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Revised Bibliography

ZOROASTRIANISM. Zoroastrianism, known to its followers as the *Zarathushti din* (Zoroastrian religion), developed from the words, ideas, beliefs, and rituals attributed to a devotional poet named Zarathushtra (later Middle Persian or Pahlavi: Zardukhsht, Zardusht; New Persian or Farsi: Zardosht). Zarathushtra eventually came to be regarded as the founder and prophet of the devotionally monotheistic, doctrinally dualistic faith named after him. So, followers of the religion are termed Zoroastrians (New Persian: Zartosthis, Zardoshtis; Gujarati: Jarthushtis). Zoroastrians also traditionally refer to their faith as *Mazdayasna daēnā* (Middle Persian: *dēn ī Māzdēsn*) (religion of Mazdā) and to themselves as *Mazdayasna* (Middle Persian: *Māzdēsn*) (worshippers of Mazdā), thus acknowledging worship of Ahura Mazdā (Wise Lord) as God and creator. The *Fravarānē* (Profession of faith) begins with the Avestan words: "I profess myself a worshiper of Mazdā, a follower of Zarathushtra, opposing the demons, accepting the doctrine of the Ahura."

Zoroastrianism developed into the major religion—theologically, demographically, and politically—of Iran and Central Asia between the sixth century BCE and the tenth century CE, enjoying royal patronage from various dynasties. During those centuries it influenced Hellenistic, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim beliefs through contact between members of those communities and Zoroastrians. Zoroastrians assimilated aspects of monotheism and hagiography from the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions. After the Arab conquest of Iran and Central Asia in the seventh century CE, Zoroastrianism gradually lost adherents through conversion to Islam. During the tenth century, some adherents migrated to India, forming the minority Parsi (Persian) community that flourishes there into the twenty-first century but became endogamic within Hindu society. By the thirteenth century, Irani Zoroastrians also had become a confessional minority. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Zoroastrians relocated from Iran and India to other countries. Based on recent demographic assessments, the faith has a following of approximately 300,000 persons worldwide.

THE FOUNDER, HIS IDEAS, AND HIS REPRESENTATIONS. The issue of Zarathushtra's image is central to Zoroastrianism and Zoroastrians. Therefore, Zarathushtra requires discussion within any overview of the religion.

Zarathushtra's dates and place. Devotees do not doubt the basic reality of Zarathushtra's existence. Yet one line of modern scholarship has been to view Zarathushtra as a legendary character. This position has resulted in suggestions that a historical Zarathushtra was not the composer of the *Gāthās* (Songs) central to Zoroastrian belief. Rather,

some scholars attributed the *Gāthās* to one or more anonymous poet-worshippers who allegedly presented an epic character named Zarathushtra as the prototypical poet-sacrificer. These conclusions are based on comparing aspects of the Gathic texts with certain Vedic poems and archaic Greek epics. However, analyses of compositional style and structure indicate that the *Gāthās* were the product of a single devotional poet named Zarathushtra (Possessor of Old Camels) who ensured that memory of him was perpetuated through self-references within his compositions.

When and where Zarathushtra lived is another problematic issue. The traditional place and date for Zarathushtra's life found in a variety of Iranian (including Zoroastrian), Mesopotamian, Greek, and later Arab sources is in Iran two hundred and fifty-eight years before Alexander the Great's conquest of Iran and the death of the last Achaemenian king, Dārayavaush or Darius III (in 330 BCE)—that is, 588 BCE. However, the traditional date for Zarathushtra's life seems to have been either of Greek or more probably of Babylonian origin. Moreover, it is unlikely that the Old or Gathic Avestan dialect was still spoken at that time, as evidenced by the rapid decline in use of its west Iranian cognate, Old Persian, during the Achaemenian period. So composition of the *Gāthās* must have predated the seventh century BCE.

Another set of dates for Zarathushtra's life arose among classical writers. Diogenes Laertius (fl. third century CE), based on Xanthus of Lydia (fl. fifth century BCE) and Hermodorus (fl. fourth century BCE), gave two dates for Zarathushtra's life—six thousand years before the Achaemenian king Xerxes' forces invaded Greece (in 480 BCE) and from five to six thousand years before the Trojan War (early second millennium BCE). Pliny the Elder (23–79 CE) cited Eudoxus (fl. fourth century BCE) in claiming that Zarathushtra had lived six thousand years before the death of Plato (in 348 or 347 BCE), or five thousand years before the Trojan War. All those dates fall within the seventh millennium BCE. Moreover, classical Greek and Roman authors regarded Zarathushtra as having been an Iranian magus. One major problem with accepting seventh millennium BCE dates for Zarathushtra's life is that his words and ideas should then be present not only in the *Gāthās* but also within early Vedic texts of Hinduism and be part of Indo-European devotional literature generally. Because the material data indicates that Proto-Indians separated from Proto-Iranians during the late third or early second millennium BCE, Zarathushtra's life cannot date to before that division.

The third possible place and date for Zarathushtra are the result of enhanced knowledge of both comparative Indo-Iranian linguistics and the archaeology of Central Asia. The linguistic data suggests that the *Gāthās* must have been composed after the Proto-Iranians were distinct from the Proto-Indians (that is, by the eighteenth century BCE) but before the *Gāthās* became part of the Zoroastrian religious canon (that is, between the tenth and sixth centuries BCE), following

which Old Avestan fell into disuse. Descriptive reconstruction from the Avestan texts of the society in which Zarathushtra lived correlates with the archaeological remains of the Late Bronze Age in Central Asia. That Bronze Age culture extended from the Caspian Sea through Transoxiana to Afghanistan in 2000–1750 BCE, followed by a period of societal dispersion in 1750–1500 BCE. So, Zarathushtra probably lived and preached in Central Asia between the eighteenth and fifteenth centuries BCE.

Zarathushtra's teachings. Zarathushtra's *Gāthās* provided the Bronze Age people of Central Asia with a vivid and engaging system whereby religious belief and ritual activity were utilized to differentiate between *asha* (order) and *drug* (confusion) (*Gāthās* 33.4, 34.6). Zarathushtra established *mazdā* (wisdom) and Ahura Mazdā (later Old Persian: Auramazdā, Middle Persian: Ohrmazd, New Persian: Hormazd) as means of distinguishing right from wrong (*Gāthās* 33.13, 45.6). The primordial entity Ahura Mazdā was ascribed a creative hypostasis called Spenta Mainyu (originally Spanta Manyu, Middle Persian: Spenāg Mēnōg) (Holy Spirit). Opposing order and Ahura Mazdā, Zarathushtra suggested, were confusion and the primordial entity Angra Mainyu (later Middle Persian: Ahreman, New Persian: Ahriman) (the Angry Spirit). By medieval times Zoroastrian theologians would ascribe a destructive hypostasis called Ganāg Mēnōg (Harmful Spirit) to Angra Mainyu. According to Zarathushtra, the two primordial entities were “in thought, word, and deed, the better and the worse” respectively (*Gāthās* 30.3). Ahura Mazdā came to be venerated as the “father of order” and the “creator of all these [beneficial] things” (*Gāthās* 44.3, 7).

The *Gāthās* also suggested that the corporeal (Avestan: *gaēthya*) world be regarded as an extension of the spiritual (Avestan: *mainyava*) one, explaining the differential experiences of humans in terms of struggles between order and confusion. In so doing, Zarathushtra endowed human existence with meaning during life and hope for an afterlife. Zarathushtra even articulated the notion of pious souls journeying to a paradisiacal existence in the Abode of Song.

Zarathushtra's images. As the Zoroastrians of ancient and medieval Iran interacted with other religious communities such as Jews, Christians, and eventually Muslims, a pious biography or hagiography developed around Zarathushtra. Zoroastrian writers in antiquity and the Middle Ages drew upon glimpses of his life, the names of family members and followers like Jāmāspa, and the accounts of his opponents, such as the tribal leader Bēndva in the *Gāthās*, combining those with biblical notions of piety, devotional quest, revelation, opposition, ministry, and violent demise. This organized hagiography began to develop after the Achaemenian conquest of Babylonia (in 538 BCE) under influence of Israelite accounts of the Patriarchs, was augmented during the second through seventh centuries CE by the Christian image of Jesus' life as recounted in the Gospels, and was supplemented by images from the life of the prophet Muḥammad after Arab Muslims began ruling Iran in the seventh century.

According to that later hagiographic tradition, Zarathushtra's mother, Dughdōvā, was forced to flee her hometown for another village. There, she met a pious man named Pourushaspa, with whom she conceived Zarathushtra. A light supposedly shone from Dughdōvā's womb when she was pregnant, resulting in attempts by evil-doers to harm mother and fetus. Upon birth, Zarathushtra's first breath apparently sounded like a laugh rather than a cry. Surviving several attacks upon his life, Zarathushtra eventually left home at the age of twenty. After a decade of wandering and contemplation, he received revelation via Vohu Manah (Middle Persian: Wahman, New Persian: Bahman) (Good Mind) and returned to preach the religion of Ahura Mazdā. Zarathushtra was opposed by the clergy of the older cults in his homeland and had to seek refuge at the court of a neighboring ruler named Vishtāspa, who accepted the religion. Here, Zarathushtra preached and gained many followers until he was assassinated by a priest of another sect at the age of seventy-seven, or so it was written. Through these stories, Zarathushtra's image was firmly established as that of a Near Eastern prophet and eventually recorded in the *Zardukhsht nāmag* or *Zardosht nāme* (Book of Zarathushtra) and other medieval texts like as the *Dēnkard* (Acts of the religion), written in the Middle Persian and New Persian languages. This hagiography has become increasingly popular among Zoroastrians. It is often reproduced in an assortment of pious literature from novels for adults to comics for children in which Zarathushtra is regarded as one of the earliest prophets.

There are no surviving descriptions or renditions of Zarathushtra's actual likeness. Images, however, were produced by devotees and others. Raphael Santi (1483–1520), the Italian Renaissance artist, depicted Zarathushtra—back turned to viewers, wearing a golden robe, holding a globe of the Earth, facing a depiction of Ptolemy, and standing next to an image of the artist himself—on the lower right corner of the *School of Artists* fresco at the Vatican in Rome, Italy. Modern Zoroastrians have generated their own images of Zarathushtra, the most popular of which is modeled on a rock relief of Mithra commissioned by the Sasanian king Ardashir II (r. 379–383) at Taq-e Bostan in Iran. Various versions of that image adorn fire temples and homes of contemporary Zoroastrians showing Zarathushtra with rays of light emerging from a halo and, sometimes, pointing his right forefinger upward to heaven, much like the Greek philosopher Plato in Raphael's fresco.

PRIESTS, SECTS, AND LAY LEADERS. A Zoroastrian clergyman is termed a magus (Old Persian: *magush*, Middle Persian: *mowbed*, *mowmard*, New Persian and Gujarati: *mobed*) and is a member of a hereditary priestly subgroup among the Zoroastrians. Over time, subgroups developed among the magi based on theological divergences. Likewise, sects arose within the Zoroastrian community itself based on differences in beliefs and praxes. At various times, certain lay members of the Zoroastrian community have also gained followers for particular tenets and traditions.

The Magi in history Herodotos (c. 484–between 430 and 420 BCE), the Greek author, mentioned that no devotional rituals would be conducted by Iranians unless a magus was present. He also listed practices and beliefs specific to the magi such as consanguineous marriage, exposure of human corpses to wild creatures and the environment for desiccation, nondesecration of nature, and dislike of creatures regarded as noxious or harmful, such as wild animals, reptiles, and insects (*History* 1.101, 132, 140). Herodotos confirms that the magi (Greek: *magoi*) began as the priestly tribe among a tribal confederation known as the Medes. It appears that they appropriated the ideas of Zarathushtra after those concepts had begun to spread among the Proto-Iranians and that they were the sole clerics of the early Zoroastrians by the time the Medes had settled permanently in Iran (ninth century BCE). The magi claimed, erroneously, that Zarathushtra had been a member of their group and had lived among them in northwestern Iran as noted by Plato (c. 428–348 or 347 BCE) *Alcibiades* 1.121). The magi modified Zarathushtra's message to accommodate their own practices within the framework of dualism between order and confusion. They brought with them the notion of a hereditary priesthood that followed their established praxis of never including women in the ecclesiastic membership, claiming that menstruation and childbirth resulted in the discharge of blood that, once outside the body, could pollute priests, ritual actions, and holy places.

Greek and Roman authors learned of Zarathushtra through contact with the magi. Hellenistic scholars such as Pythagoras (c. 570–500 BCE) came to regard Zarathushtra as a mystical figure and as the original leader of magicians—a term deriving from the Old Persian word *magush* borrowed into Greek as *mágos* and Latin as *magus*. The name Zoroaster, by which the devotional poet is commonly identified in Western literature, derives from classical Greek *Zōroástrēs*, meaning “golden star” and symbolizing his association with spirituality. The magi were introduced into Christian belief as the wise men from the east who supposedly journeyed to Bethlehem; thus, the sages of Zoroastrianism were used to legitimize the founder of another Near Eastern faith.

Ranks within the early Zoroastrian magi seem to have included that of *āthravan* (fire priest) and *zaotar* (invoker, libation offerer). During the Achaemenian Empire, magi served as seers, counselors, and tutors to Iranian noble families. Magi staffed fire temples at urban centers such as Kangavar and Istakhr. The chief priest at each temple probably was titled *magupati* (head magus, master magus.) Seminaries developed for training magi, as did pious foundations for meeting the expenses of temples and seminaries. The color white was reserved for magian clothing to symbolize purity. Their dress, as evidenced from artistic representations, consisted of loose pants, a long-sleeve tunic bound by a belt, and a hooded cap with side flaps for covering the mouth to prevent breath and saliva from polluting ritual items. Because they lost royal favor and state support, the magi reacted adversely

to Alexander's conquest of Iran. They denounced the Macedonian conqueror by claiming that his troops slaughtered many magi and burned copies of Zoroastrian scripture—a legend that became part of Iranian official history. Under the Achaemenians and, subsequently, with the Seleucids (fourth century–first century BCE), some magi moved to Ionia and Cappadocia (now in Turkey) where they staffed fire temples into the first century BCE (as noted by Strabo, (c. 63 BCE–24 CE), *Geography* 15.3.14–15).

By the Arsacid or Parthian period (238 BCE–224 CE), magi served in ranks bearing titles such as *hērpāt* (later *hērbed*) (theologian), *magpat* (ritual priest), and *bagnapat* (shrine master.) They were present in large provincial temples such as those for the holiest fires in Iran—Ādur Farrōbay, Ādur Gushnasp, and Ādur Burzēnmihr—and in village *chahār tāq* (four-arch) fire precincts. They began working with clerics of other religious groups within Iran, such as the Jewish patriarchate, to regulate religious activity across confessional lines. They also served in the imperial judiciary. Leading magi were mentioned in Sassanid royal inscriptions and other official documents. Kirdīr, who functioned as royal *hērbed* under the second Sassanid ruler Shāpūr I (r. 240–272) and his immediate successors, commissioned Middle Persian inscriptions in which his religious duties, visions of the afterlife, and image were recorded. Kirdīr claimed to have zealously attacked religious sects regarded as heresies. By the fourth century, magi were led by an official titled the *mowbedān mowbed* (chief magus of the magi), or high priest—such as Ādurbād ī Māraspandān, who served during the reign of Shāpūr II (r. 309–379)—whose position was part of the royal court at Ctesiphon (near modern Baghdad). The title *dastwar* (high priest), denoting a cleric certified in both scripture and exegesis, was used as well.

When Zoroastrians lost political control of Iran and Zoroastrianism began to lose adherents to Islam, medieval magi compiled the faith's traditions and practices into the Pahlavi books. For example, Mardānfarokh ī Ohrmazddādān (fl. ninth century) wrote the *Shkand Gumānīg Wizār* (Doubt dispelling exposition) to critique Judaism, Christianity, Manichaeism, and Islam while defending Zoroastrian tenets. Later, between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, magi in Iran sent the *Persian Revāyats* (Treatises) to their coreligionists—the Parsis—in India to advise the latter on religious observances. As the number of Zoroastrians in Iran declined through conversion to Islam, fire temples and seminaries (Middle Persian: *hērbedestān*) fell into disuse. After the Parsi Zoroastrians had settled in western India, their magi divided into five *panths* (ecclesiastic groups). Learned among the Indian magi was Neryōsangh Dhaval (fl. late eleventh century or early twelfth century), who translated portions of the Avesta into the Sanskrit language. According to Iranian tradition, the *dastur dasturān* (high priest of high priests) moved to the central Iranian village of Torkabad north of Yazd in the twelfth century and then to Yazd itself during the eighteenth century.

Contemporary magi. The present-day priesthood, whose members are still called *mobeds*, traces its lineage to the medieval magi of Iran. They form a class (New Persian and Gujarati: *āthornān*) (members of the priestly group) distinct from the laity (New Persian and Gujarati: *behdinān*) (members of the good religion). Within the modern magi, ranks persist, including that of *ostā* (teacher, an uninitiated priest), *ērvad* (teacher priest, a priest who has undergone the first level of induction), and *dastur* (high priest, usually, but not always, associated with a temple for a holy fire of the *ātesh behrām* [fire of Verethraghna], or highest ritual level). Two categories of lay individuals traditionally have assisted magi in Iran: the *ādashband* (keeper of the flames) who tends ritual fires and the *dahmobed* (junior priest) who serves as temple warden. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, another category of priestly assistants has been created by the Mobed Councils in Iran and North America, namely the *mobedyār* (lay priest), to counter the growing shortage in the number of clerics by performing basic rituals for the laity.

Magi in both Iran and India continue to wear white robes and a white turban. They don a white mouth and nose mask (Middle Persian and New Persian: *padām*, Gujarati: *padān*) to avoid polluting implements (New Persian and Gujarati: *ālāt*) and offerings (Avestan: *myazda*, Middle Persian: *mēzd*, New Persian and Gujarati: *myazd*) during rituals. For high or inner rituals, they are required to be in a major state of ritual purity, which is obtained via the *Barashnūm ī nō shab* (Purification of the nine [days and] nights ceremony). During rites, an appropriately inducted and purified magus can serve in ranks including *zōt* (invoker, officiating priest), *rāspī* (assistant), and *bōywalla* (incense offerer). Passed from father to son, priesthood involves studying liturgies and rituals from childhood. Training usually occurs at a seminary (now known in New Persian and Gujarati as *madrasah*). Presently, there are only two functioning seminaries for the magi—the Athornan Boarding Madressa at Dadar in Bombay (Mumbai) and the M. F. Cama Athornan Institute at Andheri West in Bombay. Despite such training, because scripture is memorized, many magi comprehend only the gist of prayers. Clerical training may be followed by formal induction as a priest via the *Nāwar* and *Martab* (*Maratib*) ceremonies among the Parsis and the *Navezut* ceremony among Iranis. Most magi also obtain secular education and, after undergoing only the *Nāwar* or basic *Navezut* induction, serve as part-time priests or else leave the priesthood completely for secular employment that provides greater remuneration. The resulting shortage of magi has led to abbreviation of certain rites such as purificatory ones and to a focus on daily devotions. On a regular basis, magi serve lay Zoroastrians at fire temples in countries as diverse as Iran, India, Australia, Britain, and the United States, where they are employed by local congregations.

Leaders and groups. A large array of beliefs and practices seem to have been prevalent among the ancient and medieval magi. Only as the religion declined under Muslim rule

in late medieval times were certain priests able to establish the more monolithic form of Zoroastrianism that is evidenced by the Middle Persian literature of the ninth through thirteenth centuries. As a result those texts, written for the most part by a handful of related clergymen, convey a false sense of uniformity in doctrine and ritual. One of the most widespread doctrinal variations was that called Zurvanism, which regarded Zurvan (Time) as a monist reconciliation of the dualism represented by Ahura Mazdā and Angra Mainyu and as a means of explaining the evil spirit's anger. Probably arising from theological speculation during the fifth century BCE, it was still subscribed to by magi such as Zādspram in the late ninth century CE. Another sect, that following Gayōmartiya and engaging in astrological and cosmological speculation, regarded Ahura Mazdā as eternal but Angra Mainyu as produced by divine doubt (in this respect perhaps drawing upon Zurvanite ideas) before waning in the ninth century.

Premodern and modern Parsis have experienced their own sectarian schisms. Disagreement relating to the calendar caused a division of the Parsi Zoroastrian community in 1746 into Kadmīs, who readopted the *qadīmī* (ancient) Iranian calendar, and Shenshaīs (also called Rasimīs) (traditionalists), who maintained the traditional Parsi calendar. Another group, called the Fasalīs or Faslīs, formed in 1906 to rely on a *fasl* (seasonal) calendar for rituals. Observance of rituals and festivals on different days because of these calendrical differences persists to the present, even among Parsis now residing in Western countries.

As priests' erudition on scripture and exegesis declined during the twentieth century, so did the Zoroastrian community's esteem for the magi, reliance on clerical learning, and acceptance of ecclesiastical authority. Contemporary *dasturs* still issue socioreligious injunctions on matters such as conversion to Zoroastrianism, marriage with members of other faiths, appropriate roles for women, and disposal of corpses, but by and large such rulings have only moral value for receptive laity and other magi. As a result, some magi have begun following sects established by lay Zoroastrians. One such sect arose when a Parsi named Behramshah Shroff (1858–1927) claimed to have been trained by spiritual sages on Mount Damavand in Iran and preached *Ilm-e Khshnum* (Knowledge of joy). *Ilm-e Khshnum* provides esoteric teachings that combine ideas of mysticism, astrology, reincarnation, and auras with the practice of vegetarianism and the compilation of new exegeses on the Avesta while granting religious authority to laypersons. One Khshnumist subgroup—whose members are identifiable by their red prayer caps and formulaic phrases of greeting such as *khshnaothra ahurahe mazda* (satisfaction unto Ahura Mazdā)—now follows the teachings of Minochehr Pundole and so are termed the Pundolites. Among twenty-first-century Irani Zoroastrians living in the United States, a Muslim convert to Zoroastrianism named Ali Jafarey is popular. He founded the Zarathushtrian Assembly based in Anaheim, California, in

1990. Its members advocate Zoroastrianism as a universalistic faith—a viewpoint rejected by mainstream Zoroastrians who do not favor unregulated proselytism.

SCRIPTURE, EXEGESES, COMMENTARIES, AND CATECHISMS. Holy texts, interpretations of scripture, and discourses have developed and changed over the centuries. They have also been translated into a variety of languages to meet the confessional needs of linguistically diverse Zoroastrian communities.

The Avesta. Zoroastrian scripture, or Avesta (Middle Persian: *Abestāg*, probably from Old Iranian: **Upa-stāvaka*, “praise”), is a collection of texts regarded as holy and central to beliefs and practices. The canon may be divided into two groups based on linguistic differences: (1) the Old or Gathic Avestan materials, which were composed orally between the eighteenth and twentieth century BCE, transmitted and augmented for several centuries, then established as the main portion of the oral scriptural canon between the tenth and sixth centuries BCE, and (2) the Young or Standard Avestan materials, which were composed orally, in some cases from existing verses, between the ninth and fifth centuries BCE, transmitted, augmented, then established in the oral scriptural canon by the third century BCE. The written text of the Avesta originated in the fourth century CE—probably from deliberations by magi under the royal patronage of Shāpūr II. All existing Avestan manuscripts derive from a base text dating to the ninth or tenth century.

Only about one-third of the Sassanid Avesta has survived. It consists of:

1. The *Yasna* (Middle Persian and New Persian: *Yasn*, Gujarati: *Ijeshne*) (Sacrifice, worship), comprising seventy-two chapters. *Yasna* 28–34, 43–50, 51, and 53 preserve the seventeen *Gāthās* of Zarathushtra. Chapters 35–41 comprise the *Yasna Haptanghāiti* (*Yasna* of seven chapters), composed in Old Avestan prose probably by devotional poets among the early Zoroastrian community. Four *maθhras* (holy words), also composed in Old Avestan perhaps by Zarathushtra himself, are preserved in the *Yasna*—namely, *Yathā Ahū Vairiō* (*Ahuna Vairya*, *Ahunawar*) (As is the Lord’s will), *Ashem Vohū* (Order is good), *Yenghē Hātām* (All the entities), and *Ā Airyēmā Ishyō* (May the invigorating Airyaman.) The other chapters of the *Yasna* were composed in the Young Avestan dialect. Because this scripture serves as the recitation for the central ritual of worship, *Yasna* chapter 1 invites Ahura Mazda and other holy spiritual entities to the ritual that will be performed. *Yasna* chapters 70–72 bring the accompanying ritual to an end with worship of those spirits.
2. The *Vīsperad* (Avestan: *Vīspe Ratavō*) ([Prayers to] all the [spiritual] chiefs), comprising twenty-four short sections. It is a collection of supplementary materials, compiled in the Young Avestan dialect, to the *Yasna*. It is dedicated to Ahura Mazda as the chief and master of all creation, and serves to extend the *Yasna*.
3. The *Khwardag Abestāg* (New Persian and Gujarati: *Khorde Avesta*) (Concise or shorter Avesta), beginning with five prayers: *Ashem Vohū*; *Yathā Ahū Vairiō*; *Nirang-e Kusti Bastan* (Incantation for tying the cord), also known as *Ohrmazd Khwadāy* (Ahura Mazda is the Lord); *Srōsh Bāj* (Recitation to Sraosha); and *Hōshbām* (Middle Persian: *Ōshbām*) (Dawn). Next come five *Niyāyishns* (New Persian and Gujarati: *Niyāyesh*) (Invocations of praise) to the sun, Mithra, the moon, water, and fire, in that order. Then follow prayers to the five *Gāhs* (periods, watches [of each day]). *Siroza* (Thirty days) 1 and 2 contain short invocations to thirty-three divine spirits individually. The words of four *Āfrīnagāns* (Blessings) are also given in the *Khorde Avesta*.

There are twenty-one surviving *Yashts* (Devotional poems) dedicated to various beneficent spirits in the *Khorde Avesta*. Those devotional poems are *Ohrmazd* (New Persian and Gujarati: *Hormazd*) *Yasht* to Ahura Mazda; *Haft Amahraspand* (New Persian and Gujarati: *Haft Ameshaspand*, *Haftān*) *Yasht* to the seven Amesha Spentas (Holy Immortals); *Ardwahasht* (New Persian and Gujarati: *Ardibehesht*, *Ordibehesht*) *Yasht* to the male Amesha Spenta Asha Vahishta (Best Order, Prayer); *Hordād* (New Persian: *Khordād*, Gujarati: *Awerdād*) *Yasht* to the female Amesha Spenta Haurvatāt (Integrity, Wholeness, Perfection); *Ardwīsūr* (New Persian: *Ābān*, Gujarati: *Āwān*, *Āvā*) *Yasht* to the female water yazata (worship-worthy spirit) Aredvī Sūrā Anāhitā; *Khwarshēd* (New Persian and Gujarati: *Khorshed*) *Yasht* to Hvare Khshaēta, the yazata of the Sun; *Māh* (*Māh Bakhtār*, New Persian: *Māh Bokhtār*, Gujarati: *Mohor*) *Yasht* to Māh, the yazata of the Moon; *Tishtar* (New Persian and Gujarati: *Teshtar*) *Yasht* to Tishtrya the star Sirius, religiously often confused with the divine spirit Tīr (beneficent stars); *Druwāsp* (New Persian and Gujarati: *Drvāsp*) *Yasht* to the female yazata Drvāspā, associated with horses and cattle; *Mīhr* (New Persian and Gujarati: *Meher*) *Yasht* to Mithra; *Srōsh* (New Persian and Gujarati: *Sarosh*) *Yasht* *Hādōkht* (that is, *Yasht* 11) or extract to Sraosha, together with *Srōsh Yasht Wadī* (*Yasna* 57) or the longer (greater) *yasht* to Sraosha, and *Srōsh Yasht ī Keh* (*Yasna* 56) or the shorter (lesser) *yasht* to Sraosha (this designation is found in *Yasna* manuscripts); *Rashn* (Gujarati: *Rashna*) *Yasht* to Rashnu, the male yazata of justice and spiritual judgment; *Frawardīn* (New Persian and Gujarati: *Farvardīn*) *Yasht* to the fravashis (immortal human spirits); *Wahrām* (New Persian and Gujarati: *Behrām*) *Yasht* to Verethraghna, the male yazata of victory; *Rām* *Yasht* to Vayu (Middle Persian: Way, New Persian: Bād, Gujarati: Govād), the male yazata of the good celestial wind; *Dēn* (New Persian and Gujarati: *Dīn*) *Yasht* to the Cistā (Cisti), the female yazata of insight or religious knowledge; *Ard* (*Ahrishwang*, *Ahlishwang*, New Persian and Gujarati: *Ashishvang*) *Yasht* to Ashi, the female yazata of recompense; *Ashtād* (*Āshtād*) *Yasht* to Arshāt, the female yazata of rectitude and order; *Zamyād* (*Zam*) *Yasht* to Khvarenah (glory); *Hōm Yasht* (*Yasna* 8.9–10.21) to Haoma (Parsis designate this as the *Mōtī* [larger, longer] *Hōm Yasht*) plus an

extract from *Yasna* 9 (Parsis designate this as the *Nānī* or [smaller, shorter] *Hōm Yasht*); and the *Wanand Yasht* to Vega, the brightest star in the constellation Lyra.

4. The *Vidēvdād* (Middle Persian: *Wendīdād*, New Persian and Gujarati: *Vendidād*), consisting of twenty-two prose chapters in Young Avestan. The text is largely socioreligious in content, focusing on ritual purity with rules and rites for protecting the earth, cleansing after pollution by corpses and carrion, rites for exorcizing spiritual pollution, and fines for absolution from sin. Most of the ritual stipulations in the *Vidēvdād* can be attributed to practices specific to magi of the Proto-Iranian, Median, Achaemenian, and Parthian periods. Like the *Yasna*, the *Vidēvdād* is scripture that functions as the basis of a high ritual. Therefore, its manuscripts contain not only doctrine and exegesis but also performative directions for the magi to follow.
5. Additional texts for daily use that are included in pre-modern manuscripts and modern printed versions of the *Khorde Avesta*. *Nirangs* (Avestan: *nīrāngāni*, Middle Persian: *nērang*) (incantations, spells) are present, often as extracts from Avestan or Middle Persian passages. Pious believers regard them as highly efficacious in dispelling evil, producing good health, and fulfilling boons. The *Duā Nām Setāyeshne* (*Nām Stāyishn*; Invocation of praise to the names [of Ahura Mazda]) and a list, *One hundred and One Names of Ahura Mazda* (*Sād-ō Yek Nām-e Khodā*), were incorporated so that devotees could directly display respect for their creator. The text of the *Tandorosti* (Health of the body) is given so that it can be recited for both maintenance and return to well-being. The *Pētīt* [or *Patēt*] *Pashēmānī* (Penance and repentance) also become part of many *Khorde Avestas* because it is believed that spiritual ailments which led to physical manifestations of illness could be expunged through regular confessionals. Eventually, *monājāts* (litanies) in New Persian and Gujarati (now even in English translations) were incorporated so that devotees can understand the gist of the prayers that are in languages which most individuals have not learned.
6. Several surviving Avestan texts and textual fragments, containing materials that probably were once part of scripture. A few should be mentioned. The Young Avestan *Hērbedestān* (Priestly code or book of religious education) and *Nērangestān* (Ritual code or book of ritual directions) were redacted between the sixth and ninth centuries CE. The *Pursishnīhā* (Questions [and answers]) on pious and sinful behaviors was redacted in the fifteenth century. The *Aogemadaēcā* (I profess) is a dirge that was redacted by the twelfth century. It has a Pāzand version as well. The *Hādōkht Nask* (Selection of scripture) provides an important synopsis of Zoroastrian notions of the afterlife.

Zand. Sassanid magi and learned laymen, writing in Middle Persian, produced a series of supplementary texts

often drawing upon Avestan sources that no longer exist. Their endeavors were continued by other clergymen when Zoroastrians fell under Muslim overlordship in the seventh century. The major accomplishment of those priests was *Zand* (Avestan: *zantīsh*) (exegesis) on the Avesta. The purpose of each translation with commentary—often written interlinear with the Avestan text—into Middle Persian was to transmit the meaning of texts to members of the Zoroastrian community who no longer comprehended the Avestan language. Because of problems in determining equivalent lexical value, reconstituting the sentences, and explaining phrases, the translations often were not exact but served more as expository commentaries. Middle Persian *Zand* has survived to the present for the *Gāthās*; the *Yasna*; the *Khwurdag Abestāg*, including the *Ohrmazd*, *Ardwāhisht*, *Srōsh*, *Wahrām*, *Hōm*, and *Wanand Yasht*; the *Videvdād*; the *Hērbedestān*; the *Nērangestān*; and a few other scriptures.

The Pahlavi books. Most of the Middle Persian or Pahlavi books were compiled and redacted by Zoroastrians in Iran between the ninth and thirteenth centuries. Such compilations aimed to preserve Zoroastrian doctrine, ritual, theology, mythology, history, and mores under circumstances in which the faith was becoming a minority. An encyclopedic collection, the *Dēnkard* preserves selections from the collective wisdom of the medieval magi as edited by two *hudēnān pēshōbāy* (leaders of the members of the good religion) in Fars—namely, Ādurfarrōbay ī Farrokhzādān (fl. early ninth century) and Ādurbād ī Ēmēdān (fl. early tenth century). Cosmogonical and eschatological texts include the *Bundahishn* ([Book of] primal creation; major redaction in 1078) and the *Wizīdagīhā* (Selections), by Zādspram (fl. late ninth century), which cover Zoroastrian mythical, legendary, and factual history from creation to the end of time. The *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag* (Book of righteous Wirāz, based on Sassanid-era materials but redacted in the ninth or tenth century) preserves the description of a spiritual voyage through heaven, limbo, and hell. The *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag* proved very popular as a didactic text, and so was translated into Pāzand and Old Gujarati and illustrated for the edification of premodern Parsis. A book on apocalypticism—also found in Pāzand—is the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* (Exegesis on the devotional poem to Vohu Manah), an anonymous ninth-century compilation).

Among Middle Persian catechisms are the *Mēnōg ī Khrad* ([Book of the] spirit of wisdom, sixth century), which was composed in the form of an imaginary dialogue between the Spirit of Wisdom and a sage. A later Pāzand version of it is extant as well. The *Chīdag Handarz ī Pōryōtkēshān* (Select counsels of the ancient sages, ninth century), also known as the *Pand Nāmag* (Book of advice), provides a more basic synopsis of religious values, beliefs, and practices. Among the books providing religious guidance are *Nāmagīhā* (Epistles) of Manushchihr ī Juwānjamān (fl. ninth century); the *Rivāyat* (Treatise) of Ēmēd ī Ashawahishtān (fl. mid-tenth century); and the *Pahlavi Rivāyats of Ādurfarrōbay and Farrōbaysrōsh*, which contain replies by two Irani magi to

questions posed by laypersons in the years 800 and 1008, respectively. Broader in theme is the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* (Book of religious judgments), answers by Manushchīhr ī Juwānjamān to ninety-two questions from laypersons on matters of doctrine, ethics, legal issues, and social problems experienced by Zoroastrians in ninth-century Iran. Religious stipulations and ritual requirements are discussed in the *Shāyest nē Shāyest* (The proper and the improper) and its *Supplementary Texts*; both compilations, although written in the ninth century, contain Sassanid period (224–651 CE) rulings and mores.

Pāzand and Sanskrit versions. Magi living in Iran under Muslim rule produced *Pāzand* ([Text] with commentary) literature. Pāzand prayers include the *Paywand nāme*, or *Ashirwād*, which serves as the benediction for marriage ceremonies. This Pāzand tradition was continued by the Parsi priest Neryōsangh Dhaval. He transcribed select Pahlavi books into the Avestan script to make them accessible to twelfth-century magi who could not read Middle Persian. In addition to the Pāzand texts mentioned previously (in discussions of the Avesta and the Pahlavi books), there are among others the *Petīs*, the *Dibāches* (Prefatory recitations) to *Āfrīnagāns*, and *Nirangs*.

Neryōsangh Dhaval also translated portions of Avestan scripture into Sanskrit, including incomplete versions of the *Yasna*, the *Khorde Avesta*, the *Mēnōg ī Khrad*, and the *Shkand Gumānīg Wizār*. Fragments of Sanskrit translations of the *Videvdād*, perhaps also going back to Neryōsangh's efforts, have survived. His intension was to make Zoroastrian scripture and exegesis accessible to Parsis who knew the Indian language but not Avestan and Middle Persian. There are sixteen Sanskrit *ślokas* by Aka Adhyaru, verses dating to before the seventeenth century, dealing with miscellaneous socio-religious matters from prayer times to dress codes to purity. The *Ashirwād* was translated from Pāzand into Sanskrit by Dinidās Bahman (fl. early fifteenth century) prior to the year 1415.

New Persian and Gujarati texts. Many Zoroastrian religious documents were written in New Persian. Most famous is the Parsi community's founding legend, known as the *Qessa-e Sanjān* (Story of Sanjan) composed in 1600 CE by Bahman Kaikōbād Sanjāna, a Zoroastrian priest. Expository translations from Middle Persian texts include the late medieval *Saddar Bondahesh* ([Book of] primal creation [written] in one hundred chapters) and *Saddar Nasr* (One hundred chapters of assistance.) More original works of advice, yet drawing upon established traditions, form the *Persian Revāyats*, which date to between the late fifteen and late eighteenth centuries. Those treatises contain responses by learned Zoroastrians living in Yazd and Kermān to ecclesiastical questions posed by their Indian coreligionists. The *Farziyāt nāme* (Book of obligatory duties), by *dastur* Darab Pahlān (1668–1734), written in couplets at Navsari, India, lays out the religious duties of each individual—male and female, children and adults—through life and on every day of the

month; it displayed Indian influence by advocating vegetarianism. It was translated and published in Gujarati for general readers about one century later. The Muslim scholar Ebrahim Pur-e Davoud (1885–1968) produced New Persian translations of the *Gāthās* and *Yashts* that became popular among Iranis and, upon reprint in Bombay, met with enthusiasm from educated Parsis.

In addition to translation into Gujarati of the *Khorde Avesta*, Zoroastrians in India wrote original tracts in the Gujarati language, which had replaced New Persian as their medium of communication. The *Rehbar-e Din-e Jarthushti* (Guide to the Zoroastrian religion) is a premodern catechism written by the high priest Erachji Meherjirana (1826–1900). That text was eventually translated into English with a commentary by the contemporary Parsi *dastur* Firoze Kotwal of Bombay.

English renditions. As English has become a major medium of communication among Zoroastrians—through British colonialism, Western-style secular education, globalization, and migration to the West—translations of scripture have been produced in that language. Among the most commonly utilized prayer books during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries—especially for teaching scripture to children before their initiation into the faith—with transcription of the Avestan and Middle Persian texts into the Roman (i.e., English) script and translation of those texts into English are *Daily Prayers of the Zoroastrians* by the Sri Lankan lay Parsi scholar Framroz Rustomjee (1896–1978) and *Khorde Avesta* by the Irani *mobed* Fariborz Shahzadi, who now lives in the United States. Major discourses on Zoroastrianism, written in English, have been published by *dastur* Khurshed Dabu (1889–1979) at Bombay. *Ervad* Godrej Sidhwa at Karachi and *mobed* Behram Shahzadi at Westminster, California, among many others, have also written Zoroastrian theological works in English during the twentieth century. Basically catechisms, those books serve to disseminate knowledge of Zoroastrianism—from a variety of perspectives—to clerical and secular Zoroastrians and to non-Zoroastrians who may not know any of their religion's traditional languages.

DOCTRINES AND MYTHOLOGY. Zoroastrian beliefs and myths were interconnected by ancient and medieval magi to provide believers with a unified explanation for the joys and sufferings of life while endowing existence with purpose. It is clear that Zarathushtra's own ideas were conjoined with the Indo-European and Indo-Iranian tenets that Zoroastrians inherited. Near Eastern millenary chronologies—beliefs in which a new millennium was regarded as a new age, following a violent end to the old one—then reshaped Zoroastrian beliefs as did historical events.

Dualism, pantheon, and demons. As the devotional tradition was amplified slowly after Zarathushtra's lifetime, it came to be believed that Ahura Mazdā, through Spenta Mainyu, had created six Amesha Spentas to generate and protect aspects of material creation: Vohu Manah, who over-

sees animals; Asha Vahishta, who symbolizes fire; Khshathra Vairya (Middle Persian: Shahrewar) (Desirable dominion, power), who manifests metals; Spenta Ārmaiti (Middle Persian: Spendarmad) (Holy disposition, later understood as Holy devotion), who represents the Earth as its mother; Haurvatāt, who characterizes water; and Ameretāt (Middle Persian: Amurdād, New Persian and Gujarati: Amardād) (Immortality, rejuvenation), who exemplifies plants. After incorporation of the *Yashts*, which originally served as devotional poems for Indo-Iranian divinities, into the liturgy of the descendants of Zarathushtra's early followers, it was assumed that Ahura Mazdā originally had created more beneficent spirits. These included the male and female yazatas like Mithra, Sraosha, Verethraghna, Daēnā, Ashi, and Aredvī Sūrā Anāhitā to assist in protecting the material creations. Zoroastrian doctrine records that, in response, Angra Mainyu supposedly produced numerous daēvas (Middle Persian: dēws, New Persian and Gujarati: divs). The daēvas (shinning ones) had been part of Indo-Iranian belief but were demonized by Zarathushtra (*Gāthās* 30.6). Such malevolent daēvas include female ones like Āzi (Middle Persian: Āz), who generates concupiscence and other desires; Jahikā (Middle Persian: Jēh) the "Whore," who supposedly misleads women to lust and prostitution; and Drukhsh Nasush (Middle Persian: Druz ī Nasush), who ferments carrion and pollution. There are also male ones, like Aēshma (Middle Persian: Khēshm), who instills wrath; Aka Manah (Middle Persian: Akōman), who instigates bad thoughts; and Būti (Middle Persian: But), who spreads idolatry. Essentially, spiritual entities venerated by the earliest Iranians were assimilated into the developing Zoroastrian faith and then assigned differential valence as either agents of order or confusion during antiquity and the Middle Ages.

During the modern period, the beliefs of Zoroastrians have gradually changed under the influences of Protestant Christianity—especially due to the activities of the Reverend Dr. John Wilson (who began preaching in Bombay in 1829, eventually converting some Parsis to Anglicanism) and other British missionaries—and colonial western ideas, moving from a dualism to an absolute monotheism in which Ahura Mazdā is regarded as the sole God. The Amesha Spentas and yazatas are now accorded a variety of positions, usually equivalent to archangels and angels, respectively. Angra Mainyu has come to be regarded as the Devil with his independent nature tempered by partial subservience to God. The daēvas have lost much of their demonic force, becoming minor bad spirits and ghouls. Yet most Zoroastrians living in the twenty-first century continue to believe that humans serve a vital function in the struggle between God and the Devil, representing order or good versus confusion or evil, respectively. Moreover, from the 1980s onward there has been a trend among orthodox Zoroastrians back to dualistic tenets while maintaining Ahura Mazdā's divine supremacy.

Cosmogony and sacred history. Human history is regarded as a divinely ordained, twelve-thousand-year period

of finite time (Middle Persian: *zamān ī kanāragōmand*) bounded at its commencement and conclusion by eternity or infinite time (Middle Persian: *zamān ī akanārag*). Before finite time began, Ahura Mazdā and Angra Mainyu supposedly were separated from each other by the void or wind of Vayu and dwelt within heaven in "infinite light" (Middle Persian: *anagr rōshnīh*) and within hell in "infinite darkness" (Middle Persian: *anagr tārigīh*), respectively.

When finite time began, creation (Middle Persian: *dahishn*) lasted six thousand years. The first three thousand years of creation were marked by the initial encounter between Ahura Mazdā and Angra Mainyu and an offer of peaceful co-existence in purity and righteousness that was rejected by the evil spirit. After Angra Mainyu had spurned Ahura Mazdā's overture of peace, the Angry Spirit was temporarily defeated by the Wise Lord, who chanted the *Ashem Vohū* prayer. On hearing these holy words, the Angry Spirit is said to have collapsed, stupefied, back into the darkness (*Wizīdagīhā* 1.1–4). The second three thousand years passed while Angra Mainyu lay in a stupor and Ahura Mazdā prepared spiritual creations—including the Amesha Spentas, yazatas, and the spiritual prototypes of all living creatures. Angra Mainyu revived and generated harmful spirits. When Angra Mainyu attacked again, Ahura Mazdā repelled the adversary for another three thousand years with the *Yathā Ahū Vairiō* prayer (*Bundahishn* 1.29–30). According to religious lore, Ahura Mazdā then transformed spiritual creations into the material universe by fashioning the Earth inside the sphere of the sky. That sphere, supposedly made of rock crystal, was thought to enclose the oceans, seven continents, and firmament with the Sun, Moon, planets, and stars. On the central continent called Khvaniratha (Middle Persian: Khwanirah), Ahura Mazdā apparently placed the first human—an androgyne named Gayō Maretan (Middle Persian: Gayōmard, New Persian: Gayumars, Keyumars) (Mortal life)—the primordial bovine, and the first plant (*Bundahishn* 1A.1–3.24). Angra Mainyu eventually was aroused from his second stupor by the demoness Jahikā.

Corporeal existence and humanity's purpose. The second six thousand years of finite time is said to be the current age of mixture (Middle Persian: *gumēzishn*) between good and evil. Angra Mainyu invaded the world, polluted it, and then slew Gayō Maretan, the primordial bovine, and the first plant with the demoness Āz's assistance, according to Zoroastrian cosmogonical accounts. Owing to Ahura Mazdā's intervention, humanity supposedly arose from the semen of the androgyne, animals and cereals from the body of the first bull, and other plants from the seed of the initial plant (*Wizīdagīhā* 2.1–22). The first human couple, Mashya (man) and Mashyāna (woman), who were born from Gayō Maretan's semen, are believed to have succumbed to lying and worshiping daēvas, resulting in their damnation (*Bundahishn* 14.11–30). Human history passed, in this scheme of religious chronology, with the rise and fall of legendary dynasties until Zarathushtra was born in the year 8,970.

Thirty years later, Zarathushtra received revelation from Ahura Mazdā and preached the Wise Lord's faith—thus beginning the final three-thousand-year sequence. According to sacral history, the era of Zarathushtra and the Kayanians was followed by the Achaemenian, Seleucid, Arsacid, and Sassanid dynasties. Thereafter, the Arabs conquered Iran establishing the Umayyad (661–750) and Abbasid (750–1258) caliphates, succeeded by semi-independent and independent Iranian Muslim states and then by Turkish invaders (tenth to fourteenth centuries). Those conquests, triggering the reduction of Zoroastrianism to a minor faith and Zoroastrians to the status of a religious minority through conversion to Islam between the eighth and thirteenth centuries CE, were incorporated into the faith's mythohistory and explained in terms of a steady increase in evil (*Zand ī Wahman Yasn* 1.6–11, 3.20–29, 6.6–10). Thereafter, it is claimed, finite time will progress onward and Zoroastrianism will not be practiced widely—a situation that allegedly heralds the advent of the final days.

For devotees, the material world came to be viewed as not merely the arena in which humans combat evil. Zoroastrians regard it as the trap into which the evil spirit was lured. Once trapped in matter, Angra Mainyu ostensibly is vanquished gradually via good thoughts, good words, and good deeds by divine spirits and devotees acting in unison. This became the faith's and each practitioner's *raison d'être*. Zoroastrians, then, trust that humans were created by Ahura Mazdā as allies in God's cosmic struggle against Angra Mainyu and that humans consented to assume physical form to further this battle. The reward of heaven after death is offered to the souls of believers, albeit on gender-differential bases, who have upheld righteousness and combated evil during their lifetimes.

Afterlife. Zoroastrians have faith that when an individual dies, the life force leaves the corporeal body, which then becomes a corpse that demonic forces attack and cause to decay so that pollution occurs. His or her mortal soul (Avestan: *urvan*, Middle Persian: *ruwān*, New Persian: *ravān*) also leaves the body, remaining beside the head of the corpse for three days and nights (*Mēnōg ī Khrad* 2.111–114). The mortal soul of a righteous person is said to chant happily *Yasna* 43, "According to my wish," whereas the mortal soul of a sinful person wails *Yasna* 46, "To what land shall I flee?" (*Hādōkht Nask* 2.2–6, 3.2–6). On the dawn of the fourth day, the soul is led to the Bridge of the Compiler (Avestan: *Cinvat peretav*, Middle Persian: *Chinwad puhl*). Beneath this metaphysical transit point, which connects the earthly realm to the heavenly one, is said to lie hell. Individual tribunals are convened at the bridge's earthly base to determine each mortal soul's holiness. The yazatas Mithra (who presides to appraise whether the soul has kept its covenant to do good while in the corporeal world), Rashnu, and Sraosha—in some later traditions, Mithra and Sraosha are occasionally replaced by Arshtāt and Zamyād—comprise the spiritual court. Rashnu is described as weighing each soul's good and

bad deeds in the pans of a scale (*Mēnōg ī Khrad* 2.118–122, 163).

If the soul's righteous acts outweigh its evil ones, the soul is greeted by its Daēnā or conscience in the form of a "a beautiful girl" (*Hādōkht Nask* 2.9) who personifies those pious actions. This good Daēnā, together with the yazatas, then escort the saved mortal soul across the bridge to heaven, where the soul will dwell until the end of time in union with its immortal spirit (Avestan: *fravashi*, Middle Persian: *frawahr*, New Persian: *farvarshi*, Gujarati: *farohar*) (*Mēnōg ī Khrad* 2.123). If a mortal soul's unrighteous acts outweigh its good ones, that soul is greeted by its Daēnā "in the form of an ugly naked whore" (*Hādōkht Nask* 3.9) who personifies the soul's evil actions. This bad Daēnā, together with other daēvas, toss the condemned mortal soul off the bridge into hell, where it will dwell and experience punishment as recompense until the end of time. In cases where a mortal soul's good and evil deeds are equal, it is consigned to limbo until the end of time.

Heaven or paradise, known as *Garō-nmāna* (also *Garō-demāna*, Middle Persian: *Garōdmān*) (Abode of song) and therefore termed *Wahisht* (the best [place]), is depicted as a physical location—a realm of joy, peace, happiness that is full of light, warmth, and all virtuous pleasures (*Hādōkht Nask* 2.15–18). Hell, known as *Drūjō-nmāna* (also *Drūjō-demāna*, Middle Persian: *Druzman*) (Abode of Confusion) and therefore described as *Dushokh* (he Worst [place]), is also depicted as a physical location—a realm of grief, conflict, despair that is filled with darkness, cold, stench, plus harmful insects and animals like scorpions and serpents (*Hādōkht Nask* 3.15–36). Here demonic creatures, lead by Angra Mainyu, are said to gloat as they torment the impious soul together with his or her predeceased bad relatives and friends in a gloomy space. Limbo, known as *Nana* (different [place]), *Misvana Gātav* (Place of the Mixed), or *Hamēstagān* (Place of the Equally-Weighing Ones), is thought to be located between the Earth and heaven. It is described as a place where mortal souls are suspended, each in isolation, experiencing nothing at all.

Apocalypse and eschatology. Social strife, personal calamity, and pollution of body and soul are all viewed as originating from Angra Mainyu, whose presence in the material world is believed to increase as time passes. The present period will, in Zoroastrian belief, be followed by a time when three saviors—Ukhshyatereta (Middle Persian: *Ushēdar*) (He who makes order flourish); Ukhshyatnemah (Middle Persian: *Ushēdarmah*) (He who makes reverence flourish); and Astvatereta (He who embodies order), also called Saoshyant (Middle Persian: *Sōshāns*) (Savior)—will be born, one every thousand years, to gradually purify the world and its inhabitants (*Zand ī Wahman Yasn* 9.1–23). Eventually, during the religious year 11973, the eschaton supposedly will commence with Saoshyant resurrecting all the dead. The resurrection, performed by Saoshyant at Ahura Mazdā's command, results in each human's mortal soul and immortal

spirit returning to earth from heaven, hell, or limbo and gaining a final body (Middle Persian: *tan ī pasēn*). Zoroastrians claim that Ahura Mazdā then will descend to Earth with the Amesha Spentas and yazatas. Saoshyant will separate righteous individuals from evil ones at a final, universal judgment of all humans. At that assembly, called the gathering of Isatvāstra (Middle Persian: Isadwāstar) after the prophet Zarathushtra's eldest son, each person will recognize his or her relatives and friends, and the pious shall rejoice in their goodness while the sinful lament their evil deeds. It is believed that the stars will fall from space onto the Earth, leveling the mountains into molten metal. Each sinner, having already suffered in hell after death, will be purified once more of his or her transgressions and impurities by means of an ordeal involving passage through the molten metal. A mythical bovine named Hadhayash (Middle Persian: Hadhayans) will be ritually sacrificed, and its fat mixed with a legendary white haoma to produce an elixir granting immortality of body and soul to all who consume it (*Bundahishn* 34.10–26).

Thereafter, Ahura Mazdā, the Amesha Spentas, and the yazatas will annihilate most of the daēvas and all the harmful corporeal creatures. The devil Angra Mainyu himself will be rendered innocuous and forced to scuttle out of creation back to hell. Finally, hell will supposedly be sealed shut with molten metal, safeguarding the spiritual and material worlds from evil, impurity, and pollution forever. According to Zoroastrian eschatology, once the separation (Middle Persian: *wizārishn*) of confusion or evil from order or good has been accomplished, Ahura Mazdā will renovate or “make excellent” (Avestan: *frasho-kereti*, Middle Persian: *frashagird*) the universe in the year 12000: “The renovation will take place in the world, [and the beings in] the material world will become immortal forever” (*Bundahishn* 34.32). Human history allegedly will then end, and eternity will recommence in absolute purity and perfection, with humanity dwelling in happiness upon a refurbished, flat earth.

RITUALS. Worship (Middle Persian: *yazishn*) and purification (Middle Persian: *yōjdahrgarīh*) are central to all aspects of Zoroastrian piety. Worship may occur at home or even outdoors, but is most regularly performed inside fire temples (New Persian: *āteshkade*), where holy fires of the *ātesh bebrām*, *ātesh ādarān* (fire of fires), and *ādūrōg ī dādghāh* (hearth fire) ranks burn upon altars in fire precincts (New Persian: *āteshgāhs*). Medieval injunctions urged devotees to “go each day to the fire temple and perform worship” (*Chīdag Handarz ī Pōryōtkēshān* 45). Yet in order for worship to be efficacious, the devotee must have ritual purity.

Purity and pollution. Elaborate rules were established by the magi to prevent pollution of the material world on the basis that Angra Mainyu had produced various types of defilement, particularly through Drukhsh Nasush, whose ill effects could spread from humans and animals to fire, water, and earth. A series of purificatory ceremonies were developed to ensure socioreligious purity for high ceremonies and rites of passage. Most of those rituals have fallen into disuse in the

twentieth and twenty-first centuries, because beliefs regarding pollution have undergone modification as a consequence of modern science and have come to be regarded by many Zoroastrians as superstitious demonology.

The simplest ritual cleansing, known as the *Pādyāb* (Protection [preceding] water), takes only a few minutes to perform. It is undergone facing a source of light such as the Sun, Moon, stars, or lamp. After covering the head as a sign of deference, the performer dedicates his or her action to Ahura Mazdā. He or she washes the hands and forearms, the face, and the feet (if unshod), then wipes them dry. Original praxis in ancient and medieval times required that the ablution be performed first with *gōmēz* (urine from a bovine), or else with dust, before washing with water. Moreover, *gōmēz* (or else dust) and water had to be applied thrice. In modern practice, however, water is regarded as adequate for ensuring daily purity and so is applied only once due to simplification of the ritual. According to orthopractic codes, this cleansing is essential upon awakening each morning, prior to prayer and eating, after urination and excretion, and at the beginning of each period of each day. Most Zoroastrians now perform a perfunctory *pādyāb* only before entering a fire temple or after attending a funeral. After undergoing a *pādyāb*, the devotee must perform the ritual of untying and retying the *kustī* (see below).

More elaborate is the *Sade Nāhn* (Simple ritual bath). Conducted at home, fire temple, or funerary ground, it is administered during the daylight hours so that light can aid in dispelling evil. The ceremony lasts approximately half an hour. In orthodox practice, a priest who has attained the rank of purifier (Avestan: *yaozhdāthrya*, Middle Persian: *yōjdāhrgar*, New Persian: *yozhdāsragar*) must officiate. After performing a *Pādyāb* and untying the *kustī*, the candidate for purification recites the *Bāj* ([Consecratory] recitation) used for grace before meals, then chews a pomegranate leaf as a sign of wishing for immortality, drinks three sips of *nirangdin* or consecrated urine from a bovine for symbolic spiritual cleansing, and recites the *Pētī* for absolution from sin. He or she undresses, applies *gōmēz* over the body, washes with water, dries the body, dons a *sudre* or white undershirt, dresses in clean clothes, and reties the *kustī*. In modern performance, ablution with *gōmēz* is often omitted and all actions have been reduced from thrice to once. Moreover this *Nāhn* is undergone by most male and female Zoroastrians only prior to initiation and marriage. Until the mid-1900s, it was undergone by mothers forty days after childbirth (serving as a simplification of an even more detailed cleansing of thirty washings) and by pious devotees on holy days.

The most complex of Zoroastrian purification rituals is the *Barashnūm ī nō shab*. It generally was reserved for cleansing after direct contact with human carrion or to ensure that a priest was in the highest state of ritual purity. Purification was obtained via consuming *nirangdin*, followed by multiple cleansings with *gōmēz*, dust, and water while either standing within pits (in antiquity), crouching upon stones (during the

Middle Ages), or squatting on bricks (in modern times), followed by seclusion and additional ablutions for nine days and nights. The *Barashnūm ī nō shab* is still undergone, but with diminishing frequency, only by magi who conduct the most central Zoroastrian consecratory services.

Worship. Zoroastrian liturgical ceremonies can be divided into two categories: inner or high services that must be performed within a holy *gāb* (space, precinct), usually located within fire temples, and outer or regular services that can be performed at any clean location. Inner rituals include the *Yasna*, *Visperad*, *Vendidād*, *Nīrangdīn* (Consecration of liquids), and *Bāj*. Magi who conduct inner rituals have to be in high states of purity and grace. Outer rituals include the *Āfrīnagān*, *Staomi* (*Stūm*; Praise), *Farrokhsī* ([Recitation] for the Fravashis), and *Jashan* (Thanksgiving).

The *Yasna* ritual, the most fundamental of Zoroastrian devotional ceremonies, brings together fire, water, plants, animals, humans, and holy words. The *Yasna* liturgy has already been discussed. Originating among the Indo-Iranians, it was assimilated into Zoroastrianism and modified to remove immolation of sacrificial animals in the libation produced from the haoma (Vedic: soma) plant. In a variant form it is still present in Hinduism as the *yajña* ceremony. Conducted each dawn by two magi who are in the highest state of ritual purity, most of the ritual occurs within a precinct that had been made holy by demarcating and consecrating a small space from the rest of the area via furrows while reciting holy words. In ancient and medieval times, an animal regarded as beneficial, such as an ox, sheep, or goat, would be sacrificed as an offering. Since the early twentieth century, fruits, flat unleavened breads (*drōn*), and cooked foods have been substituted. Twigs from the *haoma* plant (now identified by Zoroastrians as ephedra) are purified and pounded to extract sap, which is strained and mixed with milk and water to form a libation called *parāhōm*. Aromas from the consecrated food and drink are believed to satisfy Ahura Mazdā, the Amesha Spentas, and yazatas to whom the worship is directed. Thereafter, the two priests and sponsoring laypersons consume the food offerings and infuse the liquid offering into a source of water, such as the temple's well.

The *Visperad* ritual's liturgy consists of the *Yasna* plus twenty-four additional passages from the Avesta. Dedicated to Ahura Mazdā, its performance comprises the *Yasna* ritual with the extended recitation. This inner ritual is performed whenever the *Vendidād* is conducted. It is performed at the *Gāhānbārs* (also pronounced *Gāhāmbārs*) (Communal feasts) too.

The *Vendidād* ritual is often conducted by an officiating priest and an assisting priest at midnight to dispel evil. Celebration of the ritual involves recitation of the *Vidēvdād* text from the Avesta with interpolation of chapters from the *Yasna* and *Visperad*, producing a total of forty-nine selections. The ritual is conducted in the presence of a *dādgāh* fire and lasts approximately seven hours.

Nīrangdīn rituals are conducted to obtain consecrated liquid used to purify symbolically the souls of devotees. Having purified themselves via the *Barashnūm ī nō shab* and obtained religious fortitude via a *Khūb* (Good [ritual power]), two priests obtain bull's urine. As part of the *Nīrangdīn* ceremony, the prefatory rite for the *Yasna* and other high rituals—known as the *Paragnā* (Preceding the Yasna)—and the *Vendidād* are performed, consecrating the urine.

Bāj services involve consecration of *drōn*, *gōshudā* (animal products)—now usually butter—and fruits with dedication of those offerings to yazatas and fravashis. *Bājs* often are commissioned on death anniversaries by relatives of deceased Zoroastrians.

The *Āfrīnagān*, *Farrokhsī*, and *Staomi* outer rituals serve to honor the mortal souls and immortal spirits of both living and deceased Zoroastrians. For example, the *Staomi* (*Stūm*) ritual is a soliloquy of remembrance that links the present to the past and the future, uniting the living with the dead. That ritual may be conducted in any clean area where outer ceremonies are performed, such as at a Zoroastrian's house or inside a fire temple, upon a carpet or table or within a ritual precinct. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the *Staomi* consists of five stages: a *shnūman* (dedicatory formula), *Yasna* 26 or the rite proper, a *dībāca*, a series of propitiatory recitations, and a *Bāj* that serves as a closing recitation. Because of offerings and the fragrances of those offerings that are made holy during the ritual, it is believed that asymbolic gathering together of all fravashis occurs. At such gatherings, therefore, the immortal spirits can be propitiated by the living, and in turn those spirits presumably bless the living. Most frequently performed is the *Jashan* ritual, which also involves consecration of food by the officiating magus or magi who recite an *Āfrīnagān* and *Bāj*. Then the food is shared by the sponsors of the ritual, often at a communal gathering.

Festivals and popular rites. Prayer services like *Jashans* are performed in fire temples and homes on days such as *Nav Ruz*, the New Year's festival (at the vernal equinox); *Mihragān* (also called *Jash-e Mehr Izēd*), the feast honoring Mithra (at the autumnal equinox), and the *Gāhānbārs*. The six *Gāhānbārs* are still celebrated by many Zoroastrians, especially those in Iran. On those occasions fruits, flowers, and cooked foods made from plants—and now less frequently from animals—are consecrated to the divinities and then consumed by the community. Originally, animals were sacrificed by Zoroastrians in both Iran and India on religious and communal festivals. But Hindu vegetarian influences on the Parsis led to the gradual phasing out of animal sacrifice, and Parsi abstention spread to Iranis in the twentieth century.

The spreading upon *Sofres* (clothes) of food offerings to beneficent spirits, often in conjunction with the *Gāhānbārs* and during pilgrimages to shrines, has become a frequent devotional practice among women, although not sanctioned by the magi. *Sofres* are widely performed by Zoroastrian women of all social classes in Iran. The rite serves as a locus of femi-

nine spirituality, organized and attended mainly by women and their children.

Pilgrimages form part of the religious lives of devout Zoroastrians who are seeking favors from God or are fulfilling vows. Major shrines are located in the Iranian province of Yazd and each shrine has a founding legend associated with Zoroastrian attempts to withstand conversion to Islam. The six major *pirs* (shrines) are Pir-e Sabz, Pir-e Nawraki (Nāreke), Pir-e Narestan, Set-e (Se-tā) Pir, Pir-e Herisht (Hrisht), and Pir-e Bānu Pārs. Those shrines are administered by local *anjomans* (associations), often drawing upon funds from charitable foundations. Parsis consider the Irān Shāh *ātesh behrām* at the city of Udwada to be their most venerable holy fire, and so travel to worship Ahura Mazdā in its presence. In the late twentieth century, Parsis began making pilgrimages to Iran, where they visit the important functional fire temples and shrines at Yazd and Sharifabad, then view the ruins of ancient and early medieval archaeological monuments associated with the Zoroastrian dynasties of that country.

rites of passage. Zoroastrians past and present perform ceremonies to mark major points in their lives, much like members of other faiths. Birth, initiation into the religion, marriage, and death are important times during which religious beliefs are reaffirmed and membership in the confessional community is consolidated. Those rites of passage involve not only the Zoroastrian who is undergoing the life-altering event, but his or her family and friends as well.

Birth. Children are regarded as essential for “continuation of the corporeal lineage” to combat confusion in the material world (*Chīdag Handarz ī Pōryōtkēshān* 5). Therefore, abortion is discouraged (*Vidēvdād* 15.9–12). Birth rites still follow many guidelines found in medieval and premodern Zoroastrian writings, even though most births now occur in hospitals.

Once a woman conceives, an oil lamp or light is lit in her house to ward off evil. Also, the expectant mother should avoid contact with polluted items that may render her ritually unclean (*Saddar Nasr* 16.1, 17.2). Traditionalist Parsis mark the first days of the fifth and seventh months as auspicious, exchanging gifts between husband and wife and between each spouse’s families. Upon the birth of a child, a lamp is kept lighted for between three to forty days, depending on the degree of orthopraxy in the family, so that mother and child will be protected from daēvas (*Farziyāt nāme* 2c–d). Because haoma is regarded as “death dispelling” (*Hōm Yasht* or *Yasna* 9.7), a few drops of its libation or *parāhōm* followed by a few grains of sugar would be placed upon the child’s tongue by the parents, grandparents, or family priest while reciting the *Yathā Ahū Vairyō* prayer so that the child might experience a life free of sickness and full of joy. This practice was common into the eighteenth century (*Farziyāt nāme* 2a). Now, after prayers of thanks to God, breast milk or milk formulas are fed to the infant. Naming of the child occurs shortly thereafter (as noted even in the Achaemenian

period by Herodotos, *History*, 1.139). Many families still consult astrologers who determine, based on the day and time of birth, the syllable with which the child’s given name should commence.

Despite the positive aspects of childbirth among Zoroastrians, the accompanying discharge of tissue and blood came to be regarded as polluting. A period of isolation was prescribed for the mother—initially twelve days during antiquity (*Vidēvdād* 5.45–62, 7.60–72), extended to forty days by the Middle Ages (*Shāyest nē Shāyest* 3.15). This praxis continued into premodern times, to be followed by a ritual purification via the *Sade Nāhn* before the mother was reintroduced to the community (*Persian Revāyats* 223). Isolation and purification gradually ceased to be enforced during the early twentieth century. In the twenty-first century, most Zoroastrian women simply bathe to cleanse themselves after childbirth.

Initiation. Teaching of prayers to children by a magus or family elder usually begins at the age of seven years. Once the boy or girl has memorized at least the *Ashem Vohū*, *Yathā Ahū Vairyō*, *Kēm Nā Mazdā*, *Nirang-e Kustī Bastan* or *Ohrmazd Khwadāy*, *Jasa Mē Avanghe Mazdā* (Come to my aid, O [Ahura] Mazdā), and *Srōsh Bāj* prayers, he or she is initiated into the faith before puberty (*Farziyāt nāme* 2h–i). Failure to be initiated is thought to expose the child to demonic forces (*Vidēvdād* 18.31, 54). During the ceremony that symbolizes advent to adulthood, acceptance of religio-legal responsibilities, and spiritual rebirth, each child is vested with a cord (Avestan: *aiwiyānghana*, Middle Persian: *kustīg*, New Persian: *koshi*, Gujarati: *kustī*) around the waist and a white undershirt (Middle Persian *shabīg*, New Persian: *sedra*, Gujarati: *sudre*). Origin of initiation into the sectarian community may date from the Central Asian Bronze Age, for a similar cord is tied around the shoulder of each Brahman boy during the *Upanayana* ceremony in Hinduism. Failing to wear these holy items was regarded as a sin and equated to “scrambling around naked” (*Shāyest nē Shāyest* 4.10). The *sudre* is sown from white cloth such as cotton and serves as religious armor against evil. Its neckline has a small pocket or *girehbān* (*girdo*) where the wearer’s good deeds symbolically accumulate. The *kustī* is woven by priests’ wives from wool and its seventy-two strands are said to represent the chapters of the *Yasna* (*Nērangestān* 3.1.11–21). An entire medieval text, the *Chīm ī Kustīg* (Meaning of the cord) discusses the *kustī*’s theological significance.

In the twenty-first century, most Zoroastrian boys and girls undergo religious initiation between the ages of seven and fifteen. The ceremony is termed *Navjote* (new birth) or *Sedra-Pushi* (donning the white undershirt) and is conducted by one or more magi. Just before initiation, the boy or girl undergoes the *Sade Nāhn* to ensure that entrance into the devotional community occurs in a state of ritual purity. A *dādgāh* fire burns in a small altar during the ceremony; candles and oil lamps may also be lighted so that illumination drives away evil. Fruits and flowers are placed nearby as offer-

ings to Ahura Mazdā, the yazatas, and the fravashis. Several Zoroastrians may be initiated together, irrespective of gender. Standing up, the priest(s) lead the initiate(s) in prayers while the undershirt is donned and the cord is looped around the waist thrice and tied at front and back with square knots. Family and friends gather to witness the initiation, share a festive meal, and bestow gifts upon the initiate. The initiation ceremony is still performed routinely by Zoroastrians all over the world early in the twenty-first century. Auspicious days, such as the days of each month dedicated to Ahura Mazdā and Verethraghna, often are chosen for the ceremony.

The *kustī*, which most Zoroastrians continue to wear, should be untied and retied after the *Pādyāb* purification and with the recitation of prayers at five canonical prayer times—sunrise, noon, afternoon, evening, and before sunrise—and prior to performing worship at fire temples (*Farziyāt nāme* 3). The majority of modern-day Zoroastrians wear the *sudre* and *kustī* under their clothes, but the rites of untying and retying the cord are usually performed facing the sun or another source of light by laity only upon awakening each morning, prior to sleeping at night, and for bathing. If a Zoroastrian apostate wishes to return to the community, he or she has to undergo another initiation ceremony. Admission to Zoroastrianism became patrilineal after its followers became a minority faith during the late Middle Ages. Orthodox contemporary Parsi magi initiate only children whose parents are both Zoroastrians. More liberal magi among the Parsis and Iranis initiate children whose fathers are of Zoroastrian descent. Rarely are persons whose parents were not non-Zoroastrians initiated—and such initiates still are denied entrance to Zoroastrian religious sites on the Indian subcontinent.

Marriage. The family unit has long been central to Zoroastrian communal structure, and so marriage is encouraged as a religious duty and divorce is discouraged, especially after children have been born (*Chīdag Handarz ī Pōryōtkēshān* 5). Royal records from ancient Iran, medieval religious manuals, and premodern marriage records indicate that Zoroastrian social praxis found polygyny fully acceptable. Wives were accorded differential status within the family based on their social class prior to marriage, whether they bore children, and the stipulations of their marriage contract. Only during the twentieth century was polygyny phased out under European influence, first among the Parsis and subsequently among Iranis.

Spring, reflecting fertility and growth, is regarded as an auspicious time for weddings. So are nights of the full and new moons. *Nav Ruz*, the “New Year’s” festival day, is favored too. In India the monsoon seasons are avoided. Traditionally, weddings occur in the evening. Parsis conduct the service after nightfall owing to a legendary agreement with the first Hindu king whom their ancestors encountered in Gujarat. Iranis would conduct both the betrothal and wedding services at midnight, a practice now modified to early evening so that celebrations can be held with family and

friends at a dinner reception. A white jacket (Gujarati: *duglī*) and trousers plus an ornate hat (Gujarati: *fethā, paghī*) are worn by Parsi grooms. White saris, with the trail draped over the head, are worn by Parsi brides. White jacket and trousers, with a simple green prayer cap, are worn by Irani grooms, although recently Western-style suits have become popular. White or green robes and shawl are worn by Irani brides, although in the twentieth and twenty first centuries Western-style wedding gowns have become popular. Symbolic items at an Irani wedding include a candelabra with candles to cast light upon the service, a tray with sweets (known as *lurk*) made of seven types of fruits and nuts representing Ahura Mazdā and the Amesha Spentas, a pomegranate and an egg symbolizing fertility, decorated sugar cones representing the sweetness of married life, a mirror for self reflection, a prayer book to provide guidance, and a needle with thread and scissors indicating domesticity. Symbolic items present at Parsi weddings include trays with coconuts and rice grains representing fertility and a censer or fire brazier. Parsi brides and grooms wear flower garlands and hold flower bouquets as well. The religious service for a wedding is conducted by one or more priests. Irani and Parsi wedding ceremonies display variations that reflect cultural differences between the two communities of Zoroastrians.

Among Iranis, the wedding service begins when Ahura Mazdā is invoked by the officiating magus. Recitations include *andarz* (advice) relating to the *gava giri* (marriage contract). Bride and groom are asked if they accept each other as partners. A wedding sermon by the priest on the benevolence of the Amesha Spentas follows. Selections from the *Srōsh Bāj* and *Yasna* 52 (which recounts a wedding homily by Zarathushtra) are chanted by the magus. Finally, the *Tandorosti* is recited. Then the couple is sprinkled with flower petals and rice symbolically to bring them good luck. Among Parsis, the *Āchu Michu* rite of Indian origin—in which eggs, leaves, nuts, sugar, coconut, rose petals and other flowers, water, and coins are utilized to symbolize aspects of creation and reproduction coupled with hopes of joy and wealth—is performed upon groom and bride by the bride’s mother and the groom’s mother. The officiating priest inquires from the bride and groom whether they consent to marrying each other. The bride and groom sit facing each other and the *Hathēvāro* (hand fastening) rite is performed: a white cotton sheet separates the seated bride and groom, while their right hands are bound together by the magus using white thread to indicate their holy union. The thread is then wrapped around them seven times in a clockwise manner while seven *Yathā Ahū Vairyo* prayers are recited. The sheet is then removed, the bride and groom toss rice at each other, the thread is removed as well, and the fire brazier brought close to the couple so that they may worship God in its presence. Next, with the couple seated side by side facing east, the Pāzand and Sanskrit versions of the *Ashirwād* are narrated by the officiating magus in the name of Ahura Mazdā, and the couple’s oral consents are obtained for the marriage. Finally, *Tandorosti* is intoned to bless the newlyweds. A celebratory

meal usually follows, hosted by the couple's parents, for their families and friends.

Death and funerary practices. If a Zoroastrian is known to be in the final hours of his or her life, the dying individual is supposed to recite the *Pētī Pashēmānīh* (also called *Patēt-e Vidardegān* [Penance for the deceased] by Iranis and *Patēt Ravān-ni* [Penance for the soul] by Parsis) in repentance for prior evil deeds, followed by several *Ashem Vohū* prayers. After the deceased's eyes are closed, the corpse is given a ritual cleaning (termed *sachkār* by the Parsis) either by professional corpse bearers (New Persian and Gujarati: *nasā sālār*) and corpse cleaners (New Persian and Gujarati: *pākshus*) or by relatives or friends of the same sex, all of whom should be Zoroastrians. The chest is draped in a *sudre* and a *kustī* is tied around its waist. Thereafter, the deceased's body is dressed in white clothes, his or her hands are crossed over the chest, the legs are crossed by Iranian Zoroastrians but not by Parsi Zoroastrians, and the entire body is covered with a white shroud. The face remains exposed. If possible, handling of corpses is left to professional Zoroastrian corpse cleaners and bearers. Until the funeral service commences, a prayer vigil is maintained to safeguard the deceased's body and soul from demonic forces thought to be lurking in the vicinity. At the commencement of each period of the day, a rite known as *sagdīd* ([ritually] seen by the dog) is performed. The actual funeral service, termed *Gēh Sārnā* (Chanting of the Gāthās) by Parsis, occurs within twenty-four hours, during the three daylight periods, or morning, afternoon, and evening but not after sunset or after midnight. The body is placed upon a metal (which like stone is believed to withstand pollution) bier. The funeral service is followed by *sezdo* (*sijdā*) (last respects). Then the deceased's face is covered with the shroud. The bier may be carried to the funerary site with mourners following, after having recited the *Srōsh Bāj* and formed gender-specific pairs. Mourners must be led by a pair of priests or one priest plus a dog to ward off evil and pollution. Most often in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries the corpse is placed in a hearse, which is followed to the funerary site by relatives and friends in a motorcade.

In the early history of Zoroastrianism, human corpses were buried under the floors of disused buildings, following a practice prevalent among the Late Bronze Age people of Central Asia. Later, interment took place in village cemeteries. Achaemenian monarchs and their families were interred in rock sepulchers in the belief that the stone prevented the spread of pollution created by corpses' decay. Yet as praxis changed between the sixth and third centuries BCE, the original Avestan term *dakhma* for a grave or tomb came to designate a place for exposure of corpses. As initially remote locales came to be inhabited because of demographic growth, *dakhmas* developed into walled enclosures or funerary towers that came to be called "Towers of Silence" in popular parlance. The practice of exposure prior to gathering and disposal of the bones appears to have been introduced by the an-

cient magi in order to prevent pollution of the earth, fire, and water.

Further variations in Zoroastrian funerary practices occurred during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Exposure of corpses was gradually phased out in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) during the late 1800s and in Iran during the 1970s. Iranis now bury their dead in graves walled with cement slabs to prevent the corpse from polluting earth and water. Parsis in India and Pakistan continue the tradition of exposing bodies to vultures in funerary towers, particularly at Bombay and Karachi, laying the bodies in specific areas or rows according to gender and age. However, in the United States, Canada, England, Australia, Sri Lanka, and even some locales in India and Pakistan, Zoroastrians—like their coreligionists in Iran—bury the dead irrespective of gender and age in rows of graves within graveyards known as *aramgāhs* (places of rest, cemeteries). In Western countries, deceased non-Zoroastrian spouses may also be buried in those graveyards.

HISTORICAL ASPECTS. Zoroastrianism was brought onto the Iranian plateau by tribes migrating southward from Central Asia around 1500 BCE. It became established as the dominant faith among the Medes, Persians, Scythians, and other Iranian groups who took up residence in various locations on that plateau. Through the Persians, Zoroastrianism spread to the indigenous Elamites of southwestern Iran as evidenced by renditions of the names of Ahura Mazdā and various yazatas preserved in Elamite ritual documents.

Ancient Iran. Median practice of Zoroastrianism is known from archaeological remains. At the citadel of Tepe Nush-e Jan (c. mid-eighth century to sixth century BCE), south of the northwest Iranian city of Hamadan, two rooms with ritual fire precincts have been excavated. Likewise, the capital city of Hagmatāna (Ecbatana, now Hamadan) had at least one small, open-sided building with four corner columns supporting a domed ceiling that seems to be a precursor of the *chahār tāq*-style of fire precinct. A relief carved above the entrance to a late Median or early Achaemenian rock tomb located at Qyzqapan in Iraqi Kurdistan depicts a priest on the left and a warrior on the right, both in Median garb appropriate to their occupations, flanking a fire altar with a stylized, semicircular flame.

Some modern scholars have questioned whether the Achaemenian rulers followed Zoroastrianism. Kūrush or Cyrus II (r. 550–530 BCE), who founded the dynasty, had magi at his royal court, according to classical writers. An open-air ritual precinct with stone fire plinths has been excavated at Parsarga (Pasargadae), the royal capital. The plinths' function is indicated by reliefs carved above the rock cliff tombs of seven subsequent Achaemenian rulers, including that of Darius I at Naqsh-e Rostam and that of Artakshshaçā or Artaxerxes III (r. 359–338 BCE) at Persepolis. The king or a magus climbed to the top of the southern plinth, faced the northern plinth, which bore a fire altar with flame, and performed devotions before Zoroastrianism's main icon. Implements such

as mortars and pestles, whose dedicatory inscriptions confirm their ritual usage for pounding of *haoma* during the *Yasna* ritual, have been excavated at Persepolis. While Zarathushtra was not mentioned in imperial inscriptions, Ahura Mazda was routinely praised in those writings. For instance, Darius I noted: "Ahura Mazda is the great God who created this earth, who created that sky, who created humans, who created happiness for humanity, who made Darius king" (*Naqsh-e Rostam inscription A* 1–5). Following Egyptian depictions of Ra and Assyrian ones of Ashshur, Ahura Mazda seems to have been depicted on Achaemenian royal reliefs standing within a disk which had a bird's wings, tail, and talons, although some scholars consider the symbol to represent Khvarenah (glory) and modern Parsis regard it as a farohar. Artaxerxes II (r. 404–359 BCE) and Artaxerxes III honored Mithra and Anāhitā in conjunction with Ahura Mazda—a practice that parallels Zoroastrian liturgies—as evidenced by their official Old Persian inscriptions (*Susa inscriptions A* 4–5, D 3–4; *Hamadan inscriptions A* 5–6, B; and *Persepolis inscription A* 25). No form of Mazda worship other than Zoroastrianism has ever been identified. It is safe, therefore, to regard the Achaemenian rulers and many of their Iranian subjects as Zoroastrians, even though a range of other religions—such as Judaism and Babylonian cults—were practiced within the empire and Cyrus II honored other divinities like Yahweh and Marduk when he was among their followers.

Religiosity during the Seleucid period was characterized by an amalgamation of Greek, Mesopotamian, and Iranian divinities. On the Iranian plateau and in Armenia, Anāhitā—whose name was Hellenized as Anaitis and whose attributes were augmented by those of other feminine divinities, such as Artemis and Inanna-Ishtar—became the focus of an extensive temple cult with statuary and votive offerings. Among the residents of Commagene in southeastern Anatolia, Ahura Mazda was fused with Zeus as Zeus Oromasdes. Mithra was fused with Apollo Helios Hermes, and Verethraghna (called Artagnes by the people of Anatolia) was conjoined with Hercules Ares. Colossal images of all those composite divinities were placed on a platform in an open air Zoroastrian temple at the site of Nimrud Dagħ in southeastern Anatolia during the reign of Antiochus I (c. 69–34 BCE), a king of the regional Orontid dynasty (c. 163 BCE–CE 72) who had descended from Achaemenian satraps. Antiochus also had images carved of him clasping the hands of divinities (Greek: *dekhiōsis*).

Such syncretism continued during the Parthian period. Women, for example, served as professional mourners at funerals. Augmentation of the ritual role of fire occurred between middle Achaemenian and early Parthian times with the construction of monumental temples. Holy fires of the highest ritual grade, called the fires of Verethraghna, (Parthian: *ādar warahrān*, Middle Persian: *ātakhsh wahrām*, New Persian and Parsi Gujarati: *ātesh behrām*) the yazata of victory, were placed in fire temples. The most famous *ādar*

warahrān of antiquity were founded during that time: Ādur Farrōbay, considered the *ādar warahrān* of clergy and nobility, at the site of Kariyan; Ādur Gushnasp, linked to rulers as the *ādar warahrān* of warriors, at the site of Takht-e Sulayman southeast of Lake Urmia (now in Iranian Azerbaijan); and Ādur Burzēnmihr, regarded as the holy fire of farmers and pastoralists, on Revand mountain northwest of Nishapur in Parthia (now Khorasan).

Advent of the Sassanid dynasty witnessed Zoroastrianism becoming the official religion of Iran. In addition to supporting the faith financially, Sassanid monarchs are credited by the magi as having commanded codification of the Avesta. Sacral kingship based on Zoroastrianism became normative. So Sassanid rulers like Ardashīr I (r. 224–240), Shāpūr I (r. 240–272), and Khusrō II (r. 591–628) had themselves depicted on monumental rock reliefs at Naqsh-e Rostam, Naqsh-e Rājab, and Taq-e Bostan receiving diadems of kingship from anthropomorphized images of Ahura Mazda and Anāhitā. Every Sassanid monarch referred to himself or herself as *māzdēsn bay* (Mazda-worshipping Lord) on their coins. That coinage routinely depicted monarchs—for example, Hormizd II (r. 302–309)—performing worship in front of fire altars. Magian ranks were regularized. Fire temples and seminaries were funded by the state and by private foundations. Committing apostasy was forbidden. As a result, under the Sassanian dynasty, Zoroastrianism became the politically and demographically dominant faith on the Iranian plateau and in western Central Asia.

Conversion to Christianity and Islam. Yet as Christian missionaries began proselytizing among Zoroastrians, and individuals from the latter groups began to adopt Christianity, Zoroastrian fire temples were transformed into churches at locales like Ejmiacin and Dvin in Armenia after the year 300. In Sassanid Iran itself, converts to Nestorianism deliberately extinguished holy fires on occasion while refusing to return to Zoroastrianism—resulting in their martyrdom at the hands of magi as documented in the Syriac martyrologies.

Confessional realignment gained momentum with the Arab Muslim conquest of the Sassanid Empire during the seventh century. The Arab conquest came to be associated with prophetic and apocalyptic expectations. It gave rise to literature that presented claims of propitious birth, flourishing of a new religion and its followers, and disintegration of older dynasties and faiths. Islamic prophecy alluded to triumph, Zoroastrian apocalypticism to doom. The prophet Muḥammad and the Muslim caliphs were presented as successors to Zarathushtra and the Sassanid monarchs. These stories were construed to cast a veil of mystery over ordinary events involving the fall of one empire with its state religion and the rise of another empire with its new faith. Since people believed these statements, they acted on those beliefs. Many despondent Zoroastrians, concluding that a true deity would not have forsaken their religion or them, eventually chose to accept the new Islamic faith, which they felt had

demonstrated its ascendance through political victory. Urban Irani Zoroastrians adopted Islam from the eighth through tenth centuries, and that faith spread among rural folk from the tenth through thirteenth centuries. Most Zoroastrian ecclesiastical institutions were either transformed into Islamic mosques and Sunni *madrasahs* or else destroyed or abandoned by the fourteenth century. The *chahār tāq* style of fire precinct with its domed roof was assimilated into Muslim religious architecture as domed mosques. Moreover, as residents' confessional alliance shifted to Islam, there was gradual diminishment in contributions to pious foundations that supported the magi.

Zoroastrian leaders turned to canon law in a futile attempt to circumscribe contact of their followers with Muslims, for they rightly perceived interaction as a conveyor of religious and social changes that threatened their traditional way of life. The magi outlawed marriage, sexual intercourse, and procreation with Muslims, encouraging all Zoroastrians to ostracize those who violated these bans. Muslim elites were, however, often in positions to stifle such endeavors and encourage conversion to Islam by the people whom they referred to generically as the *māgūs* (so named by Muslims after the priesthood).

Medieval migrations. The Arab Muslim occupation of Iran triggered migrations by Zoroastrians. Zoroastrianism had already reached China during the early sixth century, where the religion came to be known as Hsien. During and after the seventh century, there were many small, poorly documented migrations away from Iran over both land and sea. Some Zoroastrians, especially Sassanid nobles and military personnel, immigrated eastward through Central Asia to northern China. Other groups of Zoroastrians probably sailed from Iran to join expatriate communities already present in southern Chinese port cities like Canton. From China, small groups even relocated to Japan. From fifteen to eighteen fire temples functioned in China until Zoroastrianism, together with other foreign faiths, was proscribed there in 845. However, Zoroastrians survived in China as late as the mid-fourteenth century, after which they were completely assimilated into the local population. The situation proved different for other groups of immigrants, specifically those who went to India and formed the *Parsi* (Persian) community that flourishes into the twenty-first century. Those Zoroastrians who remained in Iran sought refuge from Muslim lifestyles by moving to out-of-the-way locales within Fars, Yazd, and Kermān provinces.

Medieval and premodern minorities in Iran. Between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, the lives of Zoroastrians as a *dhimmī* (minority) community were governed by religious tenets and a sectarian society dominated by Muslim men. All followers of Zoroastrianism had to pay the *jizya* (poll tax) to the Sunni Muslim authorities, and the Zoroastrians' standing under Islamic law was secondary to members of the new confessional majority. Invasion and rule of Iran by the Mongols (1219–1256), Ilkhanids (1256–1335), and

Timurids (1370–1507) resulted in violence against Zoroastrians producing even further conversion to Islam.

Institutionalization of Shiism under the Safavids (1501–1722) did little to strengthen relations between the Muslim and Zoroastrian communities, for the latter increasingly feared the specter of forced conversion to Islam under the religious zealotry of specific Shī'ī clerics or *mollās*. Zoroastrians living in the Yazd and Kermān areas bore the brunt of religious persecution, resulting in adoption of Shiism by some villagers, the transformation of associated fire temples into mosques, and desecration or even demolition of nearby funerary towers. A New Persian designation, *gabr* (hollow, empty), hence “one lacking faith, infidel,” came to be used by Muslims to scorn Zoroastrians as nonbelievers in God despite the claim of the latter that the Avesta was a holy book just like the *Qur'ān*. Likewise, the term *ātashparast* (fire worshipper) became a slur directed against Zoroastrians by Shī'ī Iranians, despite the former's protestations that they worshipped God and not fire. Forcible relocation of Zoroastrians occurred during the reign of Shāh 'Abbās I (r. 1587–1629) from Yazd and Kermān to the capital city, Isfahan, as laborers. In other cities of Safavid Iran, they also served as manual workers and textile weavers. Outside the cities, they toiled on farmland owned by Muslims.

European eyewitness accounts suggest that the Zoroastrian community of Iran was at its nadir during the Qajar period (1779–1921). Since Zoroastrians were considered *najes* (unclean) by the Shī'ah, they experienced hostility from the Muslim majority populace. Conversion to Islam was enforced periodically with transformation of fire temples to mosques. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Zoroastrians feared that their homes would be raided and religious texts burned. Religious rites were performed indoors, out of view of Muslims, so as not to attract the latter's attention. Only after intercession by Parsi Zoroastrians from British India was religious freedom enhanced and the *jizya* abolished by Qajar royal decree in 1882. Zoroastrian *anjomans* (associations) were established thereafter, as were women's societies and orphanages. More than three dozen schools for Zoroastrian boys and girls were founded with Parsi and Irani money. The curricula at such institutions combined Western secular knowledge and traditional religious instruction, stressing English as a language for societal advancement. Irani magi began traveling to and residing in India for clerical training—a trend that lasted until the latter part of the twentieth century, when the priesthood within Iran was able to strengthen its organizational and didactic bases. Zoroastrians, hoping for more equitable treatment under a secular national government, participated actively in the Constitutional Reform movement. Eventually, the community was allocated its own seat in the *majles* (national consultative assembly, parliament). Although the 1906 Constitution claimed “all citizens are equal before the law,” the legal standing of Zoroastrians vis-à-vis Muslims remained unequal as evidenced by Article 8 of that Constitution, where Zoroastri-

ans were assigned a legal status no different from that which they held previously as a *dhimmī* community. Therefore, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, more Zoroastrians relocated from Iran to British India to live amidst the Parsis. Carving out a distinctive economic niche in India, they became restaurateurs and liquor merchants.

Modern Iran. A brief period of respite for Zoroastrians in Iran from socioeconomic hardship and pressure to adopt Islam was experienced under the Pahlavi dynasty (1925–1979). Attempts to secularize and westernize Iranian society resulted in citizens generally being regarded as equal under the law. The *ʿAyn nāme* (Uniform Legal Code) for Zoroastrians was put into practice during the mid-1930s, establishing a nationally approved framework for their rights in personal matters such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance. The Family Protection Law of 1967 and its revisions of 1975 were another central part of the restructuring of the community's legal relationship with the nation. Glorification of Iran's pre-Islamic past for sociopolitical reasons by the state, including introduction into the official calendar in 1925 of Zoroastrian names for the months, also raised the status of Zoroastrians in the eyes of many Muslim Iranians. The Pahlavi era was marked by rapid urbanization and reform for the Zoroastrian community as educational, employment, and business opportunities burgeoned. Westernization, urbanization, and secular education led to religious change, spread in part through elementary, middle, and high schools founded by Irani Zoroastrians for edification of their children during the Pahlavi period plus those schools that had been established earlier. Irani Zoroastrian communal leaders championed their religion as an early form of monotheism, brought about calendrical reform, and simplified or replaced rites deemed antiquated in favor of ones regarded as more suitable for a community with newfound societal and economic aspirations. Even conversion to Zoroastrianism by Muslims was tacitly permitted. Reform gradually spread from the community in Tehran to other urban settings such as the cities of Kermān and Yazd. Due to state pressure on behalf of its secularization program, access to most fire temples in Iran was opened in the 1960s to members of all faiths—although they were requested (but not required) to cover their heads and remove footwear as signs of respect for the holy fires. Together with open access, yet another change occurred wherein the *Pādīyāb* purificatory ritual and *koshti* (cord rite) came to be ever-less-frequently performed prior to entering the presence of a holy fire. Thus, an attenuation in notions of purity and pollution took place. By the mid-1970s, the community was finally confident that its lot had genuinely changed for the better in a secularizing Iranian state. Hence, leading members of the community at Tehran, Yazd, and Kermān still recount that Iran's reversal in 1979 to a political system in which Islam predominated once more deeply shook the foundational psyche of the Zoroastrian community and brought back a collective, multigenerational memory of harsh times from centuries past.

The advent of the Islamic Republic of Iran witnessed a return to strict socioreligious minority status for Zoroastrians. Technically protected under Article 13 of the 1979 Constitution, the community is allocated one elected representative position among the two hundred and seventy members or national representatives of the legislative branch of government, the *majles*. Despite being officially recognized as a minority and represented in public settings, Zoroastrians in Iran often are offered only limited protection on a daily basis from their Muslim neighbors. As a result, they sporadically have been targets for persecution. Community records list cases of Zoroastrian women being compelled to marry Muslim men in the presence of Shīʿī clerics or *mollās* and to publicly adopt Islam. On a daily basis, more important are the legal distinctions between Muslims and Zoroastrians, which echo, in large part, ordinances that Zoroastrians have experienced under many Islamic regimes since the middle of the seventh century. Thus, for instance, a Zoroastrian who converts to Islam is regarded by Iranian law as the sole inheritor of his or her family's assets. Likewise, a Zoroastrian who even accidentally causes the demise of a Muslim faces the possibility of capital punishment, but not vice versa. The concept that Zoroastrians are *najes* has been revived, affecting their socioeconomic lives in daily interactions with Muslims, since items the former touch, especially food, may be regarded as unclean by the latter. The insults *gabr* and *ātashparast* have once again been used against them. Chronic unemployment has become prevalent among members of both genders. One major cause appears to be discrimination by the government in access to state jobs. While employment opportunities are withheld, Zoroastrians feel they have been targeted for especially hazardous assignments when performing the military service required of all young men in Iran. Therefore, yet again Zoroastrians have begun leaving Iran.

Globalization of the faith. The initial modern exodus from Iran was during the 1980s by elite families who had been associated with the Pahlavi state and therefore feared retribution. Relocations since then have been by young men and women who are growing increasingly pessimistic about the possibility of a viable socioeconomic future for their families and themselves in Iran. Some of the migrants, fleeing Iran overland to Turkey, Pakistan, and India, then spending many months or a few years in refugee camps or under the protective welfare of Parsi communities, eventually settle in North America and in Europe. Globalization of the Zoroastrian community has also occurred through emigration of Parsis from the Indian subcontinent. During the British Raj, Parsi trading families settled in Burma (now Myanmar); Singapore; Malaysia; Hong Kong (now united with the People's Republic of China) and mainland China; Taiwan; the Seychelles; and African countries such as Zaire, Tanzania (on the island of Zanzibar), and South Africa. Some Parsis relocated to England, Scotland, and Wales during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, seeking better educational and economic opportunities. Beginning in the 1960s, yet other Parsis left to unite with relatives in Australia, New Zealand, Europe,

and North America as a consequence of nationalism and religious fundamentalism in India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Since the 1970s, Parsi immigrants have settled in the United States and Canada after gaining education and employment there.

Many among the first generation of recent Irani immigrants have settled in ethnic clusters—forming large communities in cities like Los Angeles, Toronto, and London—where they continue many of their native customs and speak New Persian. However, their children, the second generation, being born in Western countries, have tended to become better acculturated as native speakers of the English language. For them, Iran is a cultural legacy of their parents. While the first generation of Parsi immigrants remains bilingual in the Gujarati and English languages, maintaining customs from the Indian subcontinent, their children have limited facility in Gujarati and have integrated fully with local Western populations. Differences of language and custom still present challenges to the cultural and religious unity of the first generations of Parsi and Irani Zoroastrians in the West. Despite such divergences, they have worked together raising funds to establish community centers, fire temples, and cemeteries in most major cities in the United States, Canada, England, and Australia.

As Zoroastrians have spread globally, many issues have come to the fore. They include intermarriage between them and followers of other faiths and the religious identity of children from such unions; conversion to Zoroastrianism of persons who wish to adopt the religion; access to fire temples by non-Zoroastrians, including those who are the spouses and children of Zoroastrians; and ways in which the bodies of deceased Zoroastrians may be disposed, including inhumation and cremation. By and large the Parsis of India tend to be the most conservative and orthopractic. Theocratic positions taken by Zoroastrians in India are not uniformly accepted by lay and clerical Zoroastrians elsewhere, however. Occasionally, individuals who wish to join Zoroastrianism are initiated by magi outside the Indian subcontinent, but magi in the Indian subcontinent do not accept converts. Likewise, the frequency of marriage across confessional boundaries is on the rise; this is the case even among the Parsis of India. Outside the Indian subcontinent, Zoroastrians routinely permit non-Zoroastrian spouses to attend rituals at fire temples and cemeteries. Zoroastrian women, while still not part of the priesthood, now participate fully in community activities and governance.

In the late twentieth century, Zoroastrian organizations in countries around the globe began establishing and maintaining regular contact with one another. Recent demographic studies, national censuses, and community association membership rosters yield the following approximate population figures for Zoroastrians—Iranis, Parsis, and recent converts—worldwide in the early twenty-first century: 28,000 in Iran; 69,600 in India; 20,100 in the United States; 10,000 in Canada; 7,500 in England, Scotland, Wales, and

Ireland; 4,500 in the other countries of the European Union; 2,800 in Pakistan; 2,100 in Australia; 1,200 in the United Arab Emirates; 250 in New Zealand; 190 in Hong Kong; 150 in Singapore; 130 in Bahrain; 110 in Zaire; 75 in South Africa; 70 in Sri Lanka; 50 in Myanmar; 30 in Japan; 30 in Malaysia; 30 in the Seychelles; 20 in Bermuda; 10 in Venezuela; 10 in the Peoples Republic of China; and even smaller numbers in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Yemen, Tanzania (on the island of Zanzibar), Zambia, Mozambique, Mexico, and Brazil.

SEE ALSO Ahura Mazdā and Angra Mainyu; Ahuras; Airyana Vaējah; Amesha Spentas; Anāhitā; Ateshgah; Avesta; Chinvat Bridge; Daivas; Frashokereti; Fravashis; Gender and Religion, article on Gender and Zoroastrianism; Haoma; Khvarenah; Magi; Parsis; Saoshyant; Yazatas; Zarathushtra; Zurvanism.

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ZULU RELIGION. After nearly 150 years of missionary activity the majority of the some 5.5 million Zulu-speaking South Africans are Christians. For many, however, the *amadlozi* (ancestors or shades of dead kin) who once dominated Zulu religion are still a force to be reckoned with and propitiated. The acceptance of the power of the *amadlozi* to intervene in the lives of their descendants and to help them is manifested in the beliefs and rituals of most of the African independent churches to which, indeed, over a quarter of all Zulu Christians belong. The basic concerns of traditional Zulu religion—the pursuit of health, fertility, and a balance between man and man and between man and nature—are as relevant today as ever. Since these are the very areas in which the ancestors are thought to be most powerful, offerings to the *amadlozi* occur in many contexts both traditional and Christian. These offerings take place both in the far-flung areas of rural KwaZulu (the geographical area situated on the east coast of South Africa between 28° and 31° south latitude from which most Zulu originated even if they have no ties there today) as well as in cosmopolitan urban centers where Zulu mingle with other South Africans as residents and work-seekers.

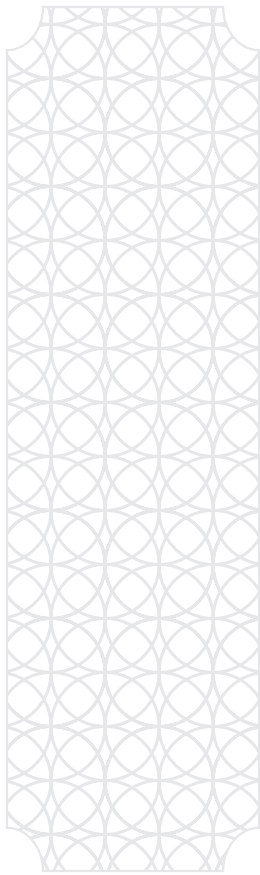
Attention is focused here upon the major enduring features of Zulu religion as first reported in the writings of early travelers and missionaries, and later in contemporary anthropological work in KwaZulu, notably that of Harriet Ngunjiri, whose study of the Nyuswa-Zulu provides a picture of how Zulu religion is practiced today and highlights the previously neglected role of women in belief and ritual.

In Zulu thought the ancestors are only one part of a more extensive system of beliefs. Within this system, the nat-

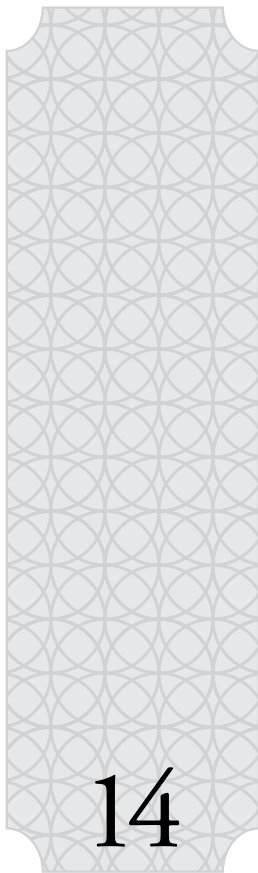
ural order is thought to impinge closely upon man for human beings are thought to be related both physically and psychically to their environment and to be vulnerable to harmful forces in nature. Such forces either operate automatically or are manipulated by sorcerers (*abathakathi*) who cause ill health, misfortune, and the general state of vulnerability known as *isifo*. The ancestors also harm the living but only as a warning when they are angry; in fact, the *amadlozi*, many of whom were once known to the living, are the major protectors against sorcery. Appropriate ancestral offerings are cattle or goats that are sacrificed, the meat being left overnight for the ancestors to “lick” (*khotha*) and to share with the living. Diviners called *izangoma* (sg., *isangoma*) are consulted whenever illness, misfortune, or unusual events occur, for it is they alone who can ascertain the cause. They also recommend paths of reparation in the case of ancestral anger and, in the event of sorcery, may point out the sorcerer or suggest countermeasures. Diviners are called to their profession by their own ancestors, who possess and guide them, and they undergo a lengthy training in their art. Herbalists (*izinyanga*) also treat disease and provide protective medicines but, because they are not possessed by the spirits, they lack powers of divination.

ZULU COSMOLOGY AND THE NATURAL ORDER. The Zulu say that in the beginning there was uMvelinqangi, literally the first “comer-out,” who broke off from a reed bed followed by human beings, animals, and nature as a whole. He sent a chameleon to humanity with the message that they would live forever. Later, growing impatient with the chameleon’s slowness, he sent a lizard with the message that all humans would die, and because it was the faster animal, the lizard arrived first. In some tales uMvelinqangi is portrayed as the source of the known social order, for he gave human beings their ancestors and decided how the ancestors should be approached and placated. There is, however, little evidence that uMvelinqangi was worshiped directly. Ideas about him probably served largely as explanatory constructs for the natural order (and some features of the social order), and in traditional times such ideas would have played a minor role in everyday religious practice. Another name for uMvelinqangi was uNkulunkulu (“the old, old one”), a term that missionaries used for “God,” thus causing some confusion by conflating Zulu ideas of a pure creator with Christian notions of a creator and supreme being to whom regular worship must be directed. Distinct from uMvelinqangi is iNkosi yeZulu, the lord of the sky and personification of heaven. He is associated with thunder and lightning, which are greatly feared and against which specially trained herbalists offer protection.

Linked also with the sky or the “above” (*ezulwini*—a critical concept that contrasts with *phansi*, the “below,” where the dead go before becoming ancestors) is iNkosazana yeZulu, or merely iNkosazana, the princess of heaven (uNkomkhulwana). The latter term is derived from *khubula* (“to sow again after rain or sun has destroyed crops”), and this female deity is closely associated with abundance and



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