessel containing smouldering coal to which a pinch of sulphur is added. This bleaches the *kusti* and is known in Gujarati as *dhupvanu*. The *kusti* is then wound, pressed and ready to become the girdle of faith.

Zoroastrians today are a people without borders. Thinly spread from Alaska to Australia, they carry within themselves an ancient heritage which grants them a place in the *Memory of the World* Programme. However, the two main branches of the Zoroastrian family, Iranian and Parsi, differ considerably in their approach to the *sudreh* and *kusti*. It has been seen that while these simple garments give rise to intense feelings among the Parsi Zoroastrians of India, their Iranian correlative are in general neither as strict about their usage nor as judgmental about disappearance. This may partly be reflective of a particular Parsi refugee ethos; in a land of varying faiths, the *sudreh* and *kusti* were badges of ethnic identity which differentiated them from the much larger surrounding communities. For Iranian Zoroastrians as a small minority in a relatively hostile environment, the display of identity was something that often might not be prudent. The wearing of the *sudreh-kusti* in India, on the other hand, encourages a sense of identity and social responsibility, helping individuals feel that they belong to their own community and that they are distinct from other communities. The wealth of skill, knowledge and tradition that is transmitted



Figure 66 The completed *kusti* (sacred thread)

in the making and wearing of the garment, all increases the sense of their value. In Parsi Zoroastrian history, change has been a constant: language and dress adapted to their assimilation into India, their food habits changed, and a complex layered identity developed among them, in which, externally at least, they have long been a sub-caste in the caste system. These layers became more complex over the centuries, when the community embraced Western cultural norms during the time of the East India Company and the British Raj. Yet such changes, particularly in dress, were perhaps always external. Beneath the layers, physically and metaphorically, an underlying and more essential protection remained – the simple white muslin *sudreh*, or religious undershirt, with the *kusti* or sacred thread. These garments remained invisible beneath, just as a core identity remained, unaffected by external shifts in location and changes in language, over long periods of time. The *sudreh-kusti* seems, then, to have provided the self-definition of a community. This need for an inner identity was a valid response for a refugee group then, and continues to be valid today, in the present situation of a homogenizing, modern world. As globalization increases, it is by examining the traditions of the past that many communities are trying to fashion a cultural identity for the future.²⁹

Today, communities experience the positive and negative impacts of a global society. Paradoxically, globalization and economic migration is perhaps increasing the need to preserve identity. Such perplexing times are predicted in the *Bahman Yašt* in the idea that ‘there will be only one in a hundred, in a thousand, in a myriad, who believes,’ when the earth will ‘rain more noxious creatures than water,’ and ‘the waters of rivers and springs will diminish and there will be no increase.’ At this time those ‘noble, great and charitable will part from their own original place and family ... and the earth of Spendamard opens its mouth wide ... and suffering, death and destitution become severe.’³⁰ *Spənta* earth even then can be protected, and is said to find hope in him ‘who in

that perplexing time, wears the sacred thread-girdle on the waist and celebrates religious rites with the sacred twigs.³¹ As in the microcosm, so in the cosmic world, devout Zoroastrians believe that mental and physical darkness can be overcome by the protective use of their sacred armour. In the modern world, it is fashionable to discard rituals and symbols as unnecessary for spiritual growth, and the threads of continuity that kept the Zoroastrian faith intact from the Bronze Age are being lightly discarded. Yet, it is said that those who continue to keep the faith and recite the *Nērang ī kustīg* of protection will, with this and the strength of the *Yasna* sacrifice, restore *aša*, the divine law of Harmony, and, according to the *Gāthās*, they are promised a happy reward:

Whoso Through Asha fully doth achieve
The renovation of our Life on Earth. [...]
Which is Zarathustra's task, Ahura's Will.
He gains Eternal Life as his reward,
He shall inherit all that Earth confers;
Mazda, Most-Wise, has Thus to me revealed.
(*Yasna* 46.19, *Ustavaiti Gāthā* 4.19)

When it is seen how the *kusti* and *sudreh* are connected to the entire process of protecting all creation, the full significance of the simple daily ritual becomes apparent. A hidden garment has become a metaphor for an inner self that remains unaffected by external change. It is this search for a core identity which prompts young Zoroastrians to accept or reject the sacred armour. Perhaps an understanding of its symbolic and technical intricacies will bring a new respect for the weavers and priests who for centuries have quietly woven together the warp and weft of the Zoroastrian community.

NOTES

1. Dato 'Habibah Zon, Director General of the National Archives of Malaysia, Introduction from 'UNESCO Memory of the World Programme: The Asia-Pacific Strategy', 17 April 1999, available at <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/flagship-project-activities/memory-of-the-world/homepage/>.
2. Quotations from the *Gāthās* follow Dr Irach J. S. Taraporewala, *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra: A Philological Study* (Bombay, 1993), p. 98; similarly, in this chapter all other quotations from the *Gāthās* are from Taraporewala's edition.
3. P. O. Skjærvø, 'Poetic weaving in the old Avesta: The *Gāthās* and the *Kusti*', in Mahmoud Jaafari-Dehaghi (ed.), *One for the Earth: Prof. Dr Y. Mahyar Nawabi Memorial Volume* (Ancient Iranian Studies Series 4) (Tehran, 2008), pp. 117–20.
4. I. J. S. Taraporewala, *The Religion of Zarathushtra* (Bombay, repr. 1980), p. 12.
5. E. W. West (ed. and trans.), *Sacred Books of the East (SBE): Pahlavi Texts II*, vol. 18: *Dadistan-i-Dinik*, ed. and trans. Motilal Banarasidass (repr. 1977), p. 122 n.1.
6. West, *SBE* III: 24, *Saddar* ch. X., p. 268.

7. West, *SBE* II: 18, pp. 128–9.
8. W. Sherwood Fox and R. E. Pemberton, *Passages in Greek and Latin Literature Relating to Zoroaster and Zoroastrianism* (Bombay, 1927–8), pp. 4 and 37.
9. Dr Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees* (Bombay, 1922; repr. 1986), p. 246.
10. See West, *SBE* II: 18, p. 122, fn.1.
11. Pliny tells that Iranian kings had a special date palm known as the ‘Royal’ palm. It was special because no sooner did a tree die, than another grew out of its roots. It was thus held to be an emblem of immortality and royalty among the ancient Iranians. Seen in many Middle Eastern cultures as a symbol of fertility or Tree of Life, it was later adopted as a symbol of triumph and victory by Christianity. When Christ entered Jerusalem, ‘[They] took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet him and cried, “Hosanna; Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord”’ (John 13. 13). See Mr and Mrs Theodore Bent, *Southern Arabia*, p. 117, quoted in Modi, *Religious Ceremonies*, pp. 273–5.
12. See M. Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism*, vol. 1, pp. 156–60.
13. See Modi, *Religious Ceremonies*, p. 291, and also see Shernaz Cama, *Asha: The Law of Harmony. A Study of Environmental Consciousness in Zoroastrian Rituals*, *Multinational candidature file submitted to UNESCO for Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* (New Delhi, 2002).
14. West, *SBE* II: 18, Appendix, p. 384.
15. Modi, *Religious Ceremonies*, p. 261.
16. The *Bahman Yašt* speaks of it as celebrated by Peshotan, a contemporary of the Prophet. *Barsom* was always held in the hand during the recitation of prayers, even in daily rituals, such as the grace before meals. A shortened form of the grace (*bāj*) is the modern *Jamvani Baj*. Oral tradition, and Ferdowsi in the *Shāhnāmeḥ*, tells us how Yazdegerd III, the last Sasanian king fleeing from the enemy, was captured when, sheltering in the house of a miller, he asked for the *barsom* to say *bāj* before eating. This led to his discovery and he was murdered by his own treacherous General Mahui Suri. Barbara Brend, *Muhammad Juki’s Shahnameh of Firdausi* (London, 2010), p. 133.
17. All translations of the prayers of the *Yasna* are from ‘The *Yasna*’, in Dastur Kotwal and James Boyd (eds and trans.), *A Persian Offering the Yasna: A Zoroastrian High Liturgy* (Paris, 1991).
18. West, *SBE*, II: 18, pp. 386–7.
19. West, *SBE* V, pp. 284–5.
20. West, *SBE* V, p. 287.
21. On rituals in general in Zoroastrianism see Michael Stausberg and Ramiyar P. Karanjia, ‘Rituals’, in Michael Stausberg and Yuhān Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina (eds), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism* (London, 2015), pp. 363–79.
22. West, *SBE* II: 18, p. 133.
23. See Ashdeen Z. Lilaowala and Shernaz Cama, *Threads of Continuity: The Zoroastrian Craft of Kusti Weaving* (Parzor, 2013), p. 144.
24. West, *SBE* II: 18, pp. 122–33, with changes in transcription.
25. West, *SBE* II: 18, pp. 122 and oral tradition.
26. Lilaowala and Cama, *Thread*, pp. 88–90.
27. West, *SBE* III: 24, p. 270, and *Nērang ī kustīg*, II: 18, pp. 386–7.

28. Katy Sorabji Patel, UNESCO Parzor interview, Navsari, Gujarat, 16 October 1999.
29. Jean-Francis Lyotard, 'Introduction' to *The Post Modern Condition* from Stephen Eric Bonner (ed.), *20th Century Political Theory: A Reader* (New York and London, 1997), pp. 3–15.
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15 RIDING THE (REVOLUTIONARY) WAVES BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

Parsi Involvement in the Transition from Old to New

Jenny Rose

Much has been written about the British in India and their extensive connections with the Parsis. In contrast, only a few studies have focused on the interaction between the early American Republic and India, let alone personal encounters between Yankees and Parsis, whose respective myths of migration are separated by a millennium. This omission is partly due to a dearth of Parsi source material for this early period of commerce with New England. Research for this chapter has, however, uncovered three previously uninvestigated documents that provide intriguing examples of cross-cultural dialogue between these two groups. These are, first, the business letters of a Parsi broker in Bombay to a Yankee merchant in Salem, Massachusetts, at the turn of the eighteenth century; second, an American review of a published discussion between a Parsi editor and an Anglican missionary that took place in Bombay in 1844; third, the diary of a Parsi acting as guide to a Yankee ship's captain en route from Bombay to Poona at the end of 1848.¹

By the time the English East India Company had established its factory at Surat in 1613,² the Parsis' own narratives of transition from Iran and resettlement on the Gujarat coast of India had been redacted, in the form of the Persian-language poem *Qesseh-ye Sanjān* (Story of Sanjan). This text, one of the few internal Parsi sources that survive from this early period provides a prototype for all subsequent Parsi repositioning from the Old World to the New. On the one hand, the account revisits the 'wondrous' rescue of the good religion, emphasizing the refugees' adherence to the faith – particularly their preservation of the fire – in the face of Muslim incursion; on the other hand, it justifies Parsi social assimilation in adopting the language, dress and some local customs, of the Hindu majority population.³ By the early seventeenth century, when the first manuscript versions of the *Qesseh-ye Sanjān* appeared, the Parsis had also adapted to the Indian setting in terms of diet. One English

observer of the time remarked that, in order to give no offence to either their Hindu or Muslim neighbours, the Parsis abstained from eating 'kine- [beef] and hogs-flesh', and that they ate alone and drank from their own cup 'for the sake of purity'.⁴ The imperative to observe local law and custom while maintaining what are deemed to be the most important elements of the religion continues to inform Parsi identity today.

From the mid-fifteenth century onwards, communications between the Parsis of Gujarat and their co-religionists in Iran⁵ tell us a little about relations with their Hindu and Muslim neighbours. These *Persian Rivāyats* do not mention the Christian Europeans – Portuguese, Dutch, English, French and Danish – who were steadily arriving in India. Reports by these Europeans living on the Gujarati coast not only reflect their authors' own theological and cultural biases, but also partly reveal internal Parsi perspectives on religious beliefs and practices. In this sense such reports may be said to present the earliest examples of Parsi dialogue with 'the West'. One early account based on direct discussion with a Parsi informant was penned by Henry Lord, the chaplain to the East India Company at Surat from 1624 to 1629. In his *Religion of the Persees*, first printed in 1630, Lord states that he was instructed by 'one of their church-men, called their *Daroo*'⁶ through a Parsi interpreter 'whose long employment in the companies service had brought him to a mediocrity in the English tongue'.⁷ This priest had evidently told Lord through the interpreter that renewed contact with their Iranian co-religionists had not only reminded the Parsis of their origins in ancient Iran, but had also provided instruction in religious matters. Lord records:

Thus they lived in India, till trace of time wore out the memory of their original, and the Records of their Religion being perished, they became ignorant of whence they were, till, being known by the name of Persees they were agonized by the remnant of their sect abiding in Persia, who acquainted them with the story of their Ancestors and communicated to them both their law and instructors in the worshippe.⁸

This 'looking back' to Iran for both ancestry and authority was also noted by Lord's contemporary, a *factor* (senior merchant) in Bharuch, named Geleynssen de Jongh (1594–1674). In a report for his Dutch East India superior in Surat, De Jongh described the Parsis collectively as 'Persians', whose beliefs and practices he had learnt from their 'teachers and others', apparently in Portuguese, which was still a dominant language of commerce.⁹ De Jongh wryly comments that, while 'these Persians' regard all Christians as impure with 'no hope of salvation', they *do* 'have social and commercial relations with Christians – but only (they say) because of the need to earn their livelihood'.¹⁰ Such a rationale for interaction with those of another religion echoes the pragmatism of the *Qesseh-ye Sanjān*, which both Lord and de Jongh seem to have known in oral versions, since their accounts differ slightly from the textual narrative.¹¹ This pragmatism foreshadows the time when Parsis

would cross the sea to predominantly Christian lands, in order to engage in study and business.

At the same time that de Jongh was reporting on the prominent role of Parsis in the seaborne trade of Gujarat, so the first English pilgrims were settling on the north-eastern shores of America. The parallels between the two immigrant communities are of interest, not only in terms of their relocation from an original homeland to preserve their religious identity (albeit a millennium apart), but also because they brought similar portable trades with them. European accounts tell of the centrality of the textile trade for the Parsis in Gujarat, particularly the weaving of fine cotton and silk. Another East India Company chaplain, John Ovington, who arrived in Bombay in 1689 and subsequently spent three years in Surat, wrote of the Parsis: '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'.¹² Many of the English nonconformist immigrants to Massachusetts were also cloth-makers, such as those who came from Rowley, Yorkshire, to Rowley, Massachusetts, who produced flax and hemp to make clothes as they had done back home.¹³ Abraham Lincoln's ancestor, Samuel Lincoln, was an apprentice weaver to a Norwich master weaver, whose family he accompanied from Norfolk, England to Salem in 1637.

These early American settlers would have learnt about the Parsis through local newspapers, periodical accounts and East India Company reports such as the 'Courante of newes from the East India' pamphlets, written by Thomas Knowles and Patrick Copland (Factor and Pastor for the Company respectively) in 1622.¹⁴ These sources familiarized readers with the famines in Gujarat, with East India Company struggles with both local rulers and their European competitors, and with travellers' reports of Indian manners and customs.¹⁵ The most significant account in terms of the Parsis, however, was printed in 1771, just before the American Revolutionary War. This two-volume, three-part French publication included the translation of several Zoroastrian manuscripts by Anquetil-Duperron (1731-1805), brother of the French consul at Surat.¹⁶ It made primary Zoroastrian texts accessible to a general audience, spurring a dramatic spread in the study of the languages and history of India. Anquetil's textual translations and his observations on ritual and praxis were both informed by personal encounters with Parsis in Surat between 1757 and 1760, particularly his tutor in Avestan and Pahlavi, Dastur Darab Kumana (1698-1772). Discussions between Anquetil and his Parsi contacts were conducted in Persian and covered many topics, including the disagreements between Sanjana and Bhagaria priests and the calendar dispute.¹⁷

On reading part of Anquetil's *Zend-Avesta* shortly after publication, Benjamin Franklin commented, in a letter from London to the Revd Ezra Stiles back in Newport, Rhode Island: 'There is no doubt of its being a genuine Translation of the Books at present deem'd sacred as the Writings of Zoroaster by his Followers'.¹⁸ Franklin then qualified this statement, by adding:

perhaps some of them are of later Date tho' ascribed to him; for to me there seems too great a Quantity & Variety of Ceremonies & Prayers, to be directed at once by one Man.

Henry Marchant, the Representative for Rhode Island in London at the time, was persuaded to purchase a copy of these volumes from Franklin to send to Stiles, who was the minister of the Congregationalist church in Newport that Marchant attended.¹⁹ Stiles was a learned biblical scholar and linguist, with a broad interest in other religions. He was also the Librarian of the Redwood Library and Athenaeum, the oldest public lending library in America, founded in Newport in 1747. Marchant's letter accompanying the three volumes explains that he was originally going to present them to Stiles, but had instead decided to donate them to the Redwood Library, since: '[I]t is so very curious a performance and perhaps the only one that may soon reach our Colony, & the Publick might be glad & be gratified with the Sight of it.'²⁰

As New Englanders were reading about the Parsis, so the Parsis were expanding their own global perspective, looking beyond British and other European trading contacts towards America. After the Revolutionary War, many Americans had made the journey to India, including two sons of the American Revolutionary general, Benedict Arnold, who served in the East India Company army.²¹ Others, who had already made their fortunes in India, emigrated to the newly independent United States of America.²² From 1784 onward, America began to trade directly with India, and the merchant mariners of New England, particularly Salem, became middlemen in moving goods between ports in India and Britain.²³ One of the earliest to visit Bombay from Salem was Elias Hasket Derby Jr, who had left Harvard in 1786 and travelled on one of his father's ships, the *Grand Turk*, out to the Isle of France (Mauritius), where he set up office as an agent. From there, in 1788, Derby Jr sailed on the ship *Peggy*, accompanied by his brig *Sultana*, to Bombay. These were some of the very first American vessels to arrive in Bombay.²⁴ The cotton cargo of both vessels was combined on the *Peggy*, which then sailed to Salem, arriving on 21 June 1789 with the first cargo of Bombay cotton for America. The customs permit and invoices for the *Peggy* on 22 June 1789 note that the ship's Master, John Williamson, had unloaded 278 bags and half-bags of cotton with a combined weight of nearly 100,000 lbs, around 50 short tons (US).²⁵

As the European population in India grew during the eighteenth century, so did the demand for goods from New England, including 'rum, fish, pork, beef, and spermaceti candles.'²⁶ In return, Salem and other ports in New England – particularly Boston, Providence, New York and Baltimore – saw the arrival of highly profitable goods from India.²⁷ By now, the British had encouraged Parsis to bring their training in carpentry and shipbuilding to the developing port city of Bombay. The resulting rise in wealth brought increased urbanization for the Parsis, along with structural changes to their social and religious systems.²⁸

After independence, American businessmen such as Derby Sr had sought trading partners other than the British to supply goods from India. On his visits to Bombay and Surat, Derby Jr made contact with the leading brokers and merchants, who were invaluable to Americans establishing their own trading network. Yankee merchants found it preferable to work directly through Parsi brokers, whose fees were competitive with those of English merchants (although the latter carried more weight with the British officials).²⁹ Jacob Crowninshield (1770–1808), later the representative for Massachusetts in Washington (1803–8), was one of the young men trained by Elias Hasket Derby Sr to captain his ships to the East Indies: he then branched out to form his own business. Crowninshield had asked an English agent in Bombay named J. Ashburner to recommend a local broker, and was told to use a Parsi named Nusserwanjee Maneckjee Wadia.³⁰ Wadia (1753–1814) came from a family of shipbuilders who had moved from Surat to Bombay under commission by the East India Company in the early eighteenth century. There, in 1750, Lovji Wadia and his brother Sorabji had constructed the first dry dock in Asia.

A letter sent from Ichabod Nichols in Portsmouth (New Hampshire), dated 15 January 1793, is addressed to the same ‘Nasservanjee Monackjee’ [Wadia].³¹ The contents of the letter make it clear that there is already an established trading relationship between the two men, since Nichols writes to introduce his friend, Captain John Murphey of Salem, who was bound for Bombay. Murphey’s outgoing cargo was ‘principally [*sic*] Iron and Cordage,’ and he wished to load either pepper or cotton for Europe or America on his return journey. Nichols states that his friend would like the very best quality cotton, and notes:

I should think it but that you send to your Friends at Surat for such Cotton as will best suit this or the Europe market. The clean and long Cotton is the only kind that will answer.³²

It is unclear how the connection between Nichols and Nusserwanji Maneckji Wadia first came about, but since Nichols had also been one of Derby Sr’s captains, it may have been directly through him, or through Crowninshield.

In 1799, an American East India Marine Society was founded in Salem. It differed from other local marine societies in that its members had to have navigated from Salem to the seas beyond the Cape of Good Hope or Cape Horn as masters or commanders of a ship, or as officers in charge of the cargo, known as ‘supercargoes.’³³ Mariners belonging to the Society were expected to keep journals of their voyages, taking note of the peoples and cultures they encountered, and to collect artefacts for its Museum. Jacob Crowninshield was one of the founder members of the Society, as was Ichabod Nichols. The collection originated with the personal inventory of Revd William Bentley (1759–1819), pastor of the Second Congregational (‘East’) Church in Salem. Bentley, who

developed strong Unitarian leanings in later life, was a diligent diarist, an avid reader, and a linguist whose studies included Arabic and Persian.³⁴

Towards the end of 1799 Ichabod Nichols put his son, George (1778–1865), in charge of the cargo on the ship *Active*, which he co-owned with three other Salem merchants. George's mission was to sail to Bombay with 'specie' (silver dollars) valued at about \$16,000, and to return with a cargo of cotton that Ichabod had requested by letter from Nusserwanji.³⁵ The *Active* left Salem on 3 July 1799³⁶ and arrived in Bombay in early 1800, where George conducted his business 'at a very handsome profit' with 'Nasser Vanji Monackji,' whom he declared in his late life autobiography to be a 'very fine man.'³⁷ Having sold the bulk of his cargo through Thomas Dickerson & Co. in London, George returned home with a 'monstrous profit ... more than three hundred percent of the first cost in Bombay.'³⁸ He also brought a letter from Nusserwanji, one of four hitherto unpublished correspondences now held in the C. S. Peirce Collection at Harvard University's Houghton Library. In that missive of 22 April 1800, written shortly after George Nichols' arrival in Bombay, Nusserwanji writes to Ichabod 'I am happy to find of your reception with my letter dated 4 June 1798,'³⁹ Nusserwanji then states that he has acted on Ichabod's directions in supplying George and Captain Briant (the master of the *Active*) 'to the utmost of their satisfaction.'⁴⁰ The opening paragraph of the letter concludes: 'I hope Providence send them speedy passage on their expected voyage in good Market to which my sincere best wishes does attend.' Nusserwanji then remarks, 'I hope you will remember me continually by recommending me to your friends coming out to this port to transact in their business as you indulged me therewith,' and concludes with this note: 'Having given a Shawl Handkerchief to Mr. G. Nichols – I hope your acceptance thereon.'⁴¹

On the envelope of the letter, Ichabod recorded his response to the receipt of this gift. It reads: 'Mrs Nichols presents you her particular thanks for the shawl you was [*sic*] so Polite as to send by her son George.' In his autobiography, George related that he had reciprocated this gift from Nusserwanji with a set of Mavor's *Voyages*:⁴² this was a compendium of 20 volumes, published from 1797 onward, about historic sea voyages from Christopher Columbus to contemporary times. On the same occasion, George had also purchased – at \$5 a yard – a length of 'beautiful striped muslin, very delicate, made in Bombay for some distinguished person.'⁴³ This cloth of embroidered Indian mull was made into a dress worn, over white silk, by George's bride, Sarah (Sally) Pierce, on their wedding day, 22 November, 1801. The dress was later made into a ball gown for their daughter, Lydia, who decorated it with 'garlands of white roses and green leaves' and trimmed it with 'white satin rolls.'⁴⁴ This dress is now in the Peabody collection, as is a larger, more handsome 'camel's hair' (cashmere) shawl sent by Nusserwanji.⁴⁵ This shawl is generally referred to as the 'Moon Shawl' because of the round design in its centre. Such careful gift exchange points to the highly synergistic and personal nature of the business relationship between Parsis and

Americans, which stood in significant contrast to the later, rather constrained, reception of both groups in China.⁴⁶

Rules for membership in the East India Marine Society included the procurement of 'Articles of the dress and ornaments of any nation, with the images and objects of religious devotion.' One of the earliest donations to the East India Marine Society's Museum was an oil painting of Nusserwanji,⁴⁷ given by Captain John Dalling, the master of a ship named *Ulysses* that had set sail from Salem to Bombay in September 1804, and then went on to Calcutta, before returning to Salem in September 1805.⁴⁸ The portrait was painted by a Chinese artist, possibly Spoilum from Guangzhou, in the style popular in New England at the time, but we do not know whether it was commissioned by Captain Dalling or by Nusserwanji himself.⁴⁹ Nusserwanji obviously agreed to sit for the portrait – or at least for the sketch on which the portrait was based – and chose to be depicted as a man of erudition and business acumen. Wearing formal Parsi clothing of the time, he is seated next to a table, which holds an inkstand, quill pen and papers. This brings to mind Nusserwanji's neat English cursive penmanship in the personal signature at the end of his letters. Nusserwanji's Parsi outfit includes the *jama pichori* – a white cotton full-sleeved robe reaching to his feet, with a wide folded belt; a dark blue turban; and an orange-pink scarf with narrow black border around his shoulders. His black shoes curl up at the toes.

In the same cargo as the portrait of Nusserwanji was a set of clothes like those in the painting, including a robe, shawl, turban and a pair of leather and wool shoes: the latter are still in the Peabody Essex Museum's collection.⁵⁰ This set of clothing is alluded to in a letter from Ichabod Nichols to Captain Dalling dated 17 September 1805. In the letter, Nichols congratulates Dalling on his safe arrival once more in his 'Native Country' and writes that he has received:

a letter from our Good Friend Nasservanjee Monackjee of Bombay – by which it appears that he has sent by you to my care, a Persian Dress for the East India Marine Society, and also a P[ersia]n shawl for myself & Son.⁵¹

He asks if Dalling will 'have the goodness to enter them at the Custom house, and pay the duties on them' for which Nichols will repay him.

Such items of clothing were displayed in Salem's annual summertime street parade of all the new 'curiosities' that had been brought from far away. Donated costumes were often modelled by Society members. The *Salem Gazette* for 8 November 1805 notes that members of the society passed in procession through the town 'exhibiting in characteristic dresses, instruments, etc. of distant nations, equal proofs of bold enterprise and steady industry in our nautical and mercantile citizens.'⁵² The same newspaper's notice concerning the Society's procession a couple of years later remarks that such displays of 'dresses and instruments from distant lands in some measure inform us of the customs, manners and arts of their inhabitants.'⁵³

The donated items were then placed on display for members and their guests to see. In 1804, this growing collection had been moved from the Stearns Block of Town House Square into the Salem Bank Building on Essex Street. The society eventually formed a corporation to construct a designated facility for the collection, which was opened as the East India Marine Hall in 1825, the site of the present Peabody Essex Museum. Caroline Howard King, born in Salem in 1822, described the impact of childhood visits to this Museum:

[I]t was an experience for an imaginative child, to step from the prosaic streets of a New England town, into that atmosphere redolent with perfumes from the East, warm and fragrant and silent, with a touch of the dear old Arabian Nights about it.⁵⁴

The enchantment of the place began at the entrance to the Museum hall where a 'solemn group of Orientals draped in Eastern stuffs and camel's hair shawls' stood facing visitors as they came in. King noted:

Three of them were life-size likenesses of East Indian merchants, in their own dresses, presented to different sea-captains by the originals, or perhaps sent to the Museum as gifts. I never heard their exact history, but I learned to know their dark faces well [...] each had his own pleasant individuality and must be greeted whenever I went to the Museum.⁵⁵

One of these figures must have been Nusserwanji, whose likeness had been carved out of wood, possibly by the local carpenter and architect, Samuel McIntire, and was exhibited wearing the set of Parsi clothes that the broker had donated.⁵⁶ The clay figures of two other Indian merchants, Durgaprasad Ghose and Rajinder Dutt were also added in about 1837 and 1840 respectively.

On 18 November 1805, Elias Haskett Derby Sr wrote a letter to one of his captains, Robert Emery, who was about to set sail on the *Golden Age* for Bombay via Ceylon. Derby writes:

You will do your business at Bombay with my Old friend Nasserangy Monagy should you go there, but you may find it best to proceed from Columbo direct to the Coromandel coast & Calcutta remembering there is an advantage in remitting from the Coast as well as from Bombay – be careful to violate no Acts of Trade conform yourself strictly to the Laws of Nations & endeavour to be here in ten months if possible.⁵⁷

In an accompanying memorandum to Emery, Derby notes that he wants cotton goods that are 'suitable for the Boston market,' especially muslin ('Beerboom Gurrah').⁵⁸

On its outward voyage the *Golden Age's* cargo included two hundred boxes of 'Sallad Oil' – that is, olive oil. A certificate relating to the cargo laden on board the *Golden Age* before it departed from Salem to India certifies that this oil – along with various other comestibles, including 156 pipes of Brandy, 20

Hogsheads of Rum, 10 Casks of Claret Wine and 24 boxes of Cordials – was not imported. The oil must therefore have been produced domestically, presumably in the Spanish missions along the Camino Real in California, where olives had been planted towards the end of the eighteenth century, and where commercial production of this popular culinary item was just beginning.⁵⁹ Of particular interest is Emery's note in his accounts that a box of this 'Sallad Oil' has been 'given to Nasservanji'.⁶⁰

Not long after these promising relations were forged, American trade with India, particularly Bombay, was badly affected by President Jefferson's implementation of an embargo against both Britain and France.⁶¹ The embargo, beginning at the end of 1807, was intended to make Britain and France respect US neutrality and stop taking its ships and its men to fight.⁶² It devastated American businesses, as there was effectively no American export to India until the embargo was lifted in March 1809, although merchandise somehow made it out of India.⁶³ The dire impact of the embargo on Yankee–Parsi commerce is reflected in a letter from Nusserwanji to Ichabod Nichols dated 15 January 1809, postmarked 'Baltimore June 22'. The letter begins somewhat plaintively: 'Dear Sir, It is long since I had the pleasure of receiving any of yours although I have had severally written to you.' Nusserwanji expresses his hope that once 'the difficulty between the United States and British' is adjusted, and 'all the obstacles to a return of harmony and free intercourse removed, so vessels from Salem will again be dispatched to the port of Bombay'.⁶⁴ In anticipation of this renewed traffic, Nusserwanji had enclosed a current price list of 'Europe goods' in demand, 'particularly the staple things as iron, lead, steel, copper, red lead [lead oxide], cochineal, saffron'. Even after the embargo was lifted, trade remained uneven, since its replacement with the 'Non-Intercourse Act' prohibited Americans from trading with Britain, France and their territories, including India. In a letter of 25 November 1810, Nusserwanji writes that he is sending his enquiries as to the good health of the Nichols family via Mr Johnson, supercargo of the *Galloway* of New York, which was the only American ship to have visited the entire season.⁶⁵

Earlier, in June 1810, at a General Association Meeting in Bradford, Massachusetts, the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions was founded as a non-denominational organization, supported mainly by New England Congregationalists and Presbyterians. The East India Company had hitherto prohibited Christian missionaries in India, alleging that such activity would conflict with its commercial interests: but in July 1813, the Company was compelled by the British House of Commons to permit entry as a condition of the renewal of its charter.⁶⁶ The eagerness of American missionaries to gain access to British India can be seen in the fact that on 19 February 1812, over a year before the ban was officially lifted, the American Board of Foreign Missions sponsored five missionaries, newly ordained at the Third ('Tabernacle') Congregational Church in Salem, to sail to Calcutta. In referring to notification of the ordination of these candidates for foreign

missions, Revd Bentley remarks in his diary for Sunday 1 February 1812: 'We learn nothing favourable to their talents or experience.'⁶⁷ Two of the missionaries and their wives sailed out from Salem on the ship *Caravan*, whose Master was Augustine Heard; the other three departed on the *Harmony* from Philadelphia.⁶⁸ Having been refused entry to Calcutta by the East India Company, the missionaries and their wives sailed on to Bombay, where they were permitted to stay by the then Governor of the Bombay Presidency, Evan Nepean, who was also vice president of the British and Foreign Bible Society.⁶⁹ The first official Protestant mission was established in Bombay in December 1813, under the leadership of one of those missionaries, the Revd Gordon Hall.⁷⁰ Hall's *Memoir*, published in 1834, was one of several missionary accounts that served to broaden American awareness of Indian religions and culture. Back in Salem, however, Revd Bentley disparaged his compatriot missionaries in Asia as 'infatuated, perhaps roguish, men' motivated by fanaticism, who were generally 'totally uninformed'.⁷¹ Bentley felt that these zealots would be better appointed if they had stayed at home – a criticism that was also later voiced by the Parsi targets of these missionaries. One of Bentley's fellow Salem residents, William Rogers (1792–1821), a young Harvard-educated lawyer who sailed to Bombay on the *Tartar* from Salem in 1817, voiced similar criticism of the American missionaries he encountered there, in particular the 'Revd and Mrs. Newhall', who were translating the New Testament into Gujarati.⁷² Their hope of converting Gujarati speakers was, Rogers felt, unlikely to be fulfilled. This insight was partly informed through his dealings with Parsis in Bombay. The first appointment for Rogers, as soon as the *Tartar* docked at the Custom House pier in February 1818, was with the brokers Nawroji and Jehangirji, Nusserwanji's 'clever and honest' sons, who had continued their father's monopoly on American business in the city after his death in 1814, and who both possessed 'a very serious, sedate air'.⁷³ Rogers refers to Nusserwanji himself as 'a man who sustained a most estimable character'.⁷⁴ On another page of his journal, he mentions that the Wadias were at the time 'the first Parsee family,' whose members were 'well known in London among the East India merchants'. He describes Nusserwanji's relatives, namely Homanjee 'as rich and haughty as a Persian satrap', and Jamsetjee Bomanjee Wadia, the master shipbuilder at the Bombay Dockyard, as reputedly 'very shrewd, a capital draughtsman and a man of great impartiality', who arbitrated as umpire in Parsi disputes.⁷⁵ It was Jamsetjee who built the first man-of-war for the British Royal Navy in Bombay, the HMS *Minden*, launched in 1810.⁷⁶ During the war between Britain and the United States, the *Minden* was a flag of truce ship. On the night of 13 September 1814, the *Minden* was tied to a British ship in Chesapeake Bay after a local lawyer, Francis Scott Key, had helped to secure the release of a prisoner held by the British. From the deck, Key watched the rocket's red glare over Fort McHenry during the battle of Baltimore and later composed the poem that became the 'Star-Spangled Banner'.

William Rogers had learned firsthand about Parsi religion, history and customs from a Bombay Parsi named Shapoorjee Soorabji: but he writes that what he was told matched other verbal accounts of the *dasturs*, whom he refers to as 'doctors of civil and ecclesiastical law'.⁷⁷ He mentions 'Molna Ferozh' – that is, Mulla Firoze, the Qadimi Dastur of the Dadyseth Atash Bahram – as 'the most learned of the Parsees and their high priest',⁷⁸ but we do not know if the two ever met in person. The Iranian-trained Mulla Firoze (d. 1830) had already proved to be a helpful source of information to the Recorder of Bombay, Sir James Mackintosh, whom he had guided around an *agiary* (fire temple) in August 1810.⁷⁹ The Dastur had also taught Persian to Jonathan Duncan, the British Governor of Bombay from 1795 to 1811, and advised him before an official visit to Iran.⁸⁰

Rogers' detailed journal offers an invaluable account of what Parsis of the time considered to be the most important aspects of their religion to impart to others. His personal dialogue with Parsis departs from the purely subjective, and wildly inaccurate, descriptions that had marked many Western travellers' accounts of Zoroastrians since the time of Marco Polo.⁸¹ The journal's narrative of Zoroastrian settlement in India follows that of the *Qesseh-ye Sanjān*, but it also includes a translation of 16 Sanskrit *ślokas* – short explanations of Parsi religion and custom, and traditionally attributed to the early immigrants.⁸² The first English translation of these Sanskrit passages had been made in 1808, which may be the basis for Rogers' version.⁸³ The *ślokas* describe Parsi hospitality and civic philanthropy, but also define areas of Parsi separateness in matters of religious praxis and domestic ritual, particularly in relation to women. The last *sloka*, comprising the Hindu ruler's putative – and positive – response to the newcomers in Gujarat, must have resonated still with Parsis as they positioned themselves in the Bombay hierarchy of the early nineteenth century. The Hindu Raja wishes: 'joy to those who walk faithfully in the way of Hormuz [Ahura Mazdā]'; 'increase of their generations'; efficacy of their prayers in remitting sins; 'abundance of wealth'; and that 'the beauties of person and mind, which now adorn' should 'continue to distinguish them among nations to the end of time' ...⁸⁴

In the decades following, American trade with Bombay diminished considerably. There was no longer any need for textiles from India, since the American cotton mills could now spin the shorter raw cotton themselves. One visitor to Bombay in 1835 noted: 'The trade between Bombay and the United States does not exceed, at present, six or eight vessels a year'.⁸⁵ This comment came from a US Naval physician, William Ruschenberger (1807–95), who was part of an Embassy from the Government of the United States to the courts of 'Muscat, Siam and Cochin-China' between 1835 and 1837. While in Bombay, Ruschenberger 'rode out to Nonparel, to see the country residence of a well known Parsee merchant' (a large 'retreat' with marble floors), and also 'made frequent visits to the counting-house, or office of Messrs. Jehangeer and Monockjee Nowrojee, Parsee merchants who transact all American business at Bombay'.⁸⁶ At the latter establishment, Ruschenberger seems to have spent many hours reclining on sofas alongside other American or European supercargoes,

examining cashmere shawls and Persian rugs.⁸⁷ Ruschenberger was particularly intrigued by his Parsi *dubash* (interpreter), Munchirjee, whose intelligence he admired, and whose information concerning Parsi religion, he reports verbatim:

Your Honour knows that the Parsees have no longer a home or a country; they are strangers in the land. We believe in one God, and that Zoroaster was his prophet – he is our Christ. We worship fire, water, the sun and moon, because they are the most prominent works of God, and we look upon them as his attributes [...] We may kindle fire, but not extinguish it.⁸⁸

Munchirjee then explained the initiation with the ‘custie’ (*kusti*) and the belief in future rewards and punishments, which he exemplified with ‘an illuminated Persian manuscript’ (presumably the *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag*), depicting both outcomes. The *dubash* felt that people followed the religion that they were born into and declared ‘that a Parsee had never been known to become a Christian.’⁸⁹ That situation was just about to change.

During the 1830s and 1840s, Parsi letters to newspapers and records of the Bombay Parsi Punchayat indicate that both Anglicization and Christian missionary activity had become more pervasive. Missionaries in Bombay encouraged interreligious debate, under the assumption that Christianity would be shown to be superior. These discussions were often played out in the Indian press.⁹⁰ Impelled by the conversion to Christianity of two Parsi boys in 1839, Pestonjee Manockjee, the editor of *Jam-e Jamsheed*, declared his readiness ‘to conduct a calm and courteous discussion with any Christian layman, divine or clergyman who may be disposed to come forward and accept his challenge’ to debate ‘two important and extensive subjects, viz; the internal and external evidences of Christianity, and the authenticity of the Bible.’⁹¹ A lengthy public correspondence then ensued between Pestonjee Manockjee and the Revd James M. Mitchell, the editor of a Christian periodical in Bombay entitled *The Native’s Friend*. Mitchell was a friend and colleague of Revd John Wilson, a fellow member of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, at whose Mission School in the Fort area of Bombay the two Parsis had been baptized into the Christian faith.

The exchange between Manockjee and Mitchell was published in full in 1845 under the Parsi-owned imprint Duftar Ashkara.⁹² The book’s contents were reviewed by Ruschenberger in his notes on a voyage to Brazil and China of 1848, undertaken during his time as the fleet surgeon for the East India Squadron. In these notes, published in *The Southern Literary Messenger* of October 1853, Ruschenberger assessed the debate’s outcome:

It seems to me almost certain that all the Parsees [...] who read this production will be satisfied, not only that the Rev. J. M. Mitchell has been routed in argument, but that the doctrines of Christianity are absurd and fabulous. Consequently, a blow has been struck which must retard the progress of Christianity in Hindoostan.⁹³

Ruschenberger quotes from 'Monockjee' at length as the latter focused his attention not on 'the past and present condition of Europe, America, of the islands of the Pacific and of the world' – which Mitchell had referred him to look at as 'proof of the moral influence of Christianity' – but on Mitchell's own country, Great Britain and Ireland, as exemplars of 'the benign influence of Christianity'. Manockjee's plea was that the British Christian missionaries should begin their work at home before progressing to Europe, and only then move to India.⁹⁴ This notion impressed Ruschenberger, particularly the argument that any 'civilization' that has occurred in the world is:

not owing to the moral character and influence of the Christian religion, but to the march of intellect, to the progress of science and knowledge, to progressive refinement, experience and to the improvement of ages.⁹⁵

In relation to the contemporary 'march of intellect,' a telling discussion in the published correspondence between Manockjee and Mitchell concerned the impact of the writings of Thomas Paine (1737–1809), which Mitchell had pinpointed as the source of Parsi criticism of Christianity. The spread of Paine's deist views in Europe, America and now India were obviously a cause of concern for Christian missionaries.⁹⁶ Mitchell, claiming that Paine's views had been rejected, goaded Manockjee to name one single American follower of Paine.⁹⁷ In his response, Manockjee noted that *many* leading Americans at the turn of the eighteenth century had espoused Paine's ideas, including Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, 'Gouverneur Morris' (the ambassador to France during the Reign of Terror), the American Revolutionary Ethan Allen, and Joel Barlow, a leading political thinker. Manockjee continued:

You know very well that during the American Revolution, Paine was of not little service in accelerating the independence of the United States, and that there was not a single American who did not admire Paine's political opinions. The religious opinions of such a popular author as that of *Common Sense* and *Rights of Man* could not fail to gain many converts, the more so, as his arguments were incontrovertible and irresistible.⁹⁸

He then considered Paine's religious and political position in relation to his own Zoroastrian background, when addressing Mitchell's questions, 'Will Zoroaster remain in honour, if Paine is believed? Is Pestonjee able to harmonize the doctrines of the *Zend Avesta* and the *Age of Reason*?' Manockjee answered:

I do not 'profess' to believe all that Paine says. I believe such portions and doctrines of the *Age of Reason* as appear to me to be reasonable and sound and I reject those that appear to me to be unreasonable; consequently Zoroaster will remain in honor if Paine is partly believed. Though I might not be able to harmonize *certain* doctrines of the *Zend Avesta* with the *Age of Reason*, yet that is no reason why I should reject all the doctrines and arguments advanced by Paine.⁹⁹

He concluded by pointing out that whereas the Bible is full of 'obscene stories ... voluptuous debaucheries, cruel and torturous executions or unrelenting vindictiveness', no such 'violations of moral justice' are found in the *Zend-Avesta*.

This Parsi analysis of the contribution of deism to current intellectual, social and political developments in both America and India took place as the Transcendentalist movement was emerging in New England. During the same time that Pestonjee Manockjee in Bombay was studying 'the internal and external evidences of Christianity and the authenticity of the Bible', so, in Concord, Massachusetts, Ralph Waldo Emerson became familiar with Anquetil's *Zend-Avesta*, and his earlier précis of the Zoroastrian religion. Emerson had first encountered the Zoroastrian religion as a student at Harvard in 1820, when he read Edward Gibbons' disquisition in *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.¹⁰⁰ In his diary of 1832, Emerson transcribed two full pages from Anquetil's 'Exposition du systeme théologique des Perses, tiré des livres Zend, Pehlevis et Parsis', which had been published in Paris in 1774.¹⁰¹ Emerson cited the 'good sentences' of both the '*Zendavesta*' and the *Dasatir* (Ordinances), a popular Persian text among Parsis. Amos Bronson Alcott, a fellow Transcendentalist, had imported from England a copy of Mulla Firoze's *Dasatir*,¹⁰² which has an English translation at the end. This was based on a manuscript of the *Dasatir* that had been brought back from Iran by Mulla Kaus, and published by his son, Mulla Firoze (the *dastur* mentioned in William Rogers' *Journal*) in Bombay in 1818, arousing great interest there. Zoroastrian communities in both Iran and India accepted this work as genuine and used it to reinterpret the Avesta in the light of the 'hidden' doctrine that it expounded.¹⁰³ Although some Western scholars questioned the authenticity of the *Dasatir*, Emerson claimed that he did not care whether either this or the '*Zendavesta*' were 'genuine antiques or modern counterfeits', since all truth is timeless and eternally relevant.¹⁰⁴ It was the transcendental nature of God, the mystical element of the *Dasatir*, which appealed to Emerson, as can be seen from the parts that he underscored or marked with heavy lines in the margins.¹⁰⁵ Emerson chose to reproduce many of these passages in his and Henry David Thoreau's publication *The Dial* of June 1843, which was the vehicle for their selections of 'Ethnical Scriptures'.¹⁰⁶

Both Emerson and his neighbour Thoreau promoted Zarathustra as the originator of an ancient model of enlightenment belonging to all humanity, and therefore always new. For instance, in a passage on 'Inspiration' Emerson wrote:

[T]he raptures of goodness are as old as history and new with this morning's sun. The legends of Arabia, Persia and India are of the same complexion as the Christian. Socrates, Manu, Confucius, Zertusht – we recognize in all of them the ardor to solve the hints of thought.¹⁰⁷

Thoreau also sought to make all religious traditions and their wise men a present reality 'to the solitary hired man on a farm in the outskirts of Concord', explaining:

Zoroaster, thousands of years ago, travelled the same road and had the same experience; but he, being wise, knew it to be universal, and treated his neighbors accordingly, and is even said to have invented and established worship among men. Let him [the hired man of Concord] humbly commune with Zoroaster then [...]'¹⁰⁸

In this universalist scheme, there was no need for conversion from one faith to another – nor any impetus to meet actual adherents of other faiths.

By 1854, as Thoreau mused how 'The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred waters of the Ganges',¹⁰⁹ ice from the frozen lakes around Boston had become one of the most lucrative exports from the United States to India, generating large profits for American merchants.¹¹⁰ About 80,000 tons of ice, covered with straw in ship's holds, was being transported annually from Boston on a 10,000 mile journey to purpose-built ice-houses in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. Sources of cheaper, domestic ice manufacturing brought an end to the Boston trade by the early 1880s. During that period, Parsis were involved not only in the ice industry, but also acted on behalf of American companies in the exporting of opium.¹¹¹ From 1838, American-owned ships began participating increasingly in the opium trade from India to China, and opium soon exceeded raw cotton as an export from the former country. Although American sentiment, led by Protestant missionaries, was largely opposed to the opium trade, and American participation in opium dealing was outlawed by treaty until 1858, American companies such as that of Augustine Heard in Canton liaised closely with Parsi trading houses in receiving, storing and marketing the drug in China.¹¹² These Parsi businesses consigned the opium to Heard's to be sold as soon as possible within the price limits that they had set.

Some of these liaisons led to cross-cultural ventures of a more aesthetic nature. In 1848, the captain of a Heard Company opium clipper, the *Frolic*,¹¹³ was accompanied by his Parsi broker, Cursetjee Merwanjee Wadia, on an overland trip from Bombay over the Western Ghat mountains to the Buddhist rock caves of Karli. In an extant handwritten account, Cursetjee briefly described this journey with the *Frolic*'s Captain Faucon during the week of 7–15 December 1848. Captain Faucon evidently left all the organizational details of the journey to Cursetjee, who relied on a network of Parsi acquaintances along the route to provide suitable transport and accommodation. These contacts, some of whom Cursetjee had first encountered on a previous visit to the caves with 'Richard P. Waters Esqre at the United States Consul at Zanzibar',¹¹⁴ included Nesserwanjee, the Customs Master at Panwell; Framjee Sorabjee Happa Baugwalla, a former employee of the Engineers department there; and Sorabjee Cursetjee (elsewhere, Jamsetjee), the local postmaster in Khandala. During the trip Captain Faucon and Cursetjee Wadia often took tea and refreshments together, in a departure from Parsi strictures on eating or drinking with non-Parsis, which Geleynssen de Jongh had noted 200 years earlier but had conceded was not observed by all.¹¹⁵ The two travelled by palanquin to Khandala at the top of the Ghat, where they stayed at a bungalow

adjacent to the Parsi postmaster's house.¹¹⁶ On the way up, at the Chowkee Toll House, they had met by chance the American Agent to Aden, another Parsi, named Merwanjee Sorabjee. Early the next morning they descended to the Karli caves where they 'minutely examined' the interior of the caves before proceeding on to Poona (Pune), where a local Parsi businessman, Eduljee Hormusjee, put them up in a house that he owned near the Cantonment of Troops. Had they desired, they could have stayed at the *dharmsala* near Poona, which had been funded in 1838 by Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy for all travellers.¹¹⁷

Over the next couple of days Cursetjee and Faucon toured the sites of Poona with their host, including the bazaar, palaces, temples, and even the gaol. On their last morning they took a carriage 'to have a view of the Parsees' Burial place on a Hill adjacent to the English Burying ground'.¹¹⁸ Presumably this was one of the two Parsee *dakhmas* in Poona, the first built in 1825 and the second, larger one, in 1835.¹¹⁹ As was customary, these seem to have been the first Parsi constructions in the town. Cursetjee makes no other comment on this particular visit, but he becomes animated when describing the auction of an English army captain's furniture – which was 'performed exactly as it is done by this class of people in England' – and by the elegant appearance and demeanour of their young host, with his English clothes, patent leather shoes, and fluent English.¹²⁰

Cursetjee's firsthand account of his adventure with a Yankee mariner stands in stark contrast to the portrayal of the fictitious Parsi 'Fedallah' in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, which hit the bookstores three years later.¹²¹ The end of the eighteenth century had seen a rise of such 'oriental tales' penned by American authors.¹²² In Melville's novel, the enigmatic Parsi with the made-up name reminds us that, although American public narrative from the arrival of the *Mayflower* onwards promoted a fundamental commitment to the principles of equality (as prescribed in the Pilgrims' original Compact), in practice, a cultural superiority was retained. Melville's own ambivalence with regard to the religious praxis of the culturally Other is evident in a passage in *Moby Dick* where he writes that just before the hunt for the whale, as Ahab takes over from the blacksmith to weld the 12 rods of iron into a harpoon, 'the Parsee passed silently and bowing over his head towards the fire, seemed invoking some curse or some blessing on the toil. But, as Ahab looked up, he slid aside'.¹²³ In this and other novels, Melville uses motifs from Indian religious traditions in an orientalist manner, while remaining within a staunchly Christian ethos.¹²⁴ His Asian characters and motifs, particularly that of Fedallah, reiterate Melville's generally pessimistic worldview.¹²⁵

While readers in both London and New York in the autumn of 1851 were being introduced to the Parsi on the *Pequod*, an actual Parsi named Ardeshir Cursetjee Wadia – a distant relative of both Nusserwanji Maneckji and Cursetjee Merwanjee – was visiting the east coast of America on business. Ardeshir was a marine engineer who had previously studied in England and had built the first private steamship in Bombay in 1833. Although his itinerary

is not well recorded, it is known that Ardeshir took a ship to the east coast of America from England in late 1851 – probably one of the new steamships from Liverpool on the very recently established Cunard, Collins or Inman Lines – to buy ‘various wood-cutting machines, which were sent to Bombay’.¹²⁶ Earlier that year, a handful of Asian Indians had participated in the Fourth of July parade in Salem, but it is not known whether any Parsis were among them.¹²⁷ Ardeshir Cursetjee was certainly accompanied by a male Parsi servant on his trip to the United States.¹²⁸

At around the time of Ardeshir’s visit, the Salem resident Caroline Howard King described the visit of a ‘real live Parsee, with tall calico headdress’ to her home.¹²⁹ Although the visitor wore traditional Parsi headwear, he had no qualms in sitting down to tea with non-Parsis.¹³⁰ King writes:

It was rather a revelation to me that a fire worshipper could ‘take tea’ like ordinary mortals. But he ... drank his tea and ate his bread and butter quite like other folks, and told us many interesting things of his life in Bombay.¹³¹

She also noted that her visitor spoke much better English than she and her family did, addressing them in a cultivated and refined voice. The identity of this particular Parsi remains a mystery. It cannot have been Ardeshir Cursetjee Wadia, as some have supposed, since King notes that her visitor had been educated in Oxford, and was returning home to India after six years’ absence. When questioned about Parsi belief, her guest explained that the worship of fire was only symbolic. He told his hostess: ‘We look upon the sun as the source of all good, light, heat and life, so when we pray, we turn our faces to the sun as the visible type of the invisible spirit which rules the earth.’¹³²

This Parsi’s adaptability to the surrounding culture in terms of adopting both its social customs and its language, while retaining what was understood to be the core of the religion, attests to the pragmatism, which both Henry Lord and Geleynssen de Jongh had remarked upon over two centuries earlier. Such cultural versatility would later facilitate the Parsi transition to, and settlement in, the New World, following that initial footstep at the beginning of the nineteenth century – in the form of a pair of pointed shoes – of Nusserwanji Maneckji.

NOTES

1. Some of the research for this chapter was made possible by a Francis E. Malamy Research Fellowship at the Phillips Library of the Peabody Essex Museum. I am grateful to librarians Kathy Flynn, Anne Deschaine and Catherine Robertson, and to Christine Bertoni of the Peabody Essex Museum for their support during my visits to Peabody and Salem.
2. Only a couple of merchants were stationed there in 1614; K. N. Seervai and B.

- B. Patel, *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, vol. 9.2 (Bombay, 1899), p. 86. The factory was fortified in 1642 and Surat remained the main centre of commerce for European trading companies, including the East India Company (EIC), until the mid-eighteenth century.
3. See Alan Williams, *The Zoroastrian Myth of Migration from Iran and Settlement in the Indian Diaspora* (Leiden and Boston, 2009), pp. 3–9, 223–8.
 4. Henry Lord, *A Display of Two Forraigne Sects in the East Indies* (1630), p. 339.
 5. Initially these communications were with Zoroastrians in Yazd, but by the sixteenth century, they were also with those in Turkabad, Sharifabad, Khorasan, Sistan and Kerman.
 6. That is, *dastur*.
 7. Lord, *A Display of Two Forraigne Sects in the East Indies*, p. 328.
 8. *Ibid.*
 9. N. K. Firby, *European Travellers and Their Perceptions of Zoroastrians in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Berlin, 1988), pp. 116, 183–93. Philip Kreyenbroek notes that Geleynssen probably ‘took down the list of *yazatas* from a slow dictation ... by someone whose speech he identified as Portuguese ... presumably in an interview conducted in that language’: *ibid.*, p. 218 n. 854.
 10. Firby, *European Travellers*, p. 189.
 11. Lord’s extra details include the comment that the original refugees obtained a fleet of seven ships ‘to convey them and theirs as Merchantmen bound for the shoares of India, in course of Trade and Merchandize’, and that they were allowed to settle at or near the port of ‘Swaley’ by the local rajas: Firby, *European Travellers*, p. 100. Geleynssen de Jongh’s Dutch report includes a similar account in which seven ships landed in ‘Cambaya’ and their passengers were granted leave to live there: *ibid.*, p. 183.
 12. *Ibid.*, p. 145. The *Rivāyats* refer to proper techniques for weaving the sacred garments, the woollen *kusti* and the cotton *sudreh*: B. N. Dhabhar, *The Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz and Others* (Bombay, 1932), p. 25.
 13. David H. Fischer, *Albion’s Seed* (New York and Oxford, 1989), p. 151. Many of these new settlers brought the names of their home villages and towns with them: just as immigrants from Hingham in Norfolk, including members of the Lincoln family, were instrumental in renaming Bay Cove, Massachusetts, ‘Hingham’, so, the Parsis are said to have named Sanjan, Gujarat after Sanjan in Khorasan, an early place of refuge for Zoroastrians in Iran.
 14. Patrick Copland and Thomas Knowles, *A Second Courante of Newes from the East India in Two Letters* (London, 1622; Amsterdam, 1975), p. 1.
 15. Access to information about India increased dramatically after the American Revolution: Rosemary Zagarrí, ‘The significance of the “Global Turn” for the early American republic: Globalization in the age of nation-building’, *Journal of the Early Republic* xxxi (2011), pp. 1–37, 11.
 16. The publication of the *Zend-Avesta* was preceded by several public readings by Anquetil at the Académie des Sciences et Belles Lettres, including one entitled ‘Exposition du système théologique des Parses’ (1767). For Emerson’s use of this text, see n. 108.
 17. John R. Hinnells, ‘Parsi Communities: 1. Early History’, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* online. According to the *Saddar*, a Persian text frequently cited by Parsis, and

- which Anquetil owned, Pahlavi was the remit of priests alone: Susan S. Maneck, *The Death of Ahriman* (Tucson, 1994), p. 136.
18. J. A. L. Lemay (ed.), *Benjamin Franklin: Writings* (New York, 1987), p. 675.
 19. Marchant notes that the book was very expensive at three guineas; Bernard I. Cohen, 'Anquetil-Duperron, Benjamin Franklin and Ezra Stiles', *Isis* xxxi/1 (1941), pp. 17–23, 22.
 20. Cohen, 'Anquetil-Duperron, Benjamin Franklin and Ezra Stiles', p. 21. Stiles' diary notes the receipt of this 'new and valuable work' on 11 April 1772: Franklin B. Dexter (ed.), *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, vol. 1: 1769–1776 (New York, 1901), 223–5. The *Zend-Avesta* does not appear in the 1810 inventory of the Redwood Library nor in any subsequent inventory. The volumes may have been lost or taken from the collection during the Revolutionary War. After the British left Newport, half of the roughly 1,400 books in the collection were gone. My thanks to Whitney Pape, Special Collections Librarian at the Redwood Library, for this information.
 21. Edward Shippen (1780–1813) and George Fitch (1787–1828) served with the Bengal Cavalry.
 22. Zagarri, 'The significance of the "Global Turn" for the early American republic', pp. 1–37, 12–13.
 23. G. Bhagat, *Americans in India, 1784–1860* (New York, 1970), p. xxvi. By 1789 at least 40 ships were sailing regularly between the US and India: *ibid.*, pp. 3–15.
 24. Robert E. Peabody, *Merchant Venturers of Old Salem* (Boston and New York, 1912), p. 81.
 25. Derby Family Papers MS37, Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.
 26. Bhagat, *Americans in India, 1784–1860*, p. xxv.
 27. *Ibid.*, 73.
 28. See Jesse Palsetia, *The Parsis of India* (Delhi, 2008), pp. 35–64.
 29. Bhagat, *Americans in India, 1784–1860*, p. 62.
 30. *Ibid.* This Ashburner may have been an English, Anglo-Indian, or Parsi broker, perhaps one of the step-children of Charles Forbes, whose father had worked for Forbes & Co.
 31. Letter Book, 1793 (Ichabod Nichols), Box 1 Folder 10, Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.
 32. *Ibid.*
 33. This term 'supercargo' derived from the Spanish *sobrecargo*. The supercargo received around 2.5 per cent commission on the funds sent out; Susan S. Bean, *Yankee India* (Mumbai, 2006), p. 36.
 34. Carl T. Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought* (Westport, 1981), p. 8.
 35. Martha Nichols (ed. and annot.), *George Nichols: Salem Shipmaster and Merchant* (Salem, MA, 1913), p. 48. The silver met the shortage of the metal in British India, and was used to purchase Indian goods including sugar, spices, ginger, silk, muslin, cashmere shawls and bandannas.
 36. Bentley notes the departure of the ship at noon on this day; William Bentley, *The Diary of William Bentley*, vol. 2: *January 1793 – December 1802* (Salem, MA, 1907), p. 315.
 37. Nichols, *George Nichols*, p. 49.

38. Ibid., p. 52.
39. Charles Sanders Peirce Papers, 1787–1951, MS Am 1632 (1645), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
40. Ibid. This letter begins with Nusserwanji thanking Ichabod for his ‘kind letter dated 5 November 1799.’
41. Ibid. The letter closes: ‘My dear Sir, Your very obedient and most humble servant to command, Nasservanji Monackji.’
42. Nichols, *George Nichols*, p. 63.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., p. 102. The dress was altered for Lydia in about 1825.
45. Peabody Essex Museum Collection 123571W and 123590.2 respectively. Both were gifts of the estate of Miss Charlotte Sanders Nichols.
46. See Bhagat, *Americans in India*, p. 83.
47. Peabody Essex Museum Collection M245.
48. John R. Dalling is listed as Member Number 85 of the East India Marine Society in Salem: Walter M. Whitehill, *The East India Marine Society and the Peabody Museum of Salem* (Salem, 1949), p. 160.
49. Spoilum’s portrait style imitated that of late eighteenth-century North America, and his paintings and those of his school (1810–20) include portraits of American sea captains who participated in the contemporary China Trade. At that time, Chinese portraits of leaders of society were much in demand in Bombay.
50. Peabody Essex Museum Collection E9934A.
51. Peirce-Nichols Family Papers MS 468, Box 1 Folder 1, Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum Salem, Massachusetts.
52. Whitehill, *The East India Marine Society*, p. 21.
53. Ibid., citing the *Salem Gazette* of 6 November 1807.
54. Caroline Howard King, *When I Lived in Salem: 1822–1866* (Brattleboro, 1937), p. 29.
55. Ibid.
56. Peabody Essex Museum Collection E9934B.
57. *Account book of Robert Emery, 1805*. MS1561, Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts. This relates to a voyage from Salem to Bombay via Ceylon.
58. Ibid.
59. Documents of E. H. Derby, 1805, Box 46, Folder 1, National Archives at Boston. I am grateful to Joanie Gearin, archivist, for alerting me to this document.
60. Ibid.
61. Bhagat, *Americans in India*, pp. 45f.
62. In 1806, Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy wrote a long letter to a friend in Bombay detailing his experience on board the East Indiaman *Brunswick* when it was captured by the French en route from India to China: D. N. Karaka, *History of the Parsis* (New Delhi, 1999), pp. 79–88.
63. Bentley notes the arrival of two ships from India in 1808, one from Calcutta, one from Moka (Mauritius), ‘but we receive no valuable information’: William Bentley, *The Diary of William Bentley*, vol. 3: *January 1803 – December 1810* (Salem, MA, 1911), p. 383.

64. Charles Sanders Peirce Papers, 1787–1951, MS Am 1632 (1645), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
65. Ibid. According to one historian, the lack of trade between the two countries that year led to the failure of Nusserwanji's business 'spectacularly': Anne Bulley, *The Bombay Country Ships 1790–1833* (Richmond, 2000), p. 201.
66. In 1813, Charles Grant, with William Wilberforce's support, presented a tract to the House of Commons, arguing for the EIC to admit missionaries to bring both education and Christianity to India for the social and moral advancement of the locals. The tract was reprinted, at the Commons' request, during debates on the renewal of the EIC charter.
67. William Bentley, *The Diary of William Bentley*, vol. 4: *January 1811 – December 1819* (Salem, MA, 1914), p. 82.
68. Bean, *Yankee India*, p. 130.
69. William Rogers wrote that this governor was not very popular, 'being Parsimonious and not very fond of shew [sic] and parade': William Augustus Rogers William Augustus, *Journal Containing Remarks and Observations during a Voyage to India A.D. 1817–18*, Log 935, Ship Tartar, Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA, p. 78.
70. In Hall's letters, there is only occasional mention of the 'Parsees' – or Syrian Christians and Jews – but he hopes that they, too, will convert; Horatio Boardwell, *Memoirs of Revd Gordon Hall A. M.* (Andover and New York, 1834), p. 216.
71. Bentley, *The Diary of William Bentley*, pp. 160, 161.
72. This refers to Revd Samuel Newell, who with his second wife was teaching children the New Testament 'in Guzerattee': Rogers, *Journal*, p. 96. The first Gujarati New Testament was printed in Surat in 1821. Elsewhere, Rogers writes: 'These missionaries ... which have been let loose on the continent of India, supported by English bayonets to enforce the mild religion of our Saviour, have called the zealous Mahommedan from his Koran, the Persee from the altar of the sun, the mild Hindoo from his native, honest & innocent purity, & in fact no sect or caste has been freed from these intrusions in search of proselytism': Rogers, *Journal*, p. 57.
73. Rogers, *Journal*, pp. 71, 85.
74. Ibid., p. 85.
75. Ibid., p. 75. Jamsetjee was a grandson of Lovji Wadia, through his son Bamanji. Nusserwanji was another grandson, through Lovji's son Maneckji.
76. See Karaka, *History of the Parsis*, pp. 64–5. The post of Master-BUILDER of Her Majesty's Dockyard was held by members of the Wadia family for over 150 years, during which time, several Wadia family members were sent to the UK to learn about new advances in shipbuilding.
77. Rogers, *Journal*, p. 80.
78. Ibid., p. 84.
79. John R. Hinnells, *Zoroastrian and Parsi Studies* (Burlington, 2000), pp. 132–3.
80. John R. Hinnells, 'Persian communities of Bombay. 1. *The Zoroastrian community*', *Encyclopaedia Iranica* online. Mulla Firoze's father, Mulla Kaus, had been one of Anquetil-Duperron's teachers.
81. Rogers wrote concerning Bombay, however: 'I never was so rejoiced as when our ships topsails loosed to leave a place where no affections bound me, no interest could connect me': Rogers, *Journal*, p. 99.

82. For a discussion of H. P. Schmidt's study of the *ślokas*, see Williams, *The Zoroastrian Myth of Migration*, pp. 229–37.
83. The translation was by Dr Robert Drummond in his *Illustrations of the Grammatical Parts of the Guzerattee, Mahratta and English Languages*, published in Bombay.
84. Rogers, *Journal*, p. 83.
85. William S. W. Ruschenberger, *A Voyage Round the World Including an Embassy to Muscat and Siam in 1835, 1836/1837* (Philadelphia, 1838), p. 106.
86. Ruschenberger, *A Voyage Round the World*, pp. 118, 121, 134.
87. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
90. Jesse Palsetia, 'Parsi and Hindu traditional and nontraditional responses to Christian conversion in Bombay, 1839–45', *AAR* lxxiv/3 (2006), pp. 615–45; 618f. Beginning in May 1830, Revd John Wilson held public debates with representatives from Parsi, Hindu and Muslim communities of Bombay.
91. William S. W. Ruschenberger, 'Notes and commentaries on a voyage to China, chapter 24', *Southern Literary Messenger* xviii (1853), pp. 614–29; 623.
92. This company was owned by Behramji Furdonji & Co. The book had appeared in abbreviated form in *The Native's Friend*, and in the *Rahnuma-i Zartushti* published by Naoroji Furdonji, largely as a polemic counteraction to missionary activity.
93. Ruschenberger, 'Notes and commentaries on a voyage to China', p. 623.
94. *Ibid.*, pp. 624f.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 626.
96. My thanks to Dan Sheffield for alerting me to this particular section of the original text of *Discussion on the Christian Religion*. Manockjee's lengthy rejoinder to Mitchell's criticism of his initial letter was not published in the *Native's Friend*.
97. Pestonjee Manockjee and Revd J. M. Mitchell, *Discussions on the Christian Religion as contained in the Bible and propounded by Christian Clergymen and Theologians* (Bombay, 1845), p. 36.
98. Manockjee and Mitchell, *Discussions on the Christian Religion*, p. 100. See also Maneck, *The Death of Ahriman*, pp. 211–14.
99. Manockjee and Mitchell, *Discussions on the Christian Religion*, p. 101.
100. In January 1820, Emerson had begun to write a diary and lists Gibbon among the books quoted from or referred to in that year (*Journals* I.84); Arthur Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism* (New York, 1972), p. 278. Emerson borrowed Anquetil's *Zend-Avesta* from the Boston Athenaeum on 21 March 1836: Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism*, p. 302.
101. *Journals* II: 473–5; Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism*, p. 302.
102. *The Desatir, or Sacred Writings of the Ancient Prophets: In the Original Tongue: Together with the Ancient Persian Version and Commentary* (Bombay, 1818). This volume is now in the Emerson library: Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism*, p. 306.
103. The text of the *Dasatir* was alleged to have a heavenly origin, revealed to a primordial prophet named 'Mahabad', but only written down during the reign of the Sasanian king, Khusrau Parviz (590–628 CE).
104. *Journals* X, 382; Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism*, p. 306. Sir

- William Jones, Anquetil's British detractor, claimed, however, that the *Dasatir*, not the *Zend-Avesta*, was a genuine work of authority and antiquity.
105. Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism*, pp. 306–8.
 106. *The Dial* VI/59–62; Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought*, p. 59.
 107. Arthur Versluis, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions* (New York, 1993), p. 72; see also Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought*, p. 53. In 1849, Alcott suggested a series of 'readings and conversations' on the teachings of the 'Sacred Books of Mankind' – including Confucius, the *Vedas*, *Vishnu Purana*, Saadi and Firdusi, the *Zend-Avesta* and the Qur'an – to take place on Sundays, but settled, two years later, for Monday evenings: Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism*, pp. 241–2, 246. At around this time, formal academic interest in Indian religion was developing, inaugurated by the formation of the American Oriental Society in 1842 by the Salem-born scholar John Pickering, who had taught law to William Rogers.
 108. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden, Or Life in the Woods* (London, 1938), p. 94.
 109. Thoreau, *Walden, Or Life in the Woods*, p. 249.
 110. Bhagat, *Americans in India, 1784–1860*, pp. 102–29.
 111. In 1773, having assumed control of Bengal, the EIC now had the monopoly of opium growing in the region. Although the Chinese Emperor had banned the sale of opium, it was smuggled into China by private traders on non-Company ships. This practice intensified after the EIC lost its trade monopoly in 1834.
 112. Stephen Lockwood, *Augustin Heard and Company 1858–1862* (Harvard, 1971), pp. 26–7. The third largest American house, Olyphant & Co. was nicknamed 'Zion's Corner' for its refusal to engage in the trade.
 113. The *Frolic* was built in 1844 and owned by the Heard Company.
 114. Cursetjee Merwanjee Wadia [Wadia], *A Short Account of a Journey from Bombay to Poona and Vice Versa*, Log 998, Brig Frolic, Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem Massachusetts, 1848, p. 2.
 115. De Jongh remarked: 'When they eat, no one of another sect or persuasion may touch their food. They cannot drink from barrels or jars of anyone not of their faith': Nora Kathleen Firby, *European Travellers and Their Perceptions of Zoroastrians in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Berlin, 1988), p. 191.
 116. This was just before the railway route was begun in 1849.
 117. Hinnells, 'Parsi communities: 1. Early History.'
 118. C. M. Wadia, *A Short Account*, p. 5.
 119. Hinnells, 'Parsi communities: 1. Early history.' Although there is some evidence of an earlier Parsi presence in Poona, the main period of settlement was after the British took control of the city from the Marathi Peshwas in 1818. The Parsis had provisioned the British forces in Sirar and moved with them to Poona.
 120. C. M. Wadia, *A Short Account*, p. 5. Eduljee's father was Hormusjee Sorabjee, the *Kotwal*, or 'Native Magistrate' in charge of the Cantonment Bazar.
 121. *Moby Dick* was first published under the title *The Whale* by Richard Bentley in London on 18 October 1851. The American edition came out in New York on 14 November of the same year, under the Harper & Brothers imprint.
 122. Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought*, p. 5.
 123. Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (New York, 1851), p. 542.
 124. Versluis, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions*, p. 128.

125. Ibid., p. 124. Captain Ahab brings Fedallah on board without the knowledge of the crew. He is first seen as a 'tall and swart' old man, with one white tooth 'evilly protruding', wearing 'a rumpled Chinese jacket of black cotton' and 'wide black trousers of the same stuff', with his white plaited hair coiled about his head in a turban: Melville, *Moby Dick*, p. 241. Although he is a skilled whale hunter, Fedallah is viewed with unease by the other crewmembers, particularly since Ahab regards him with deference. During the final hunt for the whale, Fedallah disappears, but emerges from the waters the next day, lashed to the back of the whale; Melville, *Moby Dick*, p. 628.
126. Ruttonjee A. Wadia, *The Scions of Lowjee Wadia* (Bombay, 1964), p. 66. Ardeshir may also have brought back photographic and electro-plating equipment from this trip, since he is credited with their introduction to Bombay.
127. Whitehill, *The East India Marine Society*, p. 34.
128. S. Blair Southerden, 'Ardaseer Cursetjee (1808–1877)', unpublished document, 2008.
129. King, *When I Lived in Salem*, p. 37.
130. Parsi interaction with Europeans and then Americans was less hampered by purity laws than was the case for Hindus, but they still had to make choices about which sartorial and dietary customs to follow and which religious practices to continue. When, in 1838, Ardeshir Cursetjee Wadia's two younger cousins Jehangir Nowrojee, Hirjeebhoy Merwanjee and their guardian, Dorabji Muncherjee Navjivora, arrived in England for a two and a half-year stay, they ate only food prepared for them by their own Parsi servants: Michael H. Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism* (Delhi, 2004), p. 343. They also retained their distinctive Parsi costumes with cap and robe: *ibid.*, pp. 338–51.
131. King, *When I Lived in Salem*, p. 37.
132. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

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CO-OPTING THE PROPHET

The Politics of Kurdish and Tajik Claims to Zarathustra and Zoroastrianism

Richard Foltz

It has long been standard in Western scholarship – most prominently perhaps in the work of Mary Boyce – to characterize the pre-Islamic religion of the Iranian peoples as some form of Zoroastrianism. In accordance with this view, the data pertaining to the religious life of Iranians in ancient times tends to be interpreted within a Zoroastrian framework, with the post-Sasanian textual tradition as the standard and anything that deviates from it relegated to the status of ‘heretical’ or at least ‘inauthentic’. While Boyce’s approach was challenged by contemporaries such as Marijan Molé, Shaul Shaked and Gherardo Gnoli and even by some of her own students including Philip Kreyenbroek and Albert de Jong, it remains prevalent among scholars and laypersons alike.¹ An artificially reified ‘umbrella’ Zoroastrianism has been employed as a political tool since the nineteenth century, similar to how a unified ‘Hindu’ tradition was constructed as a way of mustering and controlling a collective religious identity in India where it remains a potent, if contested political force today. In Iran, Zoroastrianism was held up by certain intellectuals throughout the twentieth century as the ‘original’ religion of Iranians, more ‘authentic’ than the ‘foreign’ religion of Islam which had been imposed by the Arabs.² This sentiment was utilized to some extent by the Pahlavi monarchs as part of their modern Iranian nation-building enterprise. More recently, a similar trend appeared at the opposing fringes of the Iranian world, among the Kurds in the west and the Tajiks in the east. In both cases an unexamined ‘Zoroastrian’ identity was espoused by political leaders, with the support of a number of intellectuals, as an alternative to the traditional Islamic identity of the majority population seen as an obstacle or threat to the aims of the elite class. As in the case of Pahlavi Iran, the Zoroastrian identity promoted during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries among Kurds and Tajiks was largely purged of its religious nature, for which a modern, largely secular interpretation was substituted.

ZOROASTRIANISM/YEZIDISM AS THE 'ORIGINAL' RELIGION OF THE KURDS

The twentieth century saw persistent efforts among the various Kurdish groups of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria to attain increased autonomy or even independence, an aim not yet fully realized in any of the countries where Kurds live. The vast majority of Kurds are Sunni Muslims, who have lived for centuries alongside small minorities of Kurdish Shi'ites, Alevis, Christians and Jews, as well as distinctively Kurdish religious groups such as the Yezidis and the Yâresân (also known as the Ahl-e Haqq). The latter two sects emerged more than five centuries ago through the amalgamation of Sufi Islam and local religious traditions. These local traditions in many cases had very ancient roots, largely Iranian but with some Semitic and Gnostic elements. It is the Iranian nature of many of these ancient survivals that fostered the claim first expounded by the Bedir Khan brothers, Celadet (1893–1951) and Kamuran (1895–1978), during the 1930s in their Kurdish nationalist newspaper *Hawar*, that the Kurds of pre-Islamic times were Yezidis and that their religion was a form of Zoroastrianism.³ In recent years this view has been extensively elaborated by Cemşid Bender and M. Siraç Bilgin in a number of works.⁴ Zarathustra, according to this view, is claimed to be a Kurdish prophet, drawing on the ahistorical claim found in some late Pahlavi texts that sought to place him in Media as a way of linking him to the Median priestly class known to the Greeks as the Magi. Zarathustra is presented as having reformed the 'Median' religion, which is said to have been Mithraism. That the ancient religion of the Kurds was a predominantly Iranian one is not, in my opinion, a matter of debate. However, there is considerable evidence that their religious traditions ran *parallel* to the form of Zoroastrianism known to us from the Pahlavi books, as opposed to following it. Zoroastrianism is most clearly articulated for the Sasanian period when it enjoyed the status of state religion and Zoroastrian priests were able to impose their religious vision upon the Iranian population with government support. Many Iranian peoples resisted this, however, preserving their own rituals and preferences despite the efforts of the Magi. The Iranian elements surviving in the religions of the Yezidis and Yâresân (some of which, such as an annual bull sacrifice, do appear to be Mithraic) provide ample evidence of this resistance; they maintain a number of mythological features in common with Zoroastrianism, but often with strikingly different meanings and interpretations.⁵ Moreover, the core aspects of these faiths have little in common: the classical Zoroastrianism of the Sasanian period is a dualistic religion with an extensive body of texts to support it, whereas the Kurdish religions are oral traditions that are essentially monotheistic; the ethical division between good and evil is starkly drawn in Sasanian Zoroastrianism, but ambiguous among the Yezidis and Yâresân. (The respect accorded by the Yezidis to Iblis/Satan, which mirrors that found in Sufism,⁶ has led them to be falsely characterized as 'devil-worshippers'.) The undeniable differences between 'orthodox' Zoroastrianism

as embodied in the Middle Persian texts and what can be reconstructed of the beliefs and practices of the ancient Kurds have led to much confusion and misinformation about the relationship of the Kurds in general, and the Yezidis in particular, to Zoroastrianism.

The modern Kurdish claim to have Zoroastrian roots has been closely identified with the socio-political agenda of the Kurdistan Workers' Party



Figure 67 A stack of Turkish translations of the Avesta in Avesta Bookstore, Diyarbakir, Turkey

(Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan, or PKK), a Marxist–Leninist political organization founded in 1978 which led an armed struggle for independence from the Turkish Republic from 1984 to 2013. The group's leader, Abdullah Öcalan (b. 1948), imprisoned since 1999, has advocated a secular society while championing Zoroastrianism as the 'original' religious identity of the Kurds. For him, and for the PKK at large, Zoroastrianism has been more of a cultural symbol than a religious one. Reflecting a somewhat opportunistic approach, the PKK has followed earlier nationalists such as the Bedir Khan brothers in conflating Zoroastrianism with Yezidism, the latter appearing as a temptingly authentic 'Kurdish' religion, which is unfortunately impossible to align with the former tradition. Indeed, while this was not always the case in the past, most Yezidi religious leaders today emphatically state that they are not Zoroastrians. Moreover, the PKK ideology has caused Kurdish opinion on the question of Zoroastrian identity to split according to political affiliation: PKK supporters tend uncritically to support the Zoroastrian identification, while the party's opponents instinctively reject it.⁷ The official PKK view was articulated by the party's emissary to the former Soviet republics, Mahir Welat, during a visit to Armenia in 1998. 'I am a Muslim Kurd,' he stated, 'but I honor all religions. All Kurds used to be Yezidi [Zoroastrian] in the past. Some of us were forced into becoming Muslim, but now it is our intention to return and to educate ourselves again.'⁸

The Yezidis' own position regarding their relationship to Zoroastrianism has not been uniform, and often reflects a lack of knowledge about both traditions. In 1983, a prominent Yezidi, Prince Mu'awiya, published a book entitled *To Us Spoke Zarathustra*, in which he echoed the assertion that all Kurds, including Yezidis, were originally Zoroastrian.⁹ Correspondingly, the position officially espoused by the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq (where most Yezidis live) has been that Yezidism was the original Kurdish religion. During the course of fieldwork in northern Iraq during the 1990s, British scholar Christine Allison found that 'Almost every Yezidi man I encountered, and many of the women, volunteered the information that the Yezidis were "the original Kurds" on first acquaintance'. She found that Iraqi Kurds typically referred to the Yezidi religion as 'Zoroastrianism', but attributes this to the association of the latter with the ancient Iranian empires and a lack of knowledge regarding any possible alternatives. 'Few if any informants in the field,' she notes, 'had a clear idea of the beliefs and practices of Zoroastrianism.'¹⁰ Similar notions exist amongst the Ahl-e Haqq/Yāresān of the Kermanshah region in Iran, though they are somewhat less pronounced. During my own visit in May 2015, I was told by a number of individuals amongst the Yāresān in Iran that 'Our religion is basically a continuation of Zoroastrianism,' although they did not in fact have much information about that religion, or indeed, about their own. Indeed, any conflation of the Yezidi or Yāresān religions with Zoroastrianism would seem to be based on ignorance, wilful or otherwise. The Yezidis and Yāresān do not recognize any Zoroastrian texts and do not engage in Zoroastrian rituals, and

theirs are based on their own deities and beliefs, not Zoroastrian ones. The fact that Kurds celebrate the Iranian New Year, Nowruz (Kurdish *Newroz*) – to the extent that Turkish authorities have often tried to suppress these celebrations as expressions of Kurdish nationalism – does not make them Zoroastrian. As a matter of fact, Parsis in India have actively sought to dispel any connection between the two religions; as Pallan R. Ichaporia put it to the Bombay Samachar in 1993, ‘if some insist on believing that there are Zoroastrians in the Kurdish nation, they are welcome to live in the dream world.’¹¹ However, many such ‘dreamers’ are to be found within the Kurdish diaspora today, especially in Europe. Freed from the constraints of living in their traditional communities in the Middle East, significant numbers of Kurdish exiles have gone beyond the rhetoric of nationalist ideologues and sought to put Zoroastrianism into practice. In Sweden, where Kurdish converts to Zoroastrianism are now claimed to number 3,000 or more, a fire temple was opened in Stockholm on the occasion of the Iranian New Year (21 March) 2012.¹²

There have been signs of a Zoroastrian ‘re-awakening’ within Iraqi Kurdistan itself, with a Supreme Council of Zoroastrians of Kurdistan being founded in April 2015. Leaders of Kurdistan’s neo-Zoroastrian movement claim over 100,000 followers, many of whom are apparently embracing the faith out of disgust with the so-called Islamic State’s version of Islam.¹³ On 1 May 2015 a *sedreh-pūši* ceremony was held in a village near Sulaimani where a number of locals were initiated into the faith. The event was organized by a Kurdish Zoroastrian group called Zand under the leadership of Luqman al-Haj Karim. Kurdistan’s tiny but apparently growing neo-Zoroastrian community has asked the Kurdistan Regional Government for permission to build 12 temples and to acknowledge Zoroastrianism as an officially recognized religion.¹⁴

An interesting incident occurred in April 2014, when the local Art and Culture Assembly in the majority Yezidi Kurdish town of Efrin in north-western Syria erected a statue of Zarathustra. The local Yezidis, far from welcoming this gesture, reacted with outrage. Yezidi religious leader Sheikh Herto Haji Isma’il declared that ‘[this] fake Zoroaster statue does not represent nor has any link to the Yezidi religion’. Dawood Shengali, a Yezidi activist, concurred:

This [statue] has nothing to do with our religion. Reasonable people cannot say that Yezidi religion and Zoroastrianism are the same. Such a statue in a Yezidi area will result in negative impact on the community. This is simply a political plan by the Self-administration [that is, the Democratic Union Party which took over control of three Kurdish cantons in the wake of the Syrian civil war] and its assembly in Efrin to distort the Yezidi historical presence in the region.¹⁵

ZOROASTRIAN SYMBOLISM AND TAJIK NATION-BUILDING

As the only Persian-speaking former Soviet country, since gaining independence in 1991, Tajikistan has drawn heavily on symbols of Iranian culture in its

attempt to build a distinct national identity. The tenth-century poet Rudaki and his empire-building patron Isma'il Samani have been held up as founding fathers of the Tajik nation. A third historical figure claimed by Tajiks is Zarathustra, whom they refer to as a 'Tajik prophet'. It has now been over a decade since UNESCO accepted a proposal from Tajik President Emomali Rahmon to declare 2003 the '3,000th Year of Zoroastrian Culture'. It is interesting to ponder the esteemed organization's decision to affirm a date which continues to be so hotly contested by scholars, as well as, at least by implication, the dubious notion that the modern state of Tajikistan holds some special claim to the heritage of Zoroastrianism.



Figure 68 A painting titled 'Yellow Camel' by Tajik artist Farrukh Khujaev

The term 'Tajik' itself has obscure origins and has undergone many semantic transformations over time.¹⁶ It is used today primarily to distinguish the Persian-speakers of Central Asia from the Turkic-speaking majority, but this usage owes much to the rather forced efforts of Soviet idealists of the 1920s to create distinct national identities out of what were in many cases very heterogeneous populations. As an elderly informant told Soviet sociologist O. A. Sukhareva during the 1950s, 'Before 1926 no one ever asked us whether we were Tajiks or Uzbeks.'¹⁷ In fact throughout all of known history Central Asian urban centres were historically cosmopolitan and multilingual, and linguistic identity was often contextual rather than absolute. For example, Persian was usually the prestige language of choice for literary as well as administrative purposes, even though much of the population did not speak it as a native tongue. Although in pre-Islamic times Iranian languages such as Sogdian (up to the eighth century) and Khotanese (up to the tenth century) dominated Central Asia, they were members of the East Iranian linguistic branch, whereas Tajiki originated from a west Iranian language, Persian, which was brought to the region during the early Islamic period.¹⁸ The native Iranian languages surviving in Tajikistan today, such as Yaghnobi and Shughni, are not mutually intelligible with Tajiki, even though their speakers are referred to as Tajiks. On the other hand, in neighbouring countries such as Uzbekistan and Afghanistan the term 'Tajik' tends to refer to native speakers of Persian, although some Persian-speaking groups such as the Hazaras are not considered Tajiks.

Given the ambiguities of identity among Central Asians in the early twentieth century, the process of creating a national republic for Tajiks was highly problematic, and its final outcome owed more to politics than to linguistic or ethnic realities. When Tajikistan was created, first as an autonomous region within Uzbekistan in 1924 and then as a full Soviet Republic in 1929, the two largest Tajik-speaking cities of Samarkand and Bukhara were excluded and remained in Uzbekistan, an act Tajiks refer to as a deliberate 'cultural beheading'. Soviet ideology, led by such figures as Sadrudin Aini and Bobojon Ghafurov, awkwardly transposed the totality of Persian-speaking cultural history – not just that of Samarkand and Bukhara but even that of Iran proper – onto the soil of the small, poor, mountainous land of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic, with the result that everything from the tenth-century Bukhara-based Samanid Empire to the classical poetry of Shirazi poets Sa'di and Hafez became 'Tajik'. Following this Soviet pattern of disregard for historical geography, it is perhaps easier to understand how contemporary Tajik leaders – most of whom, after all, were raised within the Soviet system – can justify claiming Zarathustra as one of their own. It is probably best to look at Tajik efforts to associate their country with Zoroastrianism in this light – that is to say, in the sense of their feeling of identification with Iranianness in a general, overarching sense – rather than as an anachronistic attempt to claim Zarathustra as a 'Tajik' prophet, even though such attempts have sometimes been made.

Official initiatives within Tajikistan to associate their country with Zoroastrianism were seen immediately following independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Within a matter of months the Tajikistan Academy of Sciences held an event they called the 'First Avesta World Conference'. Several Parsis from India attended, and reciprocated by inviting a number of prominent Tajiks to visit Zoroastrian sites in India. In December 1992, a delegation of 40 Tajiks, led by Prime Minister Abdumalik Abdullajonov, accepted the invitation. Addressing the Indian Merchants Chamber in Bombay, Abdullajonov reportedly stated that:

I could have taken my first official visit of my Ministers Cabinet to any country in the world – Europe, Germany, USA [...] I brought them to India because our Zoroastrian brothers and sisters live here.¹⁹

Amidst a civil war which raged in Tajikistan throughout the mid-1990s, a second 'Avesta World Conference' was held in 1996. In 2001, a third conference was held, celebrating ten years of Tajik independence. On the occasion of this third conference several Tajik scholars and their families underwent the *sedreh-pushhi* ritual to become Zoroastrians.

The first formal Zoroastrian association in Tajikistan, the Anjoman-e Farhangi-ye Zartoshtiyān dar Tājikestān, was officially registered in 1998. UK-based Tajik journalist Dariush Rajabian characterizes this group as 'a small circle of Tajik intelligentsia interested in Zoroastrian teachings and principles'.²⁰ A more explicitly religious organization, which many members of the former association joined, was founded in 2000 by Rudaki Behdin Samadov under the name Anjoman-e Mazdāyasnā. Members of this latter group received instruction from Zoroastrian priests brought from Sweden, who conducted a number of *sedreh-pushhis*. Anjoman-e Mazdāyasnā's activities included offering classes in Avestan and Pahlavi, organizing Zoroastrian celebrations such as Mehragan and Saddeh, and running a weekly radio show called 'Mazdāyasnā'. In 2001, they printed the first edition of the Gāthās in the Cyrillic alphabet. Anjoman-e Mazdāyasnā's founder, Rudaki Behdin, wrote a play entitled *Thus Spake Zarathustra* which was staged in Dushanbe in 2002.

Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, a product of the old Soviet system whose power has been largely uncontested since the end of the civil war in 1997, makes frequent mention of Zoroastrianism in his book *Tajiks in the Mirror of History*. 'My thoughts go back to Zarathustra,' he writes wistfully, 'who created the immortal Avesta, the first prophet of the Tajiks whose trace on earth has not been erased by the dust of millennia and the ashes left by countless bloody wars.'²¹ Rahmon asserts that Zoroastrian ethics have influenced him throughout his life:

From history books and from old Tajik-Persian literature I had already obtained certain knowledge about Zarathustra. Not infrequently in those hard times I

recited in my mind his call for 'goodness in thoughts, words and deeds'. During the authoritarian regime when it became common practice that all the works in a collective farm — be it livestock breeding, sowing, harvesting or renovation of the premises — were ordered by the commanding voice of the chairman, the wisdom of Zarathustra's precept[s] quite often saved me from acting in a manner which otherwise I would have afterwards deeply regretted. At other moments when I was about to lose my temper and let some rude word escape my lips, the precepts of Zarathustra and of some other famous sons of the nation would always help me to regain my composure. More than anything in the Zoroastrian religion, I remember the deep reverence for the earth and water and a great respect for farming and cultivation of the land. Later on, when studying *The Tajiks* by B. Gafurov, especially the chapters of the book devoted to ancient historical events, I was repeatedly impressed by the humanistic essence and wisdom of Zarathustra's teaching.²²

The 2003 UNESCO-supported '3,000th Year of Zoroastrian Culture' celebrations in Dushanbe included an academic conference, a book launch, music and dance, and a performance of Behdin's play *Thus Spake Zarathustra* at the Lahuti Theatre.²³ The Tajik government followed up by declaring 2006 the 'Year of Aryan Civilization,' with a symposium featuring presentations by 45 scholars and several days of music and dance performances beginning with a song proclaiming '*hamsoli Avesto'im, otashi Zartush'im*' (We are the heirs of the Avesta, we are the fire of Zarathustra).²⁴ President Rahmon's native city of Kulob, meanwhile, staged a musical in which an actor playing Zarathustra was surrounded by hundreds of youths parading a cowhide copy of the Avesta.



Figure 69 'Avesta' clothing store, Duhok, Iraqi Kurdistan

In a related effort to appropriate the past, Rahmon has promoted the Persian New Year, Nowruz, which was banned under the Soviets until the 1960s, as an 'indigenous' Tajik holiday.²⁵ His government has constructed a massive Nowruz assembly hall in the centre of Dushanbe, where the celebrations seem to get bigger every year. (Nowruz is now a week-long national holiday.) The Tajik flag bears an arc of seven stars which some say are meant to represent the seven *amāša spāntas*, and the government online news agency is called Avesta, as is a major Dushanbe hotel. The Museum of Antiquities in Khojand, Tajikistan's second largest city, features a 'Hall of Aryan Civilization' with a large banner over the entrance bearing the image of a *farvahar*; an inlaid inscription on the adjacent wall reads in Tajiki 'Pindori nek, Guftori nek Kirdori nek' – the Zoroastrian moral code of 'Good thoughts, good words, good deeds'. In the nearby city of Istaravshan, a local architect, Abdumanon Husaynzoda, privately built what he calls the 'Hushang Cultural Centre', incorporating Persepolis-inspired designs and Zoroastrian inscriptions.²⁶

Inspired by the Tajik government's use of Zoroastrian symbols in constructing a national identity, a number of Zoroastrians from India to North America have heralded what they see as a 'Zoroastrian revival' in Tajikistan. Prominent among these is Mumbai-based Parsi activist Meher Master-Moos, who generously accords to the Tajiks 'the lands of Bactria and Balkh and Sogdia ... [which are] the lands of the Avesta'.²⁷ Across the world in Boston, Massachusetts, Iranian Zoroastrian academic Farhang Mehr states (with some obvious inaccuracy) that 'The Tajikis are proud that Zarathustra was born in Khwarazm, [a] city [*sic*] now located in their country [*sic*], and rightly consider it a part of their identity'.²⁸ In Vancouver, Canada, another Iranian Zoroastrian, Fariborz Rahnamoon, has reported glowingly on a visit to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in 2006 where he witnessed several *sedreh-push*i ceremonies.²⁹ In 2014 a US-based Parsi, Kersi Shroff, published a two-part account of his participation in an archaeological tour through Tajikistan the previous year.³⁰ The Summer 2014 issue of the *FEZANA Journal*, the official organ of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America, was devoted to 'Zoroastrians of Central Asia', and included several enthusiastic testimonies by Zoroastrians from Western countries of recent visits to the region. Such visitor reports are usually published through journals or websites aimed at fellow Zoroastrians, and accompanied by calls for donations to help promote the religion in Tajikistan and throughout the region. One Paris-based Iranian Zoroastrian philanthropist, Abtin Sassanfar, has been particularly active in answering this call, funding the construction of an Iranian cultural centre in the northern Tajik city of Istaravshan which was completed in 2008. Sassanfar is currently engaged in funding a similar project in Dushanbe, which is to include a 'Zoroastrian House'.³¹

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the excitement the prospect of a 'Zoroastrian revival' in Tajikistan has generated among some Zoroastrians, one should be wary of taking the words of the country's president or the gestures of his

government at face value. Although he fears political Islam as an opposition force, President Rahmon has not hesitated to assert his identity as a Sunni Muslim when it suits his purposes, and in 1997 he actually performed the *hajj*. Any affinity he might feel toward Zoroastrianism would therefore seem to be at best cultural, and may in fact be largely political. The political dimension of Rahmon's pro-Zoroastrian stand has not been lost on his Islamist opponents. Rudaki Behdin, the founder of Anjoman-e Mazdāyasnā who actively encouraged Tajiks to convert to Zoroastrianism, was assassinated in June 2001 during a period when the Tajik government was playing up Zoroastrianism as part of the celebrations commemorating ten years of Tajik independence. His killer, possibly an Islamic radical, was never caught.³² A few months later the Tajik Minister of Culture, Abdulrahim Rahimov, who had spoken publicly in favour of Zoroastrianism on many occasions, was also assassinated. Given the timing of these murders, it is difficult not to see them as part of a violent reaction against the Tajik government's attempt to promote Zoroastrian identity as a bulwark against political Islam in the country.

According to journalist Dariush Rajabian, himself a Tajik and professed Zoroastrian, the assassination of Behdin in particular appears to have had the desired effect, since the Anjoman-e Mazdāyasnā went underground soon afterward.³³ A book published in 2003 by a Tajik cleric, entitled *The Quintessence of Zoroastrianism*, denigrated the religion and was enthusiastically supported by the country's Muslim leadership. Clearly, by this point, efforts to bring about a Zoroastrian revival in Tajikistan had become politicized, swept up amidst tensions between the regime and an opposition that tends to articulate itself in terms of Islam.

While familiarity with Zoroastrian concepts can be seen among some of Tajikistan's intellectual elite, few if any actually embrace the faith in any practical way, seeing it merely as a part of their pre-Islamic cultural heritage. Among the general population, meanwhile, any consciousness of Zoroastrianism as an element of Tajik identity seems to be mostly absent. Indeed, much to the contrary, Tajikistan seems to be undergoing a steady Islamic revival. When we (myself and my wife) visited during the month of Ramadan in 2012, almost everyone we met was quietly keeping the fast; this was observable at all levels of society. Thus, as both a nation-building strategy and as a buttress against political Islam, efforts by the Tajik government to promote Zoroastrianism would appear to have proven a failure. Correspondingly, claims by individual Zoroastrians that their religion is undergoing a revival in Tajikistan are based on anecdotal evidence centring on a small number of individuals, and are most probably a case of wishful thinking. A recent worldwide census of Zoroastrian populations published in the *FEZANA Journal* (an official organ of the Zoroastrian associations of North America) gives a figure of only 20 Zoroastrians in Tajikistan in 2004, dropping to 11 in 2012.³⁴ Moreover, no 'native' Zoroastrians were identified; all were converts.

An article by Iranian-American Zoroastrian scholar Viraf Soroushian in

the Summer 2014 special issue of the same journal poses the question, 'Is there a Zoroastrian Revival in Present Day Tajikistan?', answering firmly in the negative. During a ten-month stay in 2010–11 I met only two individuals professing to be Zoroastrians, who told me there were less than 20 throughout the country. Soroushian's assessment of Tajikistan's alleged 'Zoroastrian revival' as 'stemming from the brief existence of a small, but highly active and visible group of converts' would seem to be accurate.³⁵ This is not to say that discussing the association between Tajikistan and Zoroastrianism is unimportant, but this importance is more historical than contemporary. Recent conversions by a few Tajik Muslims aside, Tajikistan does not seem to have any surviving indigenous Zoroastrian community (though as is the case throughout the Muslim world, some pre-Islamic rituals survive in Tajik villages). The evidence connecting Central Asia, including the territory of modern Tajikistan, to the life of Zarathustra and parts of the Avesta is intriguing, though far from clear. Numerous archaeological sites within Tajik territory, especially along the upper Oxus basin, are claimed by some to be Zoroastrian.³⁶ So far the arguments to this effect have been inconclusive, but they certainly merit further investigation. The history of Zoroastrianism is full of unanswered questions, but there is no doubt that the lands and ancestors of the modern Tajiks play some part in it.

CONCLUSIONS

The attempts by some Kurds and Tajiks to appropriate the Zoroastrian heritage in recent decades bear some striking resemblances to each other, and mirror those seen in Iran under the Pahlavis and by opponents of the Islamic regime there since 1979. Specifically, these efforts posit Zoroastrianism as the 'original' and authentic religion of all ancient Iranians, and by extension of all Iranians today. The logical corollary is that contemporary Iranians of all stripes, if they wish to be true to their cultural origins, ought to revalorize Zoroastrianism, if not embrace it outright.

Zoroastrianists in all three contemporary contexts – Kurdish, Tajik and Iranian – tend to reify Zoroastrian history while also simplifying it, stripping the religion of its legal and ritual aspects while emphasizing the ethical core of 'good thoughts, good words, good deeds'. The principal motivation for this 'revival' of Zoroastrian identity would appear to be political, a way of differentiating and distancing oneself from Islam which is perceived as foreign. Another similarity between the Kurdish, Tajik, and Iranian cases is that while sympathizers may be numerous, very few individuals actually take the step of seriously learning about the Zoroastrian tradition or putting it into practice in their own lives. Many advocates of 'Zoroastrian' identity are in fact suspicious of or even opposed to religion, and see a streamlined Zoroastrian ethics as a harmless substitute.



Figure 70 Fravahr sign at the entrance to the Char Sten temple archaeological site outside of Duhok, Iraqi Kurdistan

In terms of historicity the Kurdish claim to Zoroastrian heritage is extremely problematic. The origins of the Kurds as a distinct ethnicity are unclear. They may derive in part from the ancient Medes, as they claim, but this is just as likely for Azeris; the Kurdish language may indeed be descended from Median, but the same is true for Old Azeri, a west Iranian language which disappeared by the seventeenth century. The Ādur Gušnasp fire temple, one of the three great Zoroastrian temples of ancient Iran, is situated in what were the western Median lands (near modern Takab in the Iranian province of west Azerbaijan), and is claimed by both the Kurds and the Azeris. At the same time, Kurdish ethnicity most probably evolved as a synthesis between intrusive Iranian tribes (including the Medes) with the pre-existing local inhabitants during the early first millennium BCE, just as that of the Persian resulted from a blending of the Parsa with the Elamites. This would account for the presence of non-Iranian elements which can be detected even in the oldest strata of Kurdish religion and myth, particularly among the Yezidis and Yāresān. The Iranian elements in these same traditions, meanwhile, as has been noted, would seem to derive from an ancient pool that provided a source *common* with Zoroastrianism, rather than from Zoroastrianism itself. As for the Kurdish claim to Zarathustra, it is entirely baseless since the language of the Avesta places him in eastern, not western Iran.

Geography alone would thus seem to favour the Tajiks' claim, and in terms of mere physical presence over time the Tajiks are probably among the most direct successors to the society in which Zarathustra may actually have lived. It is important to note, however, that Tajik identity as such is a far later construction, and also that Zoroastrianism as a religious tradition was most fully articulated and implanted in the west, long after Zarathustra's time. In the end, however, all such claims of unique or privileged ownership over an ancient cultural heritage are somewhat meaningless. What *is* meaningful is the way individuals and societies draw upon the past in order to construct an identity in the present; one should note that identities are never static, but are always evolving through the dynamic interplay of diverse elements. What Kurds, Tajiks or Iranians today say about Zoroastrianism and their relationship to it tells us little about their own history, but can tell us much about the ways in which they are attempting to find their place and face the challenges of living in the globalized world of the twenty-first century.

NOTES

1. See also Richard Foltz, *Religions of Iran: From Prehistory to the Present* (London, 2013), especially pp. xi–xvi.
2. See Monica Ringer, *Pious Citizens: Reforming Zoroastrianism in India and Iran* (Syracuse, 2011), especially chapters 3 and 5.
3. See Christine Allison, 'Representations of Yezidism and Zoroastrianism in the Kurdish Newspapers *Hawar* and *Roja Nû*', in Christine Allison, Anke Joisten-Pruschke and Antje Wendtland (eds), *From daēnā to Dīn: Religion, Kultur und Sprache in der iranischen Welt* (Wiesbaden, 2009), pp. 285–91.
4. Martin van Bruinessen, 'Kurds as objects and subjects of their history: Between Turkish official historiography, orientalist constructions, and Kurdish nationalists' reappropriation of their history', revised version of a paper presented at the conference 'Between Imagination and Denial: Kurds as Subjects and Objects of Political and Social Processes', organized by the Kurdology Working Group at the Free University, Berlin, 19–31 May, 1998, p. 10.
5. For a detailed overview of Yezidi religion see Philip G. Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism: Its Background, Observances and Textual Traditions* (Lewiston, 1995).
6. See the discussion in Javad Nurbakhsh, *The Great Satan 'Eblis'* (Minneapolis, 1986).
7. I owe this observation to Philip Kreyenbroek (personal communication, 19 August 2014).
8. Onnik Krikorian, 'Kurdish Nationalism in Armenia', *Newsline*, 6 January 1999, available at www.rferl.org/content/article/1141815.html (accessed 9 February 2015).
9. Christine Allison, *The Yezidi Oral Tradition in Iraqi Kurdistan* (London, 2012), p. 41.
10. Ibid.
11. Noshir H. Dadrawalla, 'The Yezidis of Kurdistan – Are they Really Zoroastrians???' available at <http://tenets.zoroastrianism.com/deen33f.html> (accessed 9 February 2015).

12. 'Kurds Open Zoroastrian Temple in Sweden,' available at www.kurdistan-zarathustrian.org/?p=1216 (accessed 9 February 2015).
13. Judit Neurink, 'Zoroastrian faith returns to Kurdistan in response to ISIS violence,' *Rudaw*, 2 June 2015, available at <http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/020620153>.
14. Alaa Latif, 'The One, True Kurdish Prophet? Thanks to Extremism, Iraqis Revive Ancient Religion,' *Niqāsh*, 28 May 2015, available at www.niqash.org/en/articles/society/5014.
15. 'Zoroaster statue raises outrage of Yezidi community in Syria,' *ARA News*, 24 May 2014, available at <http://aranews.net/2014/05/zoroaster-statue-raise-outrage-of-yezidi-community-in-efrin> (accessed 9 February 2015).
16. See John Perry, 'Tajik: 1. The Ethnonym: Origins and Application,' *Encyclopaedia Iranica* online (accessed 9 February 2015).
17. Paul Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan: National Identity and the Origins of the Republic* (London, 2007), p. 13.
18. See John Perry, 'Tajik 2: Tajiki Persian,' *Encyclopaedia Iranica* online, available at www.iranicaonline.org/articles/tajik-ii-tajiki-persian.
19. Meher Master-Moos, 'Tajikistan Celebrations for UNESCO Declared 3000 Anniversary of Zarathushtrian Religion and Culture Revival,' available at www.fravahr.org/spip.php?article134 (accessed 9 February 2015).
20. Dariush Irandoost (Rajabian), 'Zoroastrian Nostalgia of Tajiks,' World Zoroastrian Organization Seminar 2004, London, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VokWZaUJj84> (accessed 9 February 2015).
21. Emomali Rahmon, *The Tajiks in the Mirror of History* (Dushanbe, 1997), p. 44.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
23. According to a Parsi participant from Mumbai, Meher Master-Moos, the Zoroastrian-related events were deliberately sabotaged by Tajikistan's Isma'ili community who held a rival series of events commemorating Naser Khosrow (Master-Moos, 'Tajikistan Celebrations').
24. The video can be seen at www.youtube.com/watch?v=widpn9lsp6A (accessed 9 February 2015).
25. Alexander Sodiqov, 'Novruz and Nation-Building in Tajikistan,' available at <http://old.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5753> (accessed 9 February 2015).
26. Fariborz Rahnamoon, 'Balkh: The Holy Land,' *FEZANA Journal* xxviii/2 (2014), p. 85.
27. Master-Moos, 'Tajikistan Celebrations'.
28. Farhang Mehr, 'Zoroastrianism, Tajiks, and UNESCO,' available at www.zoroastrian.org.uk/vohuman/Article/Zoroastrianism,%20Tajiks,%20and%20UNESCO.htm (accessed 9 February 2015).
29. Available at <http://ahura.homestead.com/TAJIK2006.html> (accessed 9 February 2015).
30. Kersi Shroff, 'Finding "Sraosha, Tying Kusti" in Sogdiana,' *Hamazor* lxxix (2014), 1, pp. 28–31, and 2, pp. 31–4.
31. Shahin Bekhradnia, 'Abtin Sassanfar,' *Hamazor* 69/1 (2014), p. 5.
32. Irandoost, 'Zoroastrian Nostalgia of Tajiks'.
33. *Ibid.*
34. Dolly Dastoor, 'Zarathushtis in Europe and Central Asia,' *FEZANA Journal* xxvii/3 (2013), p. 56. The report gives much higher figures for neighbouring Uzbekistan,

citing Rustam Arin (Abdulkamilov) of the Mazda-Yasnigh Zarathushtrish Anjuman of Uzbekistan which he claims has 400 members, although only 34 of these have been formally initiated. Arim also states that 'There are an additional 500 who want to become Zarathushtrians.'

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COLLISION, CONFLICT AND ACCOMMODATION

A Question of Survival and the Preservation of the Parsi Zoroastrian Identity

Khojeste P. Mistree

It is generally assumed by the Zoroastrians of India – the Parsis – that their arrival in India and stay of over a millennium is a remarkable story of adaptation and harmonious existence as a minority community. Nevertheless, a few events may be seen to be indicative that the transition was not entirely free of conflict as has been generally believed by the Parsi community, which takes pride in its history of seamless and peaceful settlement in India. This widely-held conviction is supported by their strong belief in the stories that depict their landing on the western shores of India, brought together in the text known as the *Qesseh-ye Sanjān* ‘The Story of Sanjān.’¹ In particular this sense of harmonious blending into Indian culture is told allegorically in the popular story (which incidentally does not appear in the Persian text of the *Qesseh-ye Sanjān*) known as ‘The Sugar in the Milk’. This story is unfailingly mentioned in every Parsi exposition about the community to non-Zoroastrian audiences: it is perhaps part of a carefully cultivated identity, of a peace-loving people who have added value to the society in which they live. It can be argued that this image is indeed perhaps closer to the truth and that the few stray incidents of disharmony may be regarded as mere aberrations in their success story. Indeed the fact that the Parsis were numerically insignificant in proportion to the indigenous majority has made it vitally necessary for their community to build on such an affirmative image. Nevertheless, it is a matter of fact also that during their thousand year stay in India, the Parsis were caught up in eight major riots: (1) The Kalian Rai Lād Riots in Cambay in the sixteenth century; (2) the Dog Riots in Bombay of 1832 (not discussed in this chapter); (3) the Muslim–Parsi Riots in Bombay of 1851; (4) the Muslim–Parsi Riots in Bharuch of 1857; (5) a minor riot at the Tower of Silence in Bombay of 1873; (6) the Muslim–Parsi Riots in Bombay of 1874; (7) the Tower of Silence Land dispute (Babulnath Mandir) of 1774–1941; (8) the Prince of Wales riots of 1921 (not discussed in this chapter).

This chapter will give an overview of the external and internal devices which the Parsis adopted to safeguard their identity and to preserve their community institutions. These include the following: their appeals to the government for protection against the rioters while maintaining their own peaceful non-confrontational stance; giving space to their opponents by retreating from disputed areas; the internal devices of reaching out to their own community members to be peaceful in the face of provocation; asking the *sethias*, powerful Parsi merchants, to intervene with the government; and finally, writing books and poems to perpetuate a memory of such events.²

In all, early recorded events such as the battle of Variav in the eleventh century, the Kalian Rai incident in the late sixteenth century and Parsi-Muslim riots in the nineteenth century, are indicative of the fact that the transition in the centuries following the Parsi arrival in India, from rural, agrarian to urban, mercantile communities was not skirmish-free, and included at least one battle and eight major riots, compelling the British authorities to call in police forces and in some cases British troops to quell the riots against the Parsis.

The nineteenth century, during which the Parsis became wealthy, was particularly perilous for them. The Parsi-Muslim riots of 1851 and 1874 in Bombay and similar riots in Bharuch in 1857 are vivid examples of the hazardous situation in which the Parsis found themselves, despite the wealth and position they had attained under British rule. A case in point is the Babulnath Mandir dispute, involving the Hindu community's claim to lands integral to the Towers of Silence complex in Bombay. This dispute, which lasted, on and off, for over 167 years, was finally settled in 1940-1 with the Parsis in retreat, having been forced to give up Parsi Punchayet-owned lands, surrounding the Towers of Silence in order to establish peace and a resolution to the matter.

Whether these events constitute a definite landmark in the collective memory of the community, or were the results of business rivalries arising from urgent political and communal issues of the time, is a matter that needs to be considered. For the Parsis, the dousing of their sacred fires and the destruction of their fire temples in Bombay, by members of the Muslim community in the nineteenth century, struck a deep chord of anguish in their psyche and in turn aroused old memories of the time when they were forced to leave Iran. This chapter will focus on encounters between the Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians and will highlight the attempts made by Parsis to negotiate a position to ensure the preservation of Parsi identity and to promote the survival of their religious institutions.

THE BATTLE OF VARIAV

Each year, on *ruz* Ashishwang and *mah* Fravardin according to the Zoroastrian Shenshai calendar, the Navsari Mahlesar Behdin Anjuman celebrates the feast

day *Variav behdin nu parab*, to commemorate the Battle of Variav, which occurred towards the end of the eleventh century.³ A large Parsi settlement of farmers and priests, in the village of Variav near Surat, refused to pay the high tribute demanded by the Hindu Rajput chieftain: as a result, their settlement was attacked by the army of the Rajput chief of Ratanpur, while the Parsi men were away from Variav celebrating a religious festival. According to legend,⁴ the Parsi women, having been taken by surprise and left undefended, donned their men's armour and fought against the attacking Rajput army. As it happened, according to the story, a mishap caused a helmet to slip off the head of one of the women during the battle, revealing her cascading hair. The Rajputs, realizing that they had been tricked and that the men fighting them were in reality women, returned with reinforcements in an attempt to regain their honour. Unable to withstand the ferocity of the second assault and preferring death to dishonour, the Parsi women chose to jump into the river Tapti.⁵ Since then, this episode in Parsi history is commemorated by a community gathering during which a *jashan* is celebrated in memory of the brave women of Variav. The *jashan* is followed by a religious meal, termed *val no gahambar* (a communal feast, also a name for the six seasonal festivals commemorating the six creations), for which sprouted hyacinth beans are cooked, then consecrated in the *jashan* ritual and served to the attendees. According to the oral tradition, the sprouted hyacinth beans symbolically represent the hair of the women whose act of bravery and sacrifice are annually remembered in tradition. Much later in the nineteenth century, Kharshedji Bomanji Faramroze, inspired by the event, wrote a song titled *Jang-i Variav, Variav Gamni Parsi Banūōnī Bāhadurī Vishe Garbō* – 'The Battle of Variav, and the song in honour of the bravery of the women from the village of Variav'. In the song, the woman who galvanized the women of Variav into action was identified as Khorshed Banu who was said to be from a priestly family.⁶

The Rahnume Mazdayasnian Sabha, an organization in Bombay founded by Dadabhai Naoroji in 1851, also commemorates the Variav massacre with a *jashan*, followed by songs and a recital of poems, dedicated to the memory of this event. Poems recited to an audience, introduce a sense of belonging and an association with past glory, and Parsis have used songs and poems, as a means to perpetuate a revered memory and to cement the sacrifices of their ancestors in Parsi tradition. Similar recitals of the *Shāhnāmeh* became popular in the nineteenth century and were encouraged as a way to remember their Iranian imperial history and regularly to celebrate the ancestral acts of bravery. Such acts of remembrance serve to maintain identity by establishing a link to the past and thereby give the living a sense of continuity and tradition. The massacre at Variav is referred to in the manuscript *Ketāb-e Darun Yasht*, which is housed in the Meherjirana Library.⁷ In family registers (*disapothī*)⁸ of 1726⁹ and 1737, the Variav massacre is mentioned, and they record the day and month on which the *baj* and *jashan* are celebrated in honour of those who died in the massacre. S. M. Desai in his *Tavārikh-e Navsari*¹⁰ also refers to the

Variav massacre and mentions the Parsis being put to the sword at Variav. The existence of such religious references and the fervour with which the Parsis remember this tragedy attest to its importance in the collective memory of the community and the depth of the wound that was inflicted by the massacre.

THE MASSACRE OF THE PARSIS BY KALIAN RAI

In the light of the Variav episode, we may turn to the massacre of the Parsis in Cambay some 500 years later in the late sixteenth century, by a wealthy Hindu named Kalian Rai, a Dashā Lād Vaniā, who later became the *Mutāsaddi* or chief executive officer of the area.¹¹ Capt. Henry Dundas Robertson, writing in the *Bombay Gazetteer*, states that 'not a Parsi was seen' after the attack by Kalian Rai in Cambay.¹² Cambay is situated at the mouth of the Mahi River on the western coast of India and was a flourishing port city with extensive trade links to the Red Sea, Gulf of Hormuz and the Malacca Strait. It was known for its export of indigo, silk, chintz and other cotton goods. It is possible to speculate that the Kalian Rai riots may have been caused by an ongoing trade war between the Hindus and Parsis, but economic data for this is at present not available. The population of the Parsis had increased substantially in Cambay during the sixteenth century, and they were accused of aggression, breaking into homes, robbing the locals of their property and causing general panic and mayhem. It is said that their activities, forced the Hindus to abandon their homes and their much-loved temple of Kooarka Kheshitar in Kumārikā Kshetra, the ancient name of Cambay.¹³

Henry Dundas Robertson notes how the merchant Kalian Rai, who had been forced to flee to Surat, became a wealthy trader and, backed by his wealth, returned to Cambay with an army of Kohlis and Rajputs, with whom he attacked the Parsis, setting their homes on fire and forcing them to flee Cambay.¹⁴ The historical existence of Kalian Rai is noted by S. H. Hodivala,¹⁵ who referred to him as a pearl merchant of considerable importance who rebuilt the town of Cambay after the Parsis fled. Kalian Rai was sufficiently influential to have negotiated with the Europeans on behalf of the ruling Sultan for the release of the Sultan's ships detained by them. Unfortunately, neither Hodivala nor Modi, who also refers to this incident, have been able to date this event accurately.¹⁶ However, three things stand out with regard to the episode: the conflicting nature of the reports concerning the date of the massacre; the incontrovertible existence of Kalian Rai and his role in the massacre; and juxtaposed to this, the complete amnesia of the Parsi community about this episode in its own history. This massacre seems to have been erased from the collective memory of the Parsi community and hence there is no commemorative *jashan*, poem or song about this most unfortunate period of Parsi history.

As a corollary, it is appropriate here to offer a possible proposition in connection with the massacre of the Parsis living there in Cambay at the time.

In compiling the genealogy of Parsi Zoroastrian priests, a remarkable effort has been made by the Bhagaria priests of Navsari, and to a lesser extent by the priests of Udvada, Bharuch and other priestly clans, to maintain their records.¹⁷ The genealogy which is altogether missing from priestly records is that of the priests of Khambatt (Cambay). Kotwal in his article, 'A Brief History of the Parsi Priesthood', has confirmed this omission.¹⁸ It is possible to postulate that, when the Cambay massacre happened and the priests serving the community were killed, their written genealogy was so hopelessly lost in the looting and burning of the Parsi quarter of the city, that over time, the priestly families whose forefathers went to Cambay were unable to trace the names of their ancestors. However, for reasons not fully understood, this massacre remains more as a footnote in history, rather than being given a significant and appropriate place in the collective memory of the Parsi community.

PARSI-MUSLIM RIOTS – BOMBAY 1851

The latter part of the nineteenth century was beset by riots and skirmishes between the Parsis and members of the Muslim community. This period was also marked by the emergence of rich Parsi merchants in the China trade, some of whom displayed their enormous wealth on their return to Bombay by building large homes and setting up business establishments. The newspapers of the day were full of articles on the lifestyles of these merchants. As a community, the Parsis acquired considerable influence with the British colonial government and were seen to exercise a dominant influence in matters of trade and economics. In direct contrast to this known position, when the riots of 1851 and 1874 occurred, the Parsis were unable to convince the government of the serious nature of the conflict, and they failed to persuade them to take swift and firm action. This laggardly response of the government authorities resulted in the death of Parsis and the destruction of their places of worship, their homes and businesses.

The Parsi-Muslim riot of 1851 started soon afterwards: on 23 September 1851, Behramji Khurshedji Gandhi, the editor of the Parsi magazine, *Chitra Gyan Darpan* 'Illustrations Depicting Knowledge' printed a shoddily executed image of the Prophet Mohammad, with some historical material taken from a book written by Simon Ockley.¹⁹ On 7 October 1851, riots broke out in Bombay in protest against this publication, after the resident *maulana* of the local mosque incited the worshippers in his Friday sermon to attack Parsi-owned properties and businesses. The rioters beat up the police constables on duty, threw stones at Parsi residences, attacked Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy's Elahi Baug Fire Temple and desecrated the B. M. Mevawalla and the N. H. Karani Fire Temples in the area. They then moved towards the Fort area and attempted to attack the Maneckji Muncherji Seth Fire Temple, located in the heart of Bombay's business district. In Phydunie, near Bhindi Bazar, they beat up the

Parsi stable owners and destroyed their horse carriages. In the outer Fort area of Bhindi Bazar, several hundred Muslims from the nearby Nawab Mosque, joined the rioters and looted and attacked the Parsi shopkeepers. By nightfall, artillery soldiers arrived and a temporary peace was established. Despite several appeals to the government, and the convening of a special public meeting of the Justices of the Peace, the situation remained tense. The editor, Mr Behramji Khurshedji Gandhi, was forced to seek police protection and hand over copies of his magazine. The timing of the incident coincided with the holy month of Moharram and the anti-Parsi sentiment that was running high, was left unaddressed; this helped the riots to spread to the known Parsi business establishments and residential areas of Bombay. Handbills distributed by the Trustees of the Parsi Punchayet requested Parsis to avoid going out to view the Moharram procession in order to prevent a further conflagration. Unfortunately, four days later the rioting started again.

A deputation of leading Parsis, met Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy (1783–1859), the most powerful Parsi dignitary in Bombay, who was well connected with the establishment, and asked him for help. Jejeebhoy convened a meeting and passed a resolution requesting Parsis and Muslims to maintain peace and not to plunder each other's homes. Rustom Masani in describing the riots says:

Large crowds of Muhammadans assembled in the mosques of the town with the Koran in one hand and a knife in the other. [...] At a meeting held in the Juma Musjid on Friday 7 October 1851, they arrived at a frightful decision to proclaim a *jihad* (crusade) against the Parsis. A large crowd rushed out, seething with wrath, and armed with bludgeons, crying 'Din! Din!'²⁰

On 8 November 1851, a petition signed by 400 Parsis was presented to Mr Spence the Senior Magistrate of the Police, but again on 21 November 1851, several Parsis were beaten up and the Parsis could not move out of their homes. The rioters who controlled parts of the outer Fort area of Bombay could not be reined in by the authorities, who seemed reluctant to deal with the situation which was rapidly spinning out of control. A day later a deputation of 25 Parsis, led by Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917), presented a memorandum containing 400 signatures, to the Governor, Lord Falkland. It was evident that the Parsis did not have the support of the police, as Police Superintendent Captain Bains refused to extend help. The police force in Bombay had a large contingent of Muslim recruits and, it can be assumed that Superintendent Bains may have feared that there would have been a mutiny if he had asked his men to attack fellow Muslims.

The Governor ordered a cavalry contingent of 100 men to come down from Poona to control the situation. He issued a proclamation in English, Persian, Urdu, Marathi and Gujarati, warning both communities not to create any further trouble. On 28 November, a meeting of leading members of the Parsi and Muslim communities was convened by Secretary Lumsden and a letter of

explanation from the editor Behramji Gandhi was read out to inform the public that there had been no deliberate intention on the part of the editor to provoke anyone or to denigrate any religion.²¹ As reported in the *Parsi Prakash*,²² the Cadi wanted the *jihād* to continue and that although Rustomjee J. Jejeebhoy, accompanied by other prominent Parsis, went personally to the Cadi's house to appeal to him, he refused to attend the meeting. The Chief Justice Sir Erskine Perry, who was present at the meeting, suggested that Parsis and Muslims should sit in each other's carriages and go around the streets asking people to calm down and maintain peace and order. Sir Erskine Perry, Lumsden, the local Cadi (who must have subsequently relented) and Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy rode in Jejeebhoy's carriage and visited the riot-torn areas to assure the citizens. A fund was started to help those Parsis who had suffered during the riots.

The Parsis responded by publishing in June 1853 a poem in Gujarati titled *Fashad ul Kam Fam* 'The Work of Riots', by Dadabhai Edulji Pochkhanawalla and Nanabhai Pestonji Rana, under the pen-name *Bandeh Khoda* (slave of God), in which details of the suffering caused by the riots were given.²³ Again it would seem that the Parsis dealt with their pain and trauma through the medium of poetry, hoping thereby to preserve a historical narrative and memory of the event. The fire temples, which were attacked by the Muslims, remained closed for several years, as the sacred fires had been doused and extinguished. Two of the three fire temples attacked during the 1851 riots were later relocated and the newly consecrated fires were enthroned well away from Muslim-dominated areas, thereby safeguarding the religious institutions from possible future attacks. The Seth Nasserwanji Hirji Karani Fire temple, once located at Nizam street, Null Bazar, was later relocated to Cusrow Baug, a Parsi colony in the Colaba area of south Bombay; the Seth Bomanji Merwanji Mevawala Fire temple was relocated to Byculla, a suburb dominated by Christians; the Elahi Baug Fire Temple remained in Bhindi Bazar area and was relocated much later, in 1994, to Poona. Writing on the politics of power in Imperial India, Chandavarkar observes:

The fact that communal riots in Bombay in the 19th century had primarily occurred between the Parsis and Muslims – arising out of commercial rivalries in the shipping and export trades – added a further dimension to these tensions.²⁴

PARSI-MUSLIM RIOTS IN BHARUCH IN 1857

Within six years of the riots in Bombay, the port of Bharuch on the Narmada River was convulsed by riots, this time with a devastating outcome for the Parsis. Bharuch was one of the oldest Parsi settlements, with the Dakhma having been built as far back as 1309 CE. Behram Mowbed, the younger brother of Zarthosht Mowbed was among the first priests to settle in Bharuch in the thirteenth century, to serve the flourishing Parsi community there.²⁵ It

was a place of learning' and as many as 24 manuscripts are said to have been copied over a period of time in Bharuch, by eminent copyists such as Ardeshir Mowbed Jiva.²⁶ Bharuch is still home to four fire temples, which is a clear indication of how large the Parsi population must have been in early times. Like Cambay, Bharuch was a trading post and served as a link port for goods transiting to Africa, the Near East and China. Five days after the beginning of the Indian Mutiny, or War of Independence, in Meerut, on 10 May 1857, some Muslims of Bharuch falsely accused a Parsi, Bejonji Sheriarji Bharucha, of desecrating a mosque on the outer periphery of the city. The Muslim rioters rushed into the Dastur Kamdin Dar-e Mihr, extinguished the sacred fire and killed the elderly High Priest, Ervad Ardeshir Hormusji Kamdin. Inebriated with religious passion, they dragged Bejonji Sheriarji Bharucha out of his house, killed him and dragged his corpse with a rope towards the town of Vejalpore.²⁷ The rioters then proceeded to the Shapurji Narielwala Fire Temple (consecrated in 1783) in the outer Fort area. They extinguished the sacred fire and wounded the elderly Head Priest, Ervad Meherwanji Muncherji Kamdin. Unfortunately, neither the Collector nor Mr Davies the Magistrate of Bharuch, were able to quell the riots, despite being present, until a British contingent, led by Lt. Richardson, arrived and brought peace to the town. Whether this was a planned synchronized riot to coincide with the Mutiny in Meerut is not known, but emotions were considerably inflamed and it is a clear indication that all was not well in parts of India governed by the East India Company.

On 19 May 1857, the Parsis of Bharuch petitioned Bettington, the Chief of Police of the Bombay Presidency, to examine the role of the Head Constable. They petitioned the trustees of the Parsi Punchayet to use their influence with the government in Bombay to obtain justice, and they also petitioned the Governor's Council to appoint a Commission to investigate and punish the guilty. It is reported that 39 of the 61 persons arrested were sentenced to imprisonment by the Sessions Judge, A. K. Forbes.²⁸ On 16 November 1857, two of the rioters were hanged for the murders of Bejon Sheriarji Bharucha and Ardeshir Kamdin, the Parsi priest. These were trying times for India as well. The wounds of the Mutiny were still fresh, and the question of whether the ongoing riots in Bharuch had any connection with the imminent deposal of the last Mughal king and the demise of his empire in the following year perhaps warrants further consideration by historians. The Parsis, who were well represented in the Municipal Council, and who were known to be close clients of the British, having worked as commission agents to the East India Company, may have been targeted during the Mutiny. The Parsi settlement in Bharuch was an easy target, being small in number and largely unprotected, and it became a victim of rising anti-British passions, after the Mutiny in 1857. Had the rioters succeeded in eliminating the Parsis of Bharuch, it would have considerably reduced competition in the business arena.

A book titled *Khasumate Bharuch* in Gujarati verse, gives details of this riot. Compiled by Ervad Kaikhushru Pestonji Vakil, a school teacher, it was

published in August 1858, under the pen-name Bandeh Khoda (slave of God).²⁹ Parsi-Muslim rivalry continued in Bharuch and came to the fore again in another riot on 26 November 1885, when the authorities in Bharuch refused permission to grant land to a Muslim fakir to build a *darga* or shrine. The Muslims blamed the Parsis, who were well represented in the Municipal Council, for the rejection of their appeal and attacked them. The *Western Daily Press*, Bristol, which reported on the riots in 1885, stated:

The incident reveals one of the weak points in the application of the principle of local self-government to India. The Mohammedan fakir and his sympathizers could see in the decision of the Municipal Council only the influence of Parsi hatred; whereas, had it been the decree of an English Commissioner, they would have accepted it without demur.³⁰

It is apparent that Parsi influence in Bharuch was resented and that the unresolved antagonism between the two communities continued to endanger the existence of the Parsis. Added to this was the issue that in Bharuch the ruling Nawab and the Kotwal were Muslims and that they had used their influence to determine the less than effective response of the police during both riots.

MUSLIM-PARSI RIOT BOMBAY 1874

Some 22 years after the 1851 Muslim riots against the Parsis in Bombay, history repeated itself. The Parsis once again became a target of Muslim zealots. In June 1873 a book was published in Gujarati by Mr Rustomji Hormusji Jalbhoi, entitled *Prasiddhā Paigambāro ane Kamo* – 'The Known Prophets and Their Work'. It was a Gujarati translation of Washington Irving's book *Lives of Mahomet and His Successors*.³¹ According to one account,³² the Muslims viewed the book as an insult to their prophet, and so eight months after its publication, when the book came to their attention, hundreds of Muslims came out of Jame Masjid after the Friday afternoon prayers and began to attack the Parsis, indiscriminately.³³ According to a report in *Parsi Prakash*, the rioters, in an echo of the 1851 riots, came out of the mosque screaming 'Din, Din' – 'religion, religion'.³⁴ They destroyed the home of the Parsi police inspector Faramji Bhikhaji Kumana and for the second time they attacked the Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Fire Temple of Elahi Baug, desecrated the sacred fire and looted valuable items and cash. The Parsi delegation led by Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy (2nd Baronet) met the Governor Sir Philip Woodhouse who, to the shock of the Parsis, told them 'to make their own arrangements for defence', suggesting that the state was unwilling to protect them.³⁵

It is noteworthy that the Parsis responded to this situation in the long memorial ('statement of facts' as a letter of protest) presented by the Parsis to

the Marquis of Salisbury, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for India in Council, London, which was signed by eminent members of the community and nearly 8,500 other Parsis³⁶ Apart from lamenting the wrongs inflicted upon the Parsis during the riots, the plundering and desecration of the fire temple and the death of a Parsi, they also protested about the deep antagonism of the Police Commissioner Souter against the Parsis and the indifference of the Governor of Bombay, Sir Philip Woodhouse. The Parsi community's relationship with Souter was at best tenuous: in 1864 they had clashed with him over an incident of encroachment in the grounds of the Towers of Silence in Bombay. Souter was accused of defiantly riding his horse up the stairs where the *sugdee* or fire temple was situated. In the court case that followed, Souter and his police officers were accused of reckless behaviour and of being insensitive to the community's religious feelings. Thus, the Parsis expected little relief from Souter during the riots. Moreover the police force had a large contingent of Muslim officers, making their response during the riots questionable. It was by far the worst riot, in terms of its consequences, leaving behind a trail of seven dead and more than 50 persons seriously injured. The riots took place mainly in the three port cities of Cambay, Bharuch and Bombay, where the Parsi population was large enough or successful enough to cause trade rivalries, yet small enough to be vulnerable to attacks. In Bombay the riots did not start in the Fort George area, where many well-to-do Parsis, including Jejeebhoy, lived. They began primarily in the Muslim-dominated Bhindi Bazar area, where tensions ran high between the poorer members of the two communities, who battled it out in business on a daily basis while carrying out their trade.

Eminent men such as Sorabji Shapurji Bengalee, petitioned the Minister for Indian Affairs in England, drawing his attention to the injustice done to the Parsis and their religious institutions during the riots. The Parsis in defending themselves to the government described themselves as being: 'an industrious, peaceful, orderly people, whose sole desire was to live on terms of amity with all men'.³⁷ They wrote further: 'No class has so strong an interest in keeping the peace as the Parsi, for they are few in numbers, prosperous and unaccustomed to any other than commercial pursuits'. This image, reiterated again and again, is the base line on which the Parsis have formulated their community identity in India, as a non-interfering, peace-loving, prosperous people. It is this judicious construct that has helped their survival within a larger and more aggressive multi-religious populace.

The Parsis resorted to the written word not only to explain their version of what happened, but they also sought to reiterate, that theirs was a community which readily assimilated within the polity of India, like 'sugar in milk', sweetening their surroundings without causing any ripples.³⁸ Later, the Parsis also transmuted their angst and frustration by writing books on the riots.

The longest-lasting dispute involved Parsi Punchayet-owned land situated on the outer periphery of the Towers of Silence in Bombay.³⁹ The Parsis were

aggrieved when some Hindus tried to take over the land in order to build a *mandir*. The issue at hand was the demand made on the Panchayet to give up part of their land to allow Hindu worshippers easy access to the temple. The dispute, which began sometime around 1773 was eventually settled in 1940–1, with the Parsis once more in retreat, being forced to give up a part of their land in the midst of a Parsi housing colony in Bombay. A detailed study of this episode is a matter for a separate chapter.

In more recent times there are examples and illustrations of this community continuously being on the alert to safeguard its identity and religious institutions. The steps taken in 2002 by the Trustees of the Athornan Boarding Madressa in Dadar, where young Zoroastrian priests are trained, is a case in point. Fearful of Hindu fundamentalism in the aftermath of the riots in Gujarat, the Trustees sought to remove the term *madressa* from the institution's name, which until then was used to describe the seminary. They adopted a new term *gurukul*, lest anybody confuse the Parsi priestly seminary with a Muslim *madressa*. The Trustees collectively felt that the term *gurukul* would make them safer while retaining their primary identity, that of a Parsi priestly institution. It was reported, that the Trustees wanted to 'carefully secede from the Islamic connotations and ward off potential attacks'. The journalist Phatarphekar, noting this in *Outlook India*, wrote:

in a legible turning point in Mumbai's history the new signboard reveals a deepening dread [...] felt by the unlikeliest of people – the soft spoken, the genial Parsi priests.⁴⁰

In conclusion, it may be seen that the Parsis were keen to safeguard and preserve their community identity, their religious institutions and their properties, by responding to the riots and other adverse situations by several different means: petitioning the law officers directly connected to the riots; petitioning the Parsi Panchayet to intercede on their behalf with the government; approaching well-known Parsi luminaries to petition and speak to the government on their behalf; moreover, they also stretched across communal boundaries to sit with members of the opposing community to bring about peace. This was a critical survival strategy, as their miniscule numbers did not allow for a prolonged conflict. They also resorted to literary and religious means by writing books and poems and by commemorating events with annual celebrations by way of religious rituals, to reinforce and extol the sacrifices made by their forebears. Finally, in the face of fierce opposition, they retreated and by doing so they surrendered physical space to those hostile to them. The Parsis relocated some of their fire temples in areas outside the Fort and market areas of Bombay, ultimately setting the stage for a negotiated peace on a more permanent basis. By taking the above listed measures, the Parsis have been able to preserve their religious identity by adopting strategies of survival that, in spite of their small size, ensured their continued existence.

NOTES

1. See Alan Williams, *The Zoroastrian Myth of Migration from Iran and Settlement in the Indian Diaspora: Text, Translation and Analysis of the 16th Century Qeṣṣe-ye Sanjān 'The Story of Sanjān'* (Leiden and Boston, 2009), which is the only complete edition of the Persian text of the *Qeṣṣe-ye Sanjān*.
2. Intra-community quarrels, which can be numbered among the religious disputes, such as the long-running strife between the Sanjana and Bhagaria priests and between the Shehenshai and Kadmi sects, the repercussions of which were confined within the community, have not been included.
3. *Parab* is a term used in Zoroastrian practice when the day dedicated to a Yazata falls in the month dedicated to the same being. See Dara Sohrabji Dastur Meherjirana, *Navsari na Motā dastur Desai Khandānōnī Dīsapōthī* (Bombay, 1932), pp. 10–11. According to Dastur Firoze M. Kotwal, in the *dīsapōthī* of the Navsari behdins, this event is referred to as the *Variawa Behdin Shamashteno Rōzgār*. The word *behdin* has been used generically to mean those who are the followers of the good *Mazdayasnan* religion and should be taken as a general term to include the laity and the priests.
4. S. M. Desai, *Tavarikh-i Naosari* (Navsari, 1897), pp. 353–5, also mentioned in Ervad Faram, Ervad Khurshed, Ervad Aspandiar, Osta Behram Framroz's ms. of *Ketāb-e Darun Yashtan* and also in Henry Lord, *A Discovery of Two Foreign Sects in the East Indies*.
5. In another version, after the Parsi farmers defeated the Rajputs in an earlier battle, the Rajputs returned with reinforcements on a day when the men were known to be away and attacked the defenceless women of Variav.
6. Kharshedji Bomanji Faramroze, 'Jang-i Variav, Variav Gamni Parsi Banūnī Bahadurī Vishe Garb', in Dhunjibhai N. Patel, *Parsi Kirtī Prakāsh* (Bombay, 1920).
7. The name of the author, in the colophon of the manuscript of the *Ketāb-e Darūn Yasht* (1750), is given as Erv. Faram, Erv. Khurshed, Erv. Aspandiyar, Osta Behram, Osta Faram Suratia. In this Avestan ms. with ritual instructions written in Gujarati, it is stated that the Bāj ritual commemorating the Battle of Variav has to be performed in honour of Ardāfravash, the Righteous Spirits of the departed.
8. A *dīsapōthī* is a register in which the day, month and year of death of the male members of the family are recorded according to the Zoroastrian calendar.
9. Written by Jamshedji Mehrwanji Charna.
10. Desai, *Tawārīkhē Navsari*, pp. 483–4.
11. S. H. Hodivala, 'Parsi history, five Lectures', *KRICOI* viii (1925), p. 13.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 2–14.
14. Henry Dundas Robertson, 'Historical Narrative of the City of Cambay', *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government* N.S., xxvi (1856), pp. 52–3, and see R. B. Paymaster, *Early History of the Parsee in India* (Bombay, 1954), pp. 17–18.
15. Hodivala, 'Parsi history', p. 3.
16. On the issue of unresolved dates see Hodivala, 'Parsi history', pp. 4–6, and J. J. Modi, *A Few Events in The Early History of the Parsis and Their Dates* (Mumbai, 1905; repr. 2004), pp. 20–1.
17. Rustomji Meherjirana, *The Genealogy of the Naosari Parsi Priests* (London, 1776).

- See also Hodivala, 'Parsi history', lecture V, "The Genealogy of the Dasturs of Broach" by Ardeshir S. Dastur Kamdin, *KRCOI* viii (1925), pp. 85–126.
18. Firoze M. Kotwal, 'A brief history of the Parsi priesthood', in Shaul Shaked and Amnon Netzer (eds), *Irano-Judaica 2: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages* (Jerusalem, 1990), p. 218, fn. 3.
 19. Simon Ockley's *The History of the Saracens* was published early on: vol. 1 (1708), vol. 2 (1718), and later in the eighteenth century. There is a picture of Mohammad in the only copy currently digitized, from the University of California Library, namely the 6th edition of 1857 (i.e. six years before the riot) and which may be the very picture which started the unrest that led to the riot in 1851 – see <https://archive.org/stream/historyofsaracen00ocklrich/page/n7/mode/2up>).
 20. R. P. Masani, *Dadabhai Naoroji: The Grand Old Man of India* (London, 1939), p. 63.
 21. B. B. Patell, *Parsee Prakāsh Being a Record of Important Events in the Growth of the Parsee Community in Western India. Chronologically arranged from the Date of Their Migration to India to the Year 1860* (Bombay, 1888), 17 October 1851, vol. 1, pp. 579–83.
 22. Patell, *Parsee Prakāsh*, vol. 1, p. 581.
 23. Patell, *Parsee Prakāsh*, vol. 3 (1884), p. 466.
 24. Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, *Imperial Power and Popular Politics: Class, Resistance and the State in India 1850–1950* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 313.
 25. Dastur Dr F. Kotwal cites the arrival of Zarthosht Mowbed as 1275 CE: 'A brief history of the Parsi priesthood', in *Irano-Judaica 2: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture Throughout the Ages*, p. 218.
 26. S. H. Hodivala, *Studies in Parsi History* (Bombay, 1920), p. 96.
 27. Patell, *Parsee Prakāsh*, 1834–1857, 15 May 1857, pp. 728–9.
 28. *Bombay Gazette*, issue of 22 May 1857.
 29. *Fashad ul Kam Fam* on the 1851 riots in Bombay was published in 1853 by Dadabhai Edulji Pochkhanawalla and Nanabhai Pestonji Rana under the pen-name Bandeh Khoda. In 1858 a school teacher Kaikhushru Pestonji Vakil wrote the poem *Khasumate Bharuch* and it was published by the same duo Dadabhai Edulji Pochkhanawalla and Nanabhai Pestonji Rana again under the pen-name Bandeh Khoda.
 30. 'The Riot at Broach', *Western Daily Press*, Bristol, 26 November 1885 (accessed through www.britishnewspapersarchives.co.uk).
 31. Washington Irving, *Lives of Mahomet and His Successors* (Paris, 1850), available at <https://archive.org/details/livesofmahomethi00irviala>.
 32. Patell, *Parsee Prakāsh*, vol. 2: 1860–1880, 13 February 1874, p. 468, and Sapur F. Desai, *History of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet 1860–1960* (Bombay, 1977), pp. 265–66.
 33. Desai, *History*, pp. 61–3.
 34. Patell, *Parsee Prakāsh*, vol. 2: 1860–1880, 13 February, 1874, pp. 468–78.
 35. See Desai, *History*, p. 269.
 36. The memorial was signed by eminent Parsi merchants Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, Ardesir Hormarji Wadia, Framji Nusserwanji Petit, Byrassmjee Jejeebhoy, Heerjeebhoy Hormusji Sethna, Dinshaw Manockjee Petit, Cursetjee Furdoonjee Parekh, Merwanji Framji Panday, Muncherji Hormusji Cama, Nowrojee Manockjee Wadia, Sorabjee Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, Dastur Peshutan Behramjee, Jamaspjee Dastoor Minocheherjee, and 8,438 other Parsi signatories.
 37. Desai, *History*, p. 273. In the protest memorial addressed to the Marquis of Salisbury, the Parsis reaffirmed their peace-loving status by citing an example

in their letter; they stated that: 'Not once or twice only, but frequently have Mahomedan publishers reprinted works in which vile and offensive language is used in speaking of the Prophet Zoroaster and his followers, but the Parsees have uniformly let such attacks pass unnoticed.'

38. Dr Cawasji Navroji Mehta published his book *Notes and Reflections on the Bombay Riots of 1874* (Bombay, 1874); Dinshaw Ardeshir Taleyarkhan published *The Riots of 1874: Their True History and Philosophy, Tracing the Origin of the Moslem Fanaticism throughout Asia and Ascertaining its Real and Thorough Remedies as Applicable to the Continent in General* (Bombay, 1874); and Mancherji Cawasji Langdana (Mansukh) published an account of the conflict in Gujarati verse (date unknown). Another book in Gujarati, *Fesade February* [February Riots] (Bombay, 1874), was published by Cowasji Dinshawji Kias.
39. The incident known as the 'Dog Riots' has been omitted from this paper as it was more a clash against British government policies as distinct from an encounter with another resident community.
40. Pramila N. Phatarphekar, 'Renaming ceremony', *Outlook India*, 15 April 2002.

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IDEAS OF SELF-DEFINITION AMONG ZOROASTRIANS IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY IRAN

Sarah Stewart

The tumultuous events of the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran, followed by the eight-year war with Iraq, had a profound effect on the lives of all Iranians. Research conducted inside Iran on religious minorities during this time all but ceased. Moreover, the renewed religious fervour that characterized the post-revolutionary years in Iran, together with the continuation of discriminatory legislation, meant that many members of minority communities became reticent about discussing their religion – especially with foreigners. Information about the Zoroastrian religion and its people in Iran over the past 40 years has thus been fragmentary and is derived from a variety of sources. There are the accounts of those who left the country after the Revolution and settled elsewhere, some of them returning regularly to visit family members, maintain property that they continue to own, and to do business. There has also been a growing interest, amongst young Iranian students and scholars, in the languages and cultures of pre-Islamic Iran. City dwellers – particularly the younger generation – use the internet with enthusiasm, and their websites and blogs provide insights into religious and social life, as well as the ways in which young Zoroastrians create and consolidate identities.

In the past two decades, researchers from institutions both inside and outside Iran have had greater freedom of movement within the country and better access to minority communities than in the early post-revolutionary period.¹ Studies focusing on Zoroastrians and Zoroastrianism, in both rural and urban settings, include one undertaken by myself between 2007 and 2012, which included the recording of some 300 interviews with Zoroastrians from all walks of life in six main locations across Iran.² Its context is that of the teachers, religious texts and community leaders from which Zoroastrians have gained their knowledge and understanding of their religion, as well as the literatures, histories and political circumstances that have influenced their ideas. The interviews provide the primary source of information for this chapter, in which I shall both look at the ways in which Zoroastrians have adapted

to change over the past 40 years and also consider the ideas of self-definition that have developed as a result. It will be seen that these ideas have often been moulded by new phenomena, events or circumstances while at the same time remaining anchored to the past of familial memories, dreams, locations, histories and traditions.

Today one will find only a pale reflection of the village Zoroastrianism that was described by Mary Boyce and Michael Fischer in their ethnographic studies, undertaken in the 1960s and 1970s respectively. Yet religious life continues and is clung to tenaciously. Likewise, in the cities, Zoroastrians preserve their distinctive identity and continue to observe their festivals, adapting the performance of rituals to suit their circumstances. In many cases families return to their ancestral homes in the villages around Yazd to perform these in a more traditional way than is possible within city limits. So what does it mean to be a Zoroastrian in Iran today and how do Zoroastrians form their distinctive identities that distinguish them from their fellow Iranians? This question will be discussed within the framework of three further questions, the first of which is:

- 1 *How have Zoroastrians in Iran negotiated their minority status in order to practise their religion and survive as a community?*

Here I consider some of the structures in place at national level that govern Zoroastrian minority status; I also look at the ways in which internal matters within the community are managed through organizations such as *anjomans* and the Mowbedan Council.

Until the adoption of the constitution in 1906, individuals such as Maneckji Limji Hataria, the Parsi agent who secured the temporary lifting of the *jezyeh* or poll tax, had negotiated improvements in conditions for minorities on a personal level. Under the new constitution, Zoroastrians were able to send a deputy to represent their interests in parliament, a development which gave them a formal structure within which to operate and which marked the beginning of recorded proceedings.³ The collective memory of community history before this time is based on oral traditions rather than documentation. The twin pillars of internal governance, lay and priestly, together with the wealth generated by the growth of the Zoroastrian population in Tehran from the late nineteenth century onwards, began a modernization process with which Zoroastrians are familiar, a process that is often recalled within the context of family history. Those who have achieved a certain prominence within the community, both today and within living memory, are often referred to in interviews. The knowledge that they belong to the Zoroastrian community alone reinforces the sense of identity; through such people the successes and setbacks of the community can be charted.

An example of such a distinguished individual is the high priest, Mowbed Rostam Shahzadi (1912–2000), who was one of the four representatives of

minority religions debating the new constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran after the Revolution of 1979. Mowbed Shahzadi fought hard for the rights of Zoroastrians and was overtly critical of the wording of Article 13 of the Constitution, which refers to Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians as minorities. He felt strongly that Zoroastrians belonged to the land of Iran and its people and shared many cultural traditions with their Muslim fellow countrymen.⁴ Since Shahzadi's time, the onus to push for amendments to legislation and to seek equal rights for Zoroastrians in law has continued to fall on the Majles representatives, whose strong identification with the history, culture and land of Iran still seems to set them apart from other minority representatives. Parvis Malekpoor, twice Deputy to the Majles, was another outspoken Deputy who replaced Mowbed Shahzadi in the Majles at a time when there was a confrontation between conservative and liberal-minded Zoroastrians over who should control the Tehran Zoroastrian Anjoman. In a long interview he described in some detail his campaign to become a member of the first National Parliamentary Assembly, Majles-e Showrā-ye Eslāmi, formed after the drafting of the constitution, which brought him into direct competition with Mowbed Shahzadi, for whom he none-the-less had great respect. Malekpoor was deeply critical of the judicial system's inability to prevent the harassment of Zoroastrian schoolchildren that was occurring during his term of office:

The issue involving education began when some people, and I do not know how to describe them, found excuses to harass the children and young people. We did our best to prevent and put an end to these harassments. In the Majles I was the first member who criticized and complained about the nascent judicial system in the country; you can find the proceedings in the Majles too. This caused noise in the Majles and Mr Ayatollah Sādiq Khalkhālī (1926–2003) [the notorious chief justice of the Revolutionary Court] actually [verbally] attacked me. I think in those days, honestly, had it not been for Hāshimi Rafsanjāni [and his protection] I would probably not have managed to lead a sound and healthy life (*jān-e sālem be dar nemibordam*)!

Today the Zoroastrian Deputy to the Majles is Dr Esfandiar Ekhtiary, a businessman from Yazd, who continues the struggle to obtain equal status in law for Zoroastrians with respect to long-standing issues such as that of inheritance.⁵ In his address to the Majles after the Nowruz holiday in 2014, he drew attention to Articles 13 and 3 of the constitution that call for freedom, equality and judicial stability for all Iranians. He asked President Hassan Ruhani to ensure that these be observed. Further, he addressed the amendment to Article 881 of the Civil Code that repeals the rule that a non-Muslim cannot inherit from a Muslim, inquiring why in six years this had not been implemented by the judicial committee of the Majles.⁶

Articles that discriminate against religious minorities have remained unmodified in the Penal Code with respect to a number of offences including adultery, homosexuality and pre-meditated murder.⁷ Article 297 in the penal

code deals with the *diyeh* or blood money payable to the family when the victim of a death by murder or manslaughter (as happens for example in a car accident) is a non-Muslim. The compensation calculated for a non-Muslim (male or female) is the same as for a Muslim female, which is half the amount awarded to a Muslim man. An amendment to this article whereby the *diyeh* payable to Muslim and non-Muslim men be equalized has not yet been implemented in law.

Whereas there are punishments exacted for the violation of the corpse of a Muslim, there are none stipulated for similar crimes against a deceased Zoroastrian. This finds resonance in several of the interviews where it has been mentioned that bodies were routinely removed from the *dakhmeh* for the purposes of medical research. The desecration of the *dakhmeh* is the reason frequently given for the abandonment of the system of exposure of the dead some 35 years ago.

Zoroastrians rely on their community *anjomans* and the *Shorā-ye hall-e ekhtelāf-e Zartoshtiyān*, 'the council of elders to resolve Zoroastrian conflicts' as far as possible without recourse to Islamic courts. The central Tehran Anjoman is an umbrella organization for 26 local *anjomans*, most of which are in Yazd province. In addition to looking after social welfare, the *anjoman* acts as a bridge between the Zoroastrian communities and the Islamic government both at local and national level. It preserves the traditional heritage of Zoroastrians and spends much of its time, at local level, managing endowments and the communal funds for festivals and the upkeep of community halls, shrines, cemeteries and fire temples. It interprets and applies Zoroastrian law (as enshrined in the Personal Status regulations for Zoroastrians) concerning important matters such as inheritance, adoption and divorce. The *anjomans* keep the register of marriages, deaths and other records and its archives are the only accurate collective memory of the community. Much of the work of the *anjoman* in Tehran has to do with land requisition and fighting cases against various government ministries; these can be protracted affairs with no end in sight.⁸

In addition to the Tehran Zoroastrian Anjoman an organization called the *Sāzmān-e Farvahar* was founded in 1960 for the purpose of addressing the needs of young people – it was felt that the Anjoman was rather old-fashioned – and so social and cultural events were organized as well as seminars on religion, and athletic, artistic and leisure facilities were established. Since the Revolution the *Sāzmān-e Farvahar* has taken responsibility for charitable works, such as supporting the families of those who lost sons in the war with Iraq, those who were freed prisoners of war and those affected by natural disasters. It also ensures that Zoroastrians mark the special days in the national calendar of the Islamic Republic, for example 11 February, a National Holiday held in commemoration of the Revolution.

The Mowbedan Council or *Kankāsh-e Mowbedān-e Tehrān*, which addresses the needs of the *mowbeds* and *mowbedzādehs*, provides religious education

for the community and continues the tradition of answering their questions about the religion. Sessions are led by the Mowbed Mowbedān, Dr Ardeshir Khorshidian, and many of the debates are incorporated into one or other of the leading Zoroastrian websites in Iran, Amordadnews and Beresad. These websites bring the relationship between the government and the Kankāsh, concerning religious matters, into the public domain. Questions put to the Kankāsh often have to do with community rules. A recent session, for example, concerned the *mehriyeh*, the payment of an agreed sum of money by the husband to his bride-to-be, the payment of alimony following divorce, the rules pertaining to child maintenance and the age when an adolescent is considered an adult in the eyes of the Zoroastrian religion. The questioner is reminded that the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran requires religious minorities to abide by their own personal status laws Articles 21–37.⁹ Here it is stated clearly that divorce is not an option in the Zoroastrian religion, which is why the payment of *mehriyeh* is not included in the marriage contract. If, however, there is sound evidence to prove one or other of the exceptional circumstances listed in the Personal Status, then the marriage may be terminated.

Sometimes the Kankāsh is asked to respond to the government on religious issues. For example, the Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance asked that Zoroastrians cease performing the Shāh-Pari Sofreh.¹⁰ The problem arose over whether the name should be associated with the evil *pairikas*, who are servants of Ahreman, or with Paridon (Avestan Thraetona and Persian Faridun), who is associated with healing. The Muslim view was that of the former association. The Kankāsh refused to back down and responded:

Setting up a *sofreh* communally, performing rites, gatherings, social intercourse, merrymaking, cooperation, communal feasts and happiness are all good/acceptable customs which answer the needs of the community both socially and psychologically. For this reason the Anjuman-e Mowbedān of Tehrān in no way objects to the practice of setting up *sofrehs* and it regards them as commendable. Each and every day in the month of the Zoroastrian calendar is dedicated to a cherished name belonging to a *Yazata* (*Izad*) and the followers of the Good Religion (*behdinān*) choose a day or a few days belonging to *Yazatas* during the month. They set up *sofrehs*, get together communally and cooperate together.

In both responses the members of the Kankāsh achieved a balance by demonstrating the differences between Zoroastrianism and Islam, whilst taking care not to allow the religion appear too alien.

There are 60 priests in Iran today of whom eight are female.¹¹ A few are hereditary and the majority are part-time. The fact that *mowbedyārs*, 'non-hereditary priests', are not permitted to perform the full rituals means that these have been shortened – the full *Yasna* for example is no longer performed. Only two priests were interviewed, both full *mowbeds*, who recite the night-long *Vendidad*. Despite their diminished role as ritual specialists, priests are still expected to undergo rigorous training in the correct pronunciation of

the Avestan language and the quality of recitation is considered to be very important. A Tehrani Zoroastrian lady makes this very clear:

A good *mowbed* needs a good voice. His voice must attract attention. As we say, his *mantra* must hold you. Some people say that while listening to the Avesta they fall asleep ... They say look, the *mowbed* is reading the Avesta and so and so has fallen asleep. I do not think this is bad at all. It shows that the *mowbed* who is reading the Avesta is reading it so beautifully that even though the person listening has just lost a loved one he is so comforted that he falls asleep. This signifies the power of that *mowbed* who is reading the Avesta with such a nice voice. Then there are *mowbeds* who once they are done you want to slap them in the face. His voice is so bad and he reads the Avesta so badly that he makes you quite nervous. But I see the role of the *mowbeds* as very important.

The relationship between Zoroastrian doctrine and the lived experience of the religion that is brought to life via interviews is a product of priestly teaching and should be viewed within the Iranian context. Scholar-priests of the twentieth century, such as Mowbeds Firouz Azargoshasb (1912–96) and Shahzadi, who were both trained in India, became very influential within the Iranian Zoroastrian community. Their translations of the *Gāthās* from Avestan into Persian are those most in use today by the laity in Iran and derive mainly from the work of the scholar Ebrahim Pourdavoud (1885–1968), who in turn acknowledged the influence of Western scholars of his generation such as C. Bartholomae, L. H. Mills and K. F. Geldner.¹² Priestly discourse in Iran is also informed by Persian literary traditions. In a sense one could say that the teaching of Zoroastrianism in Iran is partly defined by the quest for historical continuity within the Iranian literary tradition. The public lectures delivered by Shahzadi in 2004 are representative of views expressed today. They are noteworthy for the way in which Shahzadi draws on situations in daily life and cites Persian literary works with which his audiences would have been familiar. The following passage is from a lecture devoted to the subject of dualism:

the ancients had wondered how can day and night, which are so different from one another, have been created by one creator: night must have been created by the god of darkness and day by the god of light and happiness. How is it possible for rose and thorn to have been created thus? When we reach out to pick the beautiful rose, which emits its sweet scent, should our fingers touch its thorns and be injured? The one who has created the thorn, they had thought, must be an enemy of human beings, who does not wish us humans to reach and hold flowers. How is it possible that a god should give us our lives, and the same should take them away from us? They would say, no, there have to be two gods, one responsible for goodness and the other the god of wickedness. However, as I have mentioned, 3,733 years ago a Prophet appeared in this world for the first time and stated that all has been created by Him. Yet, when you view the world with your own eyes, you perceive things differently [...] Asho Zartosht has stated that what we regard as good is attributed to *spēnta mēnō*, and what we perceive as wickedness and ugliness is an attribute of *aŋra mēnō*.

It can be seen here that while Shahzadi espouses the strict monotheism of Pourdavoud's interpretation of the *Gāthās*, he nevertheless conveys a sense of dualism in the dichotomies he describes. In general, priestly teaching reflects a coalescence of ideas drawn from a variety of sources. When Western academic interpretations collide with the 'traditional' understanding of doctrinal matters this often results in debate within the community and a defence of the indigenuous view.

2 *What makes Zoroastrians stand apart from their fellow Iranians and what are the shared identities that separate them from Zoroastrians outside Iran?*

Apart from religious beliefs there are a number of cultural differences that distinguish Zoroastrians from their fellow countrymen. These include language, religious education, issues to do with mixed marriages and emigration as well as religious observances, festivals and shrines. The distinctive Dari dialects, which Zoroastrians maintained from earlier times in order not to be understood by their Muslim conquerors, are still spoken today. There were two main Dari dialects spoken by Zoroastrians, one in Yazd and another in Kerman, as well as a number of sub-dialects within the Yazdi dialect belonging to certain villages.¹³ While these are dying out as villages are abandoned, they are still spoken by Zoroastrians wherever they have relocated. For example, Zoroastrians from Taft will speak the Tafti Dari dialect even though they are living in Tehran.

Religious education for religious minorities became more clearly defined after the Revolution. Whereas Zoroastrian children used to be sent home on Fridays, when religious education classes were held for Muslim children, after 1979 it became compulsory for all children to receive religious instruction, including those belonging to religious minorities. This development caused a major shift from home teaching to the classroom and meant that knowledge about the religion was no longer dependent on family members – although prayers were still learned at home from an early age. Some interviewees expressed the opinion that the religious fervour that accompanied the Revolution actually promoted a greater sense of religiosity amongst Zoroastrians. A priest in Tehran explained that his religious activities began after the Revolution:

That was a change, which really affected our community in terms of its religion [...] that because the country had changed from being secular to being deeply religious that everyone should do their bit [...] I was 30 and I started in earnest and have continued ever since. I have never left my job to work as a full-time priest, but I became very involved [...] Even the children would not have observed their religion had it been the continuation of the previous regime. Because then it was very lax – I could even say that religion was discouraged. There were many incentives not to be religious, and many attractive activities that you would prefer to being religious.

Asked whether he thought this was a good thing, he replied:

In this way of course; in this way we are all really indebted to this Revolution! Not only the elders, but the children too. Those who were seven years old not only had to start religious classes but their eyes opened, really opened. And then everything became religious, the radio and the mass media. And the feeling of wanting to be religious came naturally.

Others have expressed this view rather differently, pointing out that in order to counter the focus on Islam, it became necessary to ensure that the Zoroastrian religion was kept alive and of importance to its followers.

There has been a revival of interest in the Avestan language amongst young Zoroastrians, which is witnessed in the growth in popularity of an Iran-wide Avesta competition that has been an annual event since 1994. This is characterized by a focus on the correct recitation of Avestan texts and an emphasis on meaning rather than ritual. It appears that today young people prefer to interpret the practices described by Mary Boyce¹⁴ within the context of village life in times gone by, and offer practical reasons for the previous existence of purity laws and such institutions as the *dakhma* system. It is not possible to know from Boyce's account whether or not the people who engaged in these practices made the same doctrinal connections as she did. Certainly today those living in Sharifabad and other outlying villages appear largely unaware of doctrines as they are usually known from the classical tradition: their knowledge is confined to what they term the Avesta, which consists of the *Gāthās*, the *Yašts*, *Vendidad* and *Visperad*, and the *Khordeh Avesta*. Texts such as the *Bundahishn* are deemed 'mythological' in the sense that they are thought of as stories that belong to a later tradition and were developed as a means by which to explain the teachings of the Zarathustra. As such they are not considered authoritative in the same way that the Avestan texts are. When asked whether he believes in the Zoroastrian story of creation, a priest from the village of Narsiabad reflects:

If we look at the spiritual side of these stories they are the presence of good and evil in the mind. If you remove the dirty things from a room the room is clean. Same with men. If you take away the bad things from people's minds then they will become good. So in a sense, the *Bundahishn* it is a metaphor for the good and evil in men's minds. The books written after the *Gāthās* were written by the followers of Zarathustra. They are interpretations not the words of the prophet, so we do not know how correct they are.

Many belonging to the older generation, on the other hand, reflect the more traditional attitude to prayer:

I do not think we read our prayers in order to make sense of them or understand them. If the intention was to understand the prayers, we would have composed beautiful and meaningful phrases in praise of the God and recite them constantly. These ancient *niyāyishes* contain within them a timeless and sacred spirit; once they

are translated that spirit which is contained therein dies away and disappears. If one reads the *Ātash Niyāyish* or *Ābān Niyāyish* in translation, one does not gain anything from them, whereas the ancient texts do have an effect – we do not read *niyāyishes* for their meanings, but rather for their spiritual/psychological effects.

Issues that affect the Zoroastrian community, and which in a sense are linked to each other, are those of intermarriage and emigration. The question of intermarriage is influenced by inheritance laws – which heavily favour the family of the convert to Islam – as well as the fact that proselytization is considered a capital offence. As might be expected, those living in rural areas tended to be more conservative in their outlook than those who live in Tehran. None the less it was a Zoroastrian gentleman in Tehran who declared:

In such cases, I think, parents must have been negligent in properly raising their children [...] It is the parents who are to be blamed. If such a thing happens nowadays not much can be done to prevent it, I am afraid, prevention might make it even worse. Zartoshti children must be instructed from an early age not to consider marriage outside the religion, just as other religions discourage this as well. The problem is also related to our society: isolation and limited interaction between opposite sexes causes this; a young boy, for instance, is at work and meets an attractive, non-Zartoshti girl, or vice-versa, and the result is obvious. In my opinion, it doesn't make any difference if the non-Zartoshti boy or girl actually expresses his/her interest in learning about and converting to our religion, since (s)he has not been raised in the culture. The result, of course, will be to sever their relations with both families completely. Imagine if a Zartoshti boy marries a Muslim girl, and then realizes that the girl's uncle is a Muslim fundamentalist/member of the establishment (*hezboollāhi*); should or could the girl cut off her relationship with her uncle? The couple may tolerate their differences and live together but they cannot truly love one another; family unions are very important and effective in this regard, theirs will remain awkward, strange, and eventually dysfunctional.

Older people seem generally more sympathetic to the needs of young people and their desire to seek better job opportunities abroad, but they often express doubts about young people's ability to resist a wholehearted adoption of Western culture. The following view from an interview with a Zoroastrian in Ahwaz sums up the two arguments:

Emigration has to be examined from two perspectives: one has to do with responsibility and the other with practicality. From the responsibility perspective, we are the inheritors of an ancient culture and the way we are going, unfortunately, I do not think that after one or two generations we will have more than a few people left belonging to our religion, and our base will disappear from this world. Those who emigrate, no matter how strong they are, they can only keep one or two generations culturally intact [...] From this point of view, we have a responsibility towards our ancestors and our descendants and we should therefore not emigrate. But if we look at it from the point of view of living conditions, and bearing in mind the social

conditions presently prevailing in our country, and remembering the limitations Zoroastrians and other minority groups face – these exist and no one can deny them [...] For those that have no future here, especially financially, because of the political, economic and social problems that exist within our society, they are committing a crime against their children if they stay here. If they emigrate they will be sacrificed but their children will have a better life.

Popular religious observances include those that accompany the six great seasonal festivals, and the *gāhāmbārs* and *jashans* that are endowed for particular reasons such as in memory of the deceased, or to honour a vow. These are exclusively Zoroastrian affairs and accompanied by prayers and foods specially prepared for the occasion. The controversial subject of animal sacrifice still causes polarized debate – mainly among Zoroastrian communities outside Iran. It is, however, possible simply to view it as the traditional way in which farming communities provided (and still provide) a communal meal. It is the way meat is provided, for example, during the festival of Mehragan that is still celebrated in the Yazdi villages of Zeinabad, Mobareke and Cham between 31 January and 4 February according to the Qadimi calendar.¹⁵ The festival is often dedicated to someone who has passed away and is described thus:

During the *jashan* of Mehr-izad, which is the first of the *jashns* in [the month of] Mehr [...] during the first year [after the passing of the deceased] – they would kill a sheep and roast its meat. They would serve it with *komāj* and *halvā*, bread and *sabzi* (fresh greens). They would pull the meat, place it on the bread, next to *komāj* and *halvā* and *sabzi* too, with some *sirābi* (stewed offal), and these would be sent to the neighbours' and relatives' houses. This was done during the day of Mehr-izad in the month of Mehr, and this was repeated for three years. Others would kill the sheep, chop the meat and distribute it raw to others. (Muslims)

The identities shared between Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians develop from certain popular devotional practices, oral traditions and historical events. As such they are essentially Iranian and, although also part of life in the diaspora, are more strongly felt inside Iran. The cult of shrines and votive *sofrehs*, usually performed by women, are two areas of popular devotion shared by Muslims and Zoroastrians. While the Zoroastrian shrines have different theological underpinnings from Islamic shrines, the fact that they are largely absent in India or the diaspora (unless one includes the domestic shrine, or altar, that exists in all Zoroastrian homes) suggests that they derive from Iranian culture and are rooted in the pre-Islamic past. Zoroastrian shrines include the six main pilgrimage centres all of which are located in Yazd province and are referred to as *pir-e bozorg*. They are associated with legends of the last Sasanian king, Yazdegird III, and his family and their flight before the invading Arab armies. There are a large number of shrines that are attached to a local narrative that is connected to a supernatural event or vision – usually a dream.

Shrines associated with a particular natural element, such as a great tree, are often endowed with the capacity to grant a wish. Finally, there are those that commemorate an event or a person. These may be no more than a niche in the wall of a street. The story of Master Khodabakhsh, in the *Mahalleh* of Yazd is such an example. Master Khodabakhsh was employed as a teacher in the school founded by the Yazdi merchant, Kei Khosrow Sharokh. He was assassinated in 1918, apparently for his liberal views gained during a sojourn in India, his use of the *fasli* calendar and opposition to animal sacrifice. He was also accused of being sympathetic towards Bahaism. The place where he died is marked by a small shrine.¹⁶

Votive *sofreh* rituals are generally considered marginal to mainstream orthodoxy in both Muslim and Zoroastrian communities, partly because of the dubious identity of the supernatural beings to whom they are dedicated and also because of the idea that a votive offering, such as the sacrifice of a black hen, can result in the granting of a wish. There is also the fact that they are outside the remit of priests and the control and supervision of men more generally.¹⁷

In the category of shared identities is the body of Persian literature that is beloved by all Iranians and Zoroastrians the world over, of which the most prominent work is the epic *Shāhnāmeḥ*, a text that has been influenced very little by Islamic ideas and is strongly rooted in Iranian traditions.¹⁸ In many of our interviews the *Shāhnāmeḥ* is often referred to as part of early childhood memory – the stories being passed down orally, or read, in much the same way as the Avestan prayers were transmitted by family members to their children and grandchildren. For example:

Each year at Mehregān, my mother used to tell us the story of Kāveh the Blacksmith or if we were celebrating Tirgān, she used to tell us the story of Ārash. Stories that are mythical and traditional – we used to hear them. At night when she put us to bed, we would be told the story of Rustam and Sohrāb. The stories we heard as children differed from the fairytales other children were brought up on. As children we were raised on stories of the *Shāhnāmeḥ*.

Reminiscing about her childhood, a middle-aged lady in Kerman told us:

We had a fire-temple here of course, where students – mostly boys – would attend *Shāhnāmeḥ* reading classes. It was similar to the *maktab-khāne* (traditional [Muslim] schools); my father, for instance, knew all the *Shāhnāmeḥ* by heart [...] As a farmer he never developed his writing skills and was not a literate person, but orally he was amazingly well trained. He knew both the *Shāhnāmeḥ* and the [Divān of] Hāfēz by heart. In winter when there was a lot of snow and farming was impossible, we all would gather together and my father would hold the *Shāhnāmeḥ* – they would have gatherings at each other's houses – and all would recite together. Whilst playing together the children would slowly become familiar with all these literary traditions and culture.

Although the sense of Iranian identity can be seen as a factor that draws Zoroastrians in Iran to the non-Zoroastrian majority population, it should be noted that the latter are largely unaware of the pre-Islamic roots of much of their literary culture. Likewise, there are various cultural events and symbols that have become part of national Iranian identity, divorced from any Zoroastrian connotations. Nowruz is one such example, where it has now become customary for Iranians to flock to the tomb of Cyrus the Great at Parsargadae to watch the sun rise at dawn. The Persian *haft sin* seems likely to have derived from the Zoroastrian *haft shin*, or seven items beginning with the letter *shin* that are laid out at Nowruz by Zoroastrians in Iran. The *fravashi* has long been a national symbol in Iran but, although recognized to be a pre-Islamic symbol, is not associated with Zoroastrianism by the majority population. The Cyrus cylinder has become a symbol of human rights not only for Iran but also for the United Nations – again rarely, if ever, linked to Zoroastrianism.

More recently there has been another cause for shared identity, one which causes conflicting emotions when discussed, namely the Iran/Iraq war of the 1980s. While no Iranian Zoroastrians we have spoken to declare anything other than a willingness to fight for their country, Iran, the idea of martyrdom promoted by Ayatollah Khomeini as a reward for dying in battle has no resonance in Zoroastrian eschatological beliefs. Those who lost their lives in the war are recognized as martyrs by the state and this has given rise to an annual ceremony that takes place in the Yazd *ārāmghāh*. Performed by *mowbedyārs* in front of pictures of the young men who died, it serves as a reminder of their lives and the circumstances of their death.

3 *What are the narratives that Zoroastrians draw upon to construct ideas of self-definition?*

This question is linked to the body of oral literature from which Zoroastrians derive their sense of community history, and which is an important part of identity formation. A narrative that has remained in the collective memory of those who feel they belong or once belonged to a particular village or town often underpins that sense of 'place'. Certain events have become part of folklore in much the same way as the story of migration from Iran to India, as described in the *Qesse-ye Sanjān*, has for Parsis. These events form the basis for the stories that Zoroastrians tell themselves about themselves, which often describe a recovery or survival in the face of adversity. They are often formulaic and, as such, are not to be taken literally. Sometimes they are interwoven with dreams and/or conflated with stories attached to different historic events. The Afghan invasions of Kerman (1719–24), for example, identify Kermanis with their city and are recounted as part of a shared narrative. The fact that the Zoroastrian community was obliged to live outside the city walls meant that it invariably bore the brunt of the onslaught.¹⁹ Stories about these episodes have

become part of the oral tradition of Zoroastrians living there today. Accounts vary in detail. Some accounts focus on the slaughter and devastation that required a makeshift *dakhmeh* to be built in order to lay the bodies of those Zoroastrians who were massacred at the city gates. Others tell of the various ways in which the surviving Zoroastrians managed to flee and make their way into the city via the underground *qanāt* system, or by hiding in the well of *Shāhverahrām Izad*:

When Mahmood Afqān attacked Kerman, many Zoroastrians were killed; it was because they were living outside the city and out of the city gate. In *Shāhverahram Izad* there was a well inside where some Zoroastrians hid, leaving their swords outside the well. Afqāns were Muslims and believed in the story of 'Ali and his sword. So the shrine of *Shāhverahram Izad* remained safe and Zoroastrians took refuge there.²⁰

The Zoroastrian population of Kerman is smaller than that of Yazd today and the Kermani Dari dialect rarely spoken. The villages outside Kerman are no longer inhabited by Zoroastrians.²¹ In the opinion of one Kermani lady the demise of Kermani Zoroastrian agriculture was not because of a lack of water but because many young people moved to Tehran, leaving only the elderly who were no longer fit to farm. She explained that Yazdi businessmen had moved into Kerman during the time of Reza Shah and bought up agricultural and other properties. When asked if she was referring to the '*arbāb-e ra'yat*', or struggle between farmers and landed gentry, she replied:

Quite. Yazdi *arbāb* ['landed gentry'] never married their daughters to the Kermani farmers and always tried to maintain and preserve the distinctions between the ranks. I know of so many stories pertaining to Zartoshti *arbābs* who treated their Zartoshti farmers most indecently and exploited them. No doubt they had ties with the English and had learnt how to exploit the poor. The majority of the *arbāb* were Zartoshti; they were not interested in the affairs of the peasants and never gave them a plot of land to improve their livelihood. Their children acquired some education, moved to Tehrān and thence to the U.S., leaving their houses and lands behind ... Then they [the government] confiscated plots of land from the landlords and distributed them amongst peasants [during the 'White Revolution' in 1960s]; and they [landlords] were very upset.

Another popular story involves the murder of a Muslim by a Zartoshti during the reign of the Safavid king Shah Abbas. The Kermani version the *fatvā* issued by the Ayatollah, entailed someone putting his fist into a jar of *shireh* (syrup) and then inside a jar filled with *arzan* (millet). However many seeds could be counted dictated the number of Zardoshtis to be killed by way of punishment for the murder. In the event, the king's mother dreamed of the impending massacre and averted the situation by ensuring that her son allowed only one death for the death of the Muslim. Fischer also narrates this story, but with

reference to the founding of the Yazdi village of Nasrabad (Narsiabad) – an example of how oral traditions migrate from one location to another.²² In the Narsiabad version the seeds that stick to the syrup are not millet but opium. This detail finds resonance in another of the interviews, with a farmer from Narsiabad, who said that his grandfather had lived in a district known as Godal Thavab, which grew opium. Evidently Zoroastrians were responsible for collecting taxes for opium since government officials were reluctant to do so. The story is about a man who had opened his opium pods to collect the resin but overnight rainfall had ruined his entire crop and he was unable to pay his taxes. Eventually, after all sorts of misadventures, he ended up in the court of Nasruddin Shah and helped to unblock a *qanāt* for which service he was rewarded with being exempted from the tax he owed. Such stories give a flavour of the oral history with which Zoroastrians identify themselves, and which vary depending on place and context.

The city of Ahwaz, in Khuzistan province, is very different from other cities and from the Zoroastrian villages of the Yazdi plain. Although it now has a population of only 97 Zoroastrians, this is an active community with an *anjoman* and dedicated *mowbedyār*, who likens it to a large family. The city was founded by Ardeshir I at the beginning of the Sasanian period, when it was known as Ohrmazd-Ardeshir. In modern times it is distinctive for three principal reasons: its oilfields, its high proportion of Arabic speakers (24 per cent), and the fact that it was the frontier province that Iraq attempted to annexe in 1980. The Zoroastrian population of Ahwaz has been affected by all three of these factors. Many work in the oil business and are generally entrepreneurial. They have good relations with their Arab neighbours, who themselves are treated as an ethnic minority by the Islamic government and who were also at the forefront of the war with Iraq. When asked which city he would prefer to live in, Tehran, Yazd or Kerman, the priest in Ahwaz, Mr Pooladi, answered:

With respect to political and social life in Iran, I prefer Ahvaz and like the attitude of non-Zoroastrians towards Zoroastrians; there is more freedom and they are more helpful. With regard to the Zoroastrian community, I believe the Mowbedan Council should give more help to Zoroastrians of Ahwaz in their religion.

This view is borne out by Mr Pooladi's father, who at the time of the interview was 86 years old. He related how his wife had been found for him through the prayers of a Muslim woman. He explained how this had come about, after first asking his wife to block her ears:

At the time I was a very fun-loving and handsome young man. Lots of girls were after me, but I was not having any of them. I had a friend in Ahvaz called Colonel Nusratullah Naghavi. We were friends. He was a Muslim and he had married a Muslim called Muluk Vahabi. Muluk's mother was a highly religious woman who would cover her face if there was a male fly in the room. One summer Muluk's mother [...] came to Ahvaz to stay with her daughter. I told them that I was going

to Yazd to visit Pir-e Naraki. The Colonel, his wife and mother-in-law said they wanted to come too. It was summer. We went to Esfahan, and then Yazd, and from there we went to Pir-e Naraki [...] When it came to the time to say goodbye to the Pir, I was reading the Avesta when I saw the Colonel's mother-in-law come in and spread her prayer rug and put on her chador and start to perform her *namâz*. Afterwards they left for Esfahan and Ahvaz and I went to Yazd from where I intended to leave for Tehran. When I returned to Yazd I saw a lady standing at the end of our street. (He points to his wife). I asked who she was and let it be known that if she wanted to be my wife, I would like that. I took the bus and went off to Tehran. By and by we became engaged and some time later I went back to Ahvaz. The Colonel's wife said she wanted to make another pilgrimage to Pir-e Naraki. I asked her why and she said that when she was saying goodbye, she had asked the Pir to find a wife for me.

This short extract illustrates a view that often occurs in interviews, which shows that Zoroastrians invariably maintain a good relationship with their Muslim neighbours on a day-to-day basis. This is apparent mainly through anecdotes and stories that involve the resolution of a problem. When questioned directly about this relationship people tend to refer to an historic event in which Zoroastrians have suffered at the hands of Muslims. Relations with Muslims at the local level are separate from those of the leaders of the Zoroastrian community who, as shown above, are engaged in constant negotiation with the State in order to try and equalize laws that are discriminatory and can make life intolerable.

The changes that have taken place within the Zoroastrian community since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran can be summarized as having been due to two main factors: first, demographic changes as people move from the village to city and, second, the direct effects of the Revolution on religious life. Interviews show people's self-perception to be both resilient and resigned. Their resilience lies in their practical attitude towards the exigencies of life in Iran today; their resignation is in that they often express nostalgia for the past, and a desire to preserve religious customs. For example, they encourage their young people to seek better opportunities abroad but often in the hope that they will return.

Although the *anjomans* function in much the same way as they have always done; in the countryside much of their work nowadays has to do with legal disputes regarding land appropriation by the state; in the cities it has to do with unpaid rent for properties similarly requisitioned. The Mowbedan Council has assumed a more pastoral role, since priests no longer perform the full ritual ceremonies, nor are there any longer Iranian Zoroastrian institutions for priestly training. However, in spite of these facts, religious awareness has undoubtedly been enhanced by the increase in the religiosity of the general majority populace. Zoroastrian religious practice varies depending upon whether the community is rural or urban-based, and there are also differing views on emigration and intermarriage, ritual and doctrine.

Events such as the Iran/Iraq war brought a very clear response from Zoroastrians who expressed an unwavering loyalty to the land of Iran, even though the concept of 'martyrdom' is contrary to Zoroastrian religious belief. Although numbers are indeed dwindling, it can be seen that the sense of Zoroastrian identity is steadfast amongst those who remain. The villages become populated at certain times of the year – urban dwellers return to their ancestral homes and some even continue to farm their lands. The regional Dari dialects are spoken amongst those who have moved to the city, and the study of Avestan continues.

NOTES

1. Most recently Michael Stausberg and Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism* (Malden, 2015); Navid Fozi, *Reclaiming the Faravahar: Zoroastrian Revival in Contemporary Tehran* (Leiden, 2014); Richard Foltz, 'Zoroastrians in Iran: What future in the homeland', *The Middle East Journal* lxxv/1 (2011), pp. 73–84.
2. This project, funded by the British Academy, was undertaken with Mandana Moavenat whose family in Tehran and Zeinabad facilitated the gathering of information over a number of years. Many of the interviews were conducted by Zoroastrian researchers, in particular a retired teacher and respected member of the Zoroastrian community in Yazd. This methodology enabled the interviewer to gain insights into religious and social life that an outsider would find difficult to obtain.
3. The Majles records give invaluable insight into the relationship between the Zoroastrian community and central government.
4. Eliz Sansarian, *Religious Minorities in Iran* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 67ff.
5. See Foltz, 'Zoroastrians in Iran', pp. 77–8.
6. It is worth noting that according to the Zoroastrian Personal Status document, updated and approved by the Ministry of Justice in 2007, the amendment has been agreed. Article 31 states that when either husband or wife converts to another religion, thereby causing divorce, half the assets of the convert have to be given to the party who remains Zoroastrian. However, all Minority Personal Status regulations, despite being ratified by the government, are overruled by constitutional dicta whenever there is conflict.
7. If a Muslim man commits adultery with a Muslim woman he is subject to 100 lashes, but the death penalty applies in the case of a non-Muslim man. With respect to homosexuality, Article 121 states that a homosexual act between two Muslim men is punished by 100 lashes. Where the 'assertive' partner is a non-Muslim the latter is subject to the death penalty.
8. For example the case of Qasr-e Firozeh, the main *ārāmghāh* or burial site in Tehran, which began with the acquisition of land by the Tehran Zoroastrian Anjoman in 1935 and remains ongoing. See Sarah Stewart, 'The politics of Zoroastrian philanthropy and the case of Qasr-e Firuzeh', *Iranian Studies* xlv/1 (2012).
9. Zoroastrian Personal Status was reviewed, amended and agreed at a nationwide conference of the Kankāsh-e Mowbedān-e Tehrān, *anjomans* and Zoroastrian

- institutions on 27 Ardibehesht 1386/2007. It was passed by the Ministry of Justice on the basis that it did not contravene any laws of the IRI.
10. A popular observance amongst woman whereby the supernatural figure of Shāh Pari is invoked to cure sickness or grant wishes of one sort or another.
11. See Navid Fozi, *Reclaiming the Faravahar: Zoroastrian Revival in Contemporary Tehran* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 21–2.
12. For more on this relationship see Stausberg-Vevaina, *Companion*, pp. 183–4.
13. See Fereyduh Vahman and Garnik Asatrian, *Notes on the Language and Ethnography of the Zoroastrians of Yazd* (Copenhagen, 2002), pp. 18–19 where it is noted that the Zoroastrian dialects of Yazd and Kerman are distinct from Persian and derive from the dialects of Central Asia.
14. See Mary Boyce, *A Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism* (London, 1989), pp. 92–138, on ‘The Laws and Rites of Purity’.
15. This is a time when people go back to their houses and celebrate with food, music and a *gahambar* in the fire temple. During the first four days people go from house to house to honour the deceased of each household. At each one the names are read out and dried fruits, apples, oranges and pomegranates are given together with some money, which is collected and goes to the fire temple. On the fifth day everyone gathers at the little fire temple and a *gahambar* is held.
16. See Michael Fischer and Mehdi Abedi, *Debating Muslims: Cultural Dialogues in Postmodernity and Tradition* (Wisconsin, 1990), p. 237. For the shrine see <http://www.oshihan.org/Pages/OstadMasterPeer.htm>.
17. For a detailed study see S. Kalinock, ‘Supernatural Intercessions to Earthly Problems: *Sofreh* Rituals among Shiite Muslims and Zoroastrians in Iran’, in Michael Stausberg (ed.), *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 531–47, where she compares Muslim and Zoroastrian practices. Some of these have their counterpart in India, for example the *nohud-e moshgel goshā* or problem-solving peas.
18. On the *Shāhnāme* see the chapter by Ashk Dahlén, Chapter 13 of this volume.
19. The Gabr Mahaleh, as the Zoroastrian quarter was known, was built on ground that had been used for digging clay, which was used for building work and was on a lower grid than the rest of the city. This was designed to ensure that the drainage from the city would flow into the area thereby avoiding the risk of polluting water that Muslims might use. Of course, when it rained people were unable to come out of their houses because of the mud.
20. This is a reference to ‘Ali ibn Abi Tālib, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammad, who used a famously double-edged sword, Dhu’ l-Fiqr, inherited from Muhammad, to fight against the enemies of Islam. According to Shi’a tradition, after the death of the Prophet, ‘Ali never used the sword in campaigns against non-Muslims.
21. According to Mary Boyce by 1962 the last Zoroastrian family moved into the city. Mary Boyce, ‘Zoroastrian villages of the Jüpār Range’, *Festschrift für W. Eilers* (Wiesbaden, 1967), p. 149.
22. Michael Fischer, *Zoroastrianism in Iran: Between Myth and Praxis* (ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 1973), p. 165.

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