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Iranian Philosophy of Religion and the History of Political Thought

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Political Science

by

Ahmad R. Motameni

August 2014

Dissertation Committee:

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The Dissertation of Ahmad R. Motameni is approved:

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Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

## Dedication

Madaro Pedaram

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, father, teachers, and everyone else who contributed to my passion for history and politics.

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Iranian Philosophy of Religion and the History of Political Thought

by

Ahmad R. Motameni

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Political Science

University of California, Riverside, August 2014

Dr. John Christian Laursen, Chairperson

The subject of this dissertation is the relationship between Iranian philosophy of religion and the history of political thought. Major turning points in this history can be attributed to the ideas of the ancient Iranian poet, Zoroaster. He preached against raiding nomads who would steal animals for sacrificial purposes. His moral and ethical philosophy is known as Zoroastrianism.

As the first monotheist philosophy, Zoroastrianism inspired a unique form of religious toleration. The ancient Zoroastrians opposed the political rivalries attributed to belligerent city-state gods. This played a vital role in the rise of the Persian Empire. During the height of the Empire, Zoroastrianism was the largest religion in the world.

The belief in a single Creator also changed the idea of history itself. By rejecting the existence of conflicting spirits, some human beings no longer perceived themselves as the irrelevant victims of a cosmological struggle. Although Zoroastrianism endured a sharp and dramatic decline after the Muslim conquest of Iran, its legacy lives on. This

legacy has been unjustly ignored by historians of political ideas. It played a major role in the development of numerous cultural philosophies, and it had more influence on the history of human religion than any other faith. In this study, I will argue that Zoroastrianism is relevant to virtually every philosophy of history. I will also demonstrate how the study of Zoroastrianism by European travelers and philosophers from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries influenced the history of German nationalism and helped set into motion the unfortunate events that culminated in the Aryan Supremacy movement. The rise of the Nazi party disgraced the Aryan identity and stigmatized many Oriental traditions, but the remnants of ancient Iranian culture are still admired by the Iranians of today. In the concluding section of this study, I will argue that Zoroastrianism still plays an important role in Iranian political affairs. While Zoroastrians are a recognized minority in Iran, all Iranians, including Muslims and Jews, celebrate Zoroastrian traditions and holidays. Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran these traditions have been used to defy the Islamic policies of the state.

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## **Introduction**

The subject of this dissertation is the relationship between the Iranian religion known as Zoroastrianism and the history of political thought. A major turning point in this history began with the early spread of Zoroastrianism. Since then, Zoroastrianism has been very influential and I seek to convince historians of political ideas that it deserves more attention.

The early spread of Zoroastrianism was based on the hymns of an Iranian poet named “Zartusht,” otherwise known as Zoroaster. He lived around 1400 BCE. The spiritual connection to the natural world was a key theme for Zoroaster. According to the hymns, published much later in a book called the Avesta, he preached against local nomads who stole animals for ritual sacrifices. Zoroaster’s ethical crusade against the local nomads and corrupt priests culminated in a unique form of religious tolerance. Years later, the story of Zoroaster inspired a movement to abolish conflicting spirits and local deities. It played an important role in the rise of the Achaemenian Empire, also known as the Persian Empire (550-330 BCE). At the height of the Persian Empire in the fifth century BCE, Zoroastrianism was the largest religion in the world (Boyce 1984, ix).<sup>1</sup>

Zoroastrianism originally developed in a pastoral setting three and a half millennia ago and the accounts of Zoroaster describe a major social transformation. The

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<sup>1</sup> Some estimates of the population of the Persian Achaemenian Empire range from 10 million to 80 million. Most scholars agree to possible figures around 50 million people (Forbes and Prevas 2009, 14). At the low end, Barry Strauss claimed that it was about 20 million people or a fifth of the world population (Strauss 2004, 37). During this period, Zoroastrianism spread as far east as China.

setting for his story is a chaotic period of history when wild nomads incessantly raided pastoral areas for the sake of animal sacrifices. Meanwhile, Zoroaster preached against the belief in supernatural spirits and opposed the behavior of these wild nomads. Based on his belief in a single Creator, Zoroaster urged people to abandon nomadic lifestyles and share natural resources such as water and crops. He also condemned structured religious rituals since he believed that they were only meant for material gain.

Religions consist of complex theories of life and practice, and include both myth and rituals. In this study, the term “religion” will be used to describe the practice of organized rituals that are said to be rooted in some form of divine revelation or a miracle.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, “philosophy of religion” will refer to the branch of philosophy that purports to explain matters of creation and existence.<sup>3</sup>

The term “philosophy” evolved from the critique of the so-called “sophists,” who taught advanced rhetoric lessons for a fee. Philosophy means love for wisdom, and use of the term emphasized that the search for wisdom is separate from the desire for material gain. Consequently, a philosopher will try to evaluate religious claims, such as the

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<sup>2</sup> A common assumption in the scientific study of religion is that theories of religion are useful only insofar as they are true. According to the “myth-ritualist theory,” religion is primitive science: through myth and ritual, which operate together and constitute its core, religion magically manipulates the world. Modern skepticism toward the two, especially toward rituals, has perhaps resulted in an underestimation of their significance, especially in modern religion (Segal 1980, 173).

<sup>3</sup> Philosophy of Religion was a relatively novel topic at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Insofar as philosophy dealt with God, it was customarily in the form of a rational theology, as a special branch of metaphysics (Hodgson 2006, 1). In other words, philosophy of religion is an inquiry into human reason itself in order to see whether it possesses the ability of knowing God, and, consequently, contains the possibility of a philosophy of religion (Soldan 1886, 303).

existence of transcendent gods. So while Zoroastrianism is typically described as a religion, it can also be interpreted as an anti-ritualistic philosophy of religion.

Zoroaster's ideas reflect a stricter form of monotheism in comparison to the religious practices and cultural philosophies of ancient Egypt, Babylon, and India. However, unlike the Abrahamic religions that would come later, Zoroastrianism did not conflict with other religions. Zoroaster seemed to be a lot more interested in protecting animals than inspiring religious conversions (Yasna 29.1; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). His ideas evolved from the traditional religious practices of his society, which meant that an attack against polytheistic perspectives would be an attack against the roots of monotheism. In other words, Zoroaster recognized that monotheistic thought was the consequence of a journey that began with polytheism. While the Zoroastrian philosophy was based on a critique of religious rituals and practices, it never justified attacks against anyone's faith and core beliefs. It was defined by action rather than meditation since Zoroaster held that moral reasoning culminates in proper conduct (Boyce 1978, 239).

In turn, Zoroastrianism played a role in the general policy of toleration and freedom of religious worship, which is associated with the legacy of Cyrus the Great (6<sup>th</sup> Century BCE).<sup>4</sup> According to Plato (4<sup>th</sup> Century BCE) and many other historians, the

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<sup>4</sup> There are some accounts which characterize Cyrus as a bloodthirsty imperialist. Like any other king, his subjects risked death if they challenged his rule. However, in a time when it was common to enslave the prisoners of conquered territories, Cyrus freed the Jews from captivity in Babylon and allowed them to return to Jerusalem.

rise of the Persian Empire was partly attributed to the ethical conduct of its early rulers.<sup>5</sup> Later, the gradual disintegration of Persian civilization led to the spread of its culture in the form of strict monotheist thought. In addition to the accounts of European merchants and explorers who visited Iran after the fifteenth century, there are numerous sources which suggest that prior to the conquest of Iran by Alexander the Great (330 BCE), Zoroastrian philosophy began spreading into Jewish and Greek culture and influenced the story of Jesus and the history of Christianity.<sup>6</sup> In turn, the dramatic decline of Zoroastrianism following the Muslim conquest of Iran did not end its influence. It continued to shape history and political relations since it was adapted by many people, including the conquerors.

The belief in a single Creator altered the idea of history itself. By rejecting the existence of conflicting spirits, the followers of Zoroaster no longer perceived themselves as the irrelevant victims of a cosmological struggle. They accepted an active role in the universe using their reflections on the past as a guide for change. Meanwhile, they unleashed their love for wisdom and reflected on every subject, including the proper form of government and the overall purpose of human history.

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<sup>5</sup>The Persian Empire reached its height of territorial control under Darius the Great in the fifth century BCE. He made Zoroastrianism the official state religion and carried on Cyrus's legacy of religious toleration by funding the construction of non-Zoroastrian temples.

<sup>6</sup> In 1697, French Orientalist Barthélemy d'Herbelot published *Bibliotheca orientalis* and noted that the "ancient Persians have it that Zoroaster was more ancient than Moses, and there are Magi who even maintain that he is none other than Abraham and call him Ibrahim Zardusht" (d'Herbelot 1697, 931).

In this study, I will review the relevant literature on Zoroastrianism and the history of philosophy before I explain the connection between Zoroastrianism and philosophy of history. Philosophy of history consists of speculation about a common theme or purpose in history through reflection on the story of human existence in its entirety. Although it is a separate subject, it inevitably overlaps with the history of philosophy. The main feature of Zoroastrian philosophy is that it emphasizes the power of the Universal Spirit (Mind).<sup>7</sup> This is the first main reason why Zoroastrianism is relevant to the study of philosophies of history. Many notable post-Enlightenment philosophers either used the Universal Spirit as a key component in their outline of history or called for its rejection. The theory of the Universal Spirit recognizes that the world's creatures are united by a creative purpose. It is personified by the universal culture of God worship, which is rooted in Zoroaster's devotion to Ahura Mazda (The Creator of Truth).

Zoroastrianism is also relevant to the philosophy of history due to its role in shaping distinct phases of history. Zoroaster proclaimed a new era in human history by declaring the existence of a single Creator. Since the Enlightenment, most philosophies of history have described a progressive process characterized by distinct phases.<sup>8</sup> The author of one of them, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, claimed that there were four

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<sup>7</sup> The philosophical and linguistic connection between *Mind* and *Spirit* is rooted in the Zoroastrian term for humanity's ability to think, which is "Mainyu."

<sup>8</sup> The list of influential Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment authors associated with a progressive philosophy of history includes Johann Gottfried Herder, Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Karl Marx.

phases of history defined by the rise and decline of spiritual life. In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, he asserted that the first phase of history began in the “Oriental World” and was highlighted by Zoroaster’s discovery of the Universal Spirit.

Zoroastrianism is also connected to the dialectical tradition of juxtaposition and interaction. The hymns of Zoroaster illustrate how monotheist thought is rooted in an epic battle between conflicting spirits. The prose and content is characterized by the ancient view of progressive motion based on a process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. As it says, “In the beginning, both Mentalities became conscious of each other, and while the deceitful one chose to perpetrate evil, the most Holy Spirit chose the truth, just like the followers of Ahura Mazda” (Yasna 30.3-5; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914).<sup>9</sup> This pattern is especially pertinent to the classic debate between idealist and materialist philosophers, which was reignited by Karl Marx’s and Friedrich Engels’s materialist philosophy of history. Although the materialist philosophy was a critique of Hegelian idealism, Marx used a dialectical method of argumentation, which he attributed to Hegel’s works. For Marx and Engels, history was driven by the human struggle against the antithesis of spirit, otherwise known as matter.

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<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie published *The Hymns of Zoroaster: usually called the Gathas, for the first time made entirely accessible by transliterated text, translation, dictionary and grammar, introductory tables, analysis, higher and Biblical criticism, complete concordance, and subject index* (1914). He combined the efforts and methods of previous translations by Lawrence H. Mills (1879) and Christian Bartholomae (1905) (Guthrie 1914, 2-3). In certain sections, Guthrie provided varying translations of specific terms by both Mills and Bartholomae along with labels for comparison. According to Guthrie, “the English interpretations [in his translation] were the simplest that could be used conscientiously in order to avoid any dogmatic prejudice, or ecclesiastical association – the purpose of the present writer being as far as possible to restore the Gathas to that classification of literature to which they really belong—not dogmatic theology, but world-wide prophecy” (Guthrie 1914, 3).

In addition, I will argue that the study of Zoroastrianism by European travelers and philosophers between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries contributed to the rise of German nationalism and set into motion the ideas that culminated in an Aryan supremacist movement. During this period, European intellectual history was largely dominated by the legacy of the East-West schism of Christianity and the desire to reconcile religion and philosophy as well as faith and reason. Hegel's writings illustrate this point. Meanwhile, some Germans were searching for an identity that would separate them from the rest of Europe. Like Hegel, they found a synthesis and solution in Zoroastrianism.

Although the rise of the Nazi party disgraced the Aryan identity and stigmatized the ancient Indo-Aryan symbols, the remnants of these ancient cultures are still admired among Iranians and Indians today. Zoroastrianism still influences Iranian and Indian political affairs. Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Zoroastrian traditions and holidays have been used to defy state policies. These traditions and holidays represent the pre-Islamic religious and political identity of the Iranian people which is often expressed during protests against the current regime.

### **Methodology**

In this study, I will trace the chain of ideas from ancient Zoroastrianism, also known as, to the European travelers and explorers who influenced the Romantic Era German philosophers such as Johan Gottfried Herder, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Karl Marx. As I mentioned, between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, many

European explorers and merchants made visits to Asia and learned more about Zoroastrianism. The Romantic Era philosophers referred to these travelers in footnotes and citations, and they were mentioned in numerous secondary sources. These references explicitly demonstrate that Zoroastrianism had a substantial influence on many philosophies of history written after the Enlightenment. I will then try to connect this network of ideas to the literature associated with the Nazi movement.

I plan to focus on appropriations of Zoroastrianism in different times and places while avoiding speculation about the “true” meaning of Zoroastrianism. I will interpret the history of the religion using the hymns that were believed to have been composed by Zoroaster himself. I will also review the primary and secondary sources of the religion as well as official political records. This latter form of interpretation is limited to the first chapter.

The first chapter of this dissertation is a review of the available sources on Zoroastrianism. It is mostly a review of the few written records that we have, since the Zoroastrian tradition mainly survived through oral accounts. The second chapter is a review of the reports from European travelers and explorers who visited Iran and India between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries and learned about Zoroastrianism. This chapter mainly involves the interpretation of texts and references in travel writing. It provides an opportunity to learn about the European perspective on Eastern religions, and how the study of those religions affected the religious history of Europe. The first and



second chapters are both literature reviews but the point of separating the chapters was to distinguish the sources which can tell us about the history of the Zoroastrian religion itself from the sources which can tell us about the European perspective on the Zoroastrian religion, to the extent this is possible.

In the third chapter I will attempt to defend the argument that Zoroastrianism is very influential by searching for references to it in studies on the history of religion and philosophy of history. I will also try to interpret the Hegelian view of Zoroastrianism based on Hegel's references to Iranian philosophy of religion. Hegel used Zoroastrian ideas to support a four-stage process of history as driven by spiritual life. The Hegelian view of history is often described as an idealist view of history. The third chapter defends the argument that Zoroastrianism is relevant to the philosophy of history. This chapter is largely concerned with the history of political thought and the evolution of ideas. It is concerned with the period in which the Zoroastrian legacy was revived in Europe and studied as an influential movement across various periods of history.

The fourth chapter is very different from the other chapters in terms of methodology. It investigates how and why Nazi political propagandists appropriated Iranian history and connected it to their ideology. Unlike Hegel, the Nazis were less concerned with the philosophy of religion and twisted the Zoroastrian legacy to fit their racist beliefs. Regardless, without this chapter, the story about the revival of Zoroastrian ideas by European scholars, especially the German philosophers who attempted to relate

their culture to the East, seems incomplete. I will investigate this connection by surveying the references to Zoroastrianism and Aryan religion in the speeches and works of high ranking Nazi officials.

The fifth and final chapter examines the role Zoroastrian traditions and rituals play as a subversive religion and form of protest in the Islamic Republic of Iran. I will briefly review the historical connection between Zoroastrianism and the Shia movement to further explain the influence of Zoroastrianism.<sup>10</sup> Then I will examine government publications as well as quotes from high ranking officials in the Islamic Republic of Iran which refer to Zoroastrianism and pre-Islamic traditions. In this chapter I seek to show that Zoroastrianism still plays an important role in Iranian politics.

While Zoroastrians are only a recognized religious minority in Iran, almost all Iranians, including Muslims and Jews, celebrate Zoroastrian traditions and holidays. The leaders of the Islamic Republic discourage these activities, especially during periods of heavy protest. However, as the level of protest declines, state officials are willing to commemorate Iran's long history and use nationalist rhetoric that celebrates Zoroastrianism to gain support at home and abroad.

This dissertation is essentially a reclamation project for Zoroastrian ideas within the history of political thought. I seek to challenge the discourse of the West by demonstrating how the history of Zoroastrianism and other "Eastern" philosophies

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<sup>10</sup> The Shia movement coincided with major rebellions against the early Islamic Empire and evolved into a protestant form of Islam.

greatly influenced Western political thought. I will explain how the influence of Zoroastrianism has always been present within important political philosophies and movements. I will also try to demonstrate why it deserves more attention from scholars who are interested in the history of ideas.

After the Muslim conquest of Iran, very little written material was produced inside Iran on the history of the Zoroastrians (Firby 1988, 15). Though this does not deny the importance of such internal material, scholars are forced to rely heavily upon external sources, in particular, upon the accounts of European travelers (Firby 1988, 15). Therefore, the accounts of European travelers and explorers are very important, especially for scholars of Zoroastrianism. These accounts led to the appropriation of many Zoroastrian ideas and philosophies while most historians overlooked its influence throughout the world.

Unlike studies which are motivated by a biased Eurocentric view, I hope this study will be understood as a more cosmopolitan approach to the history and methodology of political thought (Godrej 2011, 3-9). Although the term Orient simply means “the East” and is rooted in the term for the “rising” sun, Edward Said pointed out that the term developed into the Western view of the East, which ultimately defined it as a distinct region from the West (Said 1978, 32). Once it developed into a distinct region from the West, there were fewer restrictions on scholars and explorers who described it as an extremely romanticized and exotic adventure land filled with mysterious cultures. Furthermore, the region known as the East evolved into a theatrical foil, or a tool that

could help the West define itself. While the East became a land of mystery, sensuality, and irrationality in many modern novels and Hollywood films, the West was portrayed as the rational, self-controlled, and civilized opposite. The depiction of the East as a land of mystery and irrationality served to justify the colonial policies of many European imperialists.

According to Mary Boyce, a British scholar of Iranian languages who studied Zoroastrianism in Iran, “Christianity and acquaintances with Greek mythology had combined to create in Europe a conviction that polytheism belonged to the childlike past of the human race, having been superseded for all advanced peoples by monotheism” (Boyce 1975, ix). This conviction essentially hindered Zoroastrian studies for Western scholars during its early stages since they found it difficult to reconcile its metaphoric teachings and complex history with the Zoroastrian legacy that fit their perspective. This “dilemma” was eventually solved by philologist Martin Haug who was able to isolate the Gathas (a group of seventeen ancient hymns) as the direct utterances of Zoroaster (Boyce 1975, ix). Based on the Gathas, Haug believed that Zoroaster preached a strict form of monotheism that was corrupted by his followers since they were unable to practice the austerity that came with it (Boyce 1975, x). Either way, it is clearly problematic when historians of political ideas base their research on a belief in “advanced peoples who overcame a childlike past.” The history of Zoroastrianism is important regardless of its connection to European philosophy and monotheist thought.

This dissertation provides a historical analysis of Zoroastrian influence upon Western discourses and seeks to challenge the narrative of a self-contained, uninfluenced West. It will follow the history of Zoroastrian thought from ancient Iran through the Enlightenment in Europe, to the Nazi movement in Germany, and ends with a geographical return to its influence on contemporary Iranian politics. This history of political thought will fill a major gap concerning the influence of this important philosophy in the history of Western political thought. It is not enough to simply add Zoroastrianism to the canon of political philosophies. Instead, it is important to recognize its influence upon important moments in Western political thought in order to demonstrate that the West is not a monolithic entity, uninfluenced by other cultures and philosophies. The history of Zoroastrianism is a lot more than a history of a particular religion or philosophy of religion. The European travelers who wrote about it largely affected the type of questions scholars asked in Europe in regard to religion, knowledge, and progress. The accounts of the travelers and explorers who learned about the history of the ancient “Near East” would not have been possible without their commercial and material interests.

In this study, I will also use arguments from the field of comparative linguistics in order to support some of the cultural ties between the ancient Iranians and modern German philosophers. The development of the field of comparative linguistics was largely influenced by the translation of the Zoroastrian Avesta by the French scholar Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil du Perron in 1771. The only way modern historians were

able to date the language of the Avesta and begin their attempts to interpret it was by comparing it to Vedic texts.

The language used in the Avesta is the only available source for the first form of a distinctly Iranian language. Like the Vedic texts, it falls under the more general linguistic classification of sources for an ancient Indo-European language. In addition, the collection of Vedic and Avestai sources include content which seems to pre-date the divergence between the people who settled on the Iranian plateau and the people who settled in the Indus Valley region. Thus, the comparison of these sources provides insight into the early development of modern languages. The linguistic arguments behind the existence of a proto-Aryan religion are rooted in the acquisition of the ancient Zoroastrian hymns. In turn, the Aryan ideology of the Nazi movement was the culmination of a “perfect storm” of rhetoric in the wake of timeless religious debates and recent advances in comparative linguistics.

In the chapter on the influences of Zoroastrianism on German-Aryan Nationalism, I trace the rise of an Ariosophist Zoroastrian cult (established around 1900) and its influences in 1920s Vienna. Ariosophy is best defined as an Aryan supremacist pagan revival movement. In *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler stated that his experiences in Vienna laid the foundation of his outlook as he studied racist pamphlets (Hitler 1937, 21). It is quite difficult to find direct links between the Nazi Party leaders and the religious millenarian movements since it was politically advantageous for the Nazis to deny such ties. However, there are direct references to Zoroastrianism and Aryan Christianity in the

works of Hitler and Alfred Rosenberg (Hitler 1922, 1 and Rosenberg 1930, 7). This study closely examines the history of political relations between Iran and Germany as well as the personalities and lives of some of the central characters associated with the occult societies in order to propose that the European scholars and explorers from the sixteenth to nineteenth century who attempted to alleviate the tensions behind the East-West schism set into motion the events that would culminate in an Aryan Nazi movement.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to convince historians of political ideas that Zoroastrianism is very influential and deserves more attention. Although it the least well known of the world religions, it exerted more influence on human religious history than any other single faith (Boyce 1984, ix). While my main purpose is to draw attention to a long-neglected system of thought, I also intend to get historians of political thought to rethink the very story of political philosophy and its origins. In a sense, I seek to excavate, re-define, and re-imagine the very self-image of the West and a few prominent ancient Greek thinkers as the originators of political philosophy.

Zoroastrian studies are very helpful for people who study political philosophy, philosophy of history, world religions, and modern languages. As Antony Black pointed out, the history of European and Western political thought has been studied in great detail (Black 2001, 1). Scholars have attempted to construct a continuous story for the history of worldwide political thought (Black 2001, 1). While this can be problematic in itself,

the problems are compounded when the story is mostly highlighted by ancient Greek and modern European contributions to the chain of intellectual thought. In 2001, Black suggested that while the history of Islamic political thought has been studied by a few, there is a lot more scope for research (Black 2001, 1). He mainly suggested that scholars must investigate Islamic contributions to the history of political thought in order to get a full picture. Similarly, my study suggests that scholars should consider how Zoroastrian ideas affected the history of political thought before and after the spread of both Platonism and Islam.

In his 2009 study, *A World History of Political Thought*, Black included less than three pages on Iran which was far fewer than any other cultural community listed in his table of contents. The history of several other cultures consisted of twenty to thirty pages. In the few pages on Iran, Black noted the importance of religion in the success of the Persian Empire. According to Black, “the idea of the investiture of the king by the supreme god seems to mark ‘the transition from a charismatic notion of power, bound up by tribal society and expressed in the Avesta,’ to a new view of monarchical sovereignty as ‘in practice unlimited, extending to a successor substantially independent of the priesthood’” (Black 2009, 47). “Iran’s adoption of a sacred monarchy was thus part of its political development into a more unified and much larger state” (Black 2009, 48). The Iranian regime was more explicitly multicultural than any of its predecessors. Meanwhile, the Iranian king was perceived as a promoter of agriculture with a dynamic relationship with nature. “The Iranian kings sponsored irrigation-works; this ‘politics of



water made the farming communities depend on him” (Black 2009, 48). From Zoroastrian religious ideals came the view that the Persian king is characterized by his ‘love of truth’ while his enemies and rebels belong to ‘the lie” (Wiesehöfer 2001, 33 and Black 2009, 47). The policies of toleration attributed to the Persian kings inaugurated a new phase in religious monarchy which was the means by which the Persians linked together India, Mesopotamia, Greece, and countless other tribes, with Aramaic as the common tongue (Black 2009, 48).

My dissertation also examines the dualist character of Iranian philosophy of religion and explains how it may relate to the triadic formula of progressive history described by Karl Marx. According to Marx, he learned this formula from Hegel’s works since the latter used a triadic method to organize his essays and lectures. In my third chapter, I will offer an argument that close attention to Zoroastrian thought will aid in illuminating aspects of Hegel’s work which have often puzzled scholars. A brief comparison of Zoroaster’s ancient hymns and Hegel’s lecture notes suggests that Hegel’s use of contradictory rhetoric was loosely based on his study of Zoroastrianism.

Finally, if anybody wonders how and why the Nazis connected themselves to Iranian and Indian culture, this study will provide a thorough explanation. While the Nazis disgraced the ancient Aryan symbols throughout the entire world, these symbols still remain popular in Iran and India. Although these countries reject the Nazi ideology, Iran still maintains close cultural ties to (post-Nazi) Germany which has been one of its largest trading partners since the early years of the twentieth century. I hope to convince

historians that while Zoroastrianism remains influential in Iran to some extent, closer attention to Zoroastrian studies will also shed light on a neglected influence on Nazism, while also locating some of the ideas that shaped our notions of the Aryan culture.

The concluding section examines the role Zoroastrianism plays as a subversive religion in the Islamic Republic of Iran and how it might usefully inform efforts to refashion Iranian politics and identity in the contemporary context. Since the ancient Aryan culture and symbols represent the pre-Islamic identity of the Iranian people, the celebration of Zoroastrian holidays and traditions is a means to defy the Islamic policies of the contemporary Iranian state. Any hope for reform and change within the Islamic Republic must re-define Iranian identity. Otherwise such change could be associated with imperialism and foreign influences, both east (Russia and China) and west (the United States). Nevertheless, many critics of the Islamic Republic are calling for secular reform. They hope a change of the state's laws and institutions will overcome Iran's long history of religious fanaticism.

## **Chapter One**

### **Materials for Zoroastrian Studies**

The influence of Zoroastrianism on the history of philosophy and the philosophy of history is truly unique. Mary Boyce, a British scholar of Iranian languages who studied Zoroastrianism in Iran, suggested that Zoroastrianism exerted more influence on human religious history than any other single faith (Boyce 1984, ix). Nevertheless, it is the least well known of the world religions. In order to demonstrate its connection to the philosophy of history, this section provides a brief review of the sources for Zoroastrianism.

This chapter will demonstrate that any “pure” authoritative status the primary sources may have had, was eventually overlaid through centuries of interpretive, priestly, political, and eventually scholarly intervention. The end result, as in all such cases, is a complex, highly multi-faceted and non-monolithic construction we now think of as Zoroastrianism, an assemblage of all the various elements which went into its construction. This chapter also demonstrates how Zoroastrianism spread throughout many different cultures and played a role in the development of Abrahamic religions.

#### **Primary Sources**

The collection of sacred Zoroastrian teachings is known as the Avesta. It includes a set of hymns attributed to Zoroaster, as well as various other oral traditions which

preceded and followed his life.<sup>11</sup> Based on the pastoral setting and its linguistic connection to Vedic texts, the hymns of Zoroaster may be dated as far back as 1400 BCE (Boyce 1975, 44). The Avesta is the only source for the oldest recorded Iranian language, which is known as Avestai. Nevertheless, it was not recorded in written form until the fifth century CE.

The Iranians who lived during the time of Zoroaster rarely committed their ideas to writing. For many centuries afterwards, they regarded writing as an alien art that was only fit for secular purposes (Boyce 1984, 1). Boyce believed the Avesta was first written in the Avestai alphabet in the fifth century CE, and the oldest extant manuscript has been dated to 1323 CE (Boyce 1984, 1). The Avestai alphabet was developed during the Sassanian Era (224-637 CE) so that there would be written representations of the correct way to recite ancient hymns. The Avestai alphabet was written in an Iranian script known as Pahlavi, which originally evolved from the Aramaic script that was used by the Achaemenians (Persians).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The main source for the *Gathas* used in this study is *The Hymns of Zoroaster: usually called the Gathas, for the first time made entirely accessible by transliterated text, translation, dictionary and grammar, introductory tables, analysis, higher and Biblical criticism, complete concordance, and subject index* (1914) by Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie. The other sources for the Gathas and the Avesta used in this study include *The Zend Avesta: Part One* (1879) and *Part Two* (1883) by James Darmesteter, *The Zend Avesta: Part Three* (1887) by Lawrence Heyworth Mills, *Die Gatha's Des Awesta* (2010) by Christian Bartholomae, and *The Hymns of Zoroaster* (1952) by Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin. Guthrie's translation combines the efforts of the translations by both Mills and Bartholomae.

<sup>12</sup> It always ought to be kept in mind in discussing the origin of letters of the Avestai alphabet that Pahlavi and Avestai writing was executed by the same scribes. Thus we shall have to take into account the fact that the form of the Avestai script, such as we know it, might be due not only to an "Ur- Avestai Aramaic script, but also, to a certain extent, to a secondary influence from scribes versed in writing Pahlavi, the scientific language of Zoroastrian theology (Barr 1936, 394).

The Avesta can be divided into two main parts, the Yasna and the Yashts. This distinction is partly based on the evolution of the Avestai language. The Yasna contains 72 chapters which were mainly composed of Gathic Avestai, but also includes portions in “Younger Avestai.” Gathic Avestai is the older form of the Avestai language in relation to Younger Avestai. The second portion of the Avesta is referred to as the Yashts (Yasts). The Yashts are 21 hymns composed of Younger Avestai.

The poetic quality and antiquity of certain verses in the Yashts parallel the Rig Veda and may include content that goes back to 2000 BCE. However, unlike the Gathic sections, they were not exactly memorized. The “less sacred” works were handed down in a more fluid oral transmission, which was partly memorized and partly composed by various generations (Boyce 1984, 2). Thus, the Yashts were ancient verses which included content that survived in the Younger Avestai dialect. The earliest of which are available include content which pre-dates the “prophet” Zarathustra’s reform, based on oral accounts that describe the worship and propitiation of the deities of the Indo-Iranian and Iranian pantheons (Stewart 2007, 137). “Much of the material contained in them goes back to a more distant time than that of Zoroaster’s reform, and scholars have been divided in their opinion as to whether or not the contents of the Yashts reflect a departure from his reform, which would mean that after his death people returned to the former religious system, or whether they can be reconciled with his teachings” (Moulton 1913,

197ff, Lincoln 1981, 50, Zaehner 2002, 166, and Stewart 2007, 137).<sup>13</sup> The Yashts invoke the pre-Zoroastrian divinities that were converted into metaphoric principles and symbols such as immortality, wholeness, and truth. In contrast, the Yasna is a documentation of older hymns that survived through a stricter oral tradition which preserved both content and style. It includes the “Gathas,” which are the 17 hymns that are attributed to Zoroaster.

The term Yasna translates as “worship” or “offering,” and the term Mazdayasnian describes “Mazda worship.” As it says in the Yasna, Zoroaster prayed for the Holy Spirit to satisfy both the Good Mind and the Soul of the bovine creation (Yasna 28.1; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914, v). This hymn demonstrates the importance of a spiritual connection to one’s surroundings, especially the connection to cows, for pastoral people. These hymns contain the historical and linguistic evidence which allowed scholars to argue that Zoroaster was the first person to acknowledge the existence of a single Creator.<sup>14</sup> According to his teachings, the Creator interacts with the world through the phenomenology of the human mind.

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<sup>13</sup> These scholars all argued that Zoroaster preached against the sacrifice of cattle. Boyce noted that although Zoroaster, like most ancient Iranians, was willing to eat meat, he opposed cruel animal sacrifices which were instigated by corrupt priests and raiding nomads (Boyce 1975, 215-216). Zoroaster prayed for “the cattle (perfecting) that pasturage which should fatten It for our food” (Yasna 48.5; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). In Avestai, the word for food is *pitu* “meat,” whereas in later Iranian languages of the settled period this was replaced by *nān* or its equivalent, that is, “bread.” The Vedic Indians too were flesh-eaters. Even today, despite the general Hindu dislike of taking life, the Brahmans, in their highest ritual, the *yajña*, both offer and partake of the blood sacrifice (Boyce 1975, 215-216).

<sup>14</sup> The list of historians and comparative linguists who regarded Zoroaster’s ideas as the first form of monotheism includes Mary Boyce (Boyce 1975, 44), Martin Haug (Haug 1865, 1, 3, and 15), and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (Hegel 1991b, 173-174).

## The Gathas

The Gathas refer to the 17 hymns of Zoroaster which begin with the 28<sup>th</sup> hymn or chapter of the Yasna (Haug 1865, 1). These hymns were composed in 238 verses which consist of about six thousand words. “They comprise seventeen sections of poetical matter, equal in extent to about twenty-five to thirty hymns of the *Rig Veda*, composed in ancient Aryan meters, ascribing supreme (beneficent) power to the Deity Ahura Mazda, who is yet opposed coordinately by an evil Deity called Aka Mainyu or Angra Mainyu” (Mills 1887, xviii).

Based on the pastoral setting he describes, as well as the linguistic connection to Vedic texts, the hymns of Zoroaster may be dated to the period around 1400 BCE (Boyce 1975, 44). These hymns, along with various other undated fragments of Avestai texts, survived through oral transmission and were rewritten centuries later by the Parsis (Boyce 1984, 3). In a brief outline of the first chapter of the Gathas by Scottish philosopher and writer Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie, “Zoroaster prays for the Holy Spirit, so as to satisfy both the good mind and the Soul of the Bovine Creation” (Guthrie 1914, v). According to his complete translation of the first verse of the Gathas, “With outstretched hands; and by reverent prayer for support, O Mazda, (mindful) I will entreat as the first (blessing) of the Spenta Mainyu (bountiful mentality)—that all (my) actions, (may be performed) with (the aid of) Asha (justice), (That I may receive) the understanding of Vohu Manah (good

disposition), and that I may thus satisfy the Soul of the Bovine” (creation) (Yasna 28.1; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914).<sup>15</sup>

Zoroaster proclaimed that the Creator is the Universal Spirit which presides over man, and the human mind is the manner in which the Creator interacts with the universe. The content and style of presentation in the Gathas is characterized by the dialectical interaction of opposites which culminates in progressive motion. As translated by Guthrie, “I pray for you, O Ahura Mazda, through Vohu Manah (good mind or disposition), to grant me both lives, that of the body and of the mind, with the felicity with which Mazda, through truth, supports those to whom Mazda gives the two-lives for their comfort” (Yasna 28.2; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). A good disposition meant that a person was “mindful to watch over the soul of the Bovine creation” (Yasna 28.4; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). In other words, justice was personified by the compassionate guardians who protected sheep and cattle from religious sacrifices. “O Ahura Mazda (lord mindful), crown with attainments the desire of such clever (persons) – As thou knowest, through Asha (justice) to be both worthy and of Vohu Manah (good disposition) – (And this I pray because) I know that supplicatory words reach You, and are effective” (Yasna 28.10; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). “I who am to protect (the worship of) Asha-(justice) and Vohu Manah (good disposition) for ever, (I beg) thee, Mazda Ahura (mindful lord) to reveal to me (the truth), so that I may (be able) to proclaim life out of thy Mainyu

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<sup>15</sup> Guthrie did not number the pages which consist of his transliteration and translation of the Gathas. They begin on page 14. The numbering system resumes on page 129.



(mentality) (as if it was being uttered through thy mouth)” (Yasna 28.11; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914).

In the following hymn known as the Exterior Call of Zarathustra, the Bovine Creation demands protection. Zoroaster stated, “The soul of the Bovine (creation) complained to You: For whose benefit did ye fashion me? Who shaped me? Fury (rages) against me; violence and cruelty, maltreatment and roughness oppress me; I have no herdsman except You: therefore it is You (I beg) to procure me good pasture” (Yasna 29.1; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). In this passage, Zoroaster draws attention to our ability to imagine how animals feel when they are mistreated. This particular passage is a unique relic of the transition from settled pastoral society to an agricultural society within ancient Iran.

In the thirtieth Hymn of the Yasna, Zoroaster proclaimed the Doctrine of Dualism and taught the necessity of taking sides in the battle between light and darkness (justice and deception). Zoroaster sang praises for “Ahura (lord)” and “hymns (worthy) of Vohu Manah (good disposition), and things well remembered with the aid of Asha (justice), and the propitious (omens) beheld through the lights (of the stars, or the altar of the flames)” (Yasna 30.1; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). The battle between light and darkness is determined by the perception and choices of humans. Zoroaster stated, “Listen with your ears to the best (information); behold with (your) sight, and with your mind; Man by man [woman by woman], each for his [or her] own person, distinguishing between both confessions, before this great crisis. Consider again!” (Yasna 30.2; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914).

In the following passages, Zoroaster explained the point of the contrast between antithetical forces which ultimately leads to greater wisdom and success. “At the beginning both-these Mentalities became conscious of each other, the one being a Mentality better in thought, and word, and deed, than the (other Mentality who is) bad. Now let the just (man) discriminate between these two, and choose the benevolent one, not the bad one” (Yasna 30.3; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). Zoroaster stated later, “and may we be those who shall make life progressive (Lawrence H. Mills’s translation) or purposeful (Christian Bartholomae’s translation)!<sup>16</sup> Assemble together, along with Asha (justice), O Ahuras Mazda (lords mindful) and come hither, So that here where our thought formerly developed (separately), they may now mature together, (fuse, or culminate) and become wisdom” (Yasna 30.9; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). Zoroaster believed that the wisdom of the contrast between the twin mentalities would lead to the right choice between prosperity and adversity. “(When, I repeat, you have realized the significance of this contrast, I feel quite sure none of) you all, will (hesitate or delay to) enter the desired abode of praise” (Yasna 30.11; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). For a complete summary and analysis of the Gathas and the Avesta, please see the Appendix to this dissertation.

The main lesson we can learn from the Gathas is that Zoroaster lived in a chaotic period of history in which wild nomads incessantly raided pastoralists for the sake of animal sacrifices. Meanwhile, the priests were essentially tricking nomads into stealing

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<sup>16</sup> In certain sections, Guthrie included varying translations of keywords from both Christian Bartholomae and Lawrence H. Mills along with labels in parenthesis for their particular translation.

food for them. Duchesne-Guillemin recognized that “the nomad is a thief of cattle, which he sacrifices and eats” (Duchesne-Guillemin 1952, 5). Although Zoroaster was a priest who underwent formal training, he rebelled against the socioeconomic order of his society and launched a major political upheaval. This upheaval coincided with the transition from semi-nomadic pastoral society to an agricultural society. In an effort to facilitate this process, Zoroaster preached against raiding nomads, and ridiculed priests who “mumbled” their prayers with little thought to their meaning (Boyce 1975, 12). Based on his belief in a single Creator, Zoroaster urged people to abandon nomadic lifestyles and share natural resources such as water and land. He taught the fertilization of the meadows which makes permanent settlements possible (Duchesne-Guillemin 1952, 5).

Although Zoroaster’s message was composed in a priestly language, it was meant to be heard by everyone. “Zoroaster’s religion was drawn down from the nebulous region of speculation into the clear, sane light of historical actuality which makes it shine all the brighter by contrast with the greater obscurity” (Guthrie 1914, 141). Guthrie noted that “it only adds to his glory that he was willing and able successfully to implant his monotheism, his personal devotion, his passion for righteousness and his humanitarianism among those blood-stained nomads” (Guthrie 1914, 141). Zoroaster was a meditative thinker and a visionary, but he was also a priest, and as we have seen in the Gathas, “he continued to pursue this calling while preaching his new message” (Boyce 1975, 214). As stated in the Gathas, “Zoroaster seeks to be heard beyond the

Magians” (Yasna 33.7; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). He certainly succeeded in this matter. His campaign against raiding nomads and dishonest priests culminated in the first expression of monotheistic thought, and had more influence on world religions than any other single faith.

### **Yasna**

“Yasna” means worship and sacrifice (Mills 1887, 195). It is now hardly necessary to say that the *Yasna* is the chief liturgy of the Zarathustrians, in which confession, invocation, prayer, exhortation, and praise are all combined as in other liturgies (Mills 1887, 195). The *Yasna*, like many other religious compositions, is made up of more or less mutually adapted fragments of different ages, as well as modes of composition (Mills 1887, 195). As mentioned, the Gathas are sung in the middle of the *Yasna* starting with the twenty-eighth Hymn.

In the first Hymn of the *Yasna*, the sacrifice commences. “I announce, and I (will) complete (my *Yasna*) to Ahura Mazda, the Creator, the radiant and glorious, the greatest and the best most beautiful (?) (to our conceptions), the most firm, the wisest, and the one of all whose body is the most perfect, who attains His ends the most infallibly, because of His Righteous Order, to Him who disposes our minds aright, who sends His joy-creating grace afar; who made us, and has fashioned us, and who has nourished and protected us, who is the most bounteous Spirit” (Yasna 1.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 195-196). For a complete summary and analysis of the *Yasna*, please see the Appendix below.

## The Yashts and Sirozahs

As mentioned, the term yasht or yast means “venerate” or “praise,” and may also refer to a collection of 21 hymns that were preserved in younger Avestai. Yasht also means the act of worshipping, the performance of the Yasna, and it is often used in Parsi tradition as synonymous with the Yasna (Darmesteter 1883, 1). However, it has also been particularly applied to a certain number of writings in which the several Izeds (deities) are praised and magnified (Darmesteter 1883, 1). According to Darmesteter, “these writings are generally of a higher poetical and epical character than the rest of the Avesta, and are the most valuable records of the old mythology and historical legends of Iran” (Darmesteter 1883, 1). The Yashts are hymns which were chanted by private individuals or their family priests, but had no place in the “inner” worship of the pavi (Boyce 1975, 270).<sup>17</sup>

The Parsis believe that formerly every Amshaspand (Bounteous Immortal) and every Ized had his or her particular Yasht, but we now possess only twenty Yashts and fragments of another (Darmesteter 1883, 1).<sup>18</sup> The order in which the Yashts have been arranged by the Parsis follows exactly the order of the Sirozah, which is the proper introduction to the Yashts (Darmesteter 1883, 1). Sirozah means “thirty days,” which refers to the name of a prayer composed of thirty invocations addressed to the several

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<sup>17</sup> Pavi refers to a “pure place,” or a small flat space that can be marked out as a sacred precinct (Boyce 1975, 166).

<sup>18</sup> James Darmesteter published an English translation of the *Yashts* and *Sirozahs* in 1883 (Darmesteter Tr., 1883).

Izeds (deities) who preside over the thirty days of the month (Darmesteter 1883, 1).<sup>19</sup>

Some of these names were also used to identify certain months. “The very idea of the Sirozah, that is to say the attribution of each of the thirty days of the month to certain gods, seems to have been borrowed from the Semites; the tablets found in the library of Assurbanipal contain an Assyrian Sirozah, that is, a complete list of the Assyrian gods that preside over the thirty days of the month” (Darmesteter 1883, 1).

The *Yashts* begin with the Ormazd Yasht, which lists the names of Ahura Mazda. Zoroaster said, “Reveal unto me that name of thine, O Ahura Mazda! That is the greatest, the best, the fairest, the most effective, the most fiend-smiting, the best healing, that destroyeth best the malice of the Daevas and Men” (Yasht 1.5; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 24). Ahura Mazda replied, “My name is the One of whom questions are asked, O holy Zarathustra!” (Yasht 1.7; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 24). For a complete summary and analysis of the Yashts and the Sirozahs, please see the Appendix.

The Mihir Yasht is devoted to Mithra, and corresponds to the sixteenth day of the Sirozah.<sup>20</sup> “The ruffian who lies unto Mithra brings death unto the whole country,

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<sup>19</sup> There are two versions of the *Sirozah*, but the only difference between them is that the formulas in the former are shorter, and there is also occasionally some difference in the epithets, which are fuller in the latter (Darmesteter 1883, 1).

<sup>20</sup> According to Darmesteter, the Mihir Yasht, one of the longest of the Avesta and one of the most interesting from a literary point of view, is not very instructive for mythology [history]. It consists of long descriptive pieces, sometimes rather spirited, and of fervent prayers and invocations for mercy or protection. Originally Mithra was the god of heavenly light; and in that character he knows the truth, as he sees everything; he is therefore taken as a witness of truth, he is the preserver of oaths and good faith; he chastises those who break their promises and lie to Mithra, and destroys their houses and smites them in battle. Particularly interesting are Yashts 10.115-10.118, as giving a sketch of moral hierarchy in Iran, and Yasht 10.121-122, as being perhaps the source of the (priestly initiation) trials in the later Roman

injuring as much of the faithful world as a hundred evil-doers could do.<sup>21</sup> Break not the contract, O Spitama, neither the one that thou hadst entered into with one of the unfaithful, nor the one that thou hadst entered into with one of the faithful who is one of thy own faith, for Mithra stands for both the faithful and the unfaithful” (Yasht 10.2; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 120). “For his brightness and glory, I will offer him a sacrifice worth being heard; we sacrifice unto Mithra, the lord of the wide pastures, sleepless, and ever awake” (Yasht 10.11-12; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 122).

Some of the latter passages of the Mihir Yasht seem to provide a short account of the social constitution and morals of Zoroastrian Iran (Darmesteter 1883, 149). “O Mithra, lord of the wide pastures, thou master of the house, of the borough, of the town, of the country, thou Zarathustrotema (chief of the sacerdotal order, the so-called Maubedanmaused). Mithra is twentyfold between two friends or two relations; Mithra is thirtyfold between two men of the same group; Mithra is fortyfold between two partners; Mithra is fiftyfold between wife and husband; Mithra is sixtyfold between two pupils (of the same master); Mithra is seventyfold between the pupil and his master; Mithra is eightyfold between the son-in-law and his father-in-law; Mithra is ninetyfold between two brothers; Mithra is a hundredfold between the father and the son; Mithra is a thousandfold between two nations; Mithra is ten thousandfold when connected with the

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Mithraicism (Mithraism) (Darmesteter 1883, 119, Yasht 10.12; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 122, Yasht 10.115-118; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 149-150, and Yasht 10.121-122; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 151-152).

<sup>21</sup> The Mithradrug [Mithra-deceiver]: one might translate “who breaks the contract,” since Mithra, as a common noun, means “a contract” (Darmesteter 1883, 120).

Law of Mazda (the contract between the faithful and the Law, the covenant), and then he will be every day of victorious strength” (Yasht 10.115-117; Darmesteter 1883, 149-150). In this passage, Mithra (the contract) is twentyfold, that is, twenty times more strictly binding than between any two strangers, and thirtyfold between two men of the same group, etc. The metaphoric account of a moral contract (covenant) is a common theme in the Abrahamic tradition (Jeremiah 31.31 and Quran 2.40).

Darmesteter suggested that Yasht 10.121-122 may be the source of the trials and initiation rituals of later Roman Mithraicism (Mithraism) (Darmesteter 1883, 119).<sup>22</sup> Zoroaster asked Ahura Mazda to tell him how the faithful man shall drink the libations cleanly prepared in order to please Mithra, and Ahura Mazda replied, “Let them wash their bodies three days and three nights; let them undergo thirty strokes for the sacrifice and prayer unto Mithra, the lord of wide pastures. Let them wash their bodies two days and two nights; let them undergo twenty strokes for the sacrifice and prayer unto Mithra, the lord of the wide pastures. Let no man drink of these libations who does not know the staota yesnya (the last chapters of the Yasna): Visperatavo (the first words of the)

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<sup>22</sup> Early references to Christ as the sun, the prevalence of his sunlike halo in Christian art, and the Church’s decision to fix the commemoration of the Nativity on December 25 (a day traditionally celebrated by sun-worshippers as the annual “birth” of the sun following the winter solstice) all seem to point to some possible “solar” origin of Christianity. More specifically, particularly given the evangelical association of the Nativity with the Persian Magi, they may indicate some possible early contact between Christianity and Mithraism, a Persian religion that flourished throughout the Roman Empire during the second and third centuries, and which actually revolved around the cult of the sun. The correspondence between the Mithraist “day of the sun” and the day claimed by the Church to have been the day of the Resurrection may indeed have been purely coincidental. Nevertheless, its observance probably added to the Church’s legitimacy among Mithraists, who observed it anyway. Furthermore, particularly given the great popularity of Mithraism, it may have also contributed considerably to the Church’s success in proselytizing pagans throughout the Roman Empire (Zerubavel 1985, 25).



Visperad (Visparad)” (Yasht 10.121-122; Darmesteter 1883, 151-152). The Visparad refers to a set of Younger Avestai prayers dedicated to the Yasna (Hintze 2002, 33). It contains evidence indicating that, by the time of its composition, the Gathas were already arranged in the sequence in which we have them today (Hintze 2002, 33). This sequence is also supported by the Vendidad (Fargard 10.4-10.12; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 134-136).

### **Post-Achaemenian Sources**

During the Ashkanian (Parthian) period (248 BCE-224 CE), Zoroastrian scholars compiled mixed sets of prose texts in late Younger Avestai. This collection is known as the *Vi Daevo Data* (Videvdat), later corrupted to the *Vendidad* (Boyce 1975, 274). These texts were concerned with the laws of purity, and its name means “the antithesis of evil spirit” (Boyce 1984, 2). This is the only congregational text that is not recited entirely from memory. The ancient Avesta as presented by Zoroaster to Vishtaspa, king of Bactria, was supposed to have been composed of twenty-one books, the greater part of which was burnt by Alexander the Great (Darmesteter 1879, xxxii). After the death of Alexander the priests from the Zoroastrian religion met together, and by collecting the various fragments that had escaped the ravages of the war and other that they knew by heart, they formed the present collection, which is a very small part of the original book, as out of the twenty-one books there was only one that was preserved in its entirety, the Vendidad (Darmesteter 1879, xxxii).

The Vendidad functions as a code or manual for Zoroastrian priests. As mentioned, it is one of twenty one volumes, but the only one that was preserved in its entirety. It is linguistically distinct from Avestai and Younger Avestai portions of the Avesta which suggests that it was originally composed shortly before the development of the Median and Persian Empires. The Vendidad has often been described as the book of the laws of the Parsis; it may be more exactly called the code of purification, a description, however, which is itself only so far correct that the laws of purification are the object of the largest part of the book (Darmesteter 1879, xxxiii). According to Mary Boyce, the Videvdat, “the code abjuring daevas, is a collection of miscellaneous pieces of varying antiquity, put together at some relatively late date to form a night office celebrated to smite the powers of darkness” (Boyce 1975, 274). The core sections of the Videvdat concern “the purity laws, to which were added various heterogeneous works such as the first *fargard*” (Boyce 1975, 274).

The first *fargard* (chapter) begins with a dialogue between Ahura Mazda and Zoroaster. As it says in the first line of the Vendidad, “Ahura Mazda spake unto Spitama Zarathustra, saying: I have made every land dear to its dwellers, even though it had no charms whatever in it, had I not made every land dear to its dwellers, even though it had no charms whatever in it, then the whole living world would have invaded Airyana Vaego” (Fargard 1.1-2; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 4). “The first of the good lands and countries which I, Ahura Mazda created, was the Airyana Vaego, by the good river Daitya” (Fargard 1.3; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 4-5). Airyana Vaego (Iran Vaej) refers to

the area inhabited by the Aryans. “Thereupon came Angra Mainyu, who is all death, and he counter-created by his witchcraft the serpent in the river and winter, a work of the Daevas” (Fargard 1.3; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 5). “There are ten winter months there, two summer months, and those are cold for the waters, cold for the earth, cold for the trees. [So] winter falls there with the worst of plagues” (Fargard 1.4; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 5).<sup>23</sup>

Airyana Vaego is the first of sixteen other “good lands” which were described in the first chapter of the Vendidad. “Various suggestions have been made as to why this list was originally drawn up, the most reasonable (in the light of its preservation as a religious work) seeming to be that these were lands which early accepted Zoroastrianism (though later, evidently, than the wholly unknown regions named in the Farvardin Yasht)” (Boyce 1975, 275).<sup>24</sup> “The second of the good lands which I, Ahura Mazda, created, was the plains in Sughdha (Soghd)” (Fargard 1.5; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 5). “Thereupon came Angra Mainyu, who is all death, and he counter-created by his witchcraft the fly Skaitya (cattle fly), which brings death to the cattle” (Fargard 1.5; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 6).

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<sup>23</sup> In the Zoroastrian tradition, “it is known that [in the ordinary course of nature] there are seven months of summer [relatively warm weather] and five months of winter [relatively cold weather]” (Bundahishn 25.1-26; Anklesaria (Tr.) 1956, 114-115 and Darmesteter 1879, 5).

<sup>24</sup> “Khwarezmia does not appear among them; and its absence has been explained as due to its identification, as the land of the prophet’s own people, with Airyanem Vaejah (Airyanem Vaego), the traditional homeland of the Aryans, where all the greatest events in their prehistory were held to have taken place – although it must be admitted that the lines devoted to Airyanem Vaejah, which introduce the text, are plainly late in composition” (Boyce 1975, 4 and 275).

The third of the good lands Ahura Mazda created refers to Margu, also known as Merv and Margiana, which is an area that overlaps with modern day Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. “The third of the good lands and countries which I, Ahura Mazda, created, was the strong, holy Mouru, [and] thereupon came Angra Mainyu, who is all death, and he counter created-by his witchcraft sinful lusts” (Fargard 1.6; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 6). The fourth of the good lands refers to Bakhdhi, also known as Bakhtri, Bactria, and Balkh, which is a region in Northern Afghanistan. “Thereupon came Angra Mainyu, who is all death and he counter-created by his witchcraft, the Bravara” (Fargard 1.7; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 6).<sup>25</sup> For a complete summary and analysis of the Vendidad, please see the Appendix.

Bactria and Margiana are the sites of the Bactria-Margiana Archeological Complex, which is a modern label for a Bronze Age civilization which dates back to 2200 BCE, and faded away some 500 years later (Lawler 2003, 979). “Four thousand years ago along the banks of the ancient Oxus River, which now separates Afghanistan from Uzbekistan, there were people who lived in vast compounds protected by high walls, produced their own bronzes, ceramics, and stone seals, and traded their wares as far as the Persian Gulf and Palestine” (Lawler 2003, 979).<sup>26</sup> “When the Persians arrived

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<sup>25</sup> Bravara refers to the “corn carrying ant” (Fargard 14.5; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 167).

<sup>26</sup> Although these people would have been key players in Bronze Age Central Asia, their civilization remains an enigma due to twentieth century politics. For decades Soviet archeologists labored in this region but revealed little to their Western colleagues, and the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian revolution closed off those countries for study. Now a growing number of scientists are focusing their attention on what is dubbed the Bactrian-Margiana Archeological Complex (BMAC) to understand its extent and its influence on the neighboring Mesopotamian and Indus civilizations. Material from BMAC

in these regions, however, in the mid sixth century BCE, the dominant power seems to have been Bactria; and a legend persisted, down into Sassanian times and beyond, which associated both Zoroaster and his patron Vishtaspa with the Bactrian capital of Balkh” (Boyce 1975, 275-276). “Presumably this, like the legend which set the *kavis* in Seistan (Sistan) and made the Hamun Lake holy, was a product of that mixture of piety and patriotism which led various Zoroastrian peoples to associate the prophet with their own homelands” (Boyce 1975, 276).

In addition to the Vendidad, there are various composite works and prayers such as the Nyayesh, the Gah, and the Little Avesta that were grouped together with all other major Zoroastrian works which established the “Great” Avesta. The Great Avesta included the sources mentioned above, some of which were previously unwritten. It also included stories about the life of Zoroaster, apocalyptic works, and sources for law, cosmogony, and scholastic science (Boyce 1984, 3). The Great Avesta was completed during the Sassanian period around the fifth and sixth century CE (Boyce 1984, 3).

The Sassanian authorities placed copies of the Great Avesta in the libraries of the chief fire temples but they were all destroyed during the Arab, Turkic, and Mongol invasions. However, the scope of its content is known from a detailed summary given in

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had long been found in archeological sites across the region, but researchers did not know where it originated. The collapse of the Soviet Union and now the cautious re-opening of Iran give Western scientists a chance to explore this neglected culture, which left traces across the Middle East and likely reached far beyond the confines of the Asian steppes (Lawler 2003, 979).

the Denkard (Boyce 1984, 4). The Denkard (Acts of Religion) is a massive compilation of very diverse materials concerning the history of Zoroastrianism made in the ninth and tenth centuries (Boyce 1984, 4).<sup>27</sup> It was written in the Pahlavi script, which was the written form of Middle Farsi that was based on the Phoenician and Aramaic alphabet.<sup>28</sup> The first three books of the Denkard were edited by Adurbad of Emedan, who also wrote the remaining six books which are dated to 1020 CE (Sanjana 1874, 26). Various undated fragments of the Denkard survived through oral transmission and were rewritten centuries later by the Parsis. The only manuscript that is nearly complete is now in Bombay, dated to 1659 (Gignoux 1994, 284). The Denkard includes portions of a liturgical text, as well as two very cryptic and difficult works on priestly rituals (Boyce 1984, 3).

### **Parsi Sources**

After the Islamic conquest of Iran, a few members of the Zoroastrian community moved into the mountains where they still survive today in Kerman and Yazd (Mavalwala 1963, 173). In the ninth century, a large group of Zoroastrians left Iran to seek religious freedom in Western India. They are known as the “Parsis” since they were associated with ancient Persia.

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<sup>27</sup> Dastur Peshotanji Behramji Sanjana, Darab Peshota Sanjana, and Ratanshah Kohiyar published an edition of the *Dinkard* in Bombay (1874) based on the fragments of the original compilation by Adurbad of Emedan dated to 1020 CE.

<sup>28</sup> Iranians refer to their language as “Farsi,” which is known in English as “Persian.”

While most Parsis attempted to maintain their distinct identity through restrictions on marriage and religious conversion, the majority of them began speaking Gujarati and the scholar priests among them translated Zoroastrian texts from the Pahlavi script into Sanskrit and Old Gujarati (Dhaval 1871, 1-122 and Boyce 1984, 5). “In the late fifteenth century the Parsis, under the leadership of Changa Asa, also called Changa Shah, sought guidance from leading Irani priests on matters of ritual and observance. In 1478 a layman, Nariman Hoshang, traveled by trading vessel from Broach to the Persian Gulf, and thence overland to Yazd. The correspondence thus initiated continued at intervals down to 1778” (Boyce 1984, 117). “In 1599 a Parsi priest [Bahman Kaikobad Hamjiar Sanjana] completed a poem in Persian [known as] the ‘Qissa-i Sanjan’ [Story of Sanjan]. Celebrating the history of the oldest Parsi sacred fire, it was based mainly on early oral traditions of the Parsis. From this time on Parsi records of various kinds (inscriptions, legal documents, genealogies, etc.) increased steadily” (Boyce 1984, 8).<sup>29</sup>

It seemed as though the Parsis would never escape Islamic persecution and conquest no matter how many times they moved. According to the “Qissa-i Sanjan,” before they left Iran, the Parsis continued to face persecution after moving to the shores of the Strait of Hormuz, and eventually “sailed away and sought refuge on the West Coast of India” (Hodivala 1920, 100, Mavalwala 1963, 173, and Boyce 1984, 120).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> An English translation of the “Qissa-i Sanjan” was published in *Studies in Parsi History* (1920) by Shahpurshah Homasji Hodivala.

<sup>30</sup> “The Parsi founding fathers, who appear to have landed at Sanjan in 936 CE, apparently named this, their first settlement in India, after their home town in Kohistan, in Khorasan. Hormuz is a port on the Persian Gulf, Div an island off the Indian coast” (Boyce 1984, 120).

“Islam eventually reached Gujarat, and a Muslim army approached Sanjan, probably around 1465 CE, to ‘wrest it from the Rajah (ruler).’ The Rajah summoned the Parsis to his aid. They fought heroically and suffered heavy losses, but in vain. The Rajah was slain and the Sanjan seized and sacked” (Boyce 1984, 120).

A large share of the Parsi community continued the journey to salvation by heading toward the city of Mumbai, also known as Bombay. “When in 1640, Bombay began to develop as a great port, the Zarathustrians, or Parsis, as they are most commonly called, began to move into the city where they today constitute a highly respected and prosperous community” (Mavalwala 1963, 173). The Parsis “were invited to settle in Bombay as ship builders, traders and merchants, and mediators between the East India Company and the hinterland; they became an enterprising and prosperous community” (Ganesh 2008, 318). “With the arrival of the Europeans, the Parsi traders now had the opportunity to extend their activities by using the larger ships of the Europeans. In the first half of the eighteenth century, Parsis opened new native trade routes to Burma, Calcutta, Persia, the Arabian peninsula, and China” (Karaka 1884, xxi-xxii, 16-17, and 54-56 and Kennedy 1962, 17). “By 1931 the Parsis were the most urban (89 per cent), and the most literate in English (50.4 per cent, almost twice that of the next highest native group, the Jews, who had 26.4 per cent)” (Davis 1951, 185 and Kennedy 1962, 17).

While the Parsi community worked hard to retain their cultural and spiritual values, they also acquired an exceptional reputation for success. This success may be attributed to their values. “Considering their meagre numbers the Parsis are one of the



most literate and urban groups in India, and also one of the wealthiest, and have contributed considerably in the fields of commerce, education, scientific research, the theatre and cinematic arts,” and the general development of India (Mavalwala 1963, 173). The accumulation of wealth by the Parsi community along with their reputation for success inspired Robert E. Kennedy to write an article on “The Protestant Work Ethic and the Parsis” (1962), in which he investigated “whether the Parsis took a proportionately greater part than others in the economic activities of their time and place” (Kennedy 1962, 17). Based on the general values of the Zoroastrian tradition, Kennedy argued that the “‘commercial bent of the Parsi mind’ is similar to the capitalistic bent of the Puritan mind in Max Weber’s study” (Kennedy 1962, 18).<sup>31</sup>

The Parsis reconstructed the Denkard which helped preserve the Pahlavi textual sources of the Zoroastrian tradition. “During the nineteenth century, lay Parsis published descriptions of traditional beliefs and practices of co-religionists” (Boyce 1984, 8), which includes Parsi manuscripts which date back to 1695 CE, as well as the available Parsi publications from before and after the establishment of the Cama Oriental Institute (Modi 1928, ix and 1). The Cama Oriental Institute was established in 1909 in honor of influential Parsi scholar, Kharshedji Rustomji Cama (Modi 1928, ix).

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<sup>31</sup> In the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930), Max Weber (1864-1920) argued “that the greater relative participation of Protestants in the ownership of capital, in management, and the upper ranks of labor in great modern industrial and commercial enterprises, may in part be explained” by a “spirit of capitalism” and a culture which values diligent labor (Weber 2005, 3-4 and 31-35).

As the socioeconomic status of Iranian Zoroastrians continued to decline, members of the Parsi community emerged as important institutional authorities concerning religious matters. After the establishment of the Parsi community in India, there were additional waves of migration by Iranian Zoroastrians to India, usually in response to discriminatory policies by religious monarchs, such as the early rulers of the Qajar dynasty (1785-1925). Although the Iranian Zoroastrians who migrated to Mumbai in the nineteenth century form a small and distinct group in Mumbai, the Parsis officially recognize them as part of the Parsi Zoroastrian community (Ganesh 2008, 319).

“The Parsis have a thriving diaspora” (Ganesh 2008, 318). “In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they had become heavily involved in India’s overseas trade in different parts of the British Empire and migrated to Yemen (especially Aden), East Africa, and Hong Kong. A powerful group of Parsis also settled down in Karachi. Later, after independence, like other South Asian communities, they migrated to Britain, Canada, Hong Kong, the United States of America, Australia, and New Zealand” (Hinnells 2005, 138, Lai 2006, 100, and Ganesh 2008, 318-319). In an effort to explore cases concerning the tension between local and transnational communities, Kamala Ganesh published a study on the relationship between Bombay Parsis and the Zoroastrian diaspora (Ganesh 2008, 315). According to Ganesh, “in recent decades, Zoroastrians based in the West, particularly North America, of both Parsi and Iranian origin, have coalesced around certain issues to form a third group, increasingly influential. This diaspora has unleashed a new kind of dynamics, altering the traditional ‘big brother’ role

that Parsis had played in their long history of interaction with Iranian Zoroastrians” (Ganesh 2008, 319).

Despite their common religion and culture, there are instances in which Parsis have diverged from Iranian Zoroastrians in regard to social activities. According to Ganesh, “the differences are more obvious in the diaspora, especially among those living in the United States of America and Canada” (Ganesh 2008, 323). For instance, “Parsis accept the authority of the priests in religious matters and see the priest as a man of spiritual power - a Hindu influence. Living in the Muslim environment, the Iranians see all authority as lying in the words of the Prophet as revealed in the sacred scriptures; they often speak negatively about the role of the priesthood” (Hinnells 1994, 66 and Ganesh 2008, 319-320). “This seems to have left its imprint on the overall Zoroastrian diasporic religious practice, which tends to have more textual, rational, theological, and transcendental elements than Indian Zoroastrianism” (Lai 2006, 101).

Meanwhile, “some Iranians claim to follow the faith in its pure form, whereas Indian Parsis are seen as more westernized due to British influence. In addition, they feel the Parsis in India have become too ritualistic due to Hindu influence” (Ganesh 2008, 323). “The Iranian Zoroastrian diaspora is, on the whole, pro conversion especially for Shia Muslims from Iran who may want to go back to their ancestral religion (Writer 1994, 123), and this has somewhat influenced the Parsi diaspora, backed by renowned diasporic scholars such as Kaikhosrov Irani” (Ganesh 2008, 323). “Owing to the political sensitivities in Iran, the diaspora is careful not to proselytize, but only accept voluntary

converts. Their approach is to go back to Zarathustra's own preaching which enjoins choosing one's religion according to individual conscience" (Ganesh 2008, 323-324). Regardless, "among the Parsi Zoroastrians, the conflict over some aspects - acceptance of new entrants via conversion or intermarriage, and the distinctive mode of disposal of the dead - actually underlines the fact that in many other aspects, a common heritage is accepted. In this dialogue, actual positions are complex, but broadly all parties situate themselves within the canvas of Zoroastrianism, laying claim to its heritage. Parsi 'liberals' argue that they go back to Zarathustra himself, rather than to later interpretations, which, they say, the 'conservatives' do. Within the Zoroastrian diaspora in the West, a similar division exists between the 'fundamentalists' and the 'traditionalists'" (Ganesh 2008, 317).<sup>32</sup>

### **Post-Pahlavi Script**

After the tenth century, the Iranian Zoroastrians abandoned composition in Pahlavi script and began using Arabic script. Although they still used Farsi, they steadily adopted more Arabic synonyms and loanwords. During this period, the Zoroastrians of Iran were highly persecuted and gradually reduced to a poor and intellectually isolated minority. In turn, their energies were focused on the survival of their community and the preservation of their core teachings (Boyce 1984, 5). Phillip G. Kreyenbroek suggested

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<sup>32</sup> "The Parsi case is important in another sense too in the context of India's religious pluralism as well as the many examples of coercive power of religious and caste communities and the lack of intra community dissension. The long standing struggle of Asghar Ali Engineer for internal democracy among Dawoodi Bohras is a striking example of one individual questioning the hold of another individual - an autocratic leader - over an entire community" (Ganesh 2008, 317).

that Zoroastrianism stopped evolving a few centuries after the Islamic conquest of Iran due to the struggle for survival of the Zoroastrian community (Kreyenbroek 2001, viii). In 2001, Kreyenbroek and Shehnez N. Munshi published *Living Zoroastrianism* based on interviews with urban Parsis in Bombay, India (Kreyenbroek 2001, vii).

As mentioned, from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, Iranian and Parsi priests sporadically sent letters to each other concerning matters of ritual and observance (Boyce 1984, 5). The Iranian answers to Parsi questions were preserved, and they shed valuable light on the religious life of the community (Boyce 1984, 5). They are known as the “Persian Rivayats” (Dhabar Ed. 1999) which are hundreds of pages (Boyce 1984, 5). During this period a variety of European merchants and travelers recorded their encounters with Zoroastrians in Iran and India. A few notable accounts that will be examined in the following chapter include the works of Raphael Du Mans, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, Jean Chardin, and Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil du Perron (Du Mans 1660, Tavernier 1679, Chardin 1711, and Anquetil du Perron 1771).

### **Political Records**

There are historical records as well as linguistic evidence which suggest that the Western Iranian tribes such as the Medes and the Persians adopted Zoroastrianism from the Eastern Iranian people (Boyce 1984, 7).<sup>33</sup> The faith passed on from the Medes to the

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<sup>33</sup> The structure of the Eastern and Western Iranian languages supports the view that Zoroastrianism originated in Eastern Iran. The Iranian languages are classified under the Indo-Iranian branch of Indo-European languages (Rask 1834, 3, Testen 2011, 289-290, and Bertoncini et al. 2012, 391). The Eastern

Persian Achaemenians, who ruled over the greatest empire in the ancient world. Their dynasty lasted from 550 to 330 BCE and their inscriptions make numerous references to Zoroastrianism.

According to Darius's inscription at Bisutun (Gershevitch 1985, *Image* 34), Cyrus the Great succeeded as a spiritually enlightened leader through his worship of Ahura Mazda (Column I Section 1-5). Darius also declared himself the ninth ruler of the noble line of Achaemenian Kings, before stating that "By the Grace of Ahura Mazda am I King; Ahura Mazda has granted me this Kingdom" (Column I Section 5). Ahura Mazda is the Holy Spirit of God for Zoroastrians. The inscription at Bisutun was mainly political propaganda intended to solidify Darius's Achaemenian ancestry, but it demonstrates the importance of God worship in Persian society.

Religious toleration was a remarkable feature of Persian rule and Cyrus was a liberal-minded promoter of this intelligent and humane policy (Gershevitch 1985, 412). In an age when it was common for powerful sovereigns to enslave the people of conquered territory, Cyrus freed the Jews from captivity in Babylon and assured their protection (Masroori 1999, 13). After the conquest of Babylon, Cyrus did not destroy temples and statues associated with local deities. He reversed the conquered king Nabonidus's hierarchical treatment of religion (Cyrus admitted that the accounts of

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and Western branches of Old Iranian languages are both rooted in the Avestai language but the Eastern branch maintained a closer connection to the protolanguage (Gershevitch 1985, 640).

Nabonidus's lack of toleration were greatly exaggerated, but the latter had centralized all the statues of the deities in Babylon to the indignation of both the priests and the people) (Arberry 1953, 6). In turn, unlike the rulers he conquered, Cyrus permitted all cultures to maintain symbols of their gods and worship them throughout his empire. His role in the development of the Jewish tradition was exceptional. He is enshrined as a great liberator in the Hebrew Bible and Jewish history (Laursen 1999, 1).

According to Hebrew scholar Ephraim E. Urbach, the Jews were mostly polytheist during the Babylonian exile and believed their God was superior to the gods of various other city-states (Urbach 1975, 20). Their God was in essence the God of Israel, which was never recognized and referred to as the creator of the world until the Jews were influenced by Iranian culture. Once Cyrus freed the Jews from captivity, some of them settled in Iran, while others interacted with Iranians throughout the Empire. According to Urbach, the Zoroastrians they encountered in Iran inspired their strict monotheist thought (Urbach 1975, 20). Urbach proposed that the Jews moved closer to monotheism because they interacted with Iranians and learned more about dualism.<sup>34</sup> In other words, the Zoroastrian faith inspired the Jews to elevate the God of Israel to something similar to the Universal Spirit, which eventually developed into the Abrahamic God.

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<sup>34</sup> Dualism refers to the perception that society and nature consist of antithetical forces, or two parts which are in opposition to each other.

In regard to the creation of the world, there are striking similarities between some sections of the Gathas (Yasna 44.3 and 44.4) and the Hebrew Bible, particularly the Book of Isaiah (Isaiah 40.26 and 44.24). These sections discuss the creation of the world and the motion of the stars. “Oh Ahura Mazda, this I ask of thee: Who established the sun lit days and the shining stars? Who apart from thee established the law by which the moon waxes and wanes? These things I would like to know!” (Yasna 44.3; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). As written in the Book of Isaiah, “Lift up your eyes, and behold who hath created these things, the stars that bringeth out their host by number” (Isaiah 40.26). “I am the lord who created these things that stretch forth the heavens alone” (Isaiah 44.24). In addition to the similarities concerning the creation of the world, the Book of Isaiah emphasized that there is no reason for animal sacrifices (Isaiah 1.11).

The Book of Isaiah also contained accurate predictions about Iranian history. There were predictions that Cyrus would free the Jews from captivity in Babylon (Isaiah 45.1). Some of this content overlaps with Persian inscriptions and political propaganda that was written on the Cyrus Cylinder (Cyrus Cylinder Lines 1-37, Kittel 1898, 149, and Smith 1963, 415). This suggests that a few of these prophecies might have been part of a larger propaganda campaign that would facilitate the invasion of Babylon. Prior to the invasion, the Jews were essentially informed that they must stand with Cyrus, a messianic figure who represented God’s will. “Thus said the Lord to the anointed one, Cyrus, whose right hand I held, to subdue the nations before him, and I will loosen the loins of kings, to open before him the two gates, which shall remain open” (Isaiah 45.1).



Accordingly, the God of Israel had spoken to Cyrus and told him to free the Jews and punish the unjust rulers of Babylon.

As Morton Smith wrote after his comparison of Persian sources and the second Book of Isaiah, “Thus, we have two closely connected themes, both concentrated in the same eight chapters of a fifteen-chapter work, one of them – political propaganda—absolutely new to the Hebrew tradition and certainly derived from the Persians, the other—the cosmology—never before so important in the Hebrew tradition, but found in Persian material and there expressed in a form strikingly similar to the one it has here” (Smith 1996, 82). In *II Isaiah and the Persians*, Smith wrote that “the similarity of elements in II Isaiah to elements in Cyrus’s proclamation concerning his conquest of Babylon was first pointed out by [Rudolf] Kittel in 1898” (Kittel 1898, 149 and Smith 1963, 415). Kittel suggested that the content was not directly related and the similarities were based on Babylonian court style rhetoric (Kittel 1898, 149). However, Smith proposed that the parallels go beyond the so-called court style and attributed them to the “propaganda put out in Babylon by Cyrus’s agents, shortly before Cyrus’s conquest, to prepare the way of their lord” (Smith 1963, 417).

Lawrence H. Mills, Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, Miles Menander Dawson, and Mary Boyce also noted that there is scholarly evidence that Zoroastrian influence began to be exerted on both Judaism and early Greek philosophy as early as the sixth century (Mills 1977, 17, Dawson 1931, ix, Duchesne-Guillemin 1958, 86, and Boyce 1982, xii). According to Dawson’s *The Ethical Religion of Zoroaster* (1931), “it might indeed be

said that Zoroaster was the discoverer, or at least un-coverer, of *individual morals*; the very evolution of the most primitive but fundamental and therefore eternal notions of right and wrong, is first of all discernible in earnest activity in the original Gathas, Zoroaster's own contribution to the enlightenment of mankind" (Dawson 1931, vii). "The rules and religious precepts of Zoroastrianism are found in Christian and Jewish creed and practice, [and] they came into existence centuries ahead of Judaism and Christianity, and in fact were relics of the race from which sprang the religions of Greece, of Rome, of Germany, of Scandinavia, and in short, of European countries, and of America, Australia, and other places which Europe has colonized" (Dawson 1931, viii-ix).

Dawson provided a list of parallel or near-parallel sayings that were Zoroastrian and Judeo-Christian, which constituted almost four pages (Dawson 1931, xxi-xxiv). The list consisted of two columns and included "God, Ahura Mazda [next to] God, Jehovah Elohim, the King of Kings [in both columns], A spirit [in both columns], [that is] not anthropomorphic [in both columns], the creator of all things [in both columns], [with a] period of creation, [next to] the world created in six days, in which humanity is the greatest creation, [next to] humanity as the last and greatest creation, [with] man and woman driven from paradise for sin, [next to] man and woman banished from Eden for disobedience (Dawson 1931, xxi). He also stated that some scholars "have placed the name, Pharisee, with Parsi; the claims of that Hebrew sect to sanctity, its aloofness and cleanliness, its belief in the continuance of life after death and in future rewards and

punishments, have been traced to the religion with which the Jews had come in contact during the Babylonian captivity” (Dawson 1931, x).

Boyce suggested that Zoroastrian influence on Judaism can mainly be attributed to Persian propagandists who used a variety of methods to inspire both Second Isaiah and Babylonian priests to have confidence in Cyrus (Boyce 1982, 47). “It would seem, therefore, that Cyrus’s agent stressed in his subversive talks with the Jewish prophet [Isaiah] the majesty and might of his Lord, Ahuramazda, and his power to work wonders through his chosen instrument, Cyrus; and that Second Isaiah, rooted in the traditions of his own people, accepted the message of hope and the new concept of God, but saw the Supreme Being in his own terms as Yahweh [the God of Israel]” (Boyce 1982, 47). This view is quite controversial because it challenges most mainstream interpretations of the scriptures of the Judaic tradition. In any case, the breakdown of the rivalries attributed to the worship of local deities represented a transition to a new form of human consciousness and the hopes for a return to peaceful political relations.

This is precisely why G.W.F. Hegel marks the spread of Zoroastrianism as the start of “human” history in his lectures on *The Philosophy of History* (Hegel 1991b, 173). In the literal sense, the sun shines its light on all beings without any sort of favoritism. For Hegel, the enlightened rule of the Iranian Kings was the personification of this idea. Under the leadership of King Darius, the Persian Empire reached its height of territorial control (Gershevitch 1985, 217). Darius married Cyrus’s granddaughter which further solidified his ties to the noble line of Achaemenian rulers (Gershevitch 1985, 226). As

Herodotus mentioned in the *Histories*, “the Persian nation contains a number of tribes [and] the Pasargadae are the most distinguished; they contain the clan of the Achaemenians from which spring the Perseid kings, [and] the other tribes are the Panthialaei, Derusiaei, Germanii, all of which are attached to the soil, the remainder -the Dai, Mardi, Dropici, Sagarti, being nomadic" (Herodotus 1901, 57).

Although Darius established Zoroastrianism as the official faith of the Iranian people he followed Cyrus’s model of religious toleration and funded the construction of non-Zoroastrian temples (Ezra 5.1-6.15). During this period, various Greek writers also made references to the Achaemenian dynasty and the “Persian religion.” Plato mentioned Zoroaster in various works such as *Alcibiades* (Plato 2001, 121), and Aristotle assumed that he made references to his teachings in *The Laws* (Boyce 1984, 15).<sup>35</sup> According to the *Natural History* of Pliny, in the fourth century BCE, Aristotle proclaimed Plato the re-embodiment of Zoroaster who he believed lived 6,000 years earlier (The Elder Pliny 2010, 422, Jackson 1896, 1, and Boyce 1984, 15).<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> According to Werner Jaeger, there are parallels between Plato’s four virtues in *Alcibiades I* and the ethics of Zarathustra. Also, the bad world-soul that opposes the good one in the *Laws* is a tribute to Zoroaster, to whom Plato was attracted because of the mathematical phase that his Idea theory finally assumed, and because of his intensified dualism involved therein. From that time onwards the [Platonic] Academy was keenly interested in Zoroaster and the teaching of the Magi (Plato 1970, 172 and Jaeger 1948, 132). It heightened the historical self-consciousness of the school to think of Plato’s doctrine of the Good as a divine and universal principle that had been revealed to eastern humanity by an Oriental prophet thousands of years before (Jaeger 1948, 134).

<sup>36</sup> Pliny the Elder (CE 23-79) cites the authority of Eudoxus of Cnidus (BCE 368), of Aristotle (BCE 350), and of Hermippus (c. BCE 250), for placing Zoroaster 6000 years before the death of Plato or 5000 years before the Trojan war (Pliny 2010, 422). Diogenes Laertius (CE 2d, 3d century), de Vit. Philos. Proem. 2, similarly quotes Hermodorus (BCE 250), the follower of Plato, as authority for placing Zoroaster’s date at 5000 years before the fall of Troy, and, as he adds on the authority of Xanthus of Lydia (Diogenes Laertius 1901, 5). A.V. Williams Jackson suggested that these extraordinary figures are presumably due to the

The Achaemenian dynasty ended with the invasion of Alexander the Great even though he portrayed himself as a Persian King. According to Boyce, “it remains remarkable that, although Alexander was a pupil of Aristotle, who greatly respected Zoroaster and the ancient order of the Magi (Boyce 1982, 260 and 280-281), no mention is made in the surviving annals of any encounter between him and a Magus, nor is any benefaction or generosity attested on his part towards the Iranian priesthood or their places of worship” (Boyce 1991, 12). After Alexander’s death in 323 BCE, Iran was ruled by his generals until the establishment of the Parthian Empire. The Parthians ruled from 248 BCE to 224 CE. Their scanty records show that they maintained the Zoroastrian faith (Boyce 1984, 7). There are also Greek and Roman records which make references to Zoroastrian observances beginning with the Persian period up to the Parthian period (Herodotus 1901, 54-63, Xenophon 1891, 146, and Cicero 1971, 245). In addition, the Zoroastrian faith was a major theme in a Parthian court romance called *Vis & Ramin* which has been re-written several times (Gorgani 2009, 425). Fakhredin

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Greeks' having misunderstood the statements of the Iranians, who place Zoroaster's millennium amid a great world-period of 12,000 years which they divided into cycles of 3,000 years (Jackson 1896, 3). Eudoxus, a noted mathematician and astronomer, had studied in Babylonia and had brought back to his friend Plato knowledge of Zoroastrian dualism, arousing his deep interest in the Iranian faith. Eudoxus wished it to be taught that the most famous and most beneficial of the philosophical sects was that of the Magi (Jaeger 1948, 131). There is no reason to doubt that Eudoxus felt a huge sense of loss at Plato's death, and linking him in this way with Zoroaster has been interpreted as bringing them together “as two essentially similar historical phenomena” (Jaeger 1948, 131-133 and Boyce 2005, 11). It was Aristotle who, led by his doctrine of a periodical return of all human knowledge, first specifically connected Zoroaster with the return of dualism, and thereby put Plato in a setting that corresponded to his profound reverence for him. The doctrine that truth returns at certain intervals assumes that men are incapable of permanently retaining it once it has been discovered, even if it has been known for a long period of time (Jaeger 1948, 136).

Gorgani wrote the story as we have it in the eleventh century. According to Abdolhossein Zarrinkoob, it was originally written during the Parthian dynasty, around the first century CE (Zarrinkoob 2000, 22).

The Parthian Empire declined due to internal strife and steady conflict with the Roman Empire. It led to the rise of the Sassanian Empire in the third century CE which was characterized by its political exploitation of the Zoroastrian faith. The Sassanians immediately initiated a revival of Iranian culture when they took over. Like Darius, the Sassanians declared Zoroastrianism the official state religion (Yarshater 1983, 134) and referred to their King as the Shahanshah (King of Kings). They strongly promoted the use of the “Pahlavi” script and language otherwise known as Middle Farsi (Yarshater 1983, 644). During their rule, Iranian society became extremely hierarchical. The commoners were used as the sole tax base for an elite class of priests, warriors, and administrative secretaries (Yarshater 1983, 644). Their economy was also weakened by their wars with the Byzantine Empire. These problems left Iran extremely vulnerable to an attack, which culminated in the Islamic conquest. Although Iranian forces repelled the initial attacks from the mid-Western border, the Arabs eventually penetrated Iran from the Northwestern border after a pivotal victory against the Byzantines.

Sassanian rule was highlighted by a major socialist and cultural movement led by Mazdak. Mazdak was the son of Bamdad and gained prominence during the sixth century under Sassanian King Kavadh. Mazdak was known to support vegetarianism and early forms of communitarian thought. During periods of drought when there were

threats of famine, Mazdak encouraged the people to loot storage buildings belonging to the aristocracy (Dorraaj 1990, 69). Mazdak believed he was a Zoroastrian puritan and strongly criticized religious ritualism and materialism (Yarshater 1983, 150). In some ways, his ideas are comparable to the ancient cynicism associated with Diogenes of Sinope. Like Diogenes, he embraced the human condition and supported altruism (Diogenes Laertius 1972, 39).

Mazdak had numerous followers including King Kavadh himself. Opponents of his ideology alleged that Kavadh offered Mazdak a chance to sleep with his wife in order to prove his communitarian loyalty (Yarshater 1983, 150). Supposedly, Mazdak refused the offer after his close friends and the Crown Prince suggested that it was not a good idea. Manochehr Dorraaj claims that “any serious attempt at a historical overview of Irano-Islamic populism must refer back to the social thought of Mazdak” (Dorraaj 1990, 66).

During the fifth century, Iranian priests began to compile an immense chronicle in Farsi translated as the “Book of Kings” or “Epic of Kings.” It linked the Sassanian dynasty to Vishtaspa, who is known as the first King who Zoroaster converted to the faith (Boyce 1984, 7). The early Sassanian Kings and their high priests also left inscriptions which made references to Zoroastrianism. The Book of Kings survived through Arabic translations and the great epic version of it written by Hakim Abol-Qasem Ferdowsi Tusi, who was born in Khorasan, Iran. His epic account of Iranian history is known as the *Shahnameh*.

The *Shahnameh* was presented to the Kings of the Samanyan Dynasty around the year 1000, and is widely considered the national epic of Iran (Frye 1975, 155). Ferdowsi wrote it with minimum use of Arabic words in an effort to revive the Iranian language. He also waited for the establishment of a legitimate Iranian dynasty before presenting it to them. According to, Behrooz Mahmoodi-Bakhtiari, “the [Samanyans] were the first authorities that adopted a scientific and systematic approach to saving the Persian language from a gradual death” (Mahmoodi-Bakhtiari 2003, 251). In turn, the endurance of Farsi as an active language is mainly attributed to the works of Ferdowsi, especially the *Shahnameh*.

Ferdowsi’s book documents Iranian history from the creation of the world to the time of the Arab conquest of Iran. It briefly mentions the rule of the Samanyans within a timeline of Iranian dynasties. Most of the heroic characters are Indo-Iranian, and it was largely inspired by previous oral, literary, and mythical histories. Certain Indo-Iranian characters within the *Shahnameh* were previously mentioned in the *Avesta* and the *Rig Veda* (Yasna 32.1; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914 and Mandala 1.71.7; Oldenberg (Tr.) 1897, 80).

### **Notable Scholars**

Nora Elisabeth Mary Boyce (1920-2006), a British scholar and professor of Iranian languages, is perhaps the most influential modern historian of Zoroastrianism. She was born in Darjeeling, India. During the 1960s, she studied Zoroastrianism while living in the Iranian villages of Yazd. She became a professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London. She wrote as Mary Boyce and is



frequently cited by most historians of Iran and Zoroastrianism (Gershevitch 1985, 416, Firby 1988, 7, Clark 1998, xiii, Fried 2004, 223, and Pourshariati 2008, 10). In her book on the *Decline of the Sasanian Empire*, Parvaneh Pourshariati referred to her as the “late matriarch of Zoroastrian studies” (Pourshariati 2008, 10). Nora Kathleen Firby dedicated her book on *European travelers and their perceptions of Zoroastrians in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries* to Professors J.R. Hinnells and Mary Boyce (Firby 2004, 5). As Peter Clark wrote in the preface for his book on *Zoroastrianism*, “I acknowledge the enormous influence of Professor Mary Boyce in my studies; the frequent references to her own work throughout this book testify to the debt I, and indeed all students of this remarkable religion, owe her” (Clark 1998, xiii). In the foreword to Clark’s book, W.J. Johnson mentioned that “while a seemingly endless series of introductions to the ‘major religions’ have tripped off the presses, students of Zoroastrianism had, until recently, only Mary Boyce’s groundbreaking 1979 ‘*Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*’ for convenient reference” (Johnson 1998, 6). Many historians of Zoroastrianism, including Parsis, studied with her as graduate and undergraduate students and acknowledged her as a unique inspiration (Kreyenbroek 2001, 138). According to interviews with her former students, she was willing to “scold” them in order to inspire a diligent and precise approach to their studies on Zoroastrianism (Kreyenbroek 2001, 141).

A critical review of Boyce’s works would mostly cite small details that relate to a couple of references. In one case, she made claims about Greek accounts of Zoroastrianism which are based on indirect sources that are difficult to verify. For

instance, she reported Aristotle's claim that Plato was the second coming of Zoroaster, as well as his belief that Plato included references to Zoroaster in *The Laws*, but provided no reference (Boyce 1984, 15). That leaves it up to the reader to trace these accounts back to Aristotle.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, these are small inconveniences. They mostly affect historians that are trying to use her meticulous research to build upon her core ideas. Mary Boyce was undoubtedly a diligent scholar who rightfully earned her place as an authority on Zoroastrianism and ancient Iranian religion.

According to Ehsan Yarshater, a professor of Iranian Studies at Columbia University and editor of the Third Volume of the *Cambridge History of Iran* (1983), Boyce advanced the view that Zoroaster belonged to a pastoral (Stone-Age) culture; and for this and other reasons she assumed that he belonged to a much earlier date than a tradition preserved in some late Pahlavi texts would indicate (Yarshater 1984, 139). As Yarshater noted in his review of her Second Volume on the *History of Zoroastrianism* (1982), "Professor Boyce placed the date of Zoroaster before 1200 BC (Boyce 1982, 3), maintaining that although the Iranian Bronze Age (c. 1700-1000 B.C.) must already have developed among neighboring tribes, the prophet's own tribe apparently maintained a largely Stone Age culture with a broad bipartite division of men into warrior-herdsmen and priests, rather than the tripartite division into priests, warriors, and herdsmen characteristic of Bronze Age culture" (Boyce 1982, 1 and Yarshater 1984, 139).

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<sup>37</sup> Pliny the Elder (CE 23-79) cites the authority of Eudoxus of Cnidus (BCE 368) for accounts of Aristotle (BCE 350) (Pliny 2010, 422).

Boyce is also known for her claim that all of the Achaemenian Kings, particularly Cyrus the Great, were indeed Zoroastrians (Boyce 1982, xi and Boyce 1988, 15). Some of this is based on relatively recent evidence. According to Boyce, “archeologists excavating in the 1960s at Pasargadae found there the first fire holders of Zoroastrian type, dating from the time of Cyrus himself; and others working at Persepolis produced detailed studies of the iconography of the royal tombs, showing thereby an unbroken continuity of beliefs from the time of Darius the Great down to that of Darius III” (Boyce 1982, xi-xii).<sup>38</sup> Boyce’s view about the religion of the Achaemenian Kings is also supported by the use of Avestai names in the royal family, such as Vishtaspa, who is believed to have been a king and an early follower of Zoroastrianism (Boyce 1982, 43). The Greeks, “who were interested observers of the Persians from the sixth century onwards, recorded no change of faith among them during the Achaemenian period, and knew their priests, the famed Magi among them, as the followers of Zoroaster, a seer assigned by them to remote antiquity” (Boyce 1982, xi). Boyce also noted that “scholars working on Judaism and on early Greek philosophy suggested that Zoroastrian influence began to be exerted on the cultures of the Near East as early as the sixth century” (Mills 1977, 17, Duchesne-Guillemin 1958, 86, and Boyce 1982, xii).

There is more evidence to support Boyce’s claims about the religion of the Achaemenian Kings than evidence against them, but there are still some “contradictions”

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<sup>38</sup> The term Pasargadae refers to Cyrus’s tomb, as well as the site of his administrative capital and main palace.

which require some explanation (Yarshater 1984, 140). For instance, “among these contradictions [was] Cyrus allowing his name to be used in homage to alien gods – Marduk, Sin, and Yahweh among them” (Boyce 1982, 64 and Yarshater 1984, 140). However, Boyce provided an effective explanation by suggesting that that this is mostly evidence of diplomacy and political propaganda (Boyce 1982, 44-47). According to Yarshater, “whether or not one agrees with all of Professor Boyce's conclusions or hypotheses, one cannot but be grateful for her skillful synthesis and for her offering students of Middle Eastern religions and Iranian civilization a lucid exposition, written in her usual engaging style, of the vexing question of Iranian religion under the Achaemenians” (Yarshater 1984, 139).

Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin (1910-2012) was a French scholar and professor of Iranian languages at the University of Liege in Belgium. In 1974, he was appointed chief editor of the *Acta Iranica* series for Peeters Publishers. Under his tenure, the series published several works by Mary Boyce. Duchesne-Guillemin was honored as a guest lecturer at various universities and received an honorary doctorate from the University of Tehran in 1975. He is also a notable scholar of world religions who published works on *The Western Response to Zoroaster* (1958) and *The Hymns of Zarathustra [Being a translation of the Gathas]* (1952).

Abraham Valentine Williams Jackson (1862-1937), a professor of Indo-Iranian languages at Columbia University from 1895 to 1935 (Guthrie 1914, i), was the authority on Zoroastrianism before Mary Boyce. In 1886, Jackson became an assistant [professor]

for “Anglo-Saxon” studies at Columbia University and his “competent knowledge of English literature led to his appointment as Adjunct Professor in 1891” (Perry 1938, 222). In 1886, “he had also been made Instructor in Indo-Iranian Languages [which was] a remarkable tribute to his attainments in that field” (Perry 1938, 222). “He made a series of extended visits to India and Persia for thorough study and exploration: the first in 1901, others in 1903, 1907, 1910, 1911” (Perry 1938, 222).

According to an article in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* by Edward Delavan Perry, Jackson’s “knowledge of Sanskrit language and literature was wide and accurate, yet Iranian language, literature, and antiquities, and most of all Iranian religion, were his chosen field” (Perry 1938, 222). He published numerous works on Iranian religion, including his first [book], “*A Hymn of Zoroaster, Yasna 31*” (1888), as well as *Zoroaster, the Prophet of Ancient Iran* (1899), the fascinating *Persia, Past and Present* (1906), *From Constantinople to the Home of Omar Khayyam* (1911), and his latest complete work, *Researches in Manichaeism* (1932) (Perry 1938, 222). As founder and editor of The Columbia University Indo-Iranian Series, he authored and influenced thirteen volumes (Perry 1938, 222).

Jackson claimed that Zoroaster was thirty when he began his ministry. Boyce agreed with Jackson in this matter and suggested that the age of thirty was the conventional age of full and sage maturity (Boyce 1975, 184). Jackson’s claim was based on the *Bundahishn*, which was an Iranian encyclopedia of Zoroastrianism compiled

during the seventh century CE (Jackson 1899, 16).<sup>39</sup> However, he provided a far more recent date for Zoroaster's life in comparison to Boyce. According to Jackson, Zoroaster lived between 660 and 583 BCE (Jackson 1899, 16). Nevertheless, after studying Zoroastrianism in the Iranian villages of Yazd during the 1960s, Boyce alleged that much of the previous foreign scholarship on Zoroastrianism was profoundly erroneous. As mentioned, she believed Zoroaster lived before 1200 BCE.

### **Conclusion**

During the height of the Persian Empire in the fifth century BCE, Zoroastrianism was the religion with the largest number of adherents in the world. It was also the first monotheist philosophy of religion and it had a large amount of influence on various other faiths before and after its decline. As historian Arnold Toynbee suggested, the sign of disintegration of a great civilization is “universality, when its spiritual remnants survive and spread long after the fall of the state” (Toynbee 1972, 255).

The primary sources of the Zoroastrian philosophy initially survived through oral traditions. Although they inspired the so-called “book” religions, Zoroaster's teachings were unrecorded until the fifth century CE, and these records were ultimately destroyed by foreign conquest. Once again, Zoroastrianism survived through oral tradition, as well as the re-construction of excerpts, which had been copied into various encyclopedias and manuscripts.

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<sup>39</sup> *Zand-Akash: Iranian or Greater Bundahishn Transliteration and Translation in English* by Behramgore Tehmur Anklesaria (1956).

In the sixteenth century, European scholars and explorers began studying Zoroastrianism in Iranian and Indian communities. The European perspective on Iranian and Indian life was highly romanticized since it was mostly based on the exotic adventures of travelers and explorers. Nevertheless, these accounts help historians trace the development of the Zoroastrian faith throughout history.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Universal Spirit**

This chapter surveys the available literature on European knowledge about Zoroastrianism. It also surveys some of the literature related to the religious roots of the Nazi movement. The purpose of this chapter is to trace the chain of intellectual thought which will shed light on certain ideas that came to influence the post-Enlightenment philosophers of history and the rise of Aryan Nationalism.

#### **Faith and Reason**

Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin wrote that by the tenth century, “antiquity had come to regard Zoroaster and the more or less spurious Magi as precursors and vouchers of its own wisdom, both pagan and Christian” (Duchesne-Guillemin 1958, 4). From the European perspective, “Zoroaster was supposed to have instructed Pythagoras” (Duchesne-Guillemin 1958, 4), and the fields of philosophy, astrology, alchemy, and magic were all greatly indebted to the Persian and Babylonian (Chaldean) cultures based on Zoroaster. The *Chaldaic Oracles*, which are Hellenistic religious texts from the second century CE, were based on Alexander’s policies of Greek and Persian



integration.<sup>40</sup> This movement inspired numerous attempts to either fuse religion with philosophy or find some other form of compromise.<sup>41</sup>

After the East-West schism that divided the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church, Georgius Gemistus (1355 CE-1452 CE), also known as Plethon, attempted to reconcile Christianity with Platonism by recognizing their connections to Zoroastrianism. His greatest work, *The Book of Laws* (15<sup>th</sup> century), was placed under the double patronage of Zoroaster and Plato (Duchesne-Guillemain 1958, 4) and he wrote about his religious views in a work titled the *Summary of the Doctrines of Zoroaster and Plato* (15<sup>th</sup> century). Plethon thus started the long, checkered history of the relationship between humanism and Christianity (Duchesne-Guillemain 1958, 4). Among those who attempted a compromise between Christianity and Platonism, itself supposed to have derived from Zoroaster, we may cite not only the great Christian theologians from this period such as Basilios Bessarion, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Marcilio Ficino, and Desiderius Erasmus, but also Franciscus Patricius, the editor of the larger edition of the

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<sup>40</sup> A revised English edition of *The Chaldean Oracles of Zoroaster* listed under Julianus the Theurgist was published in 1895 by W. Wynn Westcott. Westcott's edition was based on the collection of Chaldean Oracles that Franciscus Patricius published in Latin in 1593 (Westcott 1895, 2).

<sup>41</sup> The projection of Greek conceptions mingled with a vanishing dose of genuine Iranian ideas culminated in the ascription of the Chaldaic Oracles to Zoroaster or his Magian disciples by Plethon, and decidedly to Zoroaster himself by Plethon's editors and copyists. However, the difference between Plethon and his successors must not be overrated since for Plethon, who had little sense of history, to ascribe the Oracles to the Magi or to their master Zoroaster amounted to one and the same thing according to Duchesne-Guillemain (Duchesne-Guillemain 1958, 4). The texts are to be found in the book of Joseph Bidez and Franz Cumon on *Les mages hellénisés. Zoroastre, Ostanès et Hystaspe d'après la tradition grecque* [The Magi Hellenized: Zoroaster, Ostanès, and Hystaspe after the Greek tradition] (1938). Incidentally, the two learned editors seem to have had an exaggerated opinion of the part played in the blending of Greek and Iranian or Babylonian ideas by the hypothetical "Hellenized Magi" (Duchesne-Guillemain 1958, 4).

Chaldaic Oracles (Duchesne-Guillemin 1958, 4). In *Zoroaster and his 320 Chaldaic Oracles* (1591), Patricius wrote that “Zoroaster, first of all people, almost laid the foundations, however rough, of the Catholic faith” (Kroll 1894, 1, and Duchesne-Guillemin 1958, 4).<sup>42</sup>

For most Christians, Iran had always been the homeland of the Biblical Magi. The term Magi is mentioned in the Avesta, and refers to the priestly class. “Zoroaster seeks to be heard beyond the Magians” (Yasna 33.7; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914).<sup>43</sup> The Biblical Magi were the Three Wise Men who were guided by a star and came to worship in Bethlehem. They visited Jesus after his birth. The English term for paranormal activity is “magic,” which is a direct reference to the occult astrology of the Biblical Magi. Pliny the Elder believed the art of magic undoubtedly originated in Persia under Zoroaster (The Elder Pliny 2010, 422). There is also linguistic and archeological evidence that the Chinese term “Wu,” which describes a doctor or spiritual practitioner, was also influenced by the term Magi (Magu) (Mair 1990, 27). Regardless, based on the Jewish tradition, the Christians identified Zoroaster with Ezekiel, Nimrod, Seth, Balaam, and Baruch; and through the latter, with Christ himself (Duchesne-Guillemin 1958, 5 and Firby 1988, 17). Zoroaster and the Magi could therefore be cited by apologists such as

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<sup>42</sup> As quoted by Wilhelm Kroll in *De oracules Chaldaicis*, “Zoroastrum catholicae fidei omnium primum etiamsi rudia fere jecisse fundamenta” (Kroll 1894, 1).

<sup>43</sup> “Come hither to me O you Best (divinities); come here personally, O Mazdah (mindful) Visibly, with Asha (justice), and Vohu Manah (good disposition); inform me how I may be heard before (Mills’s Translation) or outside of (Bartholomae’s Translation) the Magians; (and, for this purpose) Let reverent services of worship be (performed) clearly and manifestly among us” (Yasna 33.7; Guthrie 1914).

Justin the Martyr as the external witnesses whom they called upon to corroborate and justify to the pagans the truth of Christianity (Duchesne-Guillemain 1958, 5).

In 1590, Barnabé Brisson published *De regio Persarum principatu* [The Preeminence of the Persian Region]. It was based on Greek and Roman texts which made references to Zoroastrianism. He was apparently unaware of Plethon's ascription of the Chaldaic Oracles to Zoroaster since they were not listed under his sources (Duchesne-Guillemain 1958, 5), but he did associate the Persian Magi with Pythagoras (Brisson 1710, 188 and 400). Brisson's work was based on ancient sources and dealt with the Persian religion as a thing of the past (Duchesne-Guillemain 1958, 6). Evidently, he was unaware that the religion was still practiced in Iran and India.

The reports from travelers who visited Egypt and Iran included references to ancient inscriptions and monuments that challenged Christian Europe's beliefs that history began with Genesis (Firby 1988, 17). Archbishop James Ussher calculated that humans were first created in 4004 BCE. His calculation was based on Biblical sources as well as historical and astronomical studies that were relatively accurate in describing the chronology of the Iranian, Greek and Roman civilizations. However, many prominent French philosophers such as Charles Louis de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, were a bit more skeptical and supported greater freedom of intellectual thought. His *The Spirit of the Laws* (1750) included reflections on the philosophy of natural and social laws.

Montesquieu acknowledged that most French philosophers knew very little about ancient Greek philosophy, and even less about Egyptian and Persian philosophy, but he

still rejected the authority of the Old Testament as well as Ussher's chronology (Firby 1988, 17 and Montesquieu 1989, 495). In a section about "the ministers of Religion," he noted that "people without priests are usually barbarians" (Montesquieu 1989, 483). In many ancient cultures, the people that were dedicated to the divinity had to be honored, and "as worship of the gods required continual attention, most peoples were inclined to make the clergy a separate body" (Montesquieu 1989, 483). In turn, "among the Egyptians, the Jews, and the Persians,<sup>44</sup> certain families, who were perpetuated and who performed the services, were dedicated to the divinity" (Montesquieu 1989, 483). Montesquieu went on to explain how this system eventually led to the tradition of celibacy within the Christian tradition. "There were even religions in which one thought not merely of withdrawing ecclesiastics from business, but even relieving them from the encumbrance of a family, and this is the practice of the principal branch of Christian law" (Montesquieu 1989, 483). He ultimately concluded that celibacy is mostly accepted by the people in societies with small populations, which are essentially the people who need it the least while it is mostly rejected in societies with large populations (Montesquieu 1989, 483-484).

During the seventeenth century, which was characterized by intense controversy between religion and philosophy, Hugo Grotius wrote that "there is no reason why the

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<sup>44</sup> Montesquieu cited Thomas Hyde's *De Veterum Persarum et Parthorum et Medorum Religionis Historia* [A History of the Persian, Parthian and Median religion] (1700) (Hyde 1760, 349 and Montesquieu 1989, 483).

restoring of a body is impossible when such learned men such as Zoroaster, the Stoics, and Peripateticos Theopompus believed that it could be and would be” (Grotius 1627, 96). Grotius suspected that there was a certain element of truth in ancient doctrines. In 1633, a copy of a Yasna manuscript is reported to have been deposited in a library in Canterbury (Eduljee 2007, 1). This is the first known acquisition of a Zoroastrian text in England for scholarly purposes. However, the content of the Yasna remained a mystery to its new owners until the late eighteenth century (Eduljee 2007, 1). In 1685, Pierre-Daniel Huet, the bishop of Avranches, noted that pagan religions have features in common with Judaism and Christianity (Huet 2009, 111-116 and Duchesne-Guillemain 1958, 9). As mentioned, a number of European scholars believed that Zoroastrianism could reconcile the differences between paganism and the Judeo-Christian tradition.

#### Zoroaster’s Influence on Greek Philosophy

Zoroastrian ideas were a key factor in the early development of Greek philosophy. The Iranian doctrine may be supposed to have modified or reinforced the ideas of Plato (Duchesne-Guillemain 1952, 2). Duchesne-Guillemain believed that “of all the sons of Asia, Zoroaster was the first to be ‘adopted’ by the West, and his doctrine was known to Plato, to whom it must have meant a great deal” (Duchesne-Guillemain 1952, 1). Eudoxus of Cnidus, the contemporary and disciple of Plato, compared his master with Zoroaster (Duchesne-Guillemain 1952, 2). According to Boyce, “the serious study of Zoroastrianism in the [Modern] West is scarcely two hundred years old, for it is founded on the interpretation of the Zoroastrian holy books, called collectively the *Avesta*, which

remained unknown outside the community itself until the late eighteenth century” (Boyce 1975, ix). Nevertheless, from the days of the ancient Greeks, “Zoroaster’s name had been familiar to the learned as that of a fabled Eastern sage; and when the *Avesta* came at last into scholars’ hands, they sought eagerly in it for teachings that would justify this fame” (Boyce 1975, ix). Ruhi Muhsen Afnan wrote about this subject in *Zoroaster’s Influence on Anaxagoras, the Greek Tragedians, and Socrates* (1969).

When dealing with this subject in a previous book, Afnan did not initially mention a direct influence of Zoroaster on Greek thought. As he wrote, perhaps “to force me into the controversy, or just to give the book a more attractive heading; the publishers asserted their right, given to them by my contract, and changed my original title ‘Zoroaster and the Trend of Greek Thought,’ to ‘Zoroaster’s influence on Greek Thought’” (Afnan 1969, 9). In *Zoroaster’s Influence on Anaxagoras, the Greek Tragedians, ad Socrates*, he stated that he could not deny his belief in the existence of an influence, and that he had to face the challenge and produce arguments in its support (Afnan 1969, 9).

Afnan’s study demonstrated diligent research and careful methodology. In his reflections on the traditional conception of God held by ancient Athenian courts, he was curious to find out “why for example, Darius, who was an Achaemenian, and from Fars in Southern Iran, was called by a Hebrew writer in the Old Testament , Median” (Book of Daniel 5.31 and Afnan 1969, 10). He continued, “if the distinguishing virtue of Media, in that age, the ground of its sanctity, was that it constituted the birthplace of Zoroaster; then why does he convey the conception of God as a universal ‘Mind’ and put it in the same

frame as those who were declared by the court in Athens to be ‘impious’” (Afnan 1969, 10). Although we should note that there is more evidence which suggests that Zoroaster was born in Eastern Iran, and the Book of Daniel might not be a literal account of Iranian and Jewish history (especially since Darius is used in place of Cyrus), the main point here is that the Zoroastrian philosophy spread to the Persians through the Medes and was originally presented as a world religion rather than a cultural religion (Medism).<sup>45</sup> The religion of the Medes may be interpreted as a blend of Zoroastrianism and the particularly Medic rituals which preceded their knowledge of Zoroaster. In turn, Medism was a legal term used to describe the subversive ideology of ancient Greece that was characterized by excessive admiration or sympathy for Medo-Persian culture.

In his study on Zoroaster’s influence on Greek thought, Afnan suggested that there were three angles from which to approach his subject, starting with a metaphysical point of view which constituted revealed religions, a factual and historical perspective which constituted the transmission of ideas, and a systematic perspective which constitutes the nature of the system they advocated and their intellectual contents (Afnan 1969, 11). This description is also useful for my study since I want to build on the level of influence that is suggested by Afnan.

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<sup>45</sup> In “The History of Greece to the Death of Alexander,” J.B. Bury drew our attention to the expression “Medism,” found in Greek classical literature (Bury 1900, 213 Afnan 1969, 23). He considered this term to be very ancient, predating the conquest of Media by the Persians (Afnan 1969, 23). The term “Medic” was associated with the religion of the Medes while the term “Magian” was specifically associated with the Zoroastrian priests who lived or traveled with the Medes and the Persians. According to Afnan, the meaning of the term Medism (Mede or Medos) has a number of very revealing derivatives such as Media, Medism, Medized, median quality, make median, Medo-Persian, and Medo-Scythian (Afnan 1969, 22).

According to Afnan, the Greek philosopher Anaxagoras was influenced by Zoroastrian ideas during his time in Iran. Anaxagoras is credited as the person who brought philosophy to Athens along with the idea of the Universal Mind (Cosmological Mind).<sup>46</sup> He was born in Clazomenae in 500 BCE, an area that was conquered by Cyrus the Great about a half a century before his birth. Anaxagoras was, therefore, a Persian subject and is reported to have served in the Persian Army (Afnan 1969, 33).

Anaxagoras had a major effect on Themistocles, who was a notable Athenian politician and general. To the Persians Themistocles was a formidable enemy, who won many successes against them, but he was also familiar with their culture and cause, and through Anaxagoras had come to respect their teachings (Afnan 1969, 20). After he was eventually ostracized from Athens for his arrogant attitude toward the Spartans, Themistocles fled to Iran where he was accepted at the court of Artaxerxes. After a long stay, he learned the Persian language so he could directly communicate with the king, and once he became acquainted with Magian learning, he was given a district in western Ionia to rule (Afnan 1969, 20). During the time of Artaxerxes (fifth century BCE), there are sources that suggest “Medism” was spreading rapidly in Thebes and among the upper classes in Northern Greece to the frontiers of Attica (Afnan 1969, 22). This alarmed many Athenians.

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<sup>46</sup> The belief in a single Creator that is associated with Ahura Mazda (Light and Wisdom).



Socrates learned about Medism through Aspasia, who was an Athenian intellectual and a consort of Pericles. Pericles was a prominent orator and managed social gatherings that included the intellectuals of his time and place, most notably, Aspasia and Anaxagoras. “Aspasia was the dominant figure in the court of Pericles and she created a social atmosphere in which the intelligentsia of the day gathered and conferred” (Afnan 1969, 130). In a dialogue with “Menexenus,” Socrates is reported to have praised her talent in teaching rhetoric, which she had developed as an art (Plato 2010, 10 and Afnan 1969, 130). “That I should be able to speak is no great wonder, considering I have had an excellent mistress in the art of rhetoric,” he said (Plato 2010, 10). After this statement, Socrates confirmed that he meant Aspasia when asked by Menexenus (Plato 2010, 10).

After tracing the influence of Zoroastrianism on Greek thought and culture, Afnan argued that the Athenian courts persecuted philosophers like Aspasia, Anaxagoras, and Socrates because they were associated with impious foreign rhetoric, particularly the idea of a “Creative Mind” (the Zoroastrian conception of God). They were charged for impiety under these courts and condemned to death.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, “after taking such stringent measures, partly under the leadership of Pericles, the Athenians found to their

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<sup>47</sup> “When Socrates was put to death on the charge of atheism, his offense was the repudiation of an imperfect religion” (Radhakrishnan 1992, 26).

consternation, that their leader himself was under the direct influence of ‘Medised Hellenes,’ though serving the political interests of the state” (Afnan 1969, 24).<sup>48</sup>

Afnan argued that when two cultures confront each other, it is not military might which finally decides which is to dominate. He claimed that victory is based on the set of spiritual and cultural values each side upholds and advocates. “The side which bears spiritual, intellectual, moral, social, and aesthetic values, which are more appealing and convincing, and sounder, is the party that wins the contest” (Afnan 1969, 18). The “early Zoroastrianism of the Achaemenian (Persian) period possessed such spiritual and cultural values, and therefore could acquire domination, irrespective of the military and political power which it also enjoyed” (Afnan 1969, 18). It survived long after the end of Achaemenian military power. Subsequent history tells us how in the form of Mithraism and Manichaeism, it spread throughout Europe and retained its missionary appeal and zeal down to the rise of Islam (Afnan 1969, 18).

Part of the allure of Plato’s academy was its strong association with the wisdom of the Magi. There are accounts that Magi mourned the death of Plato. As Peter Kingsley wrote in “Meetings with Magi: Iranian Themes among the Greeks, from Xanthus of Lydia to Plato’s Academy,” “the Magi were not the only people in Athens

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<sup>48</sup> Afnan also compared the history of futile religious suppression in Athens to the early suppression of Christianity in Rome. For instance, the Roman Emperor Diocletian became aware of the futility of trying to suppress Christianity when he learned that his wife and daughter were secret supporters of the new faith (Afnan 1969, 24). Afnan then claimed that the reform and “rebirth of Zoroastrianism under the [Sassanians], can be traced back to the spiritual awakening effected by the Christian spirit” (Afnan 1969, 25). By observing the spirit and teachings of Christianity, the Iranians became conscious of their own heritage (Afnan 1969, 25).

who sensed something very special about Plato. There were evidently discussions by both Persians and Greeks about the nature of the man and about the timing of his death; and it is rather disconcerting that, according to Zoroastrian tradition, the Saosyant – the great being ‘who will bring benefit to the whole corporeal world’ and prelude the dawning of the future age – will be miraculously born by a virgin” (Yasht 13.129; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 220-221, Boyce 1975, 282-287, and Kingsley 1995, 197).<sup>49</sup> “The broad analogies between Plato and Jesus (virgin birth; visits from Magi) are certainly not just due to the imposition of Christian themes on pagan biography” (Kingsley 1995, 197).

Like Afnan and Kingsley, Lawrence H. Mills was also interested in Zoroaster’s influence on Greek thought. In *Zarathustra, Philo, the Achaemenids, and Israel*, he suggested that the Zoroastrian conception of Vohu Manah (Good Mentality), which was essentially an expression for the attributes of “truth and benevolence,” was practically synonymous with the Greek conception of *logos* (knowledge) (Mills 1977, 20). According to Mills, no subject in the range of ancient oriental literature should be considered more important of its kind than that collection of the venerable documents which are known as the Avesta (Mills 1977, 1). However, its influence was largely ignored since most modern scholars were unaware of its antiquity.

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<sup>49</sup> “Speusippus – Plato’s nephew, and the man who succeeded him as head of the Academy after he died – mentioned the belief already current in Athens that Plato was Appollonian in nature, that he was a son of Apollo, and that his had been a virgin birth” (Kingsley 1995, 197).

## Travel Writing

This section surveys the available accounts of various European travelers. Pedro Teixeira seems to have been the first modern European traveler to notice that Zoroastrians were still living in Iran (Teixeira 1902, 196 and Firby 1988, 24). Teixeira was an independent Portuguese traveler of Jewish descent. His career as a soldier, trader, and physician led him to places such as India, East Africa, Iran (Persia), Malacca, and Mexico as he traveled around the world between 1586 and 1601 (Firby 1988, 24). “He made a second journey to India in 1604 and returned by way of Basra – Aleppo. This journey occupied most of his narrative, written in Spanish and published at Antwerp in 1610” (Firby 1988, 24). His texts mainly reflect the views of non-Zoroastrians, who were prepared to accept the antiquity of their traditions, but held the religion in contempt as a superstitious form of sun worship (Teixeira 1902, 196 and Firby 1988, 24).

In *Relaciones de P. Teixeira d'el origen, descendencia y succession de los Reyes de Persia y de Harmuz: Y de un viage hecho por el mismo autor ... hasta Italia por tierra* [Relations of P. Teixeira about the origin, descent, and succession of the Kings of Persia and Hormuz: And a journey made by the same author to Italy by Land] (1902), he includes a reference to the Zoroastrians. He wrote that Yazdy means “of Yazd,” a city in Iran where the residents follow the ancient national religion, and have not yet chosen to receive the creeds of either Mohammad or of Ali (Teixeira 1902, 196). He then wrote, “They serve the sun, and fire, which they preserve with great care, so that in more than

three thousand five hundred years it has not been extinct for an instant” (Teixeira 1902, 196).

In 1660, Father Raphael du Mans, a French Capuchin friar, published *L’Estat de La Perse* [The State of Persia]. It was based on the many years he had spent as a missionary in the city of Esfahan, Iran. He wrote a few pages about his encounters with people he considered to be survivors of the ancient fire-worshippers. He asked them whether they believed fire was their god and they replied that they did not believe fire was god, but they did believe that it was the noblest and most profitable of the elements (du Mans 1969, 43).

As traveling in Iran became more fashionable for Europeans, du Mans’s memoirs became extremely useful for people like Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, Jean de Thévenot, and Jean Chardin (Duchesne-Guillemin 1958, 6). Tavernier was a merchant explorer who published accounts of his travels through Iran and India in *Le Six Voyages de Jean-Baptiste Tavernier en Turquie, en Perse, aut ex Indes* [The Six Voyages of Jean-Baptiste Tavernier in Turkey, Persia, and India] (1675). Like du Mans, he also wrote about his encounters with people associated with the ancient fire worshippers, and claimed that “they had a confused knowledge of the mysteries of the Christian religion” (Tavernier 1679, 97). As Duchesne-Guillemin noted, this was the first modern reference to a connection between Christianity and the Persian religion (Duchesne-Guillemin 1958, 7). Tavernier wrote that his observations were drawn from associating with Zoroastrians in

India as well as Persia (Iran), and that he had lived among the Iranian Zoroastrians in Kerman for three months (Tavernier 1684, 163, Tavernier 1724, 91, and Firby 1988, 39).

While he was in Iran, Tavernier was joined by Thévenot, another wealthy traveler interested in Eastern exploration. They traveled south and visited the ancient ruins of the Persian Empire before moving West toward the Persian Gulf. Thévenot also published accounts of his travels (Thévenot 1664 and Thévenot 1687). Despite his “rigorously exact remarks,” on the customs of modern Iranians, Thévenot appears to have made little effort to inquire closely into the religion and customs of the Zoroastrian Iranians during the five months he spent at Esfahan and his comments contain no fresh information (Firby 1988, 69). “He commented briefly on their clothes – the ‘dark yellow [i.e. undyed] color’ of the men’s clothes and the uncovered faces of the women” (Thévenot 1687, 2.110 and Firby 1988, 69). He thought the women were “commonly... very handsome” (Thévenot 1687, 2.110 and Firby 1988, 69).

The most influential European writer on Iran and the Near East during this period was Jean Chardin (1643-1713). He was a French jeweler and traveler who published accounts of his travels in Iran from 1673 to 1677. They were called *Les Voyages de monsieur le chevalier Chardin en Perse et autres lieux de l’Orient* [The Travels of Sir Jean Chardin in Persia and the Orient]. The most complete European account of the Iranian Zoroastrians from the seventeenth century is found in these texts.

Chardin wrote that he had held the great books of the Persian Zoroastrians. He claimed that “I had in my power the texts in which their religion is written down, as well

as many other ideas which are mixed up with it” (Chardin 1686, 363). Chardin described the Supreme Being of the Zoroastrian faith who transcends the battle between truth and falsehood. He provided a comprehensive account of his interactions with Zoroastrians. He also wrote about the poor conditions they endured. The Zoroastrians he encountered were excused from various fines and taxes since they were so poor (Firby 1988, 60). He wrote, that it is “well known they were a wretchedly poor sort of People and under great distress” (Chardin 1686, 98). Although he found their appearance unattractive compared to the Muslim Iranians, he attributed it to poverty rather than nature, for some women were good looking enough (Chardin 1686, 127; Firby 1988, 60).

Chardin also noted that agriculture, gardening, and vine culture were the principal occupations of the Zoroastrians (Firby 1988, 60). They regarded these occupations “as meritorious and noble...the first of all vocations, that for which the Sovereign God and the lesser gods as they say, have the most satisfaction and which they reward most amply...their Priests teaching them that the most virtuous action is to engender children and next to cultivate a soil untilled to plant a tree” (Chardin 1686, 127-128). According to Chardin’s accounts, the Zoroastrians he observed were mostly manual laborers of some sort and rarely engaged in commerce or liberal arts (Chardin 1686, 127).

In 1697, French scholar Barthélemy d’Herbelot published *Bibliothèque orientale* [Eastern Library] and noted that the “ancient Persians have it that Zoroaster was more ancient than Moses, and there are Magi who even maintain that he is none other than Abraham and call him Ibrahim Zardusht” (d’Herbelot 1697, 931). In his *Philosophical*

*Dictionary* (1764), François-Marie Arouet, also known as Voltaire, wrote that “this name *Bram, Abram*, was famous in India and Persia: some learned men even allege that he was the same legislator as the one the Greeks called Zoroaster. Others say that he was the Brahma of the Indians, but this has not been proved. But what appears very reasonable to many scholars is that this Abraham was a Chaldean or a Persian. Later on the Jews boasted that they were descended from him, as the Franks descend from Hector, and the Bretons from Tubal (Voltaire 2004, 18-19). According to the Judaic tradition, the Hebrew people were descendants of Abraham through his son Isaac. Meanwhile, the Arabs “boast that they descend from Abraham through Ishmael” (Voltaire 2004, 16). English scholar Thomas Hyde also supported the monotheist legacy of the Zoroastrians and suggested that Greek and Roman sources on Zoroastrianism were biased and inaccurate (Hyde 1760, 120). As far as Hyde was concerned, the Greeks were idolaters who could never understand the religious philosophy of the Iranians (Hyde 1760, 120).

Chardin’s accounts had a tremendous effect on numerous other scholars such as Hyde. Hyde coined the term “dualism” as a description of the heretical philosophies of Manichaeism and Mazdakism. These philosophies either relapsed into dualism or aimed to metaphorically revive some of the pre-Zoroastrian traditions. Hyde published *De Veterum Persarum et Parthorum et Medorum Religionis Historia* [A History of the Persian, Parthian and Median religion] (1700), hoping to synthesize Zoroastrianism and Christianity.



Based on the accounts of Chardin, Hyde suggested that Zoroastrianism was a monotheist religion. He accused the Greek and Roman sources of personifying Zoroastrian concepts which led to a polytheistic interpretation of the faith. He referred to Zoroaster as a monotheist reformer but in seeking to reconcile Christianity with Zoroastrianism he introduced his own bias. For Hyde, Zoroaster was not only the mentor of Pythagoras, he also prophesized about Christ while borrowing from Jewish prophets (Duchesne-Guillemin 1958, 10). In his portrayal of Zoroaster and his religion, “Hyde is bent on showing them in the light most favorable to Christian eyes” (Duchesne-Guillemin 1958, 11).

Hyde appealed to scholars to search for manuscripts of Zoroastrian texts. In 1718, George Boucher, an English resident of India, managed to procure from the Parsis of Surat a manuscript of the *Vendidad Sadah* (Eduljee 2007, 1). The book, whose text was unintelligible to its new owners, was hung on the wall of the Bodleian Library in Oxford by a chain. It remained a passing curiosity until Abraham Anquetil du Perron came across the tracings of four pages of the manuscript that were sent to Paris (Eduljee 2007, 1). Like Boucher, he answered Hyde’s call to procure more manuscripts by traveling to India to search for more ancient texts.

### **The Real Enlightenment**

Anquetil was a scholar of Indian culture who is best known for publishing a French translation of the *Avesta* (Anquetil Ed. and Tr., 1771). After he translated the *Avesta*, he also acquired a manuscript of the *Upanishads* which he published in Latin (Anquetil Ed.

and Tr., 1801). While living in India, he learned Farsi from Parsi priests. These priests translated the Avesta into Modern Farsi which Anquetil used for a French translation. The French translation was published as the *Zend Avesta* (Anquetil Ed. and Tr., 1771). It included various other Zoroastrian manuscripts as well as the Bundahishn, which was an Iranian encyclopedia of Zoroastrianism compiled during the seventh century CE (Jackson 1899, 16).

The term *Zend* refers to “interpretation” but Anquetil thought that it was a synonym for the Avestai language. This is attributed to the interpretive texts included in certain copies of the Avesta which were referred to as the “Zend.” Thus, Anquetil mistakenly used the title “Zend Avesta” to describe the translation of the Avesta itself. Hegel repeated this error based on the works of Anquetil (Hegel 1991b, 176). In a reference to the Zend (Avestai) language, Hegel wrote that until “nearly the last third of the eighteenth century, this language and all the writing composed in it, were entirely unknown to Europeans, when at length, the celebrated Frenchman Anquetil-Duperron, disclosed to us these rich treasures” (Hegel 1991b, 176).

When he returned to Europe, Anquetil claimed that Zoroastrianism was a creationist faith which is best classified as pure monotheism. However, he also blamed Zoroaster’s followers for the corruption of the tradition which also explained why Greek and Roman sources considered it a polytheist faith. Anquetil supported Hyde’s claims that Zoroastrianism was linked to the legacy of Abraham as well as the notion that it was a forerunner of Christianity (Eduljee 2007, 1). “He started the great movement of

archeological and philological research owing to which modern man was to expand the knowledge of his origins far beyond the classical and biblical horizon” (Duchesne-Guillemain 1952, 1). Until this point, it was possible for most Europeans to believe that the world had begun as is told in Genesis, and civilization with the Greeks and Romans (Duchesne-Guillemain 1952, 1). This position was shattered by the mass of discoveries about ancient Iran, India, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, to which Anquetil’s achievement was a sort of prelude (Duchesne-Guillemain 1952, 1). Nevertheless, after Anquetil’s publication of the first European translation of the Avesta, “a violent dispute broke out at once, as half the learned world denied the authenticity of the Avesta, which it pronounced a forgery” (Darmesteter 1965, xv).

The war against Anquetil was opened by William Jones, a young Oxonian, who later created the Royal Asiatic Society (Darmesteter 1965, xv). Jones was offended by the scornful tone that Anquetil adopted toward Hyde and a few other English scholars: the Avesta suffered for the fault of its introducer, Zoroaster for Anquetil (Darmesteter 1965, xv). His main argument was that any books, full of such silly tales, of laws and rules so absurd, of descriptions of gods and demons, so grotesque, could not be the work of a sage like Zoroaster, or the code of a religion so much celebrated for its simplicity, wisdom, and purity (Darmesteter 1965, xvi). Jones concluded that the Avesta was an expression of praise for a more recent form of the Zoroastrian tradition. However, according to James Darmesteter, Jones only wanted to somehow validate his belief that the ancient Persians and the authors of the Avesta were inferior to the Enlightenment

thinkers of the eighteenth century simply because they had not read or considered the ideas presented in Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert's *Encyclopedie*, published in 28 volumes between 1751 and 1772 (Darmesteter 1965, xvi).

Anquetil's works were passionately supported by Johann Friedrich Kleuker, a protestant pastor and professor of theology. In 1776, Kleuker published a German translation of the *Zend Avesta*. This translation helped some German scholars establish their country as the European headquarters for Zoroastrian studies.

As time went on, more people began to accept Anquetil's translation of the Avesta as a legitimate source. By 1825, scholars no longer disputed its authenticity since it was supported by recent advances in Sanskrit studies and comparative linguistics. Nevertheless, Anquetil's translation did include a few small mistakes which were attributed to misinterpretations of certain passages.

In 1826, the Danish philologist Rasmus Kristian Rask demonstrated that Avestai is a distinct branch of the ancient Indo-European languages even though it is closely related to Sanskrit (Rask 1834, 3). Based on this relationship, philologist Eugène Burnouf used parts of the Avesta, which had been translated into Sanskrit from Pahlavi versions by Parsi scholar Naryosangh during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, in order to improve Anquetil's translations (Darmesteter 1965, xxiv). Later, many other scholars such as Franz Bopp, Martin Haug, Karl Joseph Windischmann, Niels Ludvig Westergaard, Rudolf von Roth, Friedrich von Spiegel, Karl Friedrich Geldner, Christian Bartholomae, James Darmesteter, and Lawrence H. Mills also used Sanskrit as a reference for the

meaning of words in order to interpret and translate the Pahlavi sources of the Parsis. Darmesteter noted that “the key to the Avesta is not the Pahlavi, but the Veda” (Darmesteter 1965, xxvi). In other words, he believed that the most efficient method of interpretation for Avestai works was to compare it to the Vedic works since they were both composed in ancient Indo-European languages and contain similar content.

### **European Adventures**

The adventurous travels of European explorers, scholars, and missionaries became quite trendy in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Their curiosity about the exotic and mysterious lifestyles of the people “from the East” led to major historical discoveries. Not surprisingly, these discoveries led to a tremendous amount of reflection and self-discovery. It provided useful and provocative material for philosophical debate, especially during the era of Romanticism.

The figure of Zoroaster and the sources for the Avesta were “highly topical in the eighteenth century” (Van Den Berk 2004, 210). “It was Voltaire especially who used this religious genius as a weapon against the churches, because he regarded him as the founder of a natural religion, even before Moses founded Judaism” (Van Den Berk 2004, 210). Voltaire emphasized that “it cannot be too often repeated that the Jewish books are very recent. Ignorance and fanaticism proclaim that the *Pentateuch* is the oldest book in the world. It is evident that those of Sanchionathan, those of the first Zoroaster, the *Shasta*: the *Vedas* of the Indians – which we still have, the five *Kings* of the Chinese, finally the book of *Job* are an antiquity much more distant than any Jewish book”

(Voltaire 2004, 260). According to Allan Arkush, “Voltaire’s voluminous writings on religion contain, as is well known, a large number of attacks on the Jewish people and Judaism. Historians have offered a variety of explanations for this sustained animosity on the part of a great rationalist and proponent of religious toleration toward a people and a religion which continued, in his own day, to be victimized by unjust persecution (Emmrich 1930, 256 and Gay 1959, 353). While much remains in dispute, there does seem to be general agreement that Voltaire attacked Judaism at least in part because its most sacred texts constituted the foundation of Christianity, the religion he wished to destroy” (Arkush 1993, 223). As far as Voltaire was concerned, the Christian Church was the most serious obstacle to the age of reason, so he aimed “to expose a civilization that still regarded beliefs or disbeliefs in certain survivals of primitive folklore, which the Christian Church erected into incontestable dogmas, as matters of life and death” (Rosenthal 1955, 151-152, and 159).<sup>50</sup> However, since he found it “imprudent to attack official Christianity directly, he resorted to indirect devices” (Rosenthal 1955, 159).

The sharp tone and wit employed by Voltaire in his anti-religious rhetoric certainly produced some biased critiques of various religious figures. However, his views on religion were generally rooted in a rational deism which attributed the success of most nations to moral leadership and practical innovations. He believed that everywhere people looked they would find the masses to be foolish, imbecile and

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<sup>50</sup> “Suffice it to mention the fact that witch-hunting was still a grim reality in eighteenth-century Europe” (Rosenthal 1955, 152).

superstitious (Voltaire 1785, 121 and Rosenthal 1955, 163). “It is in conformity with this that Voltaire often distinguished what he called pure or rational religion, from a superstitious religion committed to a belief in absurd dogmas and to the observance of meaningless ceremonies” (Rosenthal 1955, 163). In an article on “Voltaire’s Philosophy of History,” Jerome Rosenthal wrote that Voltaire believed “nations were good or blessed with good ideas if they had religious and moral leaders or wise legislators and proper ideas. Thus the Chinese had the good luck of having had Confucius, the old Persians a Zoroaster, the ancient Hindus an ideal group of Brahmans, the Arabs a Mohammed. The Jews on the other hand, had the misfortune of having been cursed with a barbarian like Moses” (Rosenthal 1955, 167 and Voltaire 1785, 475).<sup>51</sup> For Voltaire, a philosopher is a *lover of wisdom*, that is to say, of truth. He stated that “the philosopher is not an enthusiast, he does not set himself up as a prophet, [and] he does not claim to be inspired by the gods. So I would not include among the philosophers the ancient Zoroaster, nor Hermes, nor the ancient Orpheus, nor any of the legislators boasted by the nations of Chaldea, Persia, Syria, Egypt, and Greece. Those who called themselves children of the gods were the fathers of imposture, and if they used lies to teach truths they were

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<sup>51</sup> “It was Voltaire himself who gave the title of philosophy of history to the first part of his *Essai sur les Moeurs et L’Esprit des Nations*” (1756) (An Essay on Universal History, the Manners, and Spirit of Nations (Mr. Nugent, Ed. and Tr. 1759) (Rosenthal 1955, 151). “Voltaire was quite explicit about the role he assigned to great men in history, and stated that ‘without morally useful extraordinary men mankind would always remain at the level of wild beasts’” (Voltaire 1785, 485 and Rosenthal 1955, 167).

unworthy to teach them, they were not philosophers: they were at the most very careful liars” (Voltaire 2004, 334).

Although Voltaire associated some of Zoroaster’s fame with religion, he recognized that his ideas were not inspired by miracles or any other concepts that he deemed incompatible with deism and natural observation. “In describing ancient Persia he exclaims: ‘Here we find a useful religion based on a belief in the immortality of the soul and in a supreme creator’” (Voltaire 1785, 53 and Rosenthal 1955, 159). Voltaire regarded the belief in a supreme creator as the product of reason. In a section on “Zoroaster” in his *Dictionary of Philosophy*, Voltaire wrote, “if it is Zoroaster who first told the men this beautiful maxim: ‘When in doubt if an action is good or bad, abstain,’ Zoroaster was the first of men after Confucius. If this beautiful lesson of morality is only found in the hundred doors *Sadder* (Sad dar), long after Zoroaster, let us bless the author of the *Sadder*, you can have ridiculous dogmas and rites with excellent morals” (Voltaire 1826, 517).<sup>52</sup> According to Jenny Rose, “just before his death, Voltaire (1694-1778),

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<sup>52</sup> *Sadder*, also known as *Sad dar*, means “one hundred doors.” “There are various texts called *Sad dar*, ‘a hundred chapters,’ of which the two most important are the *Sad dar-e nasr*, ‘the prose *Sad dar*,’ and the *Sad dar-e bondahesh*, ‘the *Sad dar* [beginning with the story] of creation.’ The other, versified, texts are dependent on these. The date of these texts has not been established. They seem to be intermediary texts between the Pahlavi works of the ninth and tenth centuries and the Persian Rivayats of the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries” (de Jong 1999, 320). These two texts were published by B.N. Dhabhar, *Saddar Nasr* and *Saddar Bundahesh* (1909). According to Voltaire, “the *Sadder* is an abridgement of the laws of Zoroaster” (Voltaire 2004, 273). Voltaire’s description of Zoroaster was translated from French. “Si c’est Zoroastre qui le premier annonca aux hommes cette belle maxime: ‘Dans le doute si une action est bonne ou mauvaise, abstiens-toi,’ Zoroastre était le premier des hommes apres Confucius. Si cette belle lecon de morale ne se trouve que dans les cent portes du *Sadder*, long-temps apres Zoroastre, bénisons l’auteur du *Sadder*. On peut avoir des dogmes et des rites tres ridicules avec une morale excellente” (Voltaire 1826, 517).



who once wrote, ‘On parle beaucoup de Zoroastre et on en parlera encore’ (‘Much is said about Zoroaster, and more will be said in the future’), was introduced to a Masonic lodge in Paris by the American activist, Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) (Rose 2011, 241 and Voltaire 1826, 517).<sup>53</sup> “However, Voltaire was extremely disappointed when the first translation ever of the *Avesta* appeared in 1771, in French, being a collection of Persian religious literature” (Van Den Berk 2004, 210). “Voltaire did not know what to do with these obscure texts” (Van Den Berk 2004, 210). Meanwhile, “Franklin had already encountered Zoroaster as the source of ‘a nice morality,’ and in a letter sent from London on January 13, 1772, to Ezra Stiles (President of Yale, 1778-1795), Franklin recommended the purchase of the work entitled ‘*Zend Avesta, or the Writings of Zoroaster,*’ containing ‘the Theological, Philosophical and Moral Ideas of that Legislator and the Ceremonies of Religious Worship that he established’” (Franklin 1987, 875 and Rose 2011, 241).<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Yuhuan Vevaina noted that in “discussing the Romantic Movement, Rose cited Voltaire, ‘Zoroaster is spoken of much, and will be spoken of again’” (Rose 2000, 149 and Vevaina 2003, 121). Evidently, Rose offered various interpretations of Voltaire’s quotes. In a section on “Zoroaster” in his *Dictionary of Philosophy*, Voltaire wrote “Quel était ce Zoroastre? Ce nom a quelque chose de grec, et on dit qu’il était Mède. Les Parsis d’aujourd’hui l’appellent *Zerdust*, ou *Zerdast*, ou *Zaradast*, ou *Zarathrust*. Il ne passe pas pour avoir été le premier du nom. On nous parle de deux autres Zoroastre, dont le premier a neuf mille ans d’antiquité; c’est beaucoup pour nous, quoique ce soit très peu pour le monde” [Who was that Zoroaster? This name has something Greek in it, and it has been said he was a Mede. Parsis today call him Zerdust or Zerdast or Zaradast or Zarathrust. He was not the first to have that name. We hear of two other Zoroasters, the first from nine thousand years ago, which is a lot for us, although it is very little to the world] (Voltaire 1826, 517).

<sup>54</sup> “This was a reference to the recently translated publication by Anquetil Duperron” (Rose 2011, 241).

In 1776, a German translation of the Avesta was welcomed with much enthusiasm (Van Den Berk 2004, 210). “In hindsight, the publication of the *Avesta* signified the beginning of reliable scientific research, research that only really took off in the twentieth century” (Van Den Berk 2004, 210). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many scholars began noticing the connections among ancient Iranian, Indian, and European cultures. In 1786, a British judge in Calcutta, Sir William Jones, published his findings that there were striking similarities in the vocabulary and grammar of Sanskrit, Persian, and several European languages (Eduljee 2007, 1).<sup>55</sup> By the 1820s, the Avestai manuscripts from Iran and India were widely studied by scholars of Sanskrit and Vedic texts who used comparative linguistics as a means of deciphering them (Eduljee 2007, 1). As Josef Wiesehöfer noted in his book on *Ancient Persia*, Anquetil’s “translation of the holy script of the Zoroastrians lent the study of Iranian languages an enormous impetus” (Wiesehöfer 1996, 234). According to Max Müller, in 1657, “when the *Upanishads* had once been translated from Sanskrit into Persian (Farsi), at that time the most widely read language of the East and understood likewise by many European scholars, they became generally accessible to all who took an interest in the religious literature of India” (Müller 1879, lvii-lviii). However, the *Upanishads* did not attract the attention of European

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<sup>55</sup> “The Aryan problem was innocuously created when in 1584 an Italian merchant, Filippo Sessetti, visited Goa and learnt some Sanskrit which he found somewhat similar to Greek and Latin, but it was William Jones’s founding of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784 and his English translation of Kālidāsa’s *Śakuntala* that the study of comparative philology received great philip. The field of Vedic studies was dominated by experts in linguistics during the nineteenth century in which Germans were in the forefront” (Dhavalikar 2006, 1).

scholars until the time of Anquetil. After he translated the *Avesta*, Anquetil also received a manuscript of a Persian translation of the *Upanishads*, and after receiving a second manuscript, he translated them into French and Latin (Müller 1879, lviii and Duchesne Guillemin 1952, 1). The Latin version was first published in 1801 (Anquetil 1882, 7).

Darius's inscription at Bisutun was also an important source for scholars that were interested in Avestai manuscripts. The inscriptions at Bisutun represented a link between modern Farsi and Avestai. In 1778, German explorer Carsten Niebuhr published *Reisebeschreibung von Arabien und anderen umliegenden Ländern* [Travelogue of Arabia and Neighboring Countries] which included a copy of the inscription made in 1764 (Niebuhr 1778, 113). Georg Friedrich Grotefend, who was an expert in ancient inscriptions, used Niebuhr's transcriptions to decipher ancient Persian texts (Wiesehöfer 1996, 232). Grotefend deciphered a portion of the Ancient Iranian Alphabet in 1802 (Grotefend 1837, 17-18). He realized that unlike the Semitic scripts which it evolved from, it was alphabetic and each word was separated by a slanted symbol (Sayce 1908, 11). However, European scholars were unable to decipher the meaning of the inscription until 1838, when Sir Henry Rawlinson used Greek texts to match each character in the Bisutun inscriptions (Rawlinson 1846, 8-53 and Pringle 2006, 184). The ancient Persian inscriptions at Persepolis and Bisutun were deciphered at the same time by Eugene Burnouf in Paris, by Christian Lassen in Bonn, and by Sir Henry Rawlinson in Iran

(Darmesteter 1965, xxv). The names of Kings and dynasties were mentioned in Greek sources from Herodotus, Diogenes, Plato, and Aristotle.

The advances in comparative linguistics during this period were inseparable from the spiritual discoveries of European explorers and scholars who traveled to the Eastern part of the world. This union of faith and reason epitomized the rhetoric of the Romantic philosophers. During the late 1800s, the Romantic philosophers discussed the decline of feeling and spiritual reason. The Romantic Movement represented an antithesis to the cold rational individualism associated with a preceding movement known as the Enlightenment. One of the early critics of the Enlightenment was the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder. According to Michael Stausberg, he was electrified by Anquetil's works on the history of Zoroastrianism (Stausberg 2005, 1). In 1774, he published *Another Philosophy of History* in which he outlined distinct stages of human history and predicted that enlightened nationalism would lead to mutual respect among nations. His philosophy initiated the rebellious form of German Romanticism which culminated in the works of G.W.F. Hegel.

In his lectures on the *Philosophy of History*, which were delivered between 1821 and 1831, Hegel asserted that continuous history began in Iran with Zoroaster's discovery of the Universal Spirit (Hegel 1991b, 173). He organized history into four distinct phases which he referred to as the "Oriental, Greek, Roman, and German realms." Hegel's phases of history overlapped with the gradual westward expansion of human civilization, but each phase was invariably defined by the rise and decline of spiritual life. The

westward expansion of human civilization followed the pattern of the sun (Hegel 1991b, 103). Hegel was undoubtedly influenced by recent trends in Asian studies. He read the Zend-Avesta in Kleuker's translation but it is uncertain whether he was aware of the French translation by Anquetil (Hodgson 2006, 305).<sup>56</sup>

In the mid-nineteenth century, German philologist Martin Haug isolated the Gathas as the hymns of Zoroaster (Haug 1865, 1). The followers of Zoroaster memorized the exact pronunciation of the Gathas, which preserved their linguistic form, but the "less sacred" works were handed down in a more fluid oral transmission, which was partly memorized and partly composed by various generations (Boyce 1984, 2). There are parts of the Avesta and several other Pahlavi texts which indicated the exceptional importance of the Gathas. Haug also suggested that although Zoroaster's existential philosophy could be described as dualist, the Gathas clearly demonstrate that his theology was monotheist (Eduljee 2007, 3 and Haug 1865, 3).

As Mary Boyce wrote, "struggling as a pioneer with these baffling hymns, Haug managed to understand Zoroaster to have preached a strict monotheism—stricter even than that of the Hebrew prophets—rejecting while he did so all rituals of sacrifice and worship, apart from prayer" (Boyce 1975, ix and Haug 1865, 1). Haug also explained that rituals were a violation of Zoroaster's original teachings. Zoroaster declared that God was in our mind, leaving no reason for religious rituals, shrines, and animal sacrifice

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<sup>56</sup> Hegel was aware of the Parsi community in India and distinguished between the "Parsis" and the "Persians" (Hegel 1991b, 246).

besides unjustified material gain (Yasna 32.12 and Yasna 46.4; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914, Haug 1865, 15, Boyce 1975, x, and Tagore 2010, 10). Calendrical observances and feasts “were plainly an admirable way of creating for Zoroaster's first followers a feeling of solidarity and shared aims; and through the dedication of each feast they were reminded of fundamental doctrine, an important function in a society which had no books, statues or shrines, but found religious images in natural phenomena” (Boyce 2005, 5).

According to Haug, the structured rituals of the Zoroastrian faith were introduced by Zoroaster’s followers (Haug 1865, 25). This clearly contradicted the founding principles of Zoroaster’s philosophy. In turn, Haug believed that Zoroaster “had been the bearer of a rational and ethical theism, which was so remote from the concepts and customs of his own people that, though they brought themselves to accept his teachings, they could not long live their austerity, [and] soon distorted them, relapsing more or less into their former beliefs and ways” (Boyce 1975, x).

### **The Vedas and the Gathas**

There is no standard translation of the Gathas or the rest of the Avesta. The antiquity of the Avestai language provides unique difficulties of interpretation. Nevertheless, there are numerous translations of the Avesta in European languages that are based on the content that was preserved by the Parsis using Pahlavi script. Many scholars such as Darmesteter, Mills, and Bartholomae based their interpretations of the Avesta on comparative linguistics, in which they used Sanskrit translations as well as their knowledge of various other languages as a reference for the meaning of Avestai

terms. According to Mills, “no one should think of writing with originality on the Gathas, or the rest of the Avesta, who has not long studied the Vedic Sanskrit, and no one should think of pronouncing ultimate opinions on the Gathas who has not to a respectable degree mastered the Pahlavi commentaries” (Mills 1887, x). However, scholars such as Duchesne-Guillemin and Boyce argued that the Zoroastrian tradition as we have it today is the key to the Avesta. Although Boyce is perhaps the most notable scholar of Zoroastrian history she never published a translation of the Avesta.

The controversy about interpretation can be traced back to the year after the death of Burnouf, on May 28, 1852 (Darmesteter 1879, xxv). It is known as the “battle of the methods, which is the dispute between those who, to interpret the Avesta, rely chiefly or exclusively on the tradition, and those who rely only on comparison to the Vedas” (Darmesteter 1879, xxv). The “traditional school” emphasized that even though Avestai and the Avesta are closely related to Sanskrit and the Vedas, the comparative method overlooks the notion that the relationship between the Avesta and the Vedas is not identity, and that “what interests the Avestai scholar is not to know how far the Avesta agrees with Sanskrit, but what it is in itself: what he [or she] seeks in the Avesta, is the Avesta, not the Veda” (Darmesteter 1879, xxvi). “Both the Vedic language and the Vedas are quite unable to teach us what became in [Iran] of those elements, which are common to the two systems, a thing which tradition alone can teach us” (Darmesteter 1879, xxvi). Although the use of these methods may lead to significantly different translations of certain words in the Avesta, these methods ought not to oppose, but assist

one another, as they are intended to instruct us about the same kind of facts, albeit two kinds of facts quite different and independent (Darmesteter 1879, xxvii). The tradition provides information on the essence and evolution of the religion, while the Vedas provide a source for its origin. “Therefore it cannot happen that the tradition and the Veda will really contradict one another, if we take care to ask from each only what it knows, from one the present, and the past from the other” (Darmesteter 1879, xxvii).

Darmesteter published an English version of the *Vendidad* portion of the *Zend Avesta* (1879) as part of the *Sacred Books of the East* collection which was edited by Friedrich Max Müller.<sup>57</sup> As mentioned, the term “Zend-Avesta” is mistakenly used by many western scholars to describe the Avesta itself since Anquetil thought the term “Zend” referred to a specific language rather than interpretative commentaries.

Darmesteter published the second volume of the *Zend Avesta* (1883) which included the *Yashts, Sirozahs, and Nyayis*. Lawrence H. Mills published the final volume of the *Zend Avesta* (1887), as Darmesteter was apparently unable to find the time to finish his assigned portion of the *Sacred Books* collection (Mills 1887, ix). Mills translated the

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<sup>57</sup> According to Darmesteter, the Zend-Avesta is the sacred book of the Parsis, that is to say, of the few remaining followers of that religion which reigned over Persia at the time when Omar, the second successor of Mohammad, overthrew the Sassanian Dynasty (642 CE), and which has been called Dualism, Mazdeism, or Magism, or Zoroastrianism, or Fire-Worship [as an insulting misinterpretation], according to its main tenet, or its supreme God, or its priests, or its supposed founder, or its apparent object of worship [which] has been most in view (Darmesteter 1965, xi). Darmesteter included the small number of Zoroastrians in Iran (estimated 9,000 people in 1879) when he mentioned “Parsis” (estimated 150,000 people in 1879) even though the term specifically refers to the Zoroastrians who traveled to India after the Muslim conquest of Iran. In regard to the “apparent object of worship” as described by Darmesteter, it is important to note that Zoroastrians also hold a great deal of respect for water. We can say that they worship water just as much as they “worship” fire.



*Gathas*, along with the remaining portion of the *Yasna*, *the Visparad*, *the Afrinagan*, *the Gahs*, and “miscellaneous fragments.” He presented his translation of the *Gathas* (Yasna 28-34, 43-51, and 53) before his translation of the remaining portion of the *Yasna* (Yasna 1-27, 35-42, 52, 54-72). Later, Christian Bartholomae published a German translation of the *Gathas* (1905) with a glossary of individual Gathic terms.

In 1914, Scottish philosopher and writer Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie published *The Hymns of Zoroaster: usually called the Gathas, for the first time made entirely accessible by transliterated text, translation, dictionary and grammar, introductory tables, analysis, higher and Biblical criticism, complete concordance, and subject index*. Guthrie’s translation “attempted to combine the best from the labors of the best scholars” (Guthrie 1914, 2-3). In certain sections, Guthrie provided varying translations of specific terms by both Mills and Bartholomae for comparison.

Guthrie based most of his translation on Bartholomae’s general Iranian dictionary rather than his glossary of Gathic terms, claiming that a general dictionary is typically more reliable than a special dictionary since “what we gain in depth we lose in breadth” (Guthrie 1914, 2-3). “We are uncertain as to the precise meaning of some of the chief terms – such as, for example, those that are usually translated as *spirit*, *righteousness*, or *covenant*, and the result is that the more literary and attractive the translation, the less actual value it has” (Guthrie 1914, ii).<sup>58</sup> According to Guthrie, “the English

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<sup>58</sup> This quote can be found in the *Preface* section, which has page numbers that reset and therefore overlap with the first few pages of a section with introductory tables and outlines.

interpretations were the simplest that could be used conscientiously in order to avoid any dogmatic prejudice, or ecclesiastical association – the purpose of the present writer being as far as possible to restore the Gathas to that classification of literature to which they really belong—not dogmatic theology, but world-wide prophecy” (Guthrie 1914, 3).

Guthrie’s translations of the Gathas are not far from Mills’ translations. Guthrie’s translation of the first verse of the Gathas is: “With outstretched hands; and by reverent prayer for support, O Mazda, (mindful) I will entreat as the first (blessing) of the Spenta Mainyu (bountiful mentality)—that all (my) actions, (may be performed) with (the aid of) Asha (justice), (That I may receive) the understanding of Vohu Manah (good disposition), and that I may thus satisfy the Soul of the Bovine (creation)” (Yasna 28.1; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). Lawrence H. Mills translates it as; “With venerating (desire) for this (gift) of gracious help, O Mazda, and stretching forth my hands (to Thee) I pray for the first (blessing) of (Thy) bountiful Spirit ; (this is, I beseech of Thee that my) actions (toward) all (may be performed) in (the Divine) Righteousness; and with this I implore from Thee the understanding of Thy Benevolent Mind, in order that I may propitiate the Soul of the Kine [Cows] (our herds and folk, which cries so bitterly to Thee)” (Yasna 28.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 17).<sup>59</sup> The next verse is translated by Guthrie as: “(And this do I)

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<sup>59</sup> Mills’s translation of the Gathas seems to contain an additional verse in the beginning of chapter twenty eight which he presented in parenthesis before the first verse. He also began his translation of the Gathas with the 29<sup>th</sup> chapter followed by the 28<sup>th</sup> chapter, before he resumed the generally accepted numerical order of the Gathas with the 30<sup>th</sup> chapter. According to Mills, the 29<sup>th</sup> chapter, which is the second in the manuscripts of the Gatha Ahunavaiti, is placed here as in a more natural order since it may be regarded as containing the terminus a quo of the divine revelation (Mills 1887, 3). The Soul of the Kine, as representing the herds of the holy Iranian people, their only means of honorable livelihood, raises its voice,

who entreat You, O Ahura Mazda (mindful lord), through Vohu Manah (good mind or disposition), to grant me both lives, that of the body and of the mind, with the felicity with which Mazda, through truth, supports those to whom Mazda gives the two-lives for their comfort” (Yasna 28.2; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). The basic content is similar to Mills’s translation, “And therefore, O Great Creator, the Living Lord! (inspired) by Thy Benevolent Mind, I approach You, (and beseech of Thee) to grant me (as a bountiful gift) for both the worlds, the corporeal and (for that) of mind, those attainments which are to be derived from the (Divine) Righteousness, and by means of which (that personified Righteousness within us) may introduce those who are its recipients into beatitude and glory!” (Yasna 28.2; Mills 1887, 18). In the first verse of the next chapter translated by Guthrie, “The soul of the Bovine (creation) complained to You: For whose benefit did ye fashion me? Who shaped me? Fury (rages) against me; violence and cruelty, maltreatment and roughness oppress me; I have no herdsman except You: therefore it is You (I beg) to procure me good pasture” (Yasna 29.1; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). Like Guthrie’s translation, the translation by Mills is characterized by a call to end the cruelty toward cattle. Zoroaster stated, “Unto you (O Ahura and Asha!), the Soul of the Cattle (our sacred herds and folk) cried aloud: For whom did ye create me, and by whom did ye fashion me? On me comes the assault of wrath, and of violent power, the blow of desolation, audacious insolence, and thievish might. None other pasture-giver have I

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and expressing the profoundest needs of an afflicted people, addresses Ahura and His Divine Order, Asha, in bitterness (Mills 1887, 3).

than you, there do ye teach me good (tillage) for the fields (my only hope of welfare)” (Yasna 29.1; Mills 1887, 6).

Ebrahim Poure Davoud published a translation of the *Avesta* (1927) in modern Farsi. This version is based on Bartholomae’s German translation of Pahlavi texts. Duchesne-Guillemin published his own translation of the *Avesta* in French (1948) which M. Henning translated into English (1952). Duchesne-Guillemin was apparently unsatisfied with previous translations, since scholars like Darmesteter denied the antiquity of the Gathas despite linguistic evidence in order to support the supremacy of the Greek tradition, while the Swedish scholar Henrik Samuel Nyberg, without denying its antiquity, sought to deny its philosophical character by portraying Zoroaster as a shamanistic Mongol sorcerer (Duchesne-Guillemin 1952, 3). According to Duchesne-Guillemin, “Zoroaster will be revealed to us as an innovator who crossed at one step a decisive stage in the history of human thought” (Duchesne-Guillemin 1952, 2). “Zoroaster is, in fact, [and] in the full sense of the word; *the first theologian*” (Duchesne-Guillemin 1952, 2).<sup>60</sup>

Henning’s English translation of Duchesne-Guillemin’s French version is not significantly different from Guthrie’s translation besides subtle differences such as an “ox-soul” instead of “Bovine Creation,” “Wise Lord” for “Ahura Mazda (mindful),” and

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<sup>60</sup> “Zoroaster was a priest by profession. He has said so, and he manifestly knew the formulae, the prayers, and the poetry which were inherited from ancient times” (Duchesne-Guillemin 1952, 4). His hymns were composed in a priestly language with complex metaphors. They are the relics of a major social and philosophical transformation in regard to religious observances.

“Righteousness” as “Justice.” However, Duchesne-Guillemin rearranged the order of the chapters of the *Gathas*, aiming deliberately at a better orientation of the reader (Duchesne-Guillemin 1952, 23). Duchesne-Guillemin claimed that “it is not known in what order the *Gathas* were composed” (Duchesne-Guillemin 1952, 23). Following the practice of Persian poetry, they are arranged according to the length of their verses (Duchesne-Guillemin 1952, 23). In a review of Henning’s translation of Duchesne-Guillemin’s French translation of the *Gathas*, Ilya Gershevitch praised her efforts in providing an additional English translation and noted that “anybody can now see what the author thinks Zoroaster said” (Gershevitch 1952, 174). “To expect more would not be fair, since out of the 238 surviving Gathic stanzas scarcely less than 190 are partly or completely incomprehensible” (Gershevitch 1952, 174).

In 1959, Helmut Humbach provided a new German translation of the *Gathas* [*Die Gathas des Zarathustra*] which Gershevitch referred to as “the most original and unsettling study of the *Gathas* which has appeared since the days of [Friedrich Carl] Andreas and [Jacob] Wackernagel” (Gershevitch 1962, 367). Andreas and Wackernagel collaborated on a translation of the *Gathas* (1909) based on Andreas’s theories about the transmission of Avestai texts during the Parthian period (Windfuhr 1971, 121). Although the use of the Pahlavi script can be traced back to the Parthian period (248 BCE-224 CE), the general opinion of most historians is that the Avestai alphabet was not developed until the third century CE, or the early part of the Sassanian era (Windfuhr 1971, 121 and Boyce 1984, 1). Humbach’s translation certainly differs from previous translations, and

“at times the difference involves no greater degree of uncertainty than what attends the interpretations he wishes to displace, but more often than not he oversteps the limits of prudence” (Gershevitch 1962, 367).

Gershevitch believed that the “the Gathas are dangerous literature,” and “an intensive preoccupation with them easily leads to a conviction, seldom shared by anybody else, that one understands them completely, or almost” (Gershevitch 1962, 368). Besides contextual studies, “the lexicon of the Avesta is constantly being revised, and a great number of Avestai words have been elucidated by reference to Indian cognates on the basis of new evidence from later Iranian [sources]” (Mackenzie 1972, 452). “The lexicon of the [Vedic language] is often illuminated in return” (Mackenzie 1972, 452). So although there are a variety of English translations of Avestai texts in various forms, Zoroastrian scholars should welcome any attempt to compile and improve these translations given some of the more recent studies in the fields of history, archaeology, and linguistics.

### **Conclusion**

Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, various travelers and missionaries brought knowledge of the Zoroastrian tradition to European scholars. During this period, there was relatively little written material produced by the Zoroastrians themselves (Firby 1988, 15). The Zoroastrians of Iran had been gradually reduced to a poor and intellectually isolated community that was mainly concerned with the preservation of their core teachings (Boyce 1984, 5). Though this does not deny the importance of any

internal material, scholars were forced to rely heavily upon external sources, in particular, upon the accounts of European travelers (Firby 1988, 15). In the following chapters, I will argue that these accounts had a major influence on modern European philosophy, especially in Germany, where it dramatically altered the history of Aryan nationalism.

## Chapter Three

### Zoroastrianism and the Philosophy of History

The subject of this chapter is the influence of Zoroastrianism on post-Enlightenment European philosophy of history. It begins with a brief background of how Zoroastrianism changed the idea of history as well as a review of various studies concerning the philosophy of history.<sup>61</sup> To propose a philosophy of history, one must engage in reflection on history as a whole and search for a common theme or purpose. In the story of history, a common theme is analogous to the protagonist of a theatrical play. For post-enlightenment philosophers such as Herder and Hegel, the protagonist in the story of history was the Universal Spirit.

#### The Phenomenology of Mind

The belief in a Universal Spirit was first achieved through the intellectual conclusions of Zoroaster. This marked the first instance for which we have any evidence in which a human realized that that all humans could be united by the phenomenology of mind. It led to a huge transformation in social thought, which led to a more philosophical

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<sup>61</sup> According to the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, philosophy of history refers to the philosophical study of human history and the attempts to record and interpret it (Audi 1995, 584). During the fourteenth century, Abu Zayd Ibn Khaldun wrote a detailed volume on the study of history in which he noted the difference between critical history (historiography) and speculative history (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 5). Speculative history can be defined as the study of the intelligibility of the historical process as a whole (Fillion 2005, 47). In the nineteenth century, Hegel listed three main methods of treating history, which he called “original, reflective, and philosophical” (Hegel 1991b, 1). Although he carefully examined and explained each method, he claimed that the first two do not require explanation for they are self-evident (Hegel 1991b, 8). He included critical history as a component of reflective history (Hegel 1991b, 7). As a general definition, “Hegel claimed that the Philosophy of History means nothing but the *thoughtful consideration of it*” (Hegel 1991b, 8).



and continuous perspective of human history. The followers of Mazda moved away from the perception that humans played an indirect role in history, in which their livelihood depended on religious sacrifices and rituals. They were invited to actively free themselves from the cosmological struggle of light and darkness.

Zoroastrianism was the first monotheist philosophy for which we have any evidence. Based on the pastoral setting and their linguistic connection to Vedic texts, the hymns of Zoroaster may be dated as far back as 1400 BCE (Boyce 1975, 44). According to the Avesta, the creator is the Universal Spirit which presides over man, and the human mind is the manner in which the creator interacts with the universe. As it says, “I pray for you, O Ahura Mazda, through Vohu Manah (good mind or disposition), to grant me both lives, that of the body and of the mind, with the felicity with which Mazda, through truth, supports those to whom Mazda gives the two-lives for their comfort” (Yasna 28.2; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). A good disposition meant that a person was “mindful to watch over the soul of the Bovine creation” (Yasna 28.4; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). In other words, justice was personified by the people who protected sheep and cattle from the religious sacrifices of raiding nomads.

According to Zoroaster, the Universal Spirit can be found in the human mind. In Farsi, and many Indo-European languages, “man” refers to “oneself,” which eventually became the term for “humanity.” In the Avesta, it says that Ahura Mazda, the creator of the universe, is one with Spenta Mainyu, the “bounteous spirit” which presides over man (Yasna 36.1; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). The term “Spenta” translates as “bounteous” and

“Mainyu” translates as “spirit.” The term “Main” is derived from the term “man” and the word connotes his or her ability to think by adding “yu” (Gershevitch 1985, 641). As mentioned, Vohu Mana is the term for “good mind or disposition.” It is antithetical to the hostile and angry disposition associated with “Angra Mainyu” (Yasna 45.2; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). Thus, in the Zoroastrian tradition, spirit and mind are practically synonymous in both philosophical and linguistic terms. The core philosophy is mainly a guide to spiritual freedom through moral enlightenment. It is a fusion of the abstract spiritual realm with the concrete moral lessons of daily life.

#### The History of the Philosophy of History

Although many philosophers of history borrowed from the Zoroastrian tradition with little or no acknowledgment, there were rare cases when its importance was not overlooked. In his lectures on the *Philosophy of History*, Hegel stated that human history began in Iran due to Zoroaster’s discovery of the Universal Spirit (Hegel 1991b, 173). For Hegel, history was the unique process in which the Universal Spirit became completely conscious of itself. As mentioned, Hegel organized history into four distinct phases based on the rise and decline of spiritual life.

There were many other philosophers such as Johann Gottfried Herder, Karl Marx, and Arnold Toynbee who identified distinct realms or stages in history before and after Hegel’s lectures. The rhetoric of stages and phases is a common theme among philosophers of history, as well as “political leaders.” When Alexander invaded Iran he tried to impose a new calendar based on the “Age of Alexander” (Shahbazi 1977, 25).

The Roman Emperor Julius Caesar also introduced calendar reforms to honor his legacy. For secular Western historians, the so-called “common era” was marked by what Christian historians consider the “year of the lord” or the approximate birth of Jesus Christ. For Islamic historians, the “common era” began with Mohammad’s trip to Medina. In the twentieth century CE, Hitler’s plan to save Germany was based on a three stage plan where the country would rearm, industrialize, and fight an epic war against France and Russia (Hitler 1934, 263). This set of examples illustrates the millenarian legacy of Zoroastrianism and its relevance to the philosophy of history. Zoroaster proclaimed his discovery as the beginning of a “New Day,” which was an early instance of a person marking a distinct phase of history. This “New Day” was also the first day of the New Year, which Iranians celebrate during the Spring Equinox. An Equinox symbolizes cosmological alignment and equilibrium, as well as the belief in immortality, regeneration, and God worship. It is an ideal moment to begin a new stage. Zoroaster understood that the spring season festivals which inspired his discovery represented the beginning of a new stage in history. It marked a clear transition to monotheist thought.

Lastly, another major reason why Zoroastrianism is particularly relevant to the philosophy of history is its unique connection to the dialectical tradition of juxtaposition and interaction. The sources which compose the Zoroastrian tradition are characterized by a dialectical style of argumentation in both style and content. This is particularly pertinent to the philosophy of history articulated by Karl Marx, which was a critique of Hegelian idealism. For Marx, history was driven by the antithesis of Spirit, otherwise

known as Matter. Although Marx attempted to re-articulate Hegel's communitarian thought from a purely material perspective, he adapted his dialectical method of argumentation.

### **Light and Darkness**

There are a variety of terms which have been used to describe the dualist perception of the universe but the core idea is shared across several ancient cultures.<sup>62</sup> As Arnold Toynbee wrote in *A Study of History*, "the idea that the dialectical interaction of opposites culminates in progressive motion has served in many other ages and societies as a key for understanding the nature of creation and the process of growth: in Greece the forces were identified as love and hate, in China as Yin and Yang, in the modern West as thesis and antithesis" (Toynbee 1972, 74). In the Iranian languages, the terms for thesis and antithesis, or creation and destruction, are synonymous with the cosmological struggle between light and darkness. In the Zoroastrian tradition, Ahura Mazda (Light and Wisdom) is the Creator of Order and the preserver of Truth (Yasna 30.3-5 and 44.3;

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<sup>62</sup> On our planet, time is measured by the perpetual interaction between light and darkness, which can be personified as the struggle between spirit and matter, good and evil, or idealism and materialism. Since light was historically associated with wisdom and adequate weather conditions, many cultures associated its antithesis with the feeling of misfortune. Regardless of how these entities were characterized, they are best defined by their opposites. For instance, the light that is produced by the Sun or a wood-fire is the result of the partial destruction or transformation of matter, but this light is only able to express its power when it reflects on some other piece of matter. Furthermore, there will always be some level of relative darkness in certain areas because an area that shines absorbs the light which shines on it and casts a shadow in an area where the light may have passed. Thus, the forces of the universe have the ability to change the path of their opposites but it is only possible through interaction and change. Many creatures in the universe are able to observe this process through the phenomenology of eyesight, which is based on the absorption of the light which reflects off matter.

Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). The followers of Ahura Mazda refuse to follow the destructive spirit known as Angra Mainyu (Deceitful Mind), so they keep away from spoiled food and everlasting darkness (Yasna 31.20; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). The content in the Avesta is a prime example of the dialectical process identified by Toynbee and a synthesis of the dualist perspective.

### The Light of Zoroaster

The primary evidence for the origin of Iranian culture and language is found in spiritual cosmology. The Iranian languages are classified under the Indo-Iranian branch of Indo-European languages (Rask 1834, 3, Testen 2011, 289-290, and Bertoncini et al. 2012, 391). The Eastern and Western branches of Old Iranian languages are both rooted in the Avestai language but the Eastern branch initially maintained a closer connection to the protolanguage (Gershevitch 1985, 640).

As mentioned in Chapter One, Avestai is the oldest recorded Iranian language and it is named after the Avesta. The Avesta is a collection of sacred Zoroastrian texts and it is the sole source for the Avestai language.<sup>63</sup> The Avesta is a testament to the first monotheist faith since it is believed to describe the discovery of a Universal Spirit. However, as Peter Clark points out, Zoroastrianism does not fit the narrow definitions of monotheism or dualism, and this makes it difficult to categorize (Clark 1998, 7).<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> The Avesta was preserved by Parsi priests using the Pahlavi script.

<sup>64</sup> For the purposes of this study, religious dualism refers to the belief or presence of opposing forces or spirits.

The origin of evil is the fundamental issue which makes monotheistic religions difficult to categorize. Monotheism is the term used to define a belief in one supreme exalted God who alone has the characteristics of a divine being (Clark 1998, 7). Dualism has traditionally been understood in a variety of ways in the study of religions. “First, it states that reality has a radical twofold nature, and describes the distinction between God and creation in that the two are separate. Second, it says that there are two co-existent and fundamentally opposite forces of good and evil, having neither beginning nor end, which are totally irreconcilable, and thus that the evil in the world cannot be attributed to an all-good God, as is the case with monotheism, but to an adversarial demonic figure who has no dependence on the all-good God, and this leads into an ethical dualism which says that humanity is caught up in this battle between the two forces” (Clark 1998, 7). These definitions are restrictive, and neither is completely descriptive of Zoroastrianism, which makes it difficult to say that Zoroastrianism is monotheistic, dualistic, or a unique combination of both. Meanwhile, the tradition itself has accommodated without too much difficulty scholars who favor all three interpretations (Clark 1998, 7).

Prior to the rise of the Persian Empire, religious priests propagated the belief that humans were stuck in a cosmological struggle between light and darkness. The Avesta documents this common perception of dualism before the development of Zoroaster’s doctrine. It said that “there are two spirits in the beginning” (Clark 1998, 7). Zoroaster declared that, in the beginning, both Mentalities became conscious of each other, and while the deceitful one chose to perpetrate evil, the most Holy Spirit chose the truth, just

like the followers of Ahura Mazda (Yasna 30.3-5; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). As Hegel mentioned in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* [*The Philosophy of Fine Art*] (1818-1829), in the religion of the ancient Persians, the light is God, and since this is taken in the sense of the good and just being which disseminates life and its benefits everywhere, it is not merely an image of the good principle but the sovereign good itself (Hegel 1879, 11). It is the same with its opposite, as darkness is considered the impure element in everything – the hideous, the evil, the principle of death and destruction (Hegel 1879, 11).

A variety of other cultures, such as the Indo-Aryans, the Greeks, and the Chinese, also associated divinities with their antitheses in order to express a dualist perspective on the world. For instance, the key to enlightenment in the Hindu philosophy was to transcend the conflicting spirits of the universe. In the East Asian philosophies of religion, the Yin-Yang symbol represented the proper balance of conflicting spirits. In Greece, dualism was illustrated by love and hate (Toynbee 1972, 74). There are many other dialectical concepts which describe this perspective. Based on Aristotle's description of the Pythagorean Table of Opposites in his lectures on *Metaphysics*, some of the common groupings could be described as light and darkness, day and night, sun and moon, male and female, or good and evil (Aristotle 1984, 1559).<sup>65</sup> “The smallest unit of time in ancient calendars was the 24-hour day, defined by the alternation of

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<sup>65</sup> According to Aristotle, the Pythagoreans believed that the essence of the universe is a numerological pattern governed by ten principles which they arranged in two columns: limited and unlimited, odd and even, one and plurality, right and left, male and female, resting and moving, straight and curved, light and darkness, good and bad, square and oblong (Aristotle 1984, 1559).

darkness and light. Most peoples reckoned this unit to begin at sunset but for the Homeric Greeks it began at dawn, and this is the Zoroastrian usage also, and so presumably that of the Old Avestai people” (Boyce 2005, 2).

The daily struggles between the conflicting spirits of the universe overlapped with the repetitive cycles of seasonal change. Consequently, the winter solstice represented the moment when the spirit of light was able to resist the attacks of the dark spirit and begin recovering its relative strength. After the winter solstice, the period of daytime begins to get longer but it is still shorter than the period of nighttime.

The spring equinox represented the start of a period where the spirit of light gains enough strength to overcome the dark spirit leading to a rebirth of the lifecycle. It leads to longer days than nights until the summer solstice when the dark spirit is able to resist the momentum of the spirit of light and begin recovering its strength. Although the weather is relatively warm and daytime is longer than nighttime, daytime begins to decrease.

During the autumnal equinox, the dark spirit was believed to conquer the spirit of light. At this point, the period of daytime continues to get shorter than the period of nighttime. As the harvesting season begins to close and the evil spirit gains momentum, it culminates in a harsh winter, or a season of rapid destruction that continues to get worse until the winter solstice. As mentioned in the beginning of the description of the seasonal cycle, the winter solstice represented the moment when the spirit of light was able to resist the attacks of the dark spirit and begin recovering its relative strength. The



ancient Iranians and Indo-Aryans held major festivals and feasts to celebrate the seasons and solstices.<sup>66</sup> According to the *Bundahishn*, an Iranian encyclopedia from the seventh century CE, Zoroaster discovered the Universal Spirit at the precise moment of twilight during a spring festival (*Bundahishn* 25.1-26; Anklesaria (Tr.) 1956, 114-115).

### The Life

Zoroaster is known in the Iranian speaking world as “Zardosht,” which is derived from “Zaratushtra.” The term “ushtra” relates to the term for light and astrological knowledge but it may have originally been used to describe a golden camel. Zoroaster’s name is very metaphoric as it is associated with terms related to purity, light, and pastoral culture.

Zoroaster’s ideas were well known among the Aryan tribes prior to the establishment of the Persian Empire. According to the accounts of Zoroaster’s life in the *Denkard* and *Bundahishn*, at the age of thirty, Zoroaster attended a spring festival and at dawn he went to fetch water from a nearby river for the haoma ceremony (*Bundahishn* 25.1-26; Anklesaria (Tr.) 1956, 114-115 and Boyce 1975, 184). This event marked his discovery of the Universal Spirit. The haoma ritual is an ancient Indo-Iranian tradition.

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<sup>66</sup> “Internal evidence in the Old Avestai texts indicates that Zoroaster's own people were settled pastoralists. As such, they both tilled the soil and kept cattle on pasture lands, and so could have celebrated an autumn new year's day, as the time not only of harvest but also of ploughing for the following season. But they, and the Old Avestai people before them, must have joined as well in the almost universal celebration of spring, marked by the growing predominance of daylight hours. This celebration would accordingly be at, or soon after, the spring equinox, but how accurately this was calculated by the Avestai people is not known. Correspondingly, the harvest festival could have been held at, or soon after, the autumn one, the equinoxes being for ancient peoples the most readily observable of the noteworthy points of a solar year” (Boyce 2005, 3).

According to Boyce, “the evidence of the Brahman (solemn and orderly rites) serves to establish that there is a long common tradition behind the Zoroastrian haoma-ritual and the offerings to fire, a tradition whose preservation over millennia presupposes the equally long existence of a professional priesthood, able to maintain and transmit it” (Boyce 1970, 22 and Boyce 1982, 175). Haoma is an herb that was typically pressed into tea but the botanical identity of it is unclear. Based on the writings in the Avesta, it is a plant with stems, roots, and branches (Yasna 10.5; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 241). In turn, most scholars conclude that haoma tea may have included ephedra stems. The term “haoma” is related to the Vedic term “soma,” and both terms are rooted in the action of “pressing or pounding” (Boyce 1975, 157). In the Rig Veda, haoma-soma is described as highly intoxicant but it could be metaphoric (Mandala 8.1; Griffith (Tr.) 1891, 134-139). In the Iranian and Indo-Aryan traditions, the water fetched right before dawn was considered to be the purest (Boyce 1975, 185). As Zoroaster entered the river to draw some water for the haoma ritual, the moment of dawn and the sudden emergence of bright sunlight inspired him to recognize the power of the Universal Spirit.

Based on the pastoral setting and linguistic connections to Vedic texts, it seems that the belief in a Universal Spirit was first achieved by Zoroaster. Zoroaster engaged in deep meditation and careful calculation, especially during moments of cosmological unity such as the equinoxes and solstices. The cosmological unity symbolized by the spring festival helped Zoroaster reject the existence of creative and destructive spirits. If one focuses on the exact moment of dawn, which could possibly align with the exact

moment of an equinox, it represents astronomical alignment in the form of a zero value. In other words, that particular moment symbolizes the non-reality of conflicting spirits because the number zero represents balance and equilibrium. The morning hours in the river are very metaphoric since the eventual emergence of sunlight allows a person to see his or her own reflection in the water, helping people recognize the spirit within themselves.

### The Practicalities of Tolerance

The discovery of the universal spirit was not a divine miracle or a random event which happened to occur in Iran. It has been attributed to the philosophical reflections of many cultures. There are numerous Zoroastrian principles that can be traced back to the period before the divergence of the Iranians and Indo-Aryans. There are also profound similarities between the mythical figures and divine spirits described in the Vedas and the Avesta (Clark 1998, 4). While the philosophy of Zoroastrianism is unique, its development resulted from a synthesis of ideas from numerous other cultures.

The symbols, sculptures, and remnants of creative and destructive spirits from other cultures, such as the Jews and Babylonians, were not destroyed by followers of Zoroastrianism. They were maintained in order to recognize the process toward enlightenment and satisfy the loyal supporters of the traditional view. Thus, although toleration can be a virtue in itself, the Iranian philosophy of religion demonstrates how the path to monotheism is compatible with polytheistic perspectives since monotheism developed from a long tradition of polytheism.

## A Synthesis of Abstract and Concrete

After Zoroaster discovered the power of the Universal Spirit he elevated the Creator above six other divinities. Zoroastrianism initially converted these divinities into abstract concepts but they were eventually re-personified in the form of angels. The ability to personify these concepts is largely facilitated by the masculine and feminine character of the terms used to describe them. This pertains to the structure of language. According to Lan Freed in *Dualism and Language*, the history of dualism precedes philosophy or any systemic speculation about the nature of man and the universe. Freed used anthropological studies to suggest that “the belief in indwelling spirits, or souls or minds, was not originally a hypothesis put forward to explain anything, but rather, a spontaneous feeling about all objects” (Freed 1953, 328). He believed that the “omnipresence of the dualistic attitude may be seen in the way in which all our personal communications about things appear to carry an implicit ‘I think so,’ or ‘I believe so’ with them” (Freed 1953, 337). For instance, if someone said that “it is snowing,” this person implies that he or she recognized that it is snowing. Freed concluded that any assertion about the material world is an expression of thought or belief, and therefore, ordinary communication is dualistic in that it requires a material world to serve as the object of subjective reflection (Freed 1953, 338).

There are many other linguistics-oriented studies which support the connection between dualism and language. In *Metalinguistic Dualism and the Mark of the Mental*,

Arnold B. Levison argued against the assumption that the mental is incompatible with the physical (Levison 1986, 339). He suggested that the previous criterion for testing the relationship between the mind and the body is neutral between monistic or dualistic theories. He ultimately attributed the separation of the mental from the physical to the use and meaning of the word “mental” (Levison 1986, 339). Similarly, Noam Chomsky suggested that the ultimate source of critique for mental sciences and linguistics is the common use of a methodological dualism which assumes humans are separate from the natural world (Chomsky 1995, 7). Chomsky’s main point was that the studies of truth in language face the same problems of empiricism as studies of truth in physics or any other domain. Nevertheless, while it is impossible to determine whether the world is monistic or dualistic, the structure of language serves as a historical artifact which preserves the dualistic perception from the past.

Zoroaster mainly struggled against raiding nomads, so it is possible that he could have been more of a luminary of monotheist thought within a community that was beginning to accept some of its main principles. In his Ratanbai Katrak lectures, Professor Walter Bruno Henning provided a stimulating definition of the religion of Zoroaster: “As are most dualistic movements, it is perhaps best understood as a protest against monotheism” (Duchesne-Guillemin 1958, 1). “Dualism, he argued, always emerges as an answer to the problem of evil, which in turn presupposes belief in one good and omnipotent God” (Duchesne-Guillemin 1958, 1). According to Duchesne-Guillemin, “In the Vorrede to the second volume of his *Eranische Alterthumskunde*,

[Friedrich von] Spiegel tells us in effect that after first thinking of dualism as a link between polytheism and monotheism—as a necessary stage in a linear evolution—he has come to realize that some powerful monotheism must have preceded dualism” (Duchesne-Guillemin 1958, 1 and von Spiegel 1873, vi). As translated from German by Duchesne-Guillemin, “It is only when one has come to admit one omnipotent, omniscient creator, who created the world and all there is in it, that the question arises why everything in the world does not go according to the will of the creator and the ruler, why not only praiseworthy undertakings of the creatures go wrong, but also things happened of which he cannot possibly approve. In one word: the question arises as to how evil came into the world. An attempt to answer this question: such is dualism in different forms” (Duchesne-Guillemin 1958, 1 and von Spiegel 1873, vi). Although a polytheistic belief system can also produce a feeling of dualism, especially if there is competition among regional gods, Spiegel’s ideas still call into question whether dualism was a link between polytheism and monotheism.

Although Zoroaster referred to his discovery of the Universal Spirit as a “New Day,” the desire to personify the universe along with the dualist structure of most languages undermined the complete transition to monotheism. For instance, some Zoroastrians recognize Amordad (Ameretat) as a female personification of immortality since the term is feminine (Yasna 31.6; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). Amordad is often portrayed as a female surrounded by plants since they are a symbol of regeneration. The concept of Haurvatat is associated with the female personification of wholeness and health

represented by water (Yasna 31.6; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914 and Boyce 1984, 13). Similarly, the concept of Spenta Armaiti is associated with the female personification of holy devotion represented by earth (Yasna 28.7; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914 and Boyce 1984, 13). In contrast, the concept of Asha Vahishta is associated with the male personification of truth and order represented by fire (Yasna 28.5; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914 and Boyce 1984, 13). The concept of Vohu Manah is associated with the male personification of good thought and mind represented by animals (Yasna 28.4; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914 and Boyce 1984, 13). Lastly, the concept of Khshathra Vairya is associated with the male personification of power represented by the sky and precious metals (Yasna 31.4; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914 and Boyce 1984, 13). Whether abstract or concrete, these separate concepts owe their existence to the Universal Spirit.

Zoroaster's belief that everything in the world is of "one mind" justified numerous socioeconomic reforms. For instance, he suggested that the water used for agriculture belonged to everyone and that people should abandon nomadic lifestyles to seek greater unity with the earth (Yasna 45.9; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). Raiding nomads who seized animals for sacrificial purposes made life difficult for farmers and pastoralists (Boyce 1984, 16). They mainly helped corrupt priests eat for free. There are interpretations of the "Younger" Avesta in which Zoroaster described priests as people who moan and "mumble" prayers without much thought for their meaning (Boyce 1975, 12).

In the Zoroastrian tradition, the world is a battleground between truth and falsehood where evil is attributed to free will (Dawson 1931, 1, Duchesne-Guillemin 1958, 1, and Boyce 2001, 69). A key concept in this battle is “daena,” which translates as “vision, insight, consciousness, and conscience.” As a person’s conscience, daena is the faculty which should see and determine proper conduct (Boyce 1975, 239). It is related to the Farsi word “dean.” In Avestai and Modern Farsi, this term is synonymous with “religion” itself. It is likely that the term originated before Zoroastrianism as a description of the symbolic maiden that guides the soul to paradise (Clark 1998, 69). Nevertheless, this meaning suggests that the judgment of one’s own behavior is a crucial component of ethical behavior. According to the *Routledge Dictionary of Philosophy*, religions promising immortality engender questions shared with philosophy of Mind (Proudfoot and Lacey 2010, 352).

The Zoroastrian conception of a single Creator was a major turning point in the history of thought because it rejected the belief in conflicting spirits. According to Zoroaster, the problem of evil can be attributed to free will, and there is one Spirit and Creator that transcends our perceptions of light and darkness, good and evil, and most importantly, the existence of other creative and destructive spirits who must be satisfied in order to avoid misfortune. Furthermore, since the human mind was the manner in which the Creator interacted with the universe, the followers of Zoroaster believed that all of their ideas could shape the world. This idea is truly a synthesis of the abstract and the concrete. Nevertheless, the dualist structure of language made it difficult for humans



to move beyond the pre-Zoroastrian conception of the universe. In other words, dualism endured through the preservation of language and ancient symbols.

Shortly after Zoroaster's teachings influenced the rise of the Persian Empire, the demise of ethical life led to a return to materialism. In other words, the Persians abandoned their sense of honor and virtue so they could effortlessly maintain their wealthy lifestyles.<sup>67</sup> Their lack of honor and virtue culminated in the destruction of the Persian Empire which illustrated the cyclical pattern of political power. In his reflections on the Persian Monarchy, Plato blamed the cyclical pattern of political success on spoiled Persian princes since Iranian Kings like Cyrus allowed women to raise their children (Plato 1970, 99). When asked about Darius, Plato replied that Darius was not a prince. He attained his position by seizing power and the process repeated itself (Plato 1970, 99-100). His anecdote of the spoiled Persian prince was part of an analogy which emphasized that moderate liberty is the basis for proper parenting and effective political leadership. The proper balance between freedom and despotism was apparently achieved by Cyrus and Darius and by the Athenians at the time of Marathon and Salamis, "even

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<sup>67</sup> Achaemenian rule ended in 330 BCE after an invasion led by the Macedonian conqueror Alexander the Great (Gershevitch 1985, 439). He defeated Darius III who was often criticized for his lack of ambition and experience in comparison to his predecessors (Gershevitch 1985, 430). Before his ascension to the throne, Darius III was a distant relative of the ruling family who had recently been assassinated by their ministers. However, Darius III's father was a prince who could trace his lineage back to Cyrus and Darius. He was the great grandson of King Darius II (Gershevitch 1985, 390). Darius III is notorious for abandoning his army, property, and family in order to escape from Alexander. He was eventually killed by his own generals who panicked as the Macedonian troops approached their base. Alexander acquired Darius III's empire and married his daughters in order to legitimize his rule.

though the Persians had no democratic institutions and the Athenians had no monarch” (Stalley 1983, 77).

Plato’s ideas inspired Abu Zayd Ibn Khaldun’s cyclical philosophy of history. During the fourteenth century, Ibn Khaldun wrote *The Muqaddimah* in which he noted the difference between critical history (historiography) and speculative history (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 5). Therefore, even though there have been countless speculations on the nature of history, Ibn Khaldun was the first person to formalize the study of history by defining these terms. He attributed the cyclical pattern of history to excessive pride and laziness. He frequently cited the works of ancient Greek philosophers and discussed Plato’s ideas in great detail (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 39, 373, and Ibn Khaldun 1958, 48).

#### The Cyclical Pattern

According to the anecdotes and analogies presented by Ibn Khaldun, history endures cyclical patterns based on the rise and fall of various political systems and dynasties. He believed every successful political arrangement contains negative and positive attributes. The positive attributes, such as group cohesion, pride, and diligence will initially allow it to rise, but the conditions faced by the rising power will engender the “seeds” of negative attributes leading to inevitable downfall (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 106).

Ibn Khaldun explicitly emphasized the importance of group feeling or cohesion in successful political arrangements. He claimed it is the secret divine factor that restrains people from splitting up and abandoning each other, while it is the source of unity and agreement (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 170). He also claimed that it is the guarantor of the

intentions and laws of Islam (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 170). The cohesion is essentially spontaneous and it may be amplified by a common ideology, especially religion. He noted that the “Persians made no one king except members of the royal house, and chose him from among those who possessed virtue, religion, education, liberality, bravery, and nobility” (Ibn Khaldun 1958, 95). They stipulated that he should be just, and that he was not to take a farm, as this would harm his neighbors, and that he was not to engage in trade, as this would of necessity raise the prices of all goods (Ibn Khaldun 1958, 95). He was also not to use slaves or servants since they would not give good and beneficial advice (Ibn Khaldun 1958, 95).

Ibn Khaldun believed religion is a useful source for morality in both the real and supernatural realms (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 154). The purpose of humans is not only their worldly welfare as far as Ibn Khaldun was concerned. He believed this entire world was trifling and futile and that it would end in death and annihilation (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 154). In turn, Ibn Khaldun argued that the purpose of human beings is their religion since it is the only form of resistance to injustice (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 154). He alleged that the frugal inhabitants of the desert and people who grew accustomed to hunger were more likely to be religious than people who lived a life of luxury and abundance (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 66-67). However, the cohesion created by religion is never a permanent phenomenon. The strategies for success are ultimately unable to endure the negative characteristics of human nature.

Through a comparison of sedentary and simple lifestyles, Ibn Khaldun argued that the individual adjustment to a change in a particular lifestyle weakens political systems (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 67). It inevitably leads to the destruction of successful political arrangements. In other cases, group cohesion may also be undermined by a new and more vigorous movement (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 106-108). He essentially argued that living a simple or harsh lifestyle was more likely to increase physical strength and psychological endurance. In contrast, living a sedentary lifestyle, or a luxurious and abundant lifestyle of political success, weakened and reduced the positive traits inherited by humans. It should be known that everybody who is able to suffer hunger or eat only a little, is physically better off if he stays hungry than if he eats too much (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 68). It influences their character which may become patient, preserving, and able to carry loads, as is the case with camels (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 68). Physical strength is essentially a characteristic that will allow people to attain power and resources, but these resources eventually lead to the weakening of the body, while their power leads to excessive pride. Excessive pride reduces the faith in diligence and group cohesion which eventually leads to a cyclical pattern of inevitable downfall (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 106). The cycle is typically a set of four generations but it may continue into the fifth and sixth generation, “though in a state of decline and decay” (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 106).

Ibn Khaldun’s cyclical theory was re-emphasized by Edward Gibbon in *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776). Like Ibn Khaldun, Gibbon suggested that the success of the Roman Empire led to luxurious lifestyles among the

citizenry which ultimately weakened the empire. Gibbon blamed the decline of the Roman Empire on a loss of civic virtue, which is synonymous with Ibn Khaldun's conception of group cohesion. Gibbon also emphasized the importance of corruption among religious clerics as a factor that led to decline (Gibbon 1776, 585-586).

According to Gibbon, the rapid expansion of the Roman Empire forced the government to hire mercenaries leading to the decentralization of power and resources (Gibbon 1776, 107, 235-242, and 427). The mercenaries essentially began using the power and resources of the Roman Empire asymmetrically. They formed their own armies and attacked the Roman Empire. Ultimately, the Roman Empire was destroyed because its citizenry adapted non-militaristic and luxurious lifestyles which left them vulnerable to the attacks of vandals, looters, and ex-mercenaries. Gibbon's study clearly follows the cyclical logic of Ibn Khaldun.

Gibbon included numerous references to Zoroastrianism in his reflections on world history. Through the years 1756-1757, while studying at the Lausanne academy, Gibbon "traveled in the surrounding district, attended the winter gatherings of Vaudois society, and even made the acquaintance of the great Voltaire" (Turnbull 1982, 28). Voltaire was honored to know that the young Gibbon read his works (Thompson 1938, 95). Gibbon also represented the borough of Leskeard in the House of Commons and attended eight sessions (Thompson 1938, 103). In 1776, while he served as a member of parliament, he published his first volume on *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776) (Thompson 1938, 104).

Although Gibbon's study focused on the legacy of the Roman Empire, it contains many general reflections on world history, including references to the Persian Empire and Iranian religion.<sup>68</sup> The eighth chapter is an account of the Zoroastrian religion of the Persians, setting "Gibbon's increasing though never absent command of philosophical history, relating successive stages of the history of the human mind and society, together with the 'triumph of barbarism and religion'" (Pocock 2003, 466). As Pocock noted, in Gibbon's account of Zoroastrianism, "it is gentile but not barbaric, and occupying an important place in his developing schemes for the history of both religion and philosophy" (Pocock 2003, 466).<sup>69</sup> As Gibbon noted, "In the more early ages of the world, whilst the forests that covered Europe afforded a retreat to a few wandering savages, the inhabitants of Asia were already collected into populous cities, and reduced under extensive empires, the feat of the arts, of luxury, and of despotism" (Gibbon 1776, 200). The Assyrians initially ruled the East, until their kingdom dropped from the hands of their enervated successors, and "after the Medes and the Babylonians divided up their

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<sup>68</sup> In the early stages of the Roman Empire, the Romans endured rivalries with Germanic peoples on its northern border and Iranian peoples on its eastern border. Later, they faced attacks from Turks and Mongols. The Turks conquered Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1453 CE.

<sup>69</sup> According to Pocock, in Gibbon's view, "the Persians are 'barbarians' only in the classical sense that they are neither Greek nor Roman and are thought to obey masters rather than laws" (Pocock 2003, 465). The Persians are "certainly not the horde of migratory pastoral warriors, situated somewhere between savagery and agriculture, to whom that theory attached the term 'barbarian' in its philosophical significance" (Pocock 2003, 465). "The Germans (of chapter 9) are 'barbarians' in this sense, as are the Goths, the Franks, and other invaders of the Roman provinces (Pocock 2003, 465). In other words, the Persians were not as progressive as the Romans, but they were "hardly 'barbaric' at all" (Pocock 2003, 465). The Persians were not a band of invaders living on the periphery of civilization like the Germanic peoples. Iranians and the Germans share some cultural ties, and were major rivals of the Roman Empire, but the Persians were a powerful and sophisticated people, practicing a world religion and capable of military empire on a scale formidable to the Romans (Pocock 2003, 465).

powers, they were swallowed up by the monarchy of the Persians, whose arms could not be confined within the narrow limits of Asia” (Gibbon 1776, 200-201).

Gibbon argued that during the Macedonian conquest of Iran (330 BCE), as well as the Parthian period (248 BCE-224 CE), “the nations of Europe and Asia had mutually adopted and corrupted each other’s superstitions” (Gibbon 1776, 202). “The Arsacides [Parthians], indeed, practiced the worship of the Magi; but they disgraced and polluted it with a various mixture of foreign idolatry. The memory of Zoroaster, the ancient prophet and philosopher of the Persians, was still revered in the East; but the obsolete and mysterious language, in which the Zendavesta was composed, opened a field of dispute to seventy sects, which had arisen in his religion, and were all equally derided by a crowd of infidels, who rejected the divine mission and miracles of the prophet” (Gibbon 1776, 202).

Gibbon regarded Zoroaster’s ideas as the first form of monotheism, but argued that the Creator was yet to be characterized as active or self-conscious at this point in history. “The great fundamental article of the system, was the celebrated doctrine of the two principles, a bold and injudicious attempt of Eastern philosophy to reconcile the existence of moral and physical evil, with the attributes of a beneficent Creator and governor of the world” (Gibbon 1776, 203). Gibbon noted that “the first and original Being, in whom, or by whom, the universe exists, is denominated in the writings of Zoroaster, *Time without bounds*; but it must be confessed that this infinite substance seems rather a metaphysical abstraction of the mind, than a real object endowed with

self-consciousness, or possessed of moral perfections. From either the blind, or the intelligent operation of this infinite Time, which bears but too near an affinity with the chaos of the Greeks, the two secondary but active principles of the universe, were from all eternity produced, Ormuzd and Ahriman, each of them possessed of the powers of creations, but each disposed, by his invariable nature, to exercise them with different designs. The principle of good is eternally absorbed in light; the principle of evil eternally buried in darkness” (Gibbon 1776, 203-204).

Unlike Khaldun, Gibbon was extremely critical of religion and often referred to it as “superstition” (Gibbon 1776, 202). He claimed that in certain cases it could lead to harmony but it is most often corrupted (Gibbon 1776, 585-586).<sup>70</sup> Gibbon discussed an edict from Artaxerxes which prohibited the worship of any religion, other than that of Zoroaster, and stated that “the spirit of persecution reflects dishonor on the religion of Zoroaster; but as it was not productive of any civil commotion, it served to strengthen the new monarchy by uniting all the various inhabitants of Persia in the bands of religious zeal” (Gibbon 1776, 208). Gibbon also recognized how Zoroaster’s ideas changed as more people learned about them. “The theology of Zoroaster was darkly comprehended by foreigners, and even by the far greater number of his disciples; but the most careless observers were struck with the philosophic simplicity of Persian worship” (Gibbon 1776,

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<sup>70</sup> “We have already described the religious harmony of the ancient world, and the facility with which the most different and even hostile nations embraced, or at least respected, each other’s superstitions” (Gibbon 1776, 451).



204). “The Gnostics blended with the faith of Christ many sublime but obscure tenets, which they derived from oriental philosophy, and even from the religion of Zoroaster, concerning the eternity of matter, the existence of two principles, and the mysterious hierarchy of the invisible world” (Gibbon 1776, 461).<sup>71</sup>

Some critics of Voltaire and Gibbon unfairly characterized their ideas as atheist, heretical, skeptical, or otherwise anti-Christian (Rockwood 1937, 497, Turnbull 1982, 23, and Young 1998, 180). They often overlook the complex contradictions between personal faith and scholarly ambitions.<sup>72</sup> During his youth, Gibbon converted to the Roman Catholic faith which led his father to send him to the progressively Protestant

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<sup>71</sup> According to Gibbon, “the Gnostics were distinguished as the most polite, the most learned, and the wealthiest of the Christian name, and the general appellation which expressed a superiority of knowledge, was either assumed by their own pride, or ironically bestowed by the envy of adversaries. They were almost without exception of the race of the Gentiles, and their principal founders seem to have been natives of Syria or Egypt, where the warmth of the climate disposes both the mind and the body to contemplative devotion” (Gibbon 1776, 461).

<sup>72</sup> Even though deism can be traced back to ancient times, it became very popular for European Christians during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as they sought an alternative to organized religion. Deism expresses the belief in a single Creator based on experience, reason, and free will. The Creator only interacts with the universe by setting into motion the laws of nature, such as free will. “Although, there is no accepted definition of Deism, often it is conceived wholly, or almost wholly, as a metaphysical theory, which represents God as the Creator of the world, but now as withdrawn and separate from it and its concerns; it is the absentee God of literature (Hefelbower 1920, 217). The characteristic deistic views as developed in this controversy can be summed up thus: In an age that was rationalistic and critical, when all progressive thinkers, many of whom were conservative, felt that they must justify religion by proving it from reason and nature, the Deists developed those tendencies in a radical way, and fostered a hostile attitude toward traditional super-naturalism. They denied the possibility of any religious truth above reason; they challenged external revelation and criticized its records and the miraculous; they emphasized the perfection of natural religion, which man of his own unaided powers could know, and set it up as supreme over all positive religion, which was imperfect because of ‘mysteries,’ ‘uncertainties,’ ‘contradictions,’ and ‘confusion.’ Deism, which was essentially non-philosophical, was the more radical application to religious problems of the rationalistic critical way of thinking, that characterized English thought in the seventeenth century, which resulted in the progressive depreciation of the supernatural, especially as it appeared in positive religion, and in magnifying the worth and authority of natural religion” (Hefelbower 1920, 223).

Lausanne academy in Switzerland where he eventually proudly converted back to Protestantism under the threat of disinheritance from his family (Turnbull 1989, 26). Although Voltaire influenced Gibbon in many ways, their views on religion were quite different. Voltaire believed mainstream Christianity was an obstacle to the “age of reason” as he continuously witnessed the unjust religious persecution of his friends and neighbors. Meanwhile, Gibbon simply wanted to be known as the best historiographer of his time. When his accounts of history were criticized by religious authorities, he was more insulted by their doubts about his fidelity as a scholar than his faith in religion (Thompson 1938, 106).<sup>73</sup>

As a product of the Age of Enlightenment, it is not surprising that Gibbon was highly critical of religion, but he praised the social and practical contributions of Zoroaster’s teachings. According to Gibbon, “there are some remarkable instances, in which Zoroaster lays aside the prophet, assumes the legislator, and discovers liberal concern for private and public happiness, seldom to be found among the groveling or visionary schemes of superstition. Fasting and celibacy, the common means of purchasing the divine favor, he condemns with abhorrence, as a criminal rejection of the best gifts of providence. The saint, in the Magian religion, is obliged to beget children, to plant useful trees, to destroy noxious animals, to convey water to the dry lands of Persia, and to work out his salvation by pursuing all the labors of agriculture. We may quote

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<sup>73</sup> According to B.W. Young, scholarship could be seen as Gibbon’s religion, or substitute for religion, as in, “the religious duty of a historian” (Young 1998, 181).

from the Zendavesta a wise and benevolent maxim, ‘He who sows the ground with care and diligence, acquires a greater flock of religious merit, than he could gain by the repetition of ten thousand prayers’” (Gibbon 1776, 206).<sup>74</sup> For Gibbon, “Zoroaster is unmistakably another stray from the Age of Reason” (Morgan 1995, 91).

Gibbon’s accounts of Iranian and Roman history emphasized the role religion played in the rise and decline of ancient empires. In the beginning, religion served as a unifying force among diverse peoples, but as it spread amongst the people their cultural diversity produced alternate interpretations. This created more heretics and political conflicts, which ultimately led to a circular pattern of expansion and contraction. Although the Achaemenian, Parthian, and Sassanian monarchies attempted to establish political unity by influencing religious matters, they became progressively authoritarian and caused tension among the people while their civic virtue rapidly declined. This weakened Iran’s forces in their battles against the rival Roman (Byzantine) Empire as well as the Arab forces who invaded Iran in 633 CE and 637 CE. Iran was also invaded by the Mongols in the thirteenth century CE. “Gibbon accepted the thesis of the decline of civic virtue as largely explaining the collapse of the ancient world, but denied that the process would repeat itself under the conditions of modern society” (Pocock 1999, 2). “Enlightened historiography is, almost without exception, the execution of this purpose,”

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<sup>74</sup> Although there is similar content in the Yasna (Yasna 29.1; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914, and Yasna 53.4; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914), the passage quoted by Gibbon is not taken from the writings of Zoroaster, but the *Sadder*, a work, as mentioned above, much later than the books which form the Zendavesta and written by a Magus for popular use; what it contains, therefore, cannot be attributed to Zoroaster. It is remarkable that Gibbon should fall into this error, for Hyde himself does not ascribe the *Sadder* to Zoroaster (Milman 1871, 237).

and Gibbon gives us an opportunity to return to a world in which the Enlightenment was a product of religious debate rather than a rebellion against it (Pocock 1999, 5).

After the Enlightenment, many philosophers started to regard history as a progressive process rather than a cyclical pattern of rise and decline. They proposed that it was driven by a universal force. Like Ibn Khaldun and Gibbon, they also included many references to Iranian history, and some of them traced the idea of a universal force back to the philosophy of Zoroaster.

### **Philosophy of History and the Power of the Universal Mind**

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Johann Gottfried Herder, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Karl Marx each presented his own progressive philosophy of history. Hegel and Marx suggested that human history had distinct phases in which the final phase recaptures the glory of the first phase but reconciles the others. However, Marx believed the phases of history were driven by class struggle and material life while Herder and Hegel emphasized the importance of Spirit. The idea of the World Spirit is rooted in Zoroaster's discovery of the Universal Spirit (Hegel 1991b, 173).

Before Ibn Khaldun, Polybius also described history in cyclical terms in *The Histories* (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE), which was one of the first books to imply that there was a purpose to human history (Polybius 1976, 379). However, unlike Ibn Khaldun, Polybius, and Plato, Herder went beyond generations and dynasties and reflected on the purpose of human history in its entirety (Little 2011, 3). In 1774, he published *Another Philosophy of History* which outlined distinct stages of human history and predicted that enlightened

nationalism would lead to mutual respect among nations. He also suggested that the Germans were connected to the ancient Aryans of Iran and India as a distinct class of nobles and innovators unlike “the parasitic Semitic” peoples who lived among them (Herder 1774, 11). Nevertheless, Herder’s philosophy of history was mainly a critique of the Enlightenment which he criticized for its neglect of feeling and spiritual reason. He did not explicitly cite or reference any works that were related to Zoroastrianism.

Herder’s philosophy of history illustrated the progressive character of civilization and knowledge that was common among prominent enlightenment period thinkers such as Immanuel Kant and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Herder’s philosophy of history largely influenced one of his teachers, Kant, to present his own view of history. Kant wrote *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim* in 1784. The title itself suggests that he had a progressive perception of history.

Kant argued that the purpose of history was the education of the human race. This idea was quite similar to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s essay on *The Education of Humankind* [*Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*] (1780). Kant’s writings expressed support for Lessing’s views. Kant described the spectacle of human history as mainly a spectacle of human folly, ambition, greed, and wickedness (Kant 1784, 5 Collingwood 1946, 101). He regarded these aspects of human nature as evil and antithetical to reason, which is good. The good side of human nature is what compels humans to use their reason in order to fight evil and eventually conquer it. For Kant, the establishment of a peaceful political system which can overcome the evil side of human nature will be the

final stage of a historical path towards freedom. However, Herder critiqued the naive admiration for reason and order that was associated with the Enlightenment (Herder 1774, 11 and 30). Unlike Kant, his philosophies are characterized by the rebellious form of German Romanticism which culminated in the works of Hegel.

Herder's philosophy of history also inspired Hegel to deliver his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* between 1821 and 1831. According to Hegel, history was the process in which the Universal Spirit becomes completely conscious of itself. He stated that "the nature of Spirit may be understood by a glance at its direct opposite—Matter" (Hegel 1991b, 17). Some of Hegel's early followers admired his logic, but some of them, most notably Karl Marx, concluded that his overall philosophy amounted to religious propaganda (Marx 1843, 6 and 1998, 9). Nevertheless, Hegel's spiritual communitarian thought inspired Marx's theory of history, which was a materialist re-elaboration of Hegelian thought.

Like most philosophies of history written shortly after the Enlightenment, the theories of Herder, Hegel, and Marx supported the importance of intuition, tradition, and historicism. Nevertheless, while they all rejected the extreme rationalism associated with the age of Enlightenment, they retained its progressive mode of thought. The progress they observed was usually organized into distinct phases of history.

### **The Phases of History**

As mentioned, Zoroaster described his discovery of the Universal Spirit as the beginning of a "New Day" in human history. According to Boyce, "one of the most

striking elements in [Zoroaster's] teachings was the wholly original concept of history having an end" (Boyce 2001, 67). Some of "the Magi had evidently become familiar with very different Babylonian speculations about history being divided into great recurrent cycles of time," but the Zoroastrian concept of an end to history "embodies a doctrine of the Three times – Creation, Mixture, and Separation – [which] accustomed his followers to the idea of events taking place within a fixed chronological framework" (Boyce 2001, 67-68). Similarly, many post-Enlightenment philosophers used distinct stages, phases, and realms to describe the process of history.

Herder organized history into distinct phases and emphasized the importance of geography and climate in the rise of world civilizations (Herder 1774, 14). He asserted that history had passed through Egyptian, Oriental, Greek, and Roman periods, and was now in a German period (Herder 1774, 14). Unlike Ibn Khaldun, Herder's view was progressive and not cyclical, but his main contribution to the philosophy of history was his analysis of human history in its entirety. In other words, it pertained to human beings as a species rather than individuals or generations. Plato, Polybius, and Ibn Khaldun reflected on generations and dynasties but they did not reflect on human history as a whole. For Herder, the activities of individuals, the rise and fall of civilizations, and the distinct phases of history were all components of a larger scheme.

Like Herder, Hegel also organized history into distinct phases. In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, Hegel asserted that continuous history (as opposed to history in general) began in Iran with Zoroaster's discovery of the Universal Spirit (Hegel 1991b,

173). He organized history into four distinct phases which he referred to as the “Oriental, Greek, Roman, and German Worlds” (Hegel 1991b, 103). Hegel’s phases of history overlapped with the gradual westward expansion of human civilization, but each phase was invariably defined by the rise and decline of spiritual life. The westward movement followed the pattern symbolized by the sun (Hegel 1991b, 103).

Hegel’s commentary on India and China is largely based on his fundamental theme that history follows the pattern of the sun (Hegel 1991b, 103). For Hegel, each step that a European traveler takes while moving east gradually leads him or her to a less advanced time and place in history where people act and look less European (Hegel 1991b, 173). Hegel was certainly forced to rely on the accounts of European historians known as “Orientalists,” but it is also important to consider that reports of westward expansion and exploration in the Americas were still a fresh topic in the time of Hegel. Like any instructor, Hegel also wanted to present his lectures in a systematic fashion in order to express general lessons and overarching themes. For Hegel, during the first stage of history, the people of Asia played a central role in the development of our political and cultural institutions while the people in Europe played a minimal role in history with no significant contributions. However, this role was gradually reversed as history reached its latter stages in the West. The Chinese, Indian, and Iranian people, along with the people of Asia in general, were relegated to “historical peoples” or



“stationary” actors who did not play an active role in the latter stages of history even though they still exist today (Hegel 1991b, 139 and 173).

Hegel thus began his outline of history with a section called the “Oriental World.” He initially discussed the history of China and India but argued that the most important part of the “Oriental” phase of history was the discovery of the Universal Spirit in Iran (Hegel 1991b, 173). “With *China* and the *Mongols*—the realm of theocratic despotism—History begins” (Hegel 1991b, 112). History has to begin with the Empire of China, “for it is the oldest, as far as history gives us any information; and its principle has such substantiality, that for the empire in question it is at once the oldest and the newest” (Hegel 1991b, 116). The natural instinct among humans to secure their life and property facilitated political organization and record keeping, which also produced a certain level of spiritual development. As the “Supreme Power,” the Emperor is essentially in charge of the well-being of individuals and provinces, as well as the elements (Hegel 1991b, 132). “These have each an appropriate *Genius* (Chen), which is subject to the Emperor, who pays adoration only to the general Power of Heaven, while the several Spirits of the natural world follow his laws” (Hegel 1991b, 132). Each of these enjoys a form of worship peculiar to itself and has a certain sculpture assigned to it, but “these are disgusting idols, which have not yet attained the dignity of art, because nothing spiritual is represented in them” (Hegel 1991b, 132-133). “They are therefore only terrific,

frightful and negative; they keep watch—as among the Greeks do the River-Gods, the Nymphs, and Dryads—over single elements and natural objects” (Hegel 1991b, 133).

Hegel concludes that “the distinguishing feature of the character of the Chinese people is that everything which belongs to Spirit—unconstrained morality, in practice and theory, Heart, inward Religion, Science and Art properly so-called—is alien to it” (Hegel 1991 b, 138). “The Emperor always speaks with majesty and paternal kindness and tenderness to the people; who however, cherish the meanest opinion of themselves, and believe that they are born only to drag the car of Imperial Power” (Hegel 1991b, 138). “There is no distinction conferred by birth, and everyone can attain the highest dignity, this very equality testifies to no triumphant assertion of the worth of the inner man, but a servile consciousness—one which has not yet matured itself so far as to recognize distinctions” (Hegel 1991b, 138). Regardless of a conscious aim, the primary conditions for both civilization and social progress began in China. “The history of mankind does not begin with a *conscious* aim of any kind, as it is the case with the particular circles into which men form themselves of set purpose. The mere social instinct implies a conscious purpose of security for life and property; and when a society has been constituted, this purpose becomes more comprehensive. The History of the World begins with its general aim—the realization of the Idea of Spirit—only in an *implicit* form (*an sich*) that is, Nature; a hidden, most profoundly hidden, unconscious instinct; and the whole process of History (as already observed), is directed to rendering this unconscious impulse a conscious one” (Hegel 1991b, 25).

The style of political organization in India was not as centralized as the system in China. According to Hegel, “India, like China, is a phenomenon antique as well as modern; one which has remained stationary and fixed, and has received a most perfect home-sprung development” (Hegel 1991b, 139). “In contrast with the Chinese State, which presents only the most prosaic Understanding, India is the region of fantasy and sensibility” (Hegel 1991b, 139). India established the “Idealism of Existence (Being),” but the Idealism found in India is merely an “Idealism of imagination, without distinct conceptions; one which does indeed free existence from Beginning and Matter [liberates it from temporal limitations and gross materiality], but changes everything into the merely Imaginative; for although the latter appears interwoven with definite conceptions and Thought presents itself as an occasional concomitant, this happens only through accidental combination” (Hegel 1991b, 139).

Hegel contributed to an exaggerated characterization of Indian philosophy as a form of world denial through heavy meditation. In an essay on “Radhakrishnan on Being and Existence,” Fred Dallmayr claims that Indian philosopher Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) considered the idea of “pursuing spiritual release while working in the world” simply to “target the prevalent Western view—first formulated by Hegel and then popularized by [Arthur] Schopenhauer (1788-1860)—that India and Eastern religion in general are synonyms for world denial and/or world renunciation” (Schopenhauer 1969,

387-388, Radhakrishnan 1992, 3-82, and Dallmayr 1996, 80).<sup>75</sup> “An initial foray was undertaken by Hegel with his relegation of ‘being’ as such to a preconceptual and thus basically pre-philosophical level. Viewing preconceptual or indeterminate being as synonymous with emptiness and nothingness, Hegel shifted the accent resolutely to ‘becoming’ and thus to a historical teleology culminating in the triumph of the ‘idea,’ ‘spirit,’ or ‘subjectivity’ on a conceptual and wholly intelligible level” (Dallmayr 1996, 84). As Hegel stated, “For we have not the dreaming of an actual Individual, possessing distinct personality, and simply unfettering the latter from limitation, but we have the dreaming of the unlimited absolute Spirit” (Hegel 1991b, 139). The dreaming Indian “is therefore all that we call finite and individual; and at the same time—as indefinitely universal and unlimited—a something intrinsically divine” (Hegel 1991b, 141).

Unlike China, the organization of the State in India is not determined and arranged by a single person, and therefore there is a greater level of freedom in regard to religious thought. In the second phase of the “Oriental World,” known as the “*Indian* realm—we see the unity of political organization—a perfect civil machinery, such as exists in China—in the first instance, broken up” (Hegel 1991b, 113). However, the

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<sup>75</sup> “Hegel’s assessment of Indian thought was continued and further solidified by Schopenhauer, albeit under radically different auspices. While for Hegel preconceptual indeterminacy was a mark of insufficiency and non-development, Schopenhauer extolled the same feature as a sign of profundity and as exit route from the realm of willing and representational thinking. Despite its antithetical posture to German idealism, Schopenhauerian ‘pessimism’ thus left intact central premises of Hegel’s metaphysics and especially his construal of being (indeterminate emptiness). With some modifications, the same might be said of [Friedrich] Nietzsche’s philosophy” (Dallmayr 1996, 84). Schopenhauer read Anquetil’s translation of the *Upanishads* (Müller 1879, lix and Schopenhauer 1969, 388).

greater level of freedom of religious thought in India does not necessarily produce significant development in regard to spiritual and political life. Hegel stated that “the Indian view of things is a Universal Pantheism, a Pantheism, however, of Imagination, not of Thought” (Hegel 1991b, 141). The sensuous matter “is not liberated by the free power of Spirit into a beautiful form, and idealized in the Spirit, so that the sensuous might be a merely subservient and compliant expression of the spiritual; but [the sensuous object itself] is expanded into the immeasurable and undefined, and the Divine is thereby made bizarre, confused, and ridiculous” (Hegel 1991b, 141). “Everything, including the Sun, Moon, Stars, the Ganges, the Indus, Beasts, Flowers – everything is a God in the Indian view” (Hegel 1991b, 141). “In the universal deification of all finite existence, and the consequent degradation of the Divine, the idea of Theanthropy, incarnation of God, is not a particularly important conception” (Hegel 1991b, 141). “The parrot, the cow, the ape, and such, are likewise incarnations of God, yet are not therefore elevated above nature” (Hegel 1991b, 141). “The Divine is not individualized to a subject, to concrete Spirit, but degraded to vulgarity and senselessness” (Hegel 1991b, 141).

Hegel noted that “externally, India sustains manifold relations to the History of the World” (Hegel 1991b, 142). “In recent times the discovery has been made that the Sanskrit lies at the foundation of all those further developments which form the languages of Europe; *e.g.* the Greek, Latin, [and] German (Hegel 1991b, 141-142). “India, moreover, was the center of emigration for all of the western world; but this

external historical relation is to be regarded rather as a merely physical diffusion of peoples from this point” (Hegel 1991b, 142). “Although in India the elements of further development might be discovered, and although we would find traces of their being transmitted to the West, this transmission has been nevertheless so abstract [so superficial], that that which among later peoples attracts our interest, is not anything to be derived from India, but rather something concrete, which they themselves formed” (Hegel 1991b, 142).<sup>76</sup> “The spread of Indian culture is prehistoric, for History is limited to that which makes an essential epoch in the development of Spirit” (Hegel 1991b, 142).

Hegel described life in Iran as the antithesis to life in India and China. “The third important form—presenting a contrast to the immovable unity of China and to the wild and turbulent unrest of India—is the *Persian* Realm” (Hegel 1991b, 113).<sup>77</sup> “In Persia namely, the Theocratic power appears as a *Monarchy*. Now Monarchy is that kind of constitution which does indeed unite the members of the body politic in the head of the government as in a point; but regards that head neither as absolute director nor arbitrary ruler, but as a power whose will is regulated by the same principle of law as the obedience of the subject” (Hegel 1991b, 113-114). In other words, the early Persian

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<sup>76</sup> “With regard to the *political life* of the Indians, we must first consider the advance it presents in contrast with China. An advance is made in India in which independent members ramify from the unity of despotic power. Yet the distinctions (*Castes*) which these imply are referred to Nature. In India we have only a division of the masses—a division, however, that influences the whole political life and the religious consciousness. The distinctions of class, like that [rigid] Unity in China, remain consequently on the same original grade of *substantiality*, *i.e.* they are not the result of the free subjectivity of individuals” (Hegel 1991b, 144-145).

<sup>77</sup> In regard to political structure, Hegel stated that “China is quite peculiarly Oriental; India we might compare with Greece; Persian on the other hand with Rome” (Hegel 1991b, 113).

monarchs realized that their political power can be facilitated by the will of the people. “The representation, therefore, which Spirit makes of itself is, at this grade of progress, of a purely natural kind—Light. This Universal principle is as much a regulative one for the monarch as for each of this subjects, and the Persian Spirit is accordingly clear, illuminated—the idea of a people living in pure morality, as in a sacred community” (Hegel 1991b, 114). Although the Persian Empire united some of the most diverse nations, it was unable to completely eradicate force and hostility, a contradiction that still needed reconciliation. “The Persian Unity is not that abstract one of the of the Chinese Empire; it is adapted to rule over many and various nationalities, which it unites under the mild power of Universality as a beneficial Sun shining overall—walking them into life and cherishing their growth. This Universal principle—occupying the position of a root only—allows the several members a free growth for unrestrained expansion and ramification” (Hegel 1991b, 114).<sup>78</sup>

Against this background, Hegel claimed that “continuous history” began in the region known as Iran. The onset of continuous history was marked by the conception of a Universal Spirit among humans (Hegel 1991b, 116 and 173). From this point, the

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<sup>78</sup> “In the organization of these several peoples, the various principles and forms of life have full play and continue to exist together. We find a multitude of nations, roving Nomads; then we see in Babylonia and Syria commerce and industrial pursuits in full vigor, the wildest sensuality, the most uncontrolled turbulence. The coasts mediate a connection to foreign lands. In the midst of the confusion and the spiritual God of the Jews arrests our attention—Brahm, existing only for Thought, yet jealous and excluding from his being and abolishing all distinct specialty of manifestations [avatars], such as are freely allowed in other religions. This Persian Empire, then—since it can tolerate these several principles, exhibits the Antithesis in a lively active form, and is not shut up within itself, abstract and calm, as are China and India—makes a real transition in the History of the World” (Hegel 1991b, 114).

Universal Spirit is assigned a central role in the story of history. Hegel stated that “with the Persian Empire we first enter on continuous history” (Hegel 1991b, 173). The “Persians are the first historical people; Persia was the first Empire that passed away” (Hegel 1991b, 173).<sup>79</sup> In other words, although the Persian Empire no longer exists, its time (and place) in history had a continuous impact on the development of World Spirit. However, our entrance into the realm of “continuous history” was not attributed to the political or scientific achievements of the Persian Empire. Rather, it was attributed to the enlightened mode of thought driven by the legacy of Zoroastrianism. “While India and China have remained to the present day, of the empire of the Tigris and Euphrates on the contrary nothing remains, except, at most a heap of bricks; for the Persian Kingdom, as that of Transition, is by nature, perishable, and the Kingdoms of the Caspian Sea are given up to the ancient struggle for Iran and Turan. The Empire of the solitary Nile is only present *beneath* the ground, in its speechless Dead, ever and anon stolen away to all quarters of the globe, and in their majestic habitations;—for what remains above ground is nothing else but such splendid tombs” (Hegel 1991b, 115). Hegel stated that “in Persia first arises that light which shines itself, and illuminates what is around; for Zoroaster’s ‘Light’ belongs to the World of Consciousness—to spirit as a relation to something distinct from itself” (Hegel 1991b, 173). “We see in the Persian World a pure exalted

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<sup>79</sup> “If we compare [ancient] kingdoms in the light of their various fates, we find the empire of the two Chinese rivers the only durable kingdom in the World. Conquests cannot affect such an empire. The world of the Ganges and the Indus has also been preserved. A state of the things so destitute of [distinct] thought is likewise imperishable, but in its very nature destined to be mixed with other races—to be conquered and subjugated” (Hegel 1991b, 115).



Unity, as the essence which leaves the special existences that inhere in it, free; as the Light, which only manifests what bodies are in themselves;—a Unity which governs individuals only to excite them to become powerful for themselves—to develop and assert their individuality” (Hegel 1991b, 174).

Hegel elaborated on his belief that political life in Iran was synonymous with spiritual affairs. “Light makes no distinctions: the Sun shines on the righteous and the unrighteous, on high and low, and confers on all the same benefit and prosperity” (Hegel 1991b, 174). “Light is vitalizing only in so far as it is brought to bear on something distinct from itself, operating upon and developing that. It holds a position of antithesis to Darkness, and this antithetical relation opens out to us the principle activity and life. The principle of development begins with the history of Persia” (Hegel 1991b, 174). The history of Iran (Persia) is a vital component of Hegel’s *Philosophy of History* as “it constitutes strictly the beginning of World-History; for the grand interest of Spirit in History, is to attain an unlimited immanence of subjectivity—by an absolute antithesis to attain complete harmony” (Hegel 1991b, 174).<sup>80</sup> “In becoming objective, this Universal Essence acquires a positive nature: man becomes free, and thus occupies a position face to face as it were with the Highest Being, the latter being made objective for him. This form of Universality we see first exhibited in Persia, involving a separation of man from

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<sup>80</sup> “In earlier stages of progress, the mandates of Spirit (social and political law), are given as by a power alien to itself—as by some compulsion of mere Nature. Gradually it sees the untruth of this alien form of validity—recognizes these mandates as its own, and adopts them freely as a law of liberty. It then stands in clear opposition to its logical contrary—Nature” (Hegel 1991b, 174).

the Universal essence; while at the same time the individual recognizes himself as identical with [a partaker in], that essence” (Hegel 1991b, 174). “In the Persian principle, the Unity of nature and the will of the mind is manifested as Light, which in this case is not simply light as such, the most universal physical element, but the at the same time also *spiritual* purity—the Good” (Hegel 1991b, 175).

The chief point of this section is an explication of “the *doctrine* of Zoroaster” (Hegel 1991b, 177). “In it, the Spirit emerges from that substantial Unity of Nature” (Hegel 1991b, 178).<sup>81</sup> The ancient Iranians, “namely attained to the consciousness, that absolute Truth must have the form of Universality—of Unity” (Hegel 1991b, 178). Among the Iranians the negative assertion of a destruction of consciousness for the sake of Universality has become a positive one; and man has a relation to Universal Being of such a kind that he remains positive in sustaining it (Hegel 1991b, 178). “This One, Universal Being, is indeed not yet recognized as the free Unity of Thought; not yet ‘worshipped in Spirit and in Truth;’ but it is still clothed with a form—that of Light” (Hegel 1991b, 178). The Persian Religion is not a form of idol-worship; it does not adore individual natural objects, but the Universal itself (Hegel 1991b, 178). “Light admits, moreover, the signification of the Spiritual; it is the form of the Good and True—the substantiality of knowledge and volition as well as of all natural things. Light puts man

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<sup>81</sup> As far as Hegel was concerned, prior to the doctrine of Zoroaster, Nature was characterized by a state in which “Spirit has not yet an independent existence in contraposition to its object [consciousness]. Among the Hindus, this objectivity is only the *natural* one of the Brahmins, and is recognized as pure Universality only in the destruction of consciousness” (Hegel 1991b, 177-178).

in a position to be able to exercise choice; and he can only choose when he has emerged from that which has absorbed him, but Light directly involves an Opposite, namely, Darkness; just as Evil is the antithesis of the Good” (Hegel 1991b, 178).

Hegel stated that “the chief end of every man’s existence is to keep himself pure, and to spread this purity around him. The precepts that have this in view are very diffuse; the moral requirements are however characterized by mildness. It is said: if a man loads you with revilings, and insults, but subsequently humbles himself, call him your friend. We read in the Vendidad, that sacrifices consist chiefly of the flesh of clean animals, flowers, and fruits, milk, and perfumes. It is said there, ‘As man was created pure and worthy of Heaven, he becomes pure again through the law of servants of Ormuzd, which is the purity itself; if he purifies himself by sanctity of thought, word, and deed. What is ‘Pure Thought’? The word of Ormuzd (the Word is thus personified and imports the living Spirit of the whole revelation of Ormuzd). What is ‘Pure Deed?’ The humble adoration of the Heavenly Hosts, created at the beginning of things.’ It is implied in this that man should be virtuous: his own will, his subjective freedom is presupposed” (Hegel 1991b, 179-180 and Fargard 8.3; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 94).

Hegel believed the Universal Spirit played a central role in the success of the Persian Empire. Nevertheless, the Spirit described by Hegel undergoes a rebirth in the second phase which he refers to as the “Greek World.” “If Persia forms the *external* transition to Greek life, the internal, *mental* transition is mediated by *Egypt*. Here the antitheses in their abstract form are broken through; a breaking through which effects

their nullification” (Hegel 1991b, 115). According to Hegel, “this undeveloped reconciliation exhibits the struggle of the most contradictory principles, which are not yet capable of harmonizing themselves, but, setting up the birth of this harmony as the problem to be solved, make themselves a riddle for themselves and for others, the solution of which is only to be found in the *Greek World*” (Hegel 1991b, 115). “In Greece it is first that advancing Spirit makes itself the content of its volition and its knowledge; but in such a way that State, Family, Law, and Religion are at the same time objects aimed at by individuality” (Hegel 1991b, 223). The Greeks essentially established a communitarian unity by recognizing that it benefited individual interests.

Hegel viewed the third phase as a period of regression but expected a return to glory in the fourth and final phase. The decline associated with the third phase occurs in the “Roman World” and is characterized by universal misfortune and the demise of ethical life (Hegel 1991b, 379). He attributed this decline to the extremes of personal or private self-consciousness and abstract universality. “This element of subjectivity is afterwards realized as Personality of Individuals, and with such an Ego or personality, I am infinite to myself, and my phenomenal existence consists in the property recognized as mine, and the recognition of my personality” (Hegel 1991b, 320). In other words, the Romans abandoned their commitment to the legacy and honor of their empire. In the Roman World, “individuals are thereby posited as atoms; but they are at the same time subject to the severe rule of the *One* [the connection between the ruler and the ruled is not mediated by the claim of Divine or Constitutional Right, or any general principle, but is

direct and individual, the Emperor being the immediate lord of each subject in the Empire]” (Hegel 1991b, 320). Under their system of governance, every person was “entitled only to possession,” while the Emperor laid “claim to the possession of all these individuals, so that the right assumed by the social unit is at once abrogated and robbed of validity” (Hegel 1991b, 320). For Hegel, this contradiction was the misery of the Roman World (Hegel 1991b, 320).

Fortunately, a return to glory is expected in the “German World.” In this stage, Spirit is able to unify all the perspectives and stages of human history.<sup>82</sup> Hegel asserted that “the Mind now grasps the infinite positivity of its own inwardness, the principle of the unity of divine and human nature and the reconciliation of the objective truth and freedom which have appeared within self-consciousness and subjectivity” (Hegel 1991b, 379). In other words, Hegel’s philosophy of history outlines a four-step process which ends when all humans recognize the power of the Universal Mind. By design, history ends with the articulation of Hegel’s philosophy.

Hegel’s ideas may have been influenced by the Zoroastrian conception of Spirit. He argued that the German people have a unique place in the final stage of history due to their linguistic and philosophical connection to the ancient Iranians (Hegel 1991, 379). The difficulty in translating the term “Geist” for English speakers demonstrates how the German conception of spirit is connected to the ancient Aryan philosophy of religion. As

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<sup>82</sup> Hegel briefly described Mohametanism (Islam) in a small subsection of his focus on the “German World” (Hegel 1991b, 355-36).

mentioned, spirit is based on the Farsi term for “man’s ability to think” and is strongly associated with the mind. In German, the term “Geist” literally translates as ghost but it is a term that can be associated with both mind and spirit. The title of Hegel’s book *Phänomenologie des Geistes* has been translated as both “Phenomenology of Spirit” and “Phenomenology of Mind” in English-speaking countries.

According to Marx, Hegel used a dialectical method of argumentation based on a process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis (Marx 1867, 25). This is partly based on Hegel’s impression that the phases of history were synthesized in the German World. While Hegel never claimed to use a dialectic method of argumentation, there is certainly a dualist and triadic character to his prose.<sup>83</sup>

Marx adapted the Hegelian method in his studies of history. Unlike Hegel, Marx chose to focus on the more concrete elements of history such as land, agriculture, and heavy machinery. He stated that “my dialectic method is not only different from the

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<sup>83</sup> The dialectical method of argumentation can also be described as “triadic” since it follows a pattern of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. In addition, a period of synthesis may restart the cycle as a new form of thesis (Muir 1965, 38-39, Weiss and Kainz 1971, 217, and Schaper 1976, 230). According to Eva Schaper, “Hegel inherited the Kantian obsession with architectonics, i.e. the attempt to show that the parts, chapters, sections and even paragraphs of a written work flow effortlessly from the nature of the subject matter and combine into a pattern which makes inherent structure apparent. However, Hegel’s architectonic conviction was more robust. The absolute spirit having revealed itself as being able to count up to *three* and inevitably manifesting itself in triads or trinities, the work naturally captures this predilection in perfectly marshaled threefold divisions. There [are] three of everything, no more and no less. After an introduction, three parts each with three chapters preceded by an introduction each; three sections to every chapter, and most of the latter with three sub-sections; where the three sub-sections do not materialize, we have none at all, the spirit obviously not allowing itself the indiscretion of one, two or four. Some might worry at the relentless omnipresence of the magical figure *three*. But a true Hegelian, I suppose, would rejoice at having the dialectical trinity confirmed by whatever the spirit (or Hegel?) touches” (Schaper 1976, 230).

Hegelian, but is its direct opposite” (Marx 1999, 25). Marx believed human history was driven by material life, which was the base to the superstructure (Marx 1911, 12). In other words, the distribution of property was the main determinant of the structure of political relations, cultural philosophies, and religious institutions. Marx’s perspective on history may be described as a “materialist philosophy of history” as well as “humanist history” since it emphasizes the importance of productive labor rather than Spirit. The “humanist” label either overlooks and/or intentionally undermines the Hegelian Spirit of humanity. Nevertheless, although Marx believed humans were naturally collective and communitarian, he acknowledged that they had to initially struggle against their natural environment which produced distinct phases throughout history.

Marx believed there were five stages to history that began with a period of primitive communism. He presented his philosophy of history in *Capital* (1867) with the intention “to turn Hegel right-side up” (Stanley 1997, 449 and Marx 1999, 25). For Marx, the first stage of history is analogous to a state of nature characterized by communitarian instinct. He believed this phase was followed by a period of primitive accumulation which laid the groundwork for feudal rule (Marx 1999, 784-786). Primitive accumulation is a timeless concept which refers to any acquisition of wealth or labor through non-market means. Slavery and robbery are the primary examples of the primitive accumulation which defined the second stage of history. The third stage was defined by feudal rule. The fourth stage is the age of capitalism. Capitalism has two sub-stages. The first form of capitalism was agrarian capitalism attributed to surpluses in

crop production and major advances in farm technology. Marx believed one of the benefits of capitalists and competitive markets was their ability to accelerate technological progress (Marx 1999, 663). In turn, agrarian capitalism quickly transitioned toward industrial capitalism which completely changed the essence of capitalism itself. While the market in an agrarian society was somewhat bound by the limits of land and food spoilage, there are no physical boundaries to industrial capitalism. As long as the working class survives the level of inequality is unlimited. Thus, the competitive spirit that was believed to improve the conditions of all individuals was also the biggest flaw of industrial capitalism (Marx 1999, 445). As Ibn Khaldun ominously suggested, every triumph contains the seeds of its own destruction (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 137).

Marx argued that industrial capitalism survived through coercive competition and the harsh conditions endured by the proletariat (Marx 1999, 649). The proletariat is the term for the working class who must sell their labor to the class that owns the means of production. The class that owns the means of production is known as the bourgeoisie. In turn, market capitalism creates vicious competition among the bourgeoisie who rely on efficient production in order to maintain their position. Efficiency usually means tougher working conditions for the proletariat leading to greater surplus value and rapid technological innovation. This ultimately translates to job losses leading to over-production and under-consumption. This is also Marx's explanation of the volatility of market cycles. In *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, (1859) Marx



stated that, “at a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come into conflict with the existing relations of production, –or what is the legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they had been at work before” (Marx 1911, 12). Consequently, he believed the proletariat would eventually rebel after they realize they are supporting a flawed system that exploits them (Marx and Engels 1848, 4). However, he believed the technological advances produced by the stage of capitalism will inevitably allow humans to reconcile the various phases of history and free themselves from the constraints of material life (Marx 1998, 50). The final phase combines the utopian ideals of primitive communism and the technological support of the competitive era.

Marx’s response to Hegel epitomizes the enduring struggle between spirit and matter.<sup>84</sup> They both believed that one of these entities was the protagonist of the story of history. A true Hegelian may agree with Marx’s description of history and his critique of capitalism but he or she would attribute these events to the demise of ethical life. Thus, they might say that Marx provided a clear outline of economic development but an overly simplified philosophy of history.

Another philosopher who used the rhetoric of stages, phases, and realms to organize history was Arnold Toynbee. In *A Study of History* (1934-1961), Toynbee seeks

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<sup>84</sup> According to John L. Stanley, Marx criticized Hegel’s replacement of natural history with a philosophy of nature derived from logical categories. His critique affirms Engels’s later view that natural history should be restored by discovering dialectics in nature rather than imposing dialectics on it (Stanley 1997, 449).

to examine “the history of Mankind as a whole” (Toynbee 1972, 10). He suggests that history is essentially the story of the rise and decline of various civilizations which share common characteristics. For Toynbee, the proper unit of analysis for historical study is the civilization rather than the nation-state (Toynbee 1972, 15). He claimed all major civilizations endured five distinct stages which began with genesis, followed by growth, struggle, disintegration, and universality. For Toynbee, universality was the culmination of disintegration, when the spiritual remnants of the civilization survive and spread long after the fall of the state. Toynbee created a list of thirty four “full blown civilizations” (Toynbee 1972, 72), which included the civilizations discussed by Herder and Hegel.

Based on Hegel’s description of the early stages of human history, German philosopher and psychiatrist Karl Jaspers claimed that the time period between 800 BCE and 200 BCE represented an “Axial Age” (Jaspers 1953, 1).<sup>85</sup> It was defined by “the most extraordinary events” which led to a pivotal turning point in humanity’s mode of thought throughout various parts of the world, which changed the course of history (Jaspers 1953, 2). Jaspers included the doctrine of Zoroaster in his list of pivotal events, but his book, *The Origin and Goal of History* (1949), was published long before Mary Boyce provided evidence for an earlier date concerning the time of Zoroaster (Boyce

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<sup>85</sup> According to Jaspers, in the Western World, the philosophy of history was founded on the Christian faith in a grandiose sequence of works from St. Augustine to Hegel that visualized the movement of God throughout history. However, the Christian faith is only one faith, not the faith of mankind. In the West, many Christians separated their faith from their empirical insight into the real course of history (Jaspers 1953, 1).

1982, 1-3). According to Jaspers, during the Axial Age, “Confucius and Lao-tse were living in China, all the schools of Chinese philosophy came into being, including those of Mo-ti, Chuang-tse, Lieh-tsu and a host of others; India produced the Upanishads and Buddha and, like China, ran the whole gamut of philosophical possibilities down to skepticism, materialism, sophism and nihilism; in Iran Zarathustra taught a challenging view of the world as a struggle between good and evil; in Palestine the prophets made their appearance from Elijah, by way of Isaiah and Jeremiah to Deutero-Isaiah; Greece witnessed the appearance of Homer, of the philosophers –Parmenides, Heraclitus, and Plato – of the tragedians, Thucydides and Archimedes” (Jaspers 1953, 2). Everything associated with these names developed in a few centuries, almost simultaneously in China, India, and the West, without any one of these regions knowing about the others (Jaspers 1953, 2). “What is new about this age, in all three areas of the world, is that man becomes conscious of being as a whole, of himself and his limitations” (Jaspers 1953, 2). “An axis of world history, if such a thing exists, would be situated at the point in history which gave birth to everything which, since then, man has been able to be, the point most overwhelmingly fruitful in fashioning humanity; its character would have to be, if not empirically cogent and evident, yet so convincing to empirical insight as to give rise to a common frame of historical self-comprehension for all peoples—for the West, for Asia, and for all men on earth, without regard to particular articles of faith” (Jaspers 1953, 1).

### **Alternative Interpretations**

There are certainly alternative answers to some of the questions raised in this chapter. It is possible that the “Spirit” discussed by Johan Gottfried Herder and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel referred to an abstract concept the source of which is yet to be determined. If we only examine Hegel’s *Early Theological Writings*, we could conclude that it was mostly inspired by the Christian perception of God rather than Zoroastrianism. In addition, the “Spirit” discussed by Hegel could also be used to describe a physical force that relates to the nature of light and energy that is yet to be fully understood. Meanwhile, the belief that history is the culmination of distinct phases may not be attributable to the discovery of the Universal Spirit. It is possible that it began with a new calendar based on the “Age of Alexander,” or the calendar reforms initiated under Roman Emperor Julius Caesar which culminated in the “common era.” However, both Herder and Hegel were well aware of Zoroastrianism and explicitly acknowledged its special place in history.

Hegel included references to Anquetil’s acquisition of the Avesta in his lectures and read Johann Kleuker’s German translation of Anquetil’s French translation as a young child even though he never explicitly stated that Zoroastrianism was the inspiration for his prose or lecture style (Hegel 1991b, 176).<sup>86</sup> Kleuker’s German translation (Kleuker 2009) of Anquetil’s French translation (Anquetil 2011) of the Avesta

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<sup>86</sup> Although Hegel read the Avesta in Kleuker’s translation it is uncertain whether he read the French translation by Anquetil (Hodgson 2006, 305).

was published when Hegel was around six years old, which was about five years after Anquetil published the French translation. In an essay from “the high school years” dated July 1787, Hegel cited Zoroaster in a footnote pertaining to Plato’s Alcibiades (Hegel 1968, 175). The essay was about the great fame of the ancient Persian and Egyptian Empires and how the people of Greece learned about the art of formal education and sources of magical wisdom from the people who taught the Magic of Zoroaster, the progeny of Ahura Mazda (Hegel 1968, 175). The essay provides evidence that at the age of sixteen, Hegel knew of Zoroaster and may have read or heard about him even earlier.<sup>87</sup> There are similarities between the content and prose of the Avesta and the works of Hegel and Marx. Hegel used a dialectic style of argumentation which Marx identified in a study of his published works. It may be useful to explore the possibility that Hegel’s writing style was influenced by various ancient sources associated with religion such as the Vedas, the Avesta, and the books which encompass the Abrahamic tradition.

### **The Contradictions of Material Life**

The use of phases and dialectical reasoning may not be the best path to an accurate philosophy of history, but it is certainly a convenient and often convincing way to organize one. According to Marx, there are periods of history which represent a form

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<sup>87</sup> Hegel’s essay also seems to include a reference to the utopian novel by French author Denis Veiras known as *The History of the Sevarambians* [*L’Histoire des Séverambes*] (1675), in which the ideal city was founded by an Iranian Zoroastrian (Veiras 2006, 203). Hegel wrote, “Man konnte gewiss damals alle idealischen Plane eben so dreist nach Persien verlegen, als wir sie jetzt in das Lander Severamben verlegen. Ein jedes Land, das so weit entfernt war, war das Utopien der Griechen” [You could certainly then move all idealistic plans just so brazen to Persia, as we now transfer them to the Land of Severamben. Such a country, that was so far away, was the Utopia for the Greeks] (Hegel 1968, 175).

of thesis, or birth (Marx 1999, 25). These periods are usually followed by a distinct era which represents the antithesis to the pattern of thought in the first phase. The interactions between the creative and destructive forces of distinct periods eventually produce periods of synthesis and reconciliation. In other words, there is a pattern of progressive motion in which antithetical forces neutralize each other but in a manner that is somehow reflected in the outcome.

While Hegel makes many references to Zoroastrianism, there are also similarities between the Gathas and his style of argumentation. In a footnote about the turning points in his intellectual activities, which included the study of Philo of Alexandria at an early age, Mills noted that in 1876, “he turned to the Avesta to study the history of Hegel’s procedure by sublated negation” (Mills 1977, 140). The hymns of Zoroaster illustrate how monotheist thought is rooted in an epic battle between conflicting spirits. The prose and content is characterized by the ancient view of progressive motion based on a process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. As it says, “In the beginning, both Mentalities became conscious of each other, and while the deceitful one chose to perpetrate evil, the most Holy Spirit chose the truth, just like the followers of Ahura Mazda” (Yasna 30.3-5; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). Marx did not focus on the references to Zoroastrianism in Hegel’s works, but his view of history is genetically rooted in Zoroastrian cosmology since he adopted the Hegelian method. According to Zoroaster, the initial belief in the existence of good and evil spirits resulted from a misperception of reality. What we perceive as periods of light and darkness can be reconciled by the Universal Spirit.

Robin George Collingwood agreed with Marx's interpretation of dialectical historicism in Hegelian thought. In the *Idea of History*, he supports this point by discussing the Greek and Roman wars. He claimed that Roman culture owes its existence to the wars among the Greeks. According to the legend of Aeneas, the Romans were believed to be the descendants of the defeated Trojans who fled after the conquest of Troy (Virgil 1917, 299). Nevertheless, the Roman culture eventually developed into the antithesis of the Greek world. Collingwood proposed that the struggle between these two forces eventually resulted in a synthesis known as "the Christian world" (Collingwood 1946, 119). The dialectical method may be applied to many other points in history.

In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx suggested that the dictatorship of Louis XIV led to its antithesis, otherwise known as the radical French Revolution (Marx 2003, 4). These periods were eventually reconciled by the rule of Napoleon, who laid the groundwork for the transition from agrarian capitalism to the era of industrial capitalism. The transition coincided with dramatic shifts in class structure as the ruling classes of the feudal and agrarian periods were replaced by military elites, merchants, and bankers.

Ironically, while Marx claimed that he used the Hegelian method of dialectical argumentation, his rejection of Hegelian idealism created a major dialectical struggle in itself. Hegel's theories support a communitarian model for political life, and I have suggested that they have a deep background in Zoroastrianism. His ideas were the

culmination of the Romantic Movement in philosophy which rejected the overly rational individualism of the Enlightenment. In other words, Hegel's spiritual communitarian model represents the antithesis to rational individualism.

Based on the dialectical model, Hegel's followers split into two major factions since they could not agree on how to interpret his core ideas. A group known as the "Young-Left Hegelians" defined their faction by rebelling against the religious dimension of Hegel's philosophy.<sup>88</sup> They attempted to clarify his communitarian values through a secular perspective. In contrast, the "Old-Right Hegelians" followed a less radical interpretation in support of the religious dimension. The "Old" Hegelians emphasized the importance of Hegel's theological training, which helped them attain teaching positions at top universities. Most of them taught theology and their views supported the Protestant values of the Prussian State.

Hegel's most prominent follower was a "Young" Hegelian known as Karl Marx. He supported Hegel's communitarian values but his writings inspired a more prominent ideology based on the antithesis of spirit. In other words, Marx re-articulated Hegel's communitarian ideals from a purely material perspective.

This leads us to Friedrich Nietzsche, who included references to Zoroastrianism in *Thus Spake Zarathustra: A Book for All and None* (1885). Dawson wrote that, "Although

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<sup>88</sup> The list of prominent Young-Left Hegelians includes David Strauss, Bruno Bauer, Ludwig Feuerbach, and Karl Marx. Marx can be considered part of a second generation of Young-Left Hegelians. The Young-Left Hegelians distinguished themselves when David Strauss used the term "Right-Hegelian" to criticize the ideas of Bruno Bauer even though he was much more of a Young-Left Hegelian. Apparently, Strauss believed Bauer leaned too far away from the core Young-Left perspective (Nola 1993, 291-301).



Nietzsche was fully aware of the historical role of Zoroaster [in Persian, Zarathustra] (Pearson and Large 2006, 249), it does not appear that he was, in fact, at all acquainted with the work of the ancient Persian or his teaching. The Zend Avesta and the later Parsi scriptures were then being made known to the world in difficult translations, the meaning of the text often involved in much doubt and only a ripple of interest—barely enough to cause ‘Zarathustra’ to be heralded abroad as the [philosopher’s] name, instead of Zoroaster which had come down to us through the Greeks—had been aroused, outside of very narrow circles” (Dawson 1931, x-xi).

“The result, however little that may have been intended, is most incongruous. The Nietzschean philosophy certainly lauds to the sky nearly everything which Zoroaster of old [opposed] and reviled and also depreciates all that his followers have taught to hold sacred and pure. This is illustrated in the Prologue (VIII) in the following concerning Zarathustra bearing a corpse about him. ‘When Zarathustra had said this to his heart, he put the corpse on his shoulders and set out upon his way;’ for, according to the Parsi scriptures, if he carried the body alone, it would have been a crime involving deadly punishment. The Zend Avesta says, ‘Let no man himself carry a dead body...he is unclean thenceforth for ever and ever’ (Vendidad Fargard 3, c. 3, 14). Thus, this Zarathustra is, in his thoughts and deeds, most unlike the ancient Zoroaster” (Dawson 1931, x-xi).

However, in response to Dawson, it is possible that Nietzsche understood Zoroastrianism well enough to write his own metaphoric critique of organized religion.

According to Walter Kauffman, “it seems to have gone unnoticed *how close Nietzsche himself had come to the real Zarathustra*” (Kauffman 1974, 199). Jenny Rose also examined the degree to which the real Zarathustra was incorporated into Nietzsche’s ideas through a brief review of some of the books that were available to him as well as a list of overlapping themes.<sup>89</sup> She noted that, “although some of [her] comparisons may seem to be stretched somewhat in order to demonstrate Nietzsche’s familiarity with the Zarathustra of Zoroastrian lore, the fact is that a close reading of *Thus Spoke* discovers the existence of most of these familiar Zoroastrian themes” (Rose 2000, 181). The inclusion of Zoroaster as the main character of Nietzsche’s story was based on his perception that Zoroaster’s noble effort to reform religious thought was futile. Nietzsche recognized how most of Zoroaster’s ideas were ultimately twisted in order to justify the same type of unethical behavior that he criticized in his hymns. “The process of re-creating the image of Zarathustra does not then end with Nietzsche” (Rose 2000, 181). “In his booklet *Zarathustra’s Wiederkehr* [Zarathustra’s Return] (1919), Hermann Hesse takes up Nietzsche’s theme and focuses on the building of an individual’s character

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<sup>89</sup> “These include: Zarathustra’s entrance into the world laughing, his fight against sorcerers, his wanderings, the importance of animals, such as the wolf (usually Ahrimanic), horses and cows, who encounter the child Zarathustra; his meaningful dreams, his initiation of ‘laws,’ his lack of followers, and hatred by his enemies. Both prophets pray to the sun, both praise the dawn, the light of the stars, and the cow, they hate cattle raiders; for both, marriage is a sacred institution; both speak of the moral qualities of purity, wisdom, goodness, hospitality, courage and honesty; images of the mountain and the wind are prominent. Both figures are regarded as the friend and protector of living things; both apparently reject the cult of the dead; noontide is significant for each of them” (Rose 2000, 181).

through the ‘teachings’ of Zarathustra as the means of restoring the German spirit after the First World War” (Hess 1993, 112 and Rose 2000, 181).

#### The Dialectic Never Ends

The attacks against the religious dimension of Hegelian thought could have been minimized if his students spent more time studying Zoroastrianism, or listened closely when he delivered his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. These attacks were described by Emil L. Fackenheim in *The Religious Dimension of Hegel’s Thought* (1967). “According to legend of great longevity, the Hegelian philosophy is not and never was to be taken seriously [because it] is a dogmatic rationalism which undertakes a priori deductions of empirical fact by some strange thesis-antithesis-synthesis method, or even a panlogism which denies the empirical altogether” (Fackenheim 1982, 3). Furthermore, he claimed that “it is no accident that Hegel’s philosophy fragmented itself into right- and left-wing schools among his own disciples” because it is full of contradictions (Fackenheim 1982, 5). The most penetrating studies have been produced by borrowing fragments from Hegel’s works, he asserted (Fackenheim 1982, 5).

During his school years, religion and history were Hegel’s favorite subjects and he was particularly interested in the history of religion (Kroner 1975, 1). According to Stephen Crites, he was tremendously influenced by the Greek and Roman classics, as well as the Bible (Crites 1998, 5). Hegel’s family was of old Lutheran stock and his family included a number of pastors in addition to craftsmen, scholars, and public officials (Crites 1998, 7). He grew up in Swabia, a region with a peculiar spiritual

character. According to Crites, there is a strong mystical hue to its characteristic spirituality which dates back to at least the Middle Ages (Crites 1998, 7). “Hegel was true to his Swabian background in the peculiar and, so to speak, Gothic combination of introversion and self-abnegation with a heaven–storming Eros for the sublime and the universal” (Crites 1998, 7). Crites essentially suggests that Hegel’s writing style is largely rooted in his region’s particular language and views on spirituality. When he was eighteen, Hegel entered a theological seminary school in Tübingen where some of the most celebrated intellectuals from Swabia were educated (Kroner 1, 1975).

Fackenheim emphasized how the relation between religious life and Hegelianism demands heavy concentration on his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (Fackenheim 1982, 9). He also suggested that Hegel distinguished the “Jewish God from all pagan deities, those of Greece and Rome included” (Fackenheim 1982, 134). The books written by scholars like Crites and Fackenheim are targets of the core argument of this study, which is that Zoroastrianism is so unjustly ignored.

Fackenheim never discussed Zoroastrianism even though it was such a major part of Hegel’s *Philosophy of History*, his *Philosophy of Art*, as well as his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (Hegel 1991b, 173, Hegel 2006, 297 Hegel 1879, 11). In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel wrote included a section on Persian religion which he also referred to as “The Religion of Light” (Hegel 2006, 297). He claimed that the Persian religion set “the form in which God is known as what truly has

being in and for itself, and known truly as this; so God is in truth what is independent, what is inwardly determinate, and hence God is the good” (Hegel 2006, 297).

The publication of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* was based on the final course that Hegel taught. In these lectures, Hegel distinguished between “book” religions and “folk” religions which he previously discussed in his early theological writings. Book religions are synonymous with Abrahamic religions which are characterized by divine revelations through a specific book. Abrahamic religions are typically associated with the Semitic line of prophets who transmitted the Judaic, Christian, and Islamic scriptures. In the Islamic scriptures, the Jews and Christians are regarded as “people of the book” (Quran 2.105). Zoroastrians (Al-Majus)<sup>90</sup> are listed as believers in God along with the Jews, Christians, and Sabians (Quran 22.17). During the early stages of the Islamic conquest of Iran, Zoroastrians were treated as people of the book but this policy ended with the Umayyad Caliphate (Boyce 2001, 252). Zoroastrianism is difficult to categorize because there are sources which suggest that it influenced the Abrahamic religions, but the Zoroastrian records do not corroborate the existence of a Semitic line of prophets. Zoroaster’s ideas transcend the Abrahamic categories of folk religions and book religions, or pagan and non-pagan faiths.

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<sup>90</sup> In the Avesta, the term Magi described the priestly caste of sages that Zoroaster was associated with, but he eventually rebelled against their tradition. “Zoroaster seeks to be heard beyond the Magians” (Yasna 33.7; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). Paradoxically, the term Magi is closely associated with the Zoroastrian priestly class.

In contrast to Abrahamic religions, what scholars describe as folk religions are essentially folk-cultural philosophies which pertain to cosmology and ontology. In other words, folk religions are more closely associated with philosophy of religion, or the branch of philosophy that is concerned with questions of creation and existence. However, like any ideology, they may lead to the practice of religious rituals and traditions.

The idea of divine revelation is a lot more metaphoric in folk religions since many oral traditions were based on the natural observation of objects and patterns created by God. For instance, the ancient Vedic and Zoroastrian poets used a formulaic prose based on astronomical calculations which led their audiences to believe that they literally spoke the word of God since their poetry was based on the natural creations they observed. In other words, there are no miracles in folk religions. In his early theological writings, Hegel proposed that the miracles described in the Bible are meant to prove its authenticity which he identified as a logical contradiction (Hegel 1975, 153). The belief in a Creative Spirit cannot be justified by supernatural events which are beyond our understanding. Rather, it is the result of intellectual conclusions which ultimately come from our sense of awareness about the proper form of social conduct.

There are many other religious texts that are characterized by formulaic prose. For instance, the prose in the Quran matches the structure of ancient calendars. The Quran has 114 chapters which can be divided by 19 to equal 6. The number 6 is the first perfect number and is important for time-keeping formulas (60 and 360). The number 19

is a prime number which equals 361 when squared. This formula is quite useful for the traditional 360-day calendar which was once used by the Persians and the Babylonians.<sup>91</sup>

According to Boyce, “during the latter period of Darius’s reign, Babylonians refined their formulas for calendrical adjustments even further by introducing nineteen-year cycles, during each of which seven months were similarly intercalated” (Boyce 2005, 7). “This system achieved an almost perfect correspondence between the lunar and solar years, which may have been well appreciated by Zoroastrian priests who concerned themselves with calendrical matters” (Boyce 2005, 7). Before Darius’s reign, the conquest of Egypt in 525 by Cambyses, Cyrus’s son, helped the Persians learn about another quite different calendar, also based on a system of time-reckoning (Boyce 2005, 7). “This is attested from the days of the Old Kingdom, in the third millennium BCE, and it consisted of a calendar of twelve months of 30 days, followed by a “little month” of five days. From its format it is reasonable to deduce that this had a 360-day predecessor of “early-culture” type with a month intercalated every six years, and an autumn beginning, since the dominant phenomenon of the Egyptian natural year was the annual autumn flooding of the land by the Nile. The reformed calendar measured the length of

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<sup>91</sup> A few tribes lived in regions with winters so harsh that almost nothing happens then (during winter), and they simply ignored this time; but for most peoples the cycle of the natural year, controlled by the sun, dictated the length of the calendar year made up of lunar months (thirty-day increments based on the instinct for decimal counting, which led on to a more artificial division into three ten-day periods, assigned to the new moon, full moon, and waning moon); and since the solar year is about eleven days longer than one made up of twelve [actual] lunar months, and about nineteen days shorter than one of thirteen such months, to keep the two in accord a month had to be added or dropped when this was perceived to be necessary, ideally every six years; and the ancient Iranians were among those who needed to add a month (Boyce 2005, 2).

the natural year as accurately as is possible while counting only whole days, but there was now no intercalation. So it began at once to fall back against the natural year by a quarter day every twelve months, and the authorities did not adopt any way of halting this regression but allowed it to pass through a majestic cycle of about a thousand-and-a-half years, after which another such cycle began. It was natural that on encountering these two examples of advanced calendars some Persians - most probably primarily from the Treasury and among astronomer-priests- should have conceived a wish to reform their own 360-day calendar. The model which they chose for following was the Egyptian, with its basic similarity to their own, and they proposed only one difference: the beginning of their reformed calendar year would still be at Nouruz, that is, it would start in the spring (which agreed with the Babylonian)” (Boyce 2005, 7).<sup>92</sup>

Throughout history, astronomers used the moon to divide the year into months but the lunar system leads to a large amount of calendarical drift when used to calculate the

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<sup>92</sup> “The introduction of five more days was a radical step, and calendar change is in any case notoriously difficult to bring about. Years may therefore have passed in discussion, with the slow gathering of support (probably chiefly in Persia / Pars), before the proposal at last gained what was essential, the approval of the Great King. It was plainly impossible even then to explain the intended change to all members of the Zoroastrian communities within the Persian Empire, extending from the borders of India to the western coast of Anatolia, overwhelmingly non-literate, and most of them with no interest whatever in questions of exact chronological calculation. Change must largely have been enforced; and the Persian Great King had the power to do this, for he had the imperial army at his command, and could exact obedience from his satraps, each of whom had his own troops. The reformed calendar was likely introduced in one of the years 481-479 BCE, when Nouruz would have been celebrated at the spring equinox on the first day of the first month (the only years in which this would have been so under the earlier Achaemenians). Xerxes (519-465 BCE), Darius' son, was then on the throne, and his Daiva inscription shows him to have been a deeply pious, orthopractic Zoroastrian, who must have been convinced of the propriety of the reform. It also shows him to have been ruthless in enforcing measures which he thought were right for the religion, and it is highly probable that advocates of the reform presented it (and believed this themselves) as, in fact, a return to the calendar given by Zoroaster to his community, who had not worthily maintained it” (Boyce 2005, 7).



length of a year. The lunar calendar and a solar year have an approximate average of 361 days since a lunar year can be rounded to 354 or 355 days, while a solar year is a little over 365 days. In turn, the lunar calendar will realign with the motion and location of the sun every 33 years. Meanwhile, the number of days calculated over 19 years is very close to the length of a 235-month lunar cycle. In the Quran, there is only one passage that included a reference to the number 19, which described “nineteen angels” as a form of authentication based on unmatched numerology (Quran 74.30-31). Section 19, which is labeled “Maryam,” also contains a reference to authentication within a story about Jesus (Quran 19.33). In addition, the Arabic name Wahid (or Vahid in the Farsi pronunciation) means “the one,” and has letters which numerically match up to the number 19. Ironically, the term “Arabic Numerals” refers to the adoption of Indian Numerals by Arabs and various other peoples who previously used letters as numbers. The Indo-Aryan legacy of formulaic prose and astronomical poetry had a major influence on the numerological composition of the Quran.

Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* explicitly described the difference between a religion and a philosophy of religion. Fackenheim ultimately defended Hegel’s philosophy by pointing out that as early as 1844, when Hegel’s philosophy had widely been declared dead, “his biographer Karl Rosenkranz observed that if this were the case, ‘one would have to be astounded by the vehemence with which it is attacked precisely by those who declare it dead’” (Fackenheim 1982, 4 [Rosenkranz 1844, 8]). Fackenheim concluded that the attacks on Hegel for the religious dimension of his

thought were unwarranted, but he mainly attributed it to the problem of interpretation caused by Hegel's writing style. He never discussed Hegel's references to Zoroastrianism, which also serve as a defense against the charge that his thought is too religious. In accordance with Zoroastrianism and the idea of false perceptions, Hegel associates periods of darkness with the demise of ethical life. This is compatible with any secular philosophy.<sup>93</sup>

### **The Religious Dimension**

According to John Walker, who edited a collection of essays on *Thought and Faith in the Philosophy of Hegel* (1991), Fackenheim and Quentin Lauer were outstanding exceptions to the Hegel scholars who disregard Hegel's philosophical engagement with religion.<sup>94</sup> Walker hoped to reverse this trend. Nevertheless, he admitted that "Hegel's dual thesis that philosophical knowledge is the only mode of knowledge which can adequately articulate the absolute Idea, and that what philosophy calls the absolute Idea is what religion calls God, is the origin of the most serious charges" against Hegel's philosophy (Walker 1991, 1).

In the first essay from Walker's collection, Walter Jaeschke suggested that Hegel's philosophy of religion regards Christianity as a culmination of the history of all world religions (Jaeschke 1991, 13). In other words, Jaeschke argued that Hegel's

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<sup>93</sup> While some scholars argue that the religious dimension of Hegel's thought is very important, scholars like Georg Lukács claim that it can be over-emphasized (Lukács 1976, 28-29 and 181).

<sup>94</sup> Lauer published *A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* which suggested that the Spirit discussed by Hegel was based on the character of Jesus (Lauer 1976, 275).

philosophy was influenced by a variety of cultures and stages, which Hegel referred to as the Judaic and Greek religions. He then claims that it began with the religion of light, which Jaeschke believes to be Judaism, and not the Iranian religion (Jaeschke 1990, 201). Jaeschke's interpretation that the Judaic tradition was the initial inspiration for Hegel's Spirit is based on extensive analysis of his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. He also claimed that in the nineteenth century it was customary to discuss the unity and plurality of three religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Jaeschke 1991, 11).

Any Hegel scholar who read about Zoroastrianism would immediately consider whether Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* can provide insight into his idea of Spirit. Jaeschke confirmed that these lectures can provide insight into his idea of Spirit, but he claimed that Hegel's Spirit refers to the God of Israel (Jaeschke 1990, 201). Jaeschke suggested that the only evidence that the Iranian religion is the inspiration for Hegel's Spirit is based on the contrast between light and darkness (Jaeschke 1990, 203). However, Jaeschke never mentioned that in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, Hegel explicitly stated that "human" history began in Iran when Zoroaster discovered the Universal Spirit (Hegel 1991b, 173).

In 1831 Hegel changed the structure of his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, which originally named Judaism and Greek religion as the determinate religions of a middle phase. He categorized Judaism as a subdivision of Zoroastrianism within a "transitional" position of the first phase of world religion (von der Luft 1989, 5). Some scholars attribute these changes to the limited studies of West Asia during that period

(von der Luft 1989, 5), while some have even considered charges of anti-Semitism (Fackenheim 1982, 136). Based on the idea that Hegel also associated light with the God of Israel, as well as the changes in his lecture notes from semester to semester, Jaeschke concluded that there is more evidence that the Spirit described by Hegel is the God of Israel rather than the God associated with any other religion. However, an interpretation of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* can be misleading if it only considers his early theological writings. In addition, as most college professors have learned, teaching is a dialectical process in which a lecture plan can change from moment to moment based on student reactions. According to Eric von der Luft, what we can determine from Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* is not that Hegel changed his mind every few years, but that Hegel continued to experiment with new ways of presenting the material to his students in the hopes of publishing a book on the philosophy of religion (von der Luft 1989, 62).

Hegel's philosophy has had very little impact on education theory since his death in 1831. However, some of his letters written whilst head teacher at the Nuremberg Gymnasium (1808-1816) reveal that pedagogical and educational issues played a very important part in the development of his philosophy and his teaching in this period (Tubbs 1996, 181). Nigel Tubbs reveals Hegel's views on experimental learning, on discipline within the school, on the nature of the student/teacher relationship, on curriculum design, and on style of teaching and learning (Tubbs 1996, 181). At a more critical and theoretical level, he shows that he recognized the domination implicit in the

teacher/pupil relationship, and reveals how he incorporated the mastery of the teacher into his pedagogy as substantial education content (Tubbs 1996, 181). Finally, at a philosophical level, his practice as a classroom teacher can be seen as an example of his philosophical system in action, illustrating its dialectical contradictions, its phenomenological and experiential structure, and above all, its systematic view of what education really is (Tubbs 1996, 181).

The prose and content of Hegel's lecture style is so poetic that it allows scholars to find beauty and meaning in his description of any religion. In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, Hegel organized his discussion of the people of Judea as a subsection of Persia, and stated that, "In every religion there is a divine presence, a divine relation; and a philosophy of History has to seek out the spiritual element even in the most imperfect forms" (Hegel 1991b, 195-196). The history of the Babylonian exile and the legacy of Cyrus the Great played a major role in the development of the Jewish tradition. The "Light" they presently regard as the God of Israel first shined on the eternal homeland of the Jews, Iran. Hegel stated that "the God of the Jewish People is the God only of Abraham and of his seed: National individuality and special local worship are involved in such a conception of deity" (Hegel 1991b, 195). "Before him, all other gods are false: moreover the distinction between 'true' and 'false' is quite abstract; for as regards the false gods, not a ray of the Divine is supposed to shine into them. But every form of spiritual force, and *a fortiori* every religion is of such a nature, that whatever peculiar character, an affirmative element is necessarily contained in it.

However erroneous a religion may be, it possesses truth, although in a mutilated phase” (Hegel 1991b, 195).

The first independent kingdom of Judea suffered from internal disruption and was divided. “The two kingdoms, equally infelicitous in foreign and domestic warfare, were at last subjected to the Assyrians and Babylonians; through Cyrus the Israelites obtained permission to return home and live according to their own laws” (Hegel 1991b, 198). As mentioned in Chapter One, Hebrew scholar Ephraim E. Urbach argued that the Jews were mostly polytheist during the Babylonian exile and believed their God was superior to the gods of various city-states (Urbach 1975, 20). Their God was in essence the God of Israel. Once Cyrus freed the Jews from captivity, some of them settled in Iran while others interacted with Iranians throughout the Empire. According to Urbach, the Zoroastrians they encountered in Iran inspired their strict monotheist thought (Urbach 1975, 20).<sup>95</sup> In other words, the Zoroastrian faith inspired the Jews to elevate the God of Israel to the Universal Spirit, which eventually developed into the Abrahamic God.

As W.J. Johnson wrote, “It has long been recognized by some, that Zoroastrianism played a role in the development of both Judaism and Christianity” (Johnson 1998, 6). Mary Boyce also noted that scholars found evidence that Zoroastrian influence began to be exerted on both Judaism and early Greek philosophy as early as the sixth century BCE (Mills 1977, 17, Dawson 1931, ix, Duchesne-Guillemin 1958, 86,

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<sup>95</sup> Urbach suggested that the Jews moved closer to monotheism by confronting dualist rhetoric (Urbach 1975, 20).

Smith 1963, 415, and Boyce 1982, xii). According to Lawrence H. Mills, “the books of the Bible can only be described as Jewish-Persian, and but for their immediate authorship as being almost as Persian as they are Jewish” (Mills 1977, 213). He writes that if we believe the passages in Chronicles, Ezra, and Isaiah to possess supernatural claims to validity, the question of influence of Persia upon Jewish theology, as well as upon Jewish history would be settled at once without question (Mills 1977, 212).<sup>96</sup> However, Mills aimed to present additional evidence which avoids the controversy over “supernatural” rhetoric. In addition to Zoroaster’s influence on Jewish history, he was also interested in its influence on Greek philosophy and Christianity. In *Zarathustra, Philo, the Achaemenids, and Israel*, he suggested that the Zoroastrian conception of Vohu Manah (Good Mentality), which was essentially an expression for the attributes of “truth and benevolence,” was practically synonymous with the Greek perspective on knowledge (logos) (Mills 1977, 20). Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE – 50 CE), also known as Philo Judaeus, made numerous contributions to Jewish philosophy while hoping to reconcile various perspectives on religion through universal logos (knowledge) (Philo 1854, 1-4, and 486-487, Philo 1855, 301, and Mills 1977, 140-141).

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<sup>96</sup> As written in *Chronicles*, “Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, all the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him up” (II Chronicles 36.23). “Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither” (Ezra 4.2). “However, Zerubbabel and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us” (Ezra 4.3).

Critics argue that Hegel's works are notoriously difficult to interpret for reasons of prose and language.<sup>97</sup> The inconsistencies in his lecture notes and transcripts only add to this problem. However, they illustrate that Hegel scholars must study his works in great detail without losing sight of his message about the overall purpose of history. As Thomas A. Lewis wrote, to claim that religion is important in Hegel's thought tells us remarkably little (Lewis 2011, 3). It is more important to consider that Hegel wrote during the post-Enlightenment period in which the concept of religion itself was disputed (Lewis 2011, 3).

In *Hegel's Social Philosophy: the Project of Reconciliation* (1994), Michael O. Hardimon stated that Hegel used Geist (Spirit, Mind) to refer to human individuals, human culture and society, as well as God (Hardimon 1994, 43).<sup>98</sup> However, the main point of his book was not meant to point out the importance of religion in Hegel's thought. It suggested that Hegel's social philosophy was based on the reconciliation of the individual and the modern community. In "Hegel and the Political Theology of Reconciliation" (2001), Mark Lilla claims that "Hegel was not a Christian thinker," but his philosophy is defined by a form of reconciliation that is unmistakably Christian (Lilla

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<sup>97</sup>Bernard M.G. Reardon wrote a guide to *Hegel's Philosophy of Religion* based on this assumption (Reardon 1977, ix).

<sup>98</sup>In "God As Absolute Spirit: A Heideggerian Interpretation of Hegel's God Talk," Yong Huang argued that Martin Heidegger's conception of "Being" can provide insight into Hegel's conception of God. Huang noted that in the post-modern era, God-talk is facing serious challenges (Huang 1996, 489). According to Huang, Hegel did not regard God as a metaphysical being, but an idea "internal to human knowing" (Huang 1996, 490).



2001, 860). Similarly, in “‘The Spirit of Christianity and Its Faith:’ Toward a Reconsideration of the Role of Love in Hegel” (2002), Alice Ormiston examined Hegel’s unpublished works on love (1798-1799) and claimed that one of Hegel’s major projects was to reconcile the modern individual with the expression of love that characterized the early followers of Jesus (Ormiston 2002, 499). In turn, while Hegel can be regarded as the “Thomas Aquinas of Protestantism,” he was merely responding to the intellectual trend of post-Enlightenment scholarship (Nys 2009, 3). The term religion itself was dramatically reconceived during Hegel’s life and it was undoubtedly influenced by European travelers to Asia, especially Anquetil du Perron’s acquisition of the Zoroastrian texts.<sup>99</sup>

Bernard M.G. Reardon briefly referenced Zoroastrianism in a summary section of his “guide” to *Hegel’s Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Out of the aforementioned authors concerned with the religious dimension of Hegel’s thought, Jaeschke and Reardon were the only authors who discussed “Iranian religion.” However, Jaeschke never mentioned Hegel’s direct references to Zoroastrianism even though Hegel regarded it as a synonym for the Iranian religion. Regardless, we shall see that Hegel’s references to Zoroastrianism provide insight into his understanding of the nature of Spirit.

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<sup>99</sup> The relationship between religion and philosophy has been redefined at various points in history. For some people, some forms of religious knowledge transcend philosophy, for others, religion and philosophy are parallel paths to truth which stand equal to each other. Religion may also be categorized under the general pursuit of knowledge and wisdom, often described as a philosophy of religion.

## Hegel's Texts on the Nature of Spirit

According to Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1840), history is the process in which Spirit becomes completely conscious of itself. In other words, the purpose of history is for all humans to realize that they are united by the phenomenology of mind. In these lectures, the definition of Spirit was based on the definition Hegel provided in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), in which he wrote that Spirit is the actuality of the ethical world, "the self-of actual consciousness to which it [Spirit] stands opposed [even if it depends on it]" (Hegel 1807, 265). Thus, "the nature of Spirit may be understood by a glance at its direct opposite—Matter" (Hegel 1991b, 17). For Hegel, the first major turning point in the process of history began when the first person became conscious of the Universal Spirit. That person was Zoroaster and his ethical philosophy influenced the policies of the Persian Empire.

The highlight of the Oriental phase of history took place in Iran, which started the story of "human" history. "As Light illuminates everything—imparting to each object a peculiar vitality—so the Persian Empire extends over a multitude of nations, and leaves to each one its peculiar character" (Hegel 1991b, 187).<sup>100</sup> Hegel strongly associated the terms Light and Spirit, which are core principles in his philosophy. The science

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<sup>100</sup> According to Hegel, "the Persian Empire is an Empire in the *modern* sense—like that which existed in Germany, and the great imperial realm under the sway of Napoleon; for we find it consisting of a number states, which are indeed dependent, but which have retained their own individuality, their manners, and laws. The general enactments, binding upon all, did not infringe upon their political and social idiosyncrasies, but even protected and maintained them; so that each of the nations that constitute the whole, had its own form of Constitution" (Hegel 1991b, 187).

concerned with the behavior of light is a branch of physics called optics, and the phenomenology of vision is based on the absorption of the light which reflects off matter (Palmer 1999, 15). Meanwhile, the term “phenomenology,” which relates to the study of any observable appearance (phenomenon), is also a metaphor for knowledge and awareness. Hegel believed that the purpose of the historical process is the phenomenology of Spirit.

For Hegel, the phases of history overlapped with the gradual westward expansion of human civilization, but each phase was invariably defined by the rise and decline of spiritual life. Hegel outlined history in a four step process which traveled through “Oriental, Greek, Roman, and German Worlds” (Hegel 1991b, 103). In his section on “Historical Data,” Hegel stated that the westward movement of human civilization followed the pattern symbolized by the sun (Hegel 1991b, 103). In his *Lectures on Aesthetics [The Philosophy of Fine Art]* (1818-1829), he stated that in the religion of the ancient Persians, the light is God, and since this is taken in the sense of the good and just being which disseminates life and its benefits everywhere, it is not merely an image of the good principle but the sovereign good itself (Hegel 1879, 11). It is the same with its opposite, as darkness is considered the impure element in everything – the hideous, the evil, the principle of death and destruction (Hegel 1879, 11). Hegel referred to the Iranian religion as the “Religion of Light (Persian Religion)” in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (Hegel 2006, 297).

During the same period when he delivered his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel explicitly described the importance of Anquetil's acquisition of the Zoroastrian texts in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. He discussed how Anquetil acquired these texts from the Parsis he met in Bombay (Hegel 1991b, 176). He was also aware that the Parsis fled Iran in the wake of the "Mahometan" conquest (Hegel 1991b, 176).

Hegel implied that he understood how the ancient Avestai language changed as Zoroastrianism spread from East Iran to the Western tribes that would become the leaders of the Persian Empire. "In Media and Persia the religion of Zoroaster prevailed, and Xenophon relates that Cyrus adopted it" (Hegel 1991b, 176). However, "none of these countries was the proper habitat of the Avestai people, which Zoroaster himself calls the pure Aryan: we find a similar name in Herodotus, for he says that the Medes were formerly called Aarii—a name with which the designation of Iran is connected" (Hegel 1991b, 176). In other words, even though the Persians and the Medes referred to themselves as Aryan tribes, the term Aryan was initially associated with the language and setting of the Avesta.

Hegel viewed the third phase as a period of decline but expected a return to glory in the fourth and final phase. Nevertheless, the Roman desire for satisfaction prepared the ground for a higher spiritual world which manifested itself in connection with the

Christian religion (Hegel 1991b, 320).<sup>101</sup> The Christian conception of the trinity consists of the “Father” and the “Son,” and their duality essentially characterizes “Spirit” (Hegel 1991b, 324). According to Hegel, it is in this truth that the relation of man to this truth is posited, for Spirit makes itself its own polar opposite and when “comprehended in pure ideality, the antithetic form of Spirit is the Son of God” (Hegel 1991b, 324). However, the unity between man and God must not be superficially conceived, since man is only God only in so far as he “annuls what is merely natural and limited in his Spirit and elevates himself to God” (Hegel 1991b, 324). In this stage, Spirit is able to unify all the perspectives and stages of human history. Hegel asserted that “the Spirit now grasps the infinite positivity of its own inwardness, the principle of the unity of divine and human nature and the reconciliation of the objective truth and freedom which have appeared within self-consciousness and subjectivity” (Hegel 1991b, 379). In the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1820), Hegel implied that the Germans have a connection to the “Oriental” phase of history through Nordic culture. He wrote, “The task of accomplishing this reconciliation is assigned to the Nordic principle of the Germanic peoples” (Hegel 1991a, 379). In other words, based on the pattern of the sun and the

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<sup>101</sup> In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel stated that the “multitude of gods constitutes a very wide-ranging circle of divinities, to be sure; but it is the immediate character of the universality of Roman destiny, or the ruling Jupiter—it lies in the very definition of this foundation—that all these gods together, the individual gods, are gathered into one. The extension of the Romans’ worldly dominion consisted in this: that individuals and peoples were brought under one power and rule, and likewise their ethical powers, the divine national spirits, were compressed into one pantheon, assembled under one destiny, subordinated to the one Jupiter Capitolinus. Whole cargos of gods were hauled to Rome from Egypt, Greece, Persia (the Mithra worship), etc. Rome is a potpourri of all sorts of religions, the total condition is one of confusion” (Hegel 2006, 383-384).

historical pattern of development in our spiritual and political institutions, the rise of representative governments in “Germanic countries” (along with Hegel’s lectures) marked the time and place in which we reached the final stage of history.

Hegel’s philosophy of history outlines a four step process which ends when all humans recognize the power of the Universal Spirit. History ends with the articulation of his philosophy, which reconciled conflicting ideas and phases through a symbolic revival of Zoroastrian rhetoric and prose. Unfortunately, his prophecy was beyond the comprehension of his most prominent students as well as the leaders of the Prussian State. His ideas fragmented into a wide spectrum of ideologies which polarized the so called “Hegelians” and foreshadowed the rise of an opportunistic Aryan revival.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the connection between Zoroastrianism and philosophy of history. This history helps us understand puzzles in Hegelian thought, and offers a somewhat different, yet potentially useful way to think about familiar ideas and concepts. Zoroastrianism emphasized the importance of the Universal Spirit which was adapted as a core concept by numerous philosophers of history. In addition, Zoroaster referred to his own discovery as the beginning of a new age which created a millenarian trend in human thought. Although Zoroaster attempted to reconcile the battle between light and darkness, he was never able to fully eradicate the conflicts that pertained to religion, or completely resolve the debates that pertained to dualism, monotheism, and the problem of evil.

## **Chapter Four**

### **The Eastern Roots of Aryan Nationalism**

In the twentieth century, German leaders declared themselves the descendants of the ancient Aryan warriors and maintained close ties to contemporary Iran and India. While there were certainly linguistic connections between German, English, Farsi, and Sanskrit, the German claims to the ancient Aryan culture were also concerned with religion. The Nazi movement in Germany was strongly influenced by the accounts of the European travelers in Asia between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially their stories about Zoroastrianism. Before I examine the connection between the European travelers and the Nazi party I will briefly outline the relations between Iran, India, and Germany, prior to World War Two.

#### **German Relations with the Aryan Homeland**

During the 1930s, the Nazis declared that Iran and India were historic homelands of the Aryan peoples (Rosenberg 1930, 7, Dunlap 1944, 296, and Mokhtari 2011, 13).<sup>102</sup> They sponsored research missions to India hoping to find support for their theories. These expeditions required a large amount of funding and were largely disrupted by the conflicts of World War Two. Nevertheless, the Germans admired the hierarchical

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<sup>102</sup> During World War Two, the Nazi propaganda machine declared Iranians an Aryan nation and racial kin of the Germans (Mokhtari 2011, 13). The Nazis also subsidized propagandist newspapers that were written in German, Gujarati, and Farsi in order to promote their ideology in India and Iran (D'Souza 2000, 82). The editor of some of these newspapers, Saif Azad, an Iranian resident of Germany, was forced to move his operations to Bombay after the Iranian government shut down one of his newspapers in Tehran (D'Souza 2000, 82).

structure of Indian society which they claimed as a model for international relations. The Nazis also admired the history of the Iranian people who they regarded as “pure-blooded” Aryans.

While Iranians referred to their country as “Iran” since the time of Zoroaster, it was officially recognized as “Persia” outside of Iran until 1935. That year, Iran officially changed its name after the Iranian ambassador to Germany suggested it to Reza Shah (Yarshater 1989, 62). Many Iranians opposed the change claiming that Iran would lose its ties to Cyrus the Great and the ancient Persian Empire (Gershevitch 1985, 239). Regardless, the Iranian government proceeded with the change. Iran is derived from the term “Airyanem” which is mentioned in Younger Avestai texts such as the Vendidad (Fargard 1.3; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 4-5 and Fargard 19.39 and Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 223).

Before it changed the international name of the country, the Imperial Government of Iran supported close ties to Germany in order to balance Russian and British influences. German officers, technicians, and business personnel maintained a large presence in Iran after both nations’ leaders signed commercial treaties in 1873. While seeking to modernize the national university system, the government recruited faculty members from Europe, hiring mostly German and Austrian professors (Haghighat 2004, 77). Meanwhile, German citizens played a large role in modernizing Iran’s transportation and communication systems during the first half of the twentieth century. The Iranian



delegates in Nazi Germany were referred to as the representatives of the “Aryan Nation” (Mokhtari 2011, 13).

In 1941, the Allied Forces occupied Iran and used the German-designed transnational railroad as a weapons supply route. This tactic allowed the United States and Britain to rapidly arm the Russians so they could fight the Germans. After the Nazi defeat in World War Two, the Russians remained in northern Iran while the British remained in the southern territory. Although Iran declared neutrality during the war, the Allies removed Reza Shah from his position since he was a Nazi sympathizer. They replaced him with his son, Prince Mohammad Reza Shah. The British and the Russian forces reluctantly agreed to leave Iran in 1946 once they realized that an occupation was not practical because a conflict would destroy its vital infrastructure.

The Nazis twisted the Aryan identity and contradicted most of what the Aryans stood for. The ancient Aryans never committed genocide against Semitic cultures. In turn, the political environment during Nazi rule was characterized by madness and disorder, which gave some Iranians and Indians a chance to express their cultural traditions of toleration. The story of Abdol Hossayn Sardari was told by Fariborz Mokhtari’s *In the Lion’s Shadow* (2011). Mokhtari’s book began with the experiences of Sardari’s brother-in-law, Anoshirvan Sepahbody, who was the Minister of the Iranian delegation in France during the Nazi occupation. Before he escaped the violent chaos in Paris (Mokhtari 2011, 13), Minister Sepahbody had entrusted the consulate to Sardari, a young diplomat with a 1936 law degree from the University of Geneva (Mokhtari 2011,

13). When Sepahbody and his family arrived in Moulins, Sepahbody witnessed a Nazi General slap and scold a junior officer at a hotel for placing an insulting message on Sepahbody's table because the officer thought he was Jewish (Mokhtari 2011, 12). The officer confessed to writing the message, and claimed he did not know that Sepahbody was an Iranian diplomat. He was also ordered to apologize to the Iranian Minister (Mokhtari 2011, 12).<sup>103</sup>

While it was advisable for diplomats in France to return to their home countries, Sardari refused and insisted that he could not return without his fellow citizens. Nazi officers did not resist Sardari's wishes until he emphasized that the Iranian Jews must be allowed to return as well. The Nazis were reluctant to agree on this matter but Sardari reasoned that the Iranian Jews were the descendants of the people freed by Cyrus the Great (Mokhtari 2011, 13-14). He hoped to convince the Nazis that the Iranian Jews had no blood ties to the European Jews which would allow him to print passports for them so they could return to Iran. He suggested that Iranian Jews cannot be considered Semitic peoples since they were of Iranian Aryan racial stock (Mokhtari 2011, 13). Iranian passports and official documents do not mention race or religion, which supported Sardari's observation that Iranians were not divided by racial distinctions (Mokhtari 2011, 14). In turn, Sardari argued that the execution of Iranian Jews would disrespect the efforts and legacy of the Greatest Aryan King, thus violating the core principles of Nazi

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<sup>103</sup> This story is based on interviews with Ambassador Anoshirvan Sepahbody's son, Farhad Sepahbody, who also became an ambassador (Mokhtari 2011, 138).

ideology. The Nazis distinguished non-Muslim Iranians as “nicht Judische Abstammung” and “Blutmässig nicht Juden” [Non-Jewish Ancestry and Non-Jewish Blood] (Mokhtari 2011, 14). This group included Zoroastrians, Christians, and Armenians (Mokhtari 2011, 14). The second group included people whose religion was based on the teachings of Moses but whose blood and race were not Jewish (Mahrdad 1999, 86-87 and Mokhtari 2011, 14). Meanwhile, “the de facto governor of occupied France, German Ambassador Otto Abetz, had assured Sardari that Iranian (Jews) would not be subjected to ‘the special Nazi laws’” (Milani 2001, 91).<sup>104</sup> Sardari also saved hundreds of non-Iranian Jews by printing Iranian passports for them as well. “After having secured the safety of fellow Iranians, he issued documents for others, often recommended by his trusted Iranian Jewish friends” (Mokhtari 2011, 16). According to Mokhtari, he saved an estimated 2,400 Jews (Mokhtari 2011, 16). He unilaterally established Iran as a safe haven for all Jews without informing the Iranian government.

The occupation of Iran by Allied Forces ended the diplomatic ties between Iran and Nazi-occupied France. Nevertheless, Sardari remained in France and continued his campaign to save Jewish lives. By 1942, “the Nazi leadership in Berlin, perhaps in response to Sardari’s arguments, initiated a number of inquiries to determine the blood classification of the followers of Moses in Iran, Afghanistan, and Georgia” (Mokhtari

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<sup>104</sup> Ambassador Fereydoun Hoveyda confirmed during interviews with Milani that Sardari had received a letter with this information. Abetz was the German Ambassador to Vichy from 1940-1944, after he had been expelled as *persona non grata* in 1939. He had joined the Nazi party in 1931 and had been assigned to France as a member of the German Foreign Service from about 1935 (Milani 2001, 91 and Mokhtari 2011, 138).

2011, 14). Sardari's theories about the Iranian Jews reached the attention of Adolf Eichmann, the senior minister for Jewish Affairs under the Nazi regime. Eichmann regarded them as "the usual Jewish tricks and attempts at camouflage" (Mokhtari 2011, 103). Regardless, the Nazis were distracted enough to allow Sardari to print hundreds of passports before and after Eichmann's ruling.

According to Mokhtari, Sardari represented a nation, a culture, and a government. His story reflects a national sentiment (Mokhtari 2011, 6). Mokhtari's research on the story of Sardari was motivated by persistent rumors of Iranian diplomats having helped Jews abroad for decades, and stories of Iranians assisting Jewish refugees entering Iran from Iraq, Afghanistan, and the former Soviet Union (Mokhtari 2011, 7). He learned more about Sardari through interviews with government officials, diplomats, scholars, and Jews who lived in France during the Nazi occupation. Sardari's efforts are still commemorated by various Jewish organizations in Los Angeles (Mokhtari 2011, 17). He skillfully exploited the internal ideological differences within the Nazi party (Mokhtari 2011, 14). His story demonstrates how these differences were influenced by complex historical research and rash improvisation.

#### Nazi Abad

The legacy of Iranian and German relations continued after World War Two. Iran maintained close commercial ties with West Germany, which remained Iran's largest trading partner up until 1974 when it was surpassed by the United States. In 1960, there were 15,000 Iranian students living abroad, and by 1966 that number had risen to 30,000

(Chehabi 1990, 195). During the 1960s, [West] Germany had the highest number of Iranian students but it was eventually passed by the United States as more students acquired the resources to travel further (Chehabi 1990, 195). During the 1970s, West Germany contained the largest number of expatriate Iranians. Meanwhile, Iran's nuclear program was largely supported by its 1976 agreements with West Germany for the establishment of six nuclear power reactors in Iran. The first two were to be built by German Kraftwerk Union (KWU) in Bushehr, each housing Siemens 1,300 MW(e) reactors (Kibaroglu 2006, 215). After the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the first Western diplomat to officially visit Tehran was the German Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who visited in 1984 (Hunter 1989, 141).

A neighborhood in southern Tehran is still named "Nazi Abad." Abad translates as town or village in Farsi. Nazi Abad was a designated residential zone located near an industrial park. Before World War Two, Iranians named it after the large number of German residents who worked on the transnational railway project. The railway project began in 1927 and was completed in 1938. During the 1930s, Iranians used the term "Nazi" as a synonym for German.

After the Iranian Revolution, Germany regained its position from the United States as Iran's largest trading partner. In 2005 Germany had the largest share of Iran's export market with \$5.67 billion, which is about 14.4 percent (Habibi 2006, 1). In order of volume, the main source countries for Iran's imports in 2006 were Germany, China, the United Arab Emirates, South Korea, and France (Hooglund 2008, xxix). In the recent

decade, China passed Germany to become Iran's number one trading partner (Chang 2011, 11).<sup>105</sup> A large amount of Chinese products pass through the United Arab Emirates before they are shipped to Iran which provides additional obstacles for trade data analysis.

Iran and Germany clearly have a unique political relationship, as well as a cultural relationship which can be traced back to ancient times. This relationship played a key role in the rise of German nationalism prior to World War Two. Unfortunately, the Nazi leaders used these connections to justify their plans to industrialize Germany through murder and slavery.

### **German Nationalism**

After World War One, the Germans felt humiliated for numerous reasons. They were forced to sign the Treaty of Versailles in which they admitted defeat and agreed to the loss of vital territories. In 1871, the German Empire was founded in the Palace of Versailles which made the ceremony after World War One even more humiliating. The Germans were charged with high reparation costs since they were identified as the main aggressor in the most destructive war of all time. In order to pay back loans and reparations, the German government printed large amounts of currency which led to hyperinflation. At this point, governmental efforts to control the money supply were

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<sup>105</sup> In 2010, two-way trade between Iran and China exceeded twenty three billion dollars (Chang 2011, 11).

useless. These conditions facilitated the rise of a nationalist party which promised radical economic change.

As most people know, between 1933 and 1945, Germany was led by Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist German Workers Party (Nazis). During this period, Nazi ideology was Germany's alternative to Leninist and liberal ideologies. The Nazis aimed to restore German glory through nationalist rhetoric and rapid rearmament. They claimed that the Germans were the descendants of the ancient Aryans based on linguistic, literary, and archeological evidence.

The claim to Aryan culture gave Germany a unique position in Europe since its leaders could renounce ties to the Romans and the Jews. In order to support the German State, the Nazis forced the majority of Jews and Gypsies, as well as Slavs and Poles, into labor camps (Friedlander 1997, 89 Ioviță and Schurr 2004, 268). They also executed handicapped individuals, homosexuals, and anyone else that would not contribute to the state (Cocks 1997, 321-322 and Friedlander 1997, 89).

A few Gypsy sympathizers claimed that the Gypsies should be considered Aryans, hoping to use the Nazi logic in their favor. The Nazis conveniently responded that the Gypsy people were Aryans at some point in history but mixed with other races in order to support their vagrant nomadic lifestyles. Based on their research, Nazi historians claimed that the Gypsies in Germany were not Aryans (Ioviță and Schurr 2004, 268).<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> The Roma/Sinti/Gypsies are an itinerant people without a written history of their own. As an almost inevitable consequence of this fact, historical and anthropological accounts of them have come exclusively

Nazi ideology was based on a biological form of racism which did not depend on cultural characteristics. The Nazis believed they were the direct blood descendants of the ancient Iranian and Indian warriors. These ideas largely overlapped with recent trends in German philosophy and the rise of secret millenarian cults. The remainder of this chapter examines the ties between Zoroastrianism, the secret millenarian cults, and the leaders of the Nazi party.

### Searching for the Nazi Messiah

The Nazi party evolved from the German Workers Party which was founded by Anton Drexler in 1919. Unlike Leninist parties, the German Workers Party focused on the social welfare of Germans rather than workers in general. Its foundation was largely influenced by a romantic and legendary revival of ancient German culture. During the early years of its existence, the party was associated with attacks against corporate industrialism (Grill 1982, 153-154).

Drexler and his followers blamed Germany's social and economic problems on the Jewish population of Europe (Waite 1977, 115). Sadly, due to the religious restrictions concerning money-lending in Christian and Islamic societies, Jewish people

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from scholars belonging to the dominant non-Gypsy majority. This has undoubtedly contributed to a series of research biases in the field that have only recently come under closer scrutiny and critique (e.g., Hancock 1987; Lucassen et al. 1998; Okely 1983). In particular, the synthetic work of the 19th-century German historian H. M. G. Grellmann (1753-1804), who was influenced by contemporary Herderian ideas, has had a lasting impact on a scholarly tradition that emphasized national character based on language and customs (Grellmann 1787). The scholarly construction of Gypsies as a unitary isolated ethnic group with a common origin and inherited South Asian cultural practices contributed to the centuries of labeling and stigmatizing that ultimately led to the "criminal-biological" portrait that accompanied the systematic killing of Gypsies in National Socialist Germany (Ioviță and Schurr 2004, 267-268).



have always faced a dualistic climate in which people depend on them but also blame them for their economic troubles. Drexler accused the Jews of war profiteering and considered the Jews in Europe as a threat to the German nation. Meanwhile, the party searched for a messianic figure that would fulfill the vision of its founders and save the German nation (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 80, 95, and 197).

As a member of the German military, Hitler was originally assigned to spy on the German Workers Party.<sup>107</sup> However, he decided to join it in 1919 since he accepted the party's core values. "Membership was restricted to Germans who could establish the 'purity of blood' for three generations; and every candidate had to pledge he would join energetically in the 'struggle against internationalism and Jewry'" (Toland 1976, 85). Soon after he joined the party, he met Dietrich Eckart, one of the founding members. Eckart was a member of the Thule Society. He was "perhaps the most important ideologue in the early stages of the [Nazi] movement" (Steigman-Gall 2003, 17). He coined the phrase, "the Jewish materialist spirit within us and without us" which implied a religious element in the Nazi typology and suggested that the Jewish "problem" was not solely racial (Steigman-Gall 2003, 17). The party was the "brainchild" of Rudolf Freiherr von Sebottendorff, who instructed Anton Drexler, also a member of the Thule society, to form a Political Workers' Circle "to win the workers to his völkisch (populist)

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<sup>107</sup> Based on its name and early anti-corporate rhetoric, the German Workers Party could be associated with Marxism-Leninism. Hitler was commanded to infiltrate and disrupt such organizations. Once he spied on the German Workers Party, he realized that its members shared his militant stance against the rise of Marxist-Leninist groups.

cause” (Toland 1976, 85). Like Hitler, von Sebottendorff believed in the Germanic wave of the future and so threw his considerable energies into the formation of a Bavarian branch of the Teutonic Order in the decade after 1900, and was forced to give his organization the innocent title of the Thule Society as a cover, due to the recent labor movements and revolutions throughout the country (Toland 1976, 85). The ideology of the Thule Society members was closely related to the Ariosophist views of Guido von List, to be discussed below.

Both von List and Eckart predicted the arrival of a “German Messiah.” Eckart expressed his ideas about the German Messiah in a poem only weeks before he met Hitler at a German Workers Party gathering in 1919 (Hant 2010, 395). As soon as he heard Hitler speak, he realized he had found “the Great One” mentioned in his poem. According to Claus Hant, “the coming of the savior now, in the darkest hour, was consistent with the Ariosophists’ Hindu-inspired philosophy of continual becoming and passing” (Hant 2010, 395). The Indo-Aryans believed that the downfall of something old always contained something new. So it was the “old” prophet, von List, who died in 1919, the same year that Hitler entered the public spotlight with his speech at the Sterneckerbräu beer hall in Munich” (Hant 2010, 395).

As a mentor for Hitler during his early membership in the party, Eckart introduced Hitler to influential citizens as “the man who will liberate Germany” (Toland 1976, 99). During their first encounter, “Drexler was so impressed by Hitler’s delivery and logic that he whispered to his secretary ‘this one has what it takes, we could use

him” (Toland 1976, 87). Once he joined the Germany Workers Party, Hitler was quickly promoted to upper leadership positions based on his oratorical skills.

Hitler swiftly established himself as the supreme orator of the party. He organized large events and gatherings which allowed him to share his views and expand the party. His speeches attacked the conditions Germany faced under the Treaty of Versailles and blamed the leaders who were too weak to resist it in the first place. He also believed that the German people could not thrive and coexist with the Jewish population. Hitler’s ascendancy deeply concerned some of the other members of the party since they objected to his volcanic and mercurial style (Toland 1976, 95).

Meanwhile, Drexler was also distressed by the direction of the party along with the sudden influx of members with military ties, but he was so convinced that Hitler was the hope of the party that he supported a move to make him the new chief of propaganda (Toland 1976, 95). After his opponents attempted to disband and merge the German Workers Party with its rival Socialist party, Hitler demanded more control and acquired the position of party chairman (Toland 1976, 111).

Hitler led a failed coup in 1923. He was arrested after sixteen rebels were killed. Hitler went to prison and wrote *Mein Kampf* before he was released in 1924. He dedicated it to Dietrich Eckart and it was published in 1925. During the failed coup, the rebels carried a Swastika Flag which absorbed the blood of the martyrs. This inspired a ritual in which Nazi flags were authenticated by touching the original flag. According to Hitler, the blood of the martyrs was the “Holy Water of the Third Reich” (Hitler 1927, 1).

Nazi blood carried a sacred and symbolic form of energy, which was also the basis for political and civic rights.

Hitler ran for President in 1932. In many places, the Nazis used intimidation against people who were working for the re-election of President Paul von Hindenburg which had a dampening effect on their propaganda activities (Pridham 1973, 266). Although Hitler's loss to von Hindenburg was a disappointment to many of his followers, he gained a large number of votes and popular support (Pridham 1973, 264-265). The Nazis increased their share of the vote to 37.4 percent which gave them 230 seats in the Reichstag, more than any other party (Giblin 2002, 68). Based on his popular support, Hitler was appointed by President von Hindenburg to the position of Chancellor in 1933 (Pridham 1973, 253 and Toland 1976, 288).

Hitler's party eventually gained control of parliament and led a vote to significantly increase his power. As von Hindenburg was close to death, his position was dissolved and merged with the duties and responsibilities of the Chancellor (Toland 1976, 356 and Giblin 2002, 87). Hitler was proclaimed "Führer" which translates as leader and spiritual guide (Toland 1976, 356). Von Hindenburg died in 1934.

Hitler and his followers attempted to strengthen the German economy through policies that were based on Aryan supremacy. The State financed reconstruction and rearmament projects through forced labor and seized assets (Gruner 2006, 10-11 and 169). Many private firms benefited from these projects while Hitler sought to gain more

territories. Before Germany was eventually defeated and humiliated again in World War Two, it seemed that Hitler was the messiah that most Germans were searching for.

Hitler's efforts can be understood as the culmination of an anti-Semitic pagan revivalist movement that existed in Germany for centuries. The Nazi leaders held a variety of religious views such as paganism, Protestantism, and Catholicism. According to Richard Steigman-Gall, the pagan and Christian members of the Nazi elite engaged in numerous struggles to define the Nazi ideology in their terms (Steigman-Gall 2003, 93). Meanwhile, Reinhold Krause, a member of a Protestant Church organization known as the League for a German Church, expressed unconditional commitment to National Socialist laws and values, and urged the rejection of most Biblical practices as "Jewish superstition" (Steigman-Gall 2003, 74-75 and Overy 2004, 284). He also caused a tremendous amount of controversy by calling for the removal of the Old Testament from the Christian Bible and discouraging the persistence of Christian love, promoting a heroic, "fighting Jesus" (Steigman-Gall 2003, 75 and Overy 2004, 284). The history of both German paganism and Christianity was characterized by anti-Semitism, anti-Marxism, and anti-liberalism, which made both of them very useful for Nazi scholars.

In Germany, the discourse about the separation between Aryan and Semite first arose as an intellectual debate within Christianity (Steigman-Gall 2003, 108). Although there was some historical logic to the Nazi ideology, the leaders essentially agreed with anything that justified Hitler's policies. The Nazi scholars and researchers supported various historians who argued that Christianity was an Aryan religion. In other words,

they believed the Christian tradition was rooted in “Indo-European” history. In German art, Christ was portrayed as an Aryan hero who struggled against the Jews (Steigman-Gall 2003, 108). As far as the Nazis were concerned, the portrayal of Jesus as a dark-skinned martyr was part of an effort to appeal to non-Aryans and southern Europeans (Steigman-Gall 2003, 108-109).

The ability to convince anyone that Jesus was an Aryan hero would not have been possible without the accounts of the European travelers to Asia between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. These reports included numerous references to the ancient cultures of India and Iran, which ultimately influenced the religious dimension of the Nazi ideology. Meanwhile, western scholars also offered explanations for why the popularity of Shia Islam in modern Iran was analogous to the Protestant movement against Roman Catholicism (Lewis 1987, 22 and Nasr 2006, 34). Although he believed the specific matchups in this analogy were somewhat arbitrary, Bernard Lewis noted that “in a Europe that was obsessed by race, some saw the division [in Islam] as one between Semites and Aryans, the Shia representing the upsurge of Aryan Iran, in a racial revolt against Semitic domination” (Lewis 1987, 22). As Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke argued, only “religious beliefs and myth could explain the success of an ideology concerned with special racial and esoteric knowledge, the belief in a nefarious world-conspiracy of scheming Jews and other racial inferiors, and the apocalyptic promise of group salvation in a millenarian apotheosis of the German nation” (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, vii). Although the ancient Aryans were known for their policies of toleration and their efforts to protect

the Jews, many German nationalists, such as Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels, twisted their ideas in order to support their hatred.

### **The Occult Roots of the Nazi Movement**

The Nazi movement was heavily influenced by secret millenarian groups. These groups were characterized by recent trends in pagan revivalism and the study of ancient German culture. Initially, the leaders of the Protestant Reformation expressed concerns about corruption within the Roman Catholic Church and its imposition of Latin as an official language. Later, the German priest Martin Luther translated the Bible into German (first printed in 1534) in order to make it more accessible to the masses of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. Meanwhile, most German nationalists refused to accept the view that the Germanic peoples were barbarians until they were Christianized. The accounts of the European travelers to Asia between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries supported this view. They included notions about the similarities between German, English, Farsi, and Sanskrit as well as Zoroastrian influences on the Abrahamic tradition.

The European travelers and the German philosophers that were interested in Zoroastrianism unintentionally set into motion the events that would culminate in the rise of Aryan Nazism. There were certainly linguistic connections between German, English, Farsi and Sanskrit but the German claims to ancient Aryan culture were also concerned with religion. For German nationalists, Iranian culture allowed them to separate themselves from the rest of Europe both ethnically and spiritually. If Zoroastrianism was

recognized as the first monotheist faith, the Germans who claimed to be Aryan would no longer have to express any gratitude to the Jews or the Romans as the forerunners of Christianity or any other form of God worship.

In *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945* (2003), Richard Steigman-Gall examined the religious views of Nazi leaders. According to Steigman-Gall, the pagan and Christian members of the Nazi elite engaged in numerous struggles to define Nazi ideology in their terms (Steigman-Gall 2003, 93). Adolf Hitler maintained a position of confessional neutrality since Protestant and Catholic disunity was a threat to nationalism. Some Nazi leaders stated that Biblical practices were “Jewish superstition” (Overy 2004, 1).

In *The Occult Roots of Nazism: Secret Aryan Cults and Their Influence on Nazism*, Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke tells the story of Guido von List (1848-1919), an Austrian philosopher who discussed the existence of a proto-Aryan language as well as a proto-Aryan religion led by a set of sun-priests (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 33-37 and von List 1908, 1).<sup>108</sup> The rule of the sun-priests was sanctioned by an enlightened sun-king. This is very similar to the Zoroastrian tradition, as well as Norse mythology such as the *Sagas*. The *Sagas* are stories about ancient Germanic histories which include references to religious worship (Sturluson 1899, 361). The arctic sun is very important in ancient

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<sup>108</sup> Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke (1953-2012) was a professor who specialized in Ariosophy and other esoteric ideas at the University of Exeter, as well as the director for the Center of the Study of Esotericism within the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. He published numerous works on occult and esoteric traditions and is best known for his work on *The Occult Roots of Nazism* (2005).



Norse history. In the Zoroastrian tradition, light and fire are symbols of truth. In these contexts, the term Aryan, which also translates as noble, describes an enlightened class of priests in addition to a race. The term “aristocrat” is rooted in the word Aryan, which also relates to words which describe a class of “possessors,” “skilled” constructors, or the people that are able to “properly fit” and “assemble” useful equipment (Laroche 1960, 124-128 and Bailey 1987, 1). Von List himself added the aristocratic “von” to his family name in the early 1900s, which seems to fit his religious fantasy. However, he also claimed that by choosing to be a scholar and artist rather than pursuing a commercial life like his father, he had revived his family tradition and therefore had the legal right to reacquire the name (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 42).<sup>109</sup> He claimed that his grandfather abandoned the title when he became an inn-keeper (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 42).

Von List published an unsigned article, “Germanischer Lichtdienst” [German Light Rituals], in 1899 which discussed the significance of pagan solstice fires. List suggested that it symbolized the original birth of the sun (von List 1899, 5). He then claimed that the swastika was a holy Aryan symbol, since it derived from the fire whisk that twirled the cosmos into being (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 52). The ancient records of the swastika symbol in Asia as well as Germanic countries supported the connection between the Germans and the ancient Aryans.

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<sup>109</sup> Guido von List’s father was a wealthy leather merchant who encouraged his son to take over the family business.

The swastika dates back to 2,500 BCE and can be traced to the Indus Valley. It spread to China and Japan where it was included in various writing systems. The ancient symbol for the Chinese term “Wu” is similar to a swastika. The term “Wu” refers to a doctor or spiritual practitioner, which is possibly based on the term for the Magi (Magu) (Mair 1990, 27). The swastika also appears on an ancient Iranian necklace from the first millennium BCE (National Museum of Iran), as well as Northern European weapons from before and after the Viking age (8<sup>th</sup> century CE).

Von List claimed he was concerned with esoteric forms of knowledge rather than exoteric forms of knowledge which are intended for the lower classes (Goodrick-Clark 2005, 17). He regarded Roman Catholicism in Austria as Roman colonization of the German tribes. He challenged “the conventional belief that the barbarian migrations had scattered the Celtic tribes of the region, and that it was Charlemagne who had first settled converted Germans on the eastern marches” (von List 1911, 3 and Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 66). Von List’s admiration for ancient German culture overlapped with the ideologies of the Thule society, especially his anticipation of a German messiah. The Thule society was an occultist romanticist group which supported various political organizations that would eventually develop into the Nazi party.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> The Thule society members had tremendous influence within these organizations. Based on their membership lists, Thule Society supporters were mainly lawyers, judges, university professors, aristocratic members of the Wittelsbach royal entourage, industrialists, doctors, scientists, and rich businessmen (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 149).

A notable follower of Guido von List was Adolf Josef Lanz (1874-1954), who was also known as Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels. After leaving a Catholic monastery he became a founding member of the Guido von List Society in Austria. Lanz was a follower of von List's philosophy of Aryo-Christianity, otherwise known as Ariosophy. Ariosophy is best described as an esoteric Aryan supremacy movement which largely overlapped with pagan revivalism. Unlike von List, Lanz's writings on Ariosophy focused their attacks against Judaism rather than Christianity.

In 1905, Lanz founded a German nationalist magazine called "*Ostara*." He claimed it had a peak circulation of 100,000 copies (Daim 1994, 322). It was published in three series between 1905 and 1930. It was mostly based on Lanz's anti-Semitic version of Ariosophy.

Goodrick-Clarke suggested that the rise of secret Ariosophist groups was a symptom in anticipation of the Nazi movement (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 202). There is evidence which suggests that Hitler was strongly influenced by the ideas of Lanz (Daim 1994, 7). In a letter from 1932, Lanz wrote that "Hitler is one of our pupils" (Daim 1994, 12). He also claimed that the "swastika and the national socialist movement" are the basic offspring of *Ostara* (Daim 1994, 12).

As Goodrick-Clarke wrote, "the lineage of the early Nazi party in respect of its sponsors, newspaper, and symbols has been traced to the Thule Society, the Germanenorden, and thus to the ideas of Guido von List" (Goodrick-Clarke 2003, 192). In addition, Goodrick-Clarke showed how Himmler officially patronized Karl Maria

Wiligut, whose historical speculations were rooted in the ideas of von List and his Ariosophist epigones (Goodrick-Clarke 2003, 192). In interviews with witnesses, Friedrich Heer elicited descriptions of Hitler's childhood interest in German racial characteristics and his segregation of classmates into Germans and non-Germans (Heer 1968, 19-21 & Goodrick-Clarke 2003, 193). According to Goodrick-Clarke, “[Hitler’s] early fixation on mother Germany across the border in the context of both Manichaeian and millenarian ideas would also find an echo in the writings of both List and Lanz von Liebenfels” (Goodrick-Clarke 2003, 244).<sup>111</sup>

Hitler discussed the Aryan Christ and its relation to German culture in several speeches. In a 1922 speech in Munich, he stated that Jesus inspired him because “he recognized the Jews for what they were” and led the fight against them (Hitler 1922, 1). He also referenced the importance of spirituality in *Mein Kampf*. He wrote “Indeed, nearly all attempts to exterminate a doctrine and its organizational expression, by force without spiritual foundation, are doomed to failure, and not seldom end with the exact opposite of the desired result” (Hitler 1934, 103). Hitler was a major admirer of Martin Luther for his support of German nationalism through religious reform.

Hitler was raised Catholic but he eventually rebelled against the ritualistic elements of the Catholic Church. He did not publicize many of his personal religious

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<sup>111</sup> Friedrich Heer has also suggested that the emotional inspiration of Hitler's adult dreams of world-dominion and Caesarism may have derived from his childhood experience of South German Catholic pomp and pageantry at Passau between 1892 and 1895 (Heer 1968, 19-21 and Goodrick-Clarke 2003, 244).

views since he did not want Catholic and Protestant disunity to threaten the movement. If his movement succeeded, Berlin would have been the “New Jerusalem.” Overall, Hitler backed any view that rejected the traditional roots of Christianity and supported Aryan justice.

The 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Luther’s birthday was only a few months after the Nazi seizure of power in 1933 (Steigman-Gall 2003, 1). There were celebrations in Germany on behalf of both the Protestant Churches and the Nazi party. In one celebration, the regional Nazi party leader Erich Koch compared Hitler and Luther and implied that the Nazi seizure of power was an act of divine will (Steigman-Gall 2003, 1).

Goodrick-Clarke’s main goal was to demonstrate how various secret theosophy cults influenced Nazi ideology and symbols. He examined the influence of these groups on Adolf Hitler as well as on the German Schutzstaffel, otherwise known as the SS, which was the military organization of the Nazi party led by Heinrich Himmler. In addition to Himmler, Hitler’s elite class of officers and ministers included Alfred Rosenberg, Erich Ludendorff, Joseph Goebbels, and Rudolf Hess.

Goodricke-Clarke also wrote about the life of Otto Hanisch (1856-1936), a German immigrant who founded a Mazdaznan cult in the United States around 1900 (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 234). Hanisch claimed he was born in Tehran and referred to himself as Ottoman Zardusht (Hanisch 1902, 4 and Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 234). In the early 1900s he published various works related to spirituality and physical health (Hanisch 1902, 3 and Hanisch 1907, 5). In 1908 he published a health journal known as

the *Mazdaznan* in Germany (Hanisch 1908, 1). In his view, the Aryans and Christians were all descendants of the Zoroastrians. The Mazdaznan cult spread from United States to Europe where Karl Heisse established a branch in Zurich. Heisse was a supporter of the Guido von List Society which was founded in 1905 (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 66). It had members in Austria and Germany.

The ideology of Aryan supremacy was influenced by Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882). De Gobineau was a French diplomat who served in various countries such as Iran and Brazil (Gershevitch 1985, 884). Coincidentally, he obtained a manuscript containing the history of the Bahai faith before Iranian officials executed its author (de Gobineau 1856, 133). De Gobineau believed Greek, Roman, and German culture were rooted in an ancient Aryan culture. However, he classified the Greeks as people who descended from Aryan stock that was modified by Semitic elements.

De Gobineau believed cultural connections were maintained through race which he classified as “black, white, and yellow” (de Gobineau 1853, 205). He wrote *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* (1853) in which he attributed the decline of certain states to racial mixing. “I can positively say that a people will never die, if it remains eternally composed of the same national elements” (de Gobineau 1853, 33). He then wrote that if the empire of Darius had, at the battle of Arbela, been able to fill its ranks with Persians, that is to say with real Aryans, and if the Romans of the later Empire maintained a Senate and army of the same stock which existed at the time of the Fabii, their dominion would never have come to an end (de Gobineau 1853, 33). De Gobineau

attributed advances in human development to the Aryan race but his arguments were not directly anti-Semitic.

De Gobineau's ideas were taken up in the music of German composer Richard Wagner (1813-1883). Many of Wagner's songs and theatrical performances illustrated ancient Norse mythology such as the Sagas. After Wagner died, his followers continued performances based on his work. In *Parsifal*, Wagner told the story of a pure-blooded Knight in pursuit of the Holy Grail. In one scene, Parsifal fell to his knees and cried "Redeemer! Savior! Lord of Grace! If I sin it will efface my guilt" (Wagner 2009, 14). Like most Nazis, Wagner was convinced that Jesus was Aryan. He said that the identification of the God of our Savior with the tribal god of Israel is "one of the most terrible confusions in all world history" (Steigman-Gall 2003, 101).

Hitler was a major supporter of Wagner's operas and attended his performances with his close associates (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 197). Although Hitler rejected Catholic rituals during his youth and viewed himself as the new German Messiah, his "enthusiasm for Wagner's chivalrous portrayal of the grail, its guardian knights and their idealism would have made him receptive to Lanz's notion of a crusading order dedicated to the purity of Aryan blood" (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 197). The religious dimension of the Nazi ideology was illustrated by their support for Wagner's operas. The only sources available in Germany during this period which supported the existence of an Aryan Christ or an Aryan influence on Christianity were the accounts of the European travelers in Asia between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries that are reviewed above.

Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855-1927) was largely influenced by the ideas of de Gobineau and the music of Wagner. Chamberlain was born in Britain but became a German citizen in 1916. In 1882, Chamberlain attended Wagner's Bayreuth Festival and became a friend of the Wagner family. He moved to Austria in 1889. In 1908, he married Wagner's daughter, Eva Von Bülow Wagner. After World War One, he remained in Bayreuth.

Chamberlain's most famous work is *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* [The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century] (1899) which essentially re-articulated de Gobineau's main argument about the superiority of the Aryan race. However, in addition to Germans, Chamberlain included Celts, Slavs, Greeks, and Romans as members of the "noble" Aryan race. These groups were united by the Proto-Indo-European culture. Chamberlain also discussed the concept of mixing, but unlike de Gobineau, his writings were anti-Semitic. Although England can be considered a Germanic nation, Chamberlain favored the German state during World War One.

Years before the Nazi movement, a eugenics movement in the United States concluded that the Nordic, Germanic, and Anglo-Saxon peoples were superior to other races. It began in the 1880s with the ideas of Francis Galton. Galton was the cousin of Charles Darwin, who was fascinated by Galton's theory of eugenics which largely overlapped with his theories of natural selection and survival of the fittest (Darwin 1859, 27 and Darwin 1871, 161). However, Darwin never accepted the inferiority of various races and referred to slavery as a universal sin (Darwin 1871, 90). By the early 1900s



eugenics studies became typical course subjects at the top universities in the United States and Germany.

Goodrick-Clarke argued that Ariosophy was a symptom in anticipation of the Nazi movement (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 202). Nazi ideology was influenced by a long history of religious research and debates which overlapped with more recent class tensions and nationalist sentiments. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler stated that his experiences in Vienna as he studied racist pamphlets laid the foundation of his outlook (Hitler 1934, 21). While many biographers believed Hitler was influenced by writers such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Arthur de Gobineau, there is no evidence that he read their scholarly works (Goodrick-Clarke 2003, 194). Goodrick-Clarke claimed it is altogether more likely that he would have picked up ideas to rationalize his own dualist outlook and fixation on Germany from cheap and accessible pamphlets in contemporary Vienna (Goodrick-Clarke 2003, 194). Austrian scholars were the first to suggest that Hitler gleaned the materials for his racist political ideas from Lanz (Goodrick-Clarke 2003, 194). As early as the 1930s August M. Knoll ridiculed the Nazis at the University of Vienna by observing that the German leader had simply taken his ideas from the locally notorious and scurrilous *Ostara* (Goodrick-Clarke 2003, 194).

These accusations caused the Nazis to firmly deny any ties to the occultist movements. The Mazdaznan cult was banned by the Nazis in 1935 and Lanz's writings were banned after the Nazis annexed Austria in 1938. "These measures were most probably the result of the general Nazi policy of suppressing lodge organizations and

esoteric groups, but it is also possible that Hitler wished to avoid any connection being made to his own political ideas and the sectarian doctrine of Lanz” (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 197-198). While the Nazis will always be remembered as a bunch of thugs who committed genocide, their ideas largely overlapped with contemporary trends in German philosophy and the rise of secret millenarian cults.

Elsa Schmidt-Falk approached the writer and psychologist Wilfried Daim and claimed that Hitler had visited her and her late husband and frequently mentioned the writings of von List (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 199). According to Schmidt-Falk, Hitler was particularly inspired by von List’s *Deutsch-Mythologische Landschaftsbilder* [German Mythological Landscape Scenes] (1891) (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 199).<sup>112</sup> Schmidt-Falk was in charge of a genealogical research group within the Nazi party at Munich during the 1920s. She met with Hitler often and knew him from his time in Vienna (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 199). She claims Hitler also had a high opinion of von List’s work *Der Unbesiegbare* (1898) [The Invincible] and discussed Aryo-Germanic research with her. However, some of her claims are dubious and contradictory, and her sources are unspecified (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 199-200).

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<sup>112</sup> A further Munich source could corroborate Hitler's interest in von List. In 1921, Dr. Babette Steininger, an early Nazi Party member, presented Hitler with Rabindranath Tagore's essay on nationalism as a birthday present. On the flyleaf she wrote a personal dedication: “To Adolf Hitler my dear Armanen brother.” Her use of the esoteric term suggests a shared interest in the work of von List. Armanen was a term used by von List to refer to the Aryan priests and rulers of ancient Germany. A final indication that Hitler might have been familiar with von List’s themes is provided by Kubizek’s description of Hitler’s draft for a play he wrote at their shared lodging in 1908. The drama was based on the conflict between Christian missionaries and the Germanic priests of a pagan shrine in the Bavarian mountains. Hitler might have easily taken this idea from von List's *Die Ananenschaft der An'o-Germanen*, published earlier in the same year (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 199).

Goodrick-Clarke claimed that “Hitler was surely influenced by the millenarian and Manichaeic motifs of Ariosophy, but its descriptions of a prehistoric golden age, a Gnostic priesthood, and a secret heritage in cultural relics and orders had no part in his political and cultural imagination” (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 202). If Goodrick-Clarke believed it is possible that Hitler was influenced by Ariosophy, we should consider further investigation on the specific details and roots of these ideas, with specific attention to the tradition of a “Gnostic priesthood.” Schmidt-Falk identified various other Nazi leaders who read von List’s works such as Erich Ludendorff, Rudolf Hess, and Dietrich Eckart (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 199). There were many other high ranking Nazi leaders with ties to religious movements and occult societies.

#### The Leaders of the Nazi Party

It is possible that the Germans associated themselves with the cultures and civilizations of Iran and India simply because these places had a long history. The Nazi movement in Germany may also be attributed to the unique personalities of its leaders who used any propaganda within their reach to support their political careers. Consequently, the linguistic and religious evidence which supported their view of the history of the Aryan culture could be a dramatic coincidence.<sup>113</sup> This does not hinder the general purpose of this study because it still illustrates the influence of Zoroastrianism.

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<sup>113</sup> The term *Aryan* may refer to a language, class, or setting rather than a race. The term *aristocrat* derives from this word.

Adolf Hitler's elite class of officers and ministers included Alfred Rosenberg, Heinrich Himmler, Erich Ludendorff, Joseph Goebbels, and Rudolf Hess. Rosenberg was the most prominent pagan in the Nazi party which he joined in 1919 (Steigman-Gall 2003, 91). Once Hitler joined the party in October, he was introduced to Rosenberg by Eckart. Both Eckart and Rosenberg were associated with the Thule society (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 149).

Rosenberg had "pretensions to becoming the movement's great intellect and official ideologue" (Steigman-Gall 2003, 91). Nevertheless, in his role as the "protector" of the Nazi worldview, "scholars have shown that Rosenberg encountered resistance and ultimate defeat at the hands of rival offices within the Nazi party and state" (Steigman-Gall 2003, 91). According to Steigman-Gall, church historians in particular, including Franklin Littell and Hubert Locke, who contributed to their field of research in *The German Church Struggle and the Holocaust* (Littell and Locke 1974, 131-132 and Steigman-Gall 2003, 91), have argued that Rosenberg's ideas represented the party's ideology as such. There are other scholars, especially those who espouse "political religion" theories about Nazism such as Robert Pois and Philippe Burrin, who still maintain that Rosenberg's ideas were hegemonic within the party (Steigman-Gall 2003, 91, Pois 1986, 41 and Burrin 1997, 335-336).

According to Burrin, at the time of writing *Mein Kampf*, Hitler publicly rejected the role of religious reformer, but he was aware of the fate of the small völkisch groups, and fearing to arouse the wrath of the churches, he gave priority to building a political

organization capable of victory (Burrin 1997, 335). “Nonetheless, his mentality and sensibility like most of his lieutenants—Hess, Rosenberg, [Martin] Bormann, and Himmler—continued to be marked by the völkisch tradition” (Burrin 1997, 335-336). Hitler appreciated religion not only for its social utility but also for its intrinsic value, adhering, as revealed by statements he made in private, to a belief that blended the two versions of the völkisch religious reform—Germanic pantheism and Germanic Christianity (Burrin 1997, 336). Germanic Christianity in this context included the tradition of an Aryan Christ who was killed by the Jews (Burrin 1997, 336).

In 1930, Rosenberg published *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* which supported theories about an Aryan Christ and the Aryan roots of Christianity (Rosenberg 1930, 17). Six months after he submitted a copy of the manuscript to Hitler, he gathered enough courage to ask for some comments on his book, and Hitler said “it was a very clever book; only I ask myself who today is likely to read and understand such a book” (Cecil 1972, 100 and Steigman-Gall 2003, 93). It was a reflection of the insecurity of Rosenberg’s position that he replied by asking whether he should suppress it or even resign party office, but Hitler supposedly said “no” to both, maintaining that Rosenberg had a right to publish his book as it was his “intellectual property” (Cecil 1972, 101). Meanwhile, Goebbels regarded the book as a worthless expression of Rosenberg’s personal ideology (Fest 1999, 168). Nevertheless, “Among the public too it found readers, [and] thanks to a sales campaign using every trick of the trade it had run to 1,100,000 copies by 1944” (Fest 1999, 168). This figure is not a real reflection of its

popularity since secondary schools and institutions of higher education in Nazi Germany were required to have copies in their libraries, and it is unclear how much these were read (Cecil 1972, 103). Therefore, it remains unclear whether most committed Nazis accepted Rosenberg's view of religion (Steigman-Gall 2003, 93), but his book illustrates the importance of religion for at least one high ranking Nazi official.

Rosenberg's book argued that the legacy of Jesus spread to Semitic cultures who attempted to make it their own. He referenced the dualistic elements of Manichaeism and various Christian sects which he described as more accurate traditions concerning Aryan struggles against the Jews (Rosenberg 1930, 17). His book also included references to the Zoroastrian religion and its connection to the Nordic homeland (Rosenberg 1930, 6). He wrote, "Ahura Mazda says to Zoroaster: Only once in the year does one see the rising and setting of stars and sun and moon; and the inhabitants hold to be a day, what is a year" (Rosenberg 1930, 7). "This must be for the Persian God of Light a distant memory of the Nordic homeland, for only in the far north do day and night last six months" (Rosenberg 1930, 7). In addition, Rosenberg regarded the Protestant Reformation as an incomplete phase in the resurgence of the Aryan spirit (Rosenberg 1930, 30).

Heinrich Himmler was the military commander of the Nazi party. Before the Nazi rise to power, Himmler was a pious Catholic. However, after Hitler's failed coup, his attitude slowly began to change as he criticized the Catholic Church. He stated that it was "too doctrinaire and fanatical" (Steigman-Gall 2003, 107). Nevertheless, he did not completely abandon Christianity and enjoyed reading Ernest Renan's *Life of Jesus* (1863)

(Angress and Smith 1959, 218 and Steigman-Gall 2003, 107). Renan's belief that Jesus was a friend of the Jews was unacceptable as far as Himmler was concerned. According to Himmler's comments for his Books List,<sup>114</sup> Jesus was no Jew, and Christianity is the most important protest of the Aryans against the Jews, and of good against evil (Smith 1971, 145). This is very similar to Eckart's, Goebbels's, and Hitler's religious views (Steigman-Gall 2003, 107). "Following the pattern of other Nazis who would end up pagan, Himmler the Catholic began to have high regard for Protestantism and Germandom and reserved his wrath for Catholics" (Steigman-Gall 2003, 108).

During the onset of World War Two, Himmler often related his struggles to Arjuna, the great ancient warrior of the Hindu tradition who played a central role in the *Baghavat Gita* (Karsten 1956, 149). According to his close confidant Felix Karsten, Himmler claimed he "never moved without" a copy of the *Baghavat Gita*, which he prized for its Aryan qualities (Karsten 1956, 149-152).<sup>115</sup> In 1935, Himmler founded a German intellectual society known as "Ahnenerbe" along with Herman Wirth and Richard Walter Darré. This group sponsored research expeditions to West Asia and Tibet

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<sup>114</sup> Himmler's Book List is part of the Himmler Documents collection which is available at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University (Himmler's Documents Roll 18A – Book List Item 181).

<sup>115</sup> After he opened the *Baghavat Gita* and claimed he never moved without a copy, Himmler quoted a passage which meant: "It is decreed that whenever men lose their respect for law and truth, and the world is given over to injustice, I will be born anew. I have no desire for material gain." He declared that this passage is absolutely about the Führer, who "rose up out of our deepest need, when the German people were at a dead end. He is one of those brilliant figures which always appear in the Germanic world when it has reached a final crisis in mind, body, and soul. [Johann Wolfgang von]Goethe was one such figure in the intellectual sphere, [Otto von] Bismarck in the political—the Führer in the political, cultural, and military combined. It has been ordained by the Karma of the Germanic world that he should wage war against the East and save the Germanic peoples" (Karsten 1956. 152).

in order to learn more about the history of the Aryan race. In Tibet, researchers focused on the Buddhist priests and their possible connections to the Aryan race (Pringle 2006, 11). In West Asia, researchers focused on the Aryan and Semitic conflicts within the Roman Empire (Pringle 2006, 111). The researchers made it as far east as Iraq in order to study Parthian and Persian ruins in Southern Iraq and Babylon (Pringle 2006, 102).

Walter Wust, the president of Himmler's intellectual society, also planned a trip to Iran. Wust hoped to visit the ruins in Bisutun in order to investigate Darius's inscriptions. In these inscriptions, Darius proclaimed himself "the son of an Aryan" (Gershevitch 1985, *Image* 34). The inscriptions include a relief of Darius standing majestically (Pringle 2006, 184). Wust admired Darius as a great monarch with a particularly relevant story for Nazi Germany (Pringle 2006, 183). As Heather Pringle noted in *The Master Plan*, "Darius had usurped the throne, ruthlessly extinguished his contenders, stamped out rebellions, and forged a vast empire of diverse peoples" (Pringle 2006, 183). It was essentially the blueprint for Hitler's career (Pringle 2006, 183).

The inscriptions are on a rugged mountain. The sculptors constructed a high stairway on a steep cliff in order to reach a spot that would be difficult to vandalize. They tore down the wooden stairwell when they finished the project (Pringle 2006, 184).

It was very expensive and time consuming to rebuild the construction route. Wust proposed that he and his Iranian wife, who happened to be a skilled climber and photographer, would take pictures of the inscription from a balloon mounted camera attached to a cable (Pringle 2006, 183-184). This technology had been recently devised



by an American archaeologist (Pringle 2006, 185). The trip was canceled due to the start of World War Two, but the initial plans to make the trip in the first place demonstrate the ideological roots of the Nazi movement.

Himmler was largely influenced by Ariosophy through his indirect ties to the Thule Society. His quest to find Germanic roots for his SS ideology led him to patronage of a 66-year-old Austrian Ariosophist named Karl Maria Wiligut (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 178). Wiligut (1866-1946) was introduced to Himmler in September 1933 and became a member of the SS (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 183). He was the head of a department which specialized in the early history of the Aryan race within a main SS office at Munich.

Wiligut wrote *Seyfrieds Runen* (1903), a collection of poems devoted to the legends of the East German Knights. The setting was a German castle at Znaim on the Austrian-Moravian border (Wiligut 1903, 1). The introduction to Wiligut's book referred to the "Germanic origin" of place-names and reflected the mood of contemporary folklore studies by Guido von List (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 179). It was published by the same person who issued some of von List's early work (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 179).

Theodor Czepl of the Order of the New Templars provided useful accounts of Wiligut's pre-war pagan tradition (Czepl 1982, 27-34 and Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 180).<sup>116</sup> This mystical organization was founded by Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels in 1894. Lanz gave

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<sup>116</sup> Goodrick-Clarke used Rudolf J. Mund's *Der Rasputin Himmlers* (1982) as his main source for information on Wiligut. He gleaned further details from the Wiligut-Weisthor SS file at the Berlin Document Center.

Czepl the task of making contact with Wiligut. In 1908, Czepl was acquainted with Wiligut's ideas through some occultist associates from Vienna. He met with Wiligut several times in the winter of 1920-1921 in Salzburg (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 180). Wiligut supported the research of *Ostara* and his ideas were a fusion of Lanz's and List's theories. Nevertheless, Wiligut disagreed with some of List's ideas and eventually used his position in the SS to attack von List's followers and send them to concentration camps.

Wiligut believed he was the re-incarnation of regional figures who endured the persecution of Jews and Catholics. He claimed he was able to recall his ancestral memory which also gave him a unique source on ancient German religion and traditions (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 183). He shared these views with Himmler who kept these ideas in his private papers (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 184).<sup>117</sup>

Wiligut also collaborated with various associates of the Guido von List Society on essays about ancient Germanic history. These essays were submitted to the intellectual research committees of the SS. Wirth later described Wiligut as a senile alcoholic who plagiarized the works of Guido von List (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 190).

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<sup>117</sup> Fourteen surviving items are a draft of his first Hagal [the 7<sup>th</sup> letter of the ancient Germanic alphabet] article 'Gotos Raunen-Runenwissen!' (July 1934) with a handwritten dedication 'in Armans Treue!'; 'Harumar' (May 4, 1934), a seven-verse mythological poem; 'Die neun Gebote Gts' (summer 1935); 'Darstellung der Menschheitsentwicklung' (June 17, 1936); '0 mani batme hum!', a mythological idyll; several letters dated 1935-6; and 'Ur-Vatar-unsar!' (August 14, 1934) [Bundes Archive in Koblenz] (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 259).

Erich Ludendorff (1865-1937) was probably the first pagan member of the Nazi movement and easily the most recognizable of the early Nazis (Steigman-Gall 2003, 87). Ludendorff was a notable military commander during World War One. He served as deputy to Paul von Hindenburg who came out of retirement to win some of Germany's greatest victories. "During the last two years of the war, he and Hindenburg assumed near-dictatorial powers as the civilian authorities began to lose credibility" (Steigman-Gall 2003, 87). He advocated a negotiated peace after the collapse of the Western front in 1918, and became involved in romantic nationalist movements (Steigman-Gall 2003, 87). In order to support his nationalist views, he blamed government opponents and rebels for weakening Germany's ability to carry on the war.

Ludendorff took part in a failed military coup against the German Republic in 1920. Shortly afterward, he became a figurehead of the Nazi movement and participated in Hitler's failed coup of 1923. However, his prestigious military record earned him a pardon and he tried to lead the Nazi movement while Hitler was in prison (Steigman-Gall 2003, 87).

During this period, Ludendorff attempted to turn Nazism into an explicitly religious movement (Steigman-Gall 2003, 87). Although fellow Nazi Artur Dinter supported Christian reform, Ludendorff proclaimed a complete divorce from Christianity (Steigman-Gall 2003, 87). Like many Nazis, Dinter mostly wanted to erase the Judaic roots of Christianity. He was eventually expelled from the Nazi party in 1924 because he was clearly more concerned with religion than politics. Ludendorff's role in the Nazi

party decreased after Hitler was released from prison, especially after a poor result in the 1925 elections (Steigman-Gall 2003, 88). Ludendorff's and Dinter's career paths demonstrated that polarized religious views threatened the success of the Nazi party.

Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945) served as Minister of Propaganda in Nazi Germany. He began serving in 1933 and committed suicide in 1945 to avoid capture. Like Eckart and Dinter, Goebbels had literary pretensions and his religious views were influenced by the story of Jesus (Steigman-Gall 2003, 20). For Goebbels, the Nazi struggle was innately religious as it was a struggle against the Devil himself (Steigman-Gall 2003, 21). His rhetoric suggests that he viewed the world in dualistic terms. "Money is the power of evil and the Jew its servant — Aryan, Semite, positive, negative, constructive, [and] destructive — the Jew has his fateful mission to once more dominate the sick Aryan race" (Steigman-Gall 2003, 21).<sup>118</sup> Goebbels regarded Hitler as the instrument of God that would save the Aryans. He was one of the most prolific writers of the movement, both in number of published works and in the quantity of unpublished, private material (Steigman-Gall 2003, 20).

Goebbels's publications include *Michael* (1929 [English tr. 1987]), a fictional account of a German war veteran that is loosely based on the life of Goebbels and his friends. The main character is an angry nationalist and the story tells of his experiences

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<sup>118</sup> The translation of this quote is based on Goebbels's diary entry for August 6<sup>th</sup> 1924 (Fröhlich 2004, XX). His diaries from October 1923 to November 1925 were edited and published by Elke Fröhlich (2004).

in Germany after he returned home from World War One. The story reveals his feeling of betrayal by the establishment of the Weimar Republic (Goebbels 1987, 28). He believed the Germans were “tricked out of [their] revolution” by profiteers from beyond German borders who “turned the shards of the old Reich into a new hybrid” (Goebbels 1987, 28). Michael’s story also revealed his love for German culture and its tradition of Christian socialism (Goebbels 1987, 38).

In the beginning of the story, Michael spent an afternoon reading “Nietzsche’s *Afternoon Worship from Zarathustra*,” as he sat in an “old silent cemetery where a fountain sprayed water into hot air” (Goebbels 1987, 8). Michael died at the end of the story, and his friends found a note on his desk in which he wrote about being a pioneer of the new Reich (Goebbels 1987, 131). His desk drawer contained *Faust*, the Bible, Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and a journal (Goebbels 1987, 131). The book ends with an important account about the symbolism of Michael’s death. His friend wrote about how Michael’s mother sent him his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* after Michael died, which was an old ragged copy that he carried through the war (Goebbels 1987, 131). As his friend leafed through it, he found a passage that Michael had underlined twice with a thick red pencil, which is also the last sentence of Goebbels’s novel, “many die too late and some too soon, the teaching still sounds strange: Die at the proper time” (Nietzsche 2009, 97 and Goebbels 1987, 131). These references confirm that Goebbels was aware of Nietzsche’s works which related to Zoroastrianism and religion, although it is unclear

how well Goebbels understood the references to Zoroastrianism in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.<sup>119</sup>

Rudolf Hess (1894-1987) joined the Nazi party in 1920 and attained the rank of Deputy Führer. He participated in Hitler's failed coup and helped transcribe and edit *Mein Kampf* while he was in prison with him. Schmidt-Falk claimed that both Hess and Hitler read von List's works (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 199). Hess was associated with the Thule Society (Goodrick-Clarke 2005, 221).

Erich Koch (1896-1986) was the leader of the East-Prussian branch of the Nazi party. The leaders of regional branches were known as "Gauleiters." Gauleiter Koch spoke at the celebrations commemorating Martin Luther and attributed the Nazi seizure of power to divine will. Koch's speech may seem like typical Nazi propaganda given the occasion, but in addition to being Gauleiter of East Prussia, Koch was also the president of the provincial Protestant church synod (Steigman-Gall 2003, 2). His contemporaries regarded him as a sincere Christian "who had attained his position through a genuine commitment to Protestantism and its institutions" (Steigman-Gall 2003, 2). A prominent Königsberg theologian and leader of the East Prussian Confessing Church stated that Koch spoke "with the deepest understanding of our Church" and consistently dealt with the "central themes of Christianity" (Iwand 1964, 251 and Steigman-Gall 2003, 2).

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<sup>119</sup> Although scholars such as Max Müller believed that their interest in comparative religions and linguistics would create greater dialogue and unity among different cultures, Müller was deeply saddened to know that the publication of the materials contained in and associated with the *Sacred Books of the East* contributed to the view that Aryan and Semitic traditions are in opposition to each other (Müller 1879, lvii-lviii and Murti 2008, 62). The Nazis used this interpretation to their advantage.

Koch resigned from his position as president of the provincial church synod in 1943. By the end of the war, Koch gained tremendous notoriety as the Reich Commissar of Ukraine, where he established his credentials as a brutal Nazi. He played a leading role in the murder of thousands of Jews and prisoners, as well as the enslavement of the remaining Slavic population (Steigman-Gall 2003, 2). In his postwar testimony taken by a prosecutor in Bielefeld, Koch insisted that “the Nazi idea had to develop from a basic Prussian-Protestant attitude and from Luther’s unfinished reformation” (Iwand 1964, 251 and Steigman-Gall 2003, 2).<sup>120</sup> Although Koch’s successful career as a Nazi can be perceived as an anomaly given the fact that he embraced two ideological systems that were long supposed to be polar opposites, his story prompted scholars to reexamine the connection between Nazism and the history of Christian movements in Germany (Steigman-Gall 2003, 2-3).

#### The United States and Britain

The Eugenics Movement in the United States provided support for the core principles of Nazi ideology. The Eugenics Movement was based on the assumption that the Nordic, Germanic, and Anglo-Saxon peoples were superior to other races. It began in the 1880s with the ideas of Francis Galton. The United States and Britain are considered Germanic countries since English is a Germanic language. However, Modern English includes a large number of Latin root words that were added after the Norman conquest

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<sup>120</sup> Institut für Zeitgeschichte [Institute of Contemporary History in Munich] - Manuscript Cancel I (7.15.1945) (Steigman-Gall 2003, 2). Available at <http://www.ifz-muenchen.de/>.

of Britain in the eleventh century. The United States and Britain also have a Protestant legacy which may be traced back to the King of England, Henry VIII (1491-1547), as well as the Dutch Revolt in 1568.

Before it became clear that war was inevitable, Nazi Germany tried to form an alliance with Britain through Aryan propaganda. German state newspapers made references to the linguistic connections between the British and the Aryans. They also praised the British Empire for their imperialist policies and subjugation of inferior peoples.

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, British colonists and officers of the East India Company hoped the Germanic connection to the ancient Aryans would justify their colonization efforts in India. They agreed with scholars like Friedrich Max Müller, who suggested that the Aryan warriors invaded ancient India and established themselves as the ruling class (Müller 1888, 89 and Thapar 1996, 6). Müller based his theories on language in order to argue against racism (Müller 1888, 85-89). The Aryans were also credited for their spiritual wisdom which they expressed through the Vedic texts. The British colonists believed that India maintained a racial caste system that was directly attributed to an Aryan invasion. Ironically, many Indian nationalists accepted this perspective. They believed it would ultimately raise their status through an ethnic connection to their rulers (Thapar 1996, 7).

The histories of Iran and India are very similar in regard to the socioeconomic structure of class distribution. Before and after the spread of Islam, the Iranian social



order was characterized by a hierarchy of rulers, priests, warriors, and commoners. The ancient caste system in Iran was not as strict as the system in India, since individuals were expected but not required to follow their father's career paths. As we shall see in the following chapter, the establishment of the Islamic Republic marked the first point in Iranian history when the priests became the ruling class.

### **Conclusion**

Before World War One, there was a dramatic rise in millenarian spiritual cults in Western Europe and the United States. These groups were influenced by Zoroastrianism while some cults were founded upon explicit Zoroastrian themes. However, it is difficult to find direct links between the Nazis and the mysterious cults because it was politically advantageous for the Nazis to deny such ties.

It seems the Nazis used anything within their reach to sustain and justify their racist acts of terror. The Nazis sponsored costly expeditions and research projects to validate the Aryan roots they claimed in their ideology. This suggests that they genuinely hoped to find evidence and support for their theories.

The strict form of monotheism we have today can be traced back to Zoroaster and the philosophy of light and darkness that was common in many cultures. The Indo-Aryans and Germans likely separated from the Iranians before the spread of Zoroastrianism. Nevertheless, the only texts that the Nazis had to support the Aryan roots of Christianity were based on the accounts of the European travelers in Asia and

their interactions with Zoroastrians between the sixteenth and nineteenth century. These texts had a major influence on the religious history of Europe.

## Chapter Five

### Zoroastrianism and the Shia Islamic Republic of Iran

Any study of Iranian philosophy of religion inevitably overlaps with the history and tradition of a scholarly priesthood. This ancient tradition plays an important role in contemporary Iranian politics. This chapter examines the role Zoroastrian traditions and rituals play as a subversive religion and a form of protest in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Throughout Iran's long history of conquest, the priesthood maintained an important role in shaping and evolving alongside the religions of the people. After the revolution in 1979 which overthrew the Pahlavi dynasty, the establishment of the Islamic Republic represented a new stage in Iranian history in which priests replaced the monarchs as the official ruling class. Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic, Zoroastrianism has been a major symbol of rebellion since it embodies the pre-Islamic political and religious identity of the Iranian people. While Zoroastrians are only a recognized religious minority in Iran, virtually all Iranians, including Muslims and Jews, celebrate Zoroastrian traditions and holidays.<sup>121</sup> They continue to celebrate the Now Ruz tradition since they begin their New Year with the Spring Equinox. The Modern Iranian calendar is based on the observation of the Spring Equinox which makes it the

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<sup>121</sup> In a study on Iranian Jewish rituals as understood by women, Saba Soomekh noted that the rituals practiced by Iranian Jewish women were influenced not only by Shia Islam, but also by Zoroastrian religious tradition. The two Zoroastrian rituals most visibly appropriated by Jews were celebrating Nouruz and lighting *esphand* (rue) (Soomekh 2009, 29).

most accurate calendar in use.<sup>122</sup> The Islamic Republic mostly discourages Zoroastrian traditions and New Year festivities during periods of heavy protest. However, as the level of protest declines, state officials are willing to commemorate Iran's long history and use nationalist rhetoric to gain support at home and abroad.

The Iranian New Year is characterized by various pre-Islamic rituals, some of which pre-date Zoroastrianism.<sup>123</sup> Most of these rituals are closely associated with Zoroastrianism, especially the celebration of the Spring Equinox. The Spring Equinox represents re-birth. It inspired Zoroaster's worship of Ahura Mazda and the beginning of a new era in Human history. Zoroaster discovered the Universal Spirit during a spring festival commemorating the New Year and the re-birth of the life cycle. He referred to the period after his discovery as "Now Rooz" (Boyce 1975, 175), which translates as the "New Day." He used this term in a millenarian sense, recognizing the transformation in society that would follow. The "New Day" and the "New Year" allude to the new era in human history marked by the discovery of God (Truth).

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<sup>122</sup> The current Iranian Calendar was officially instituted in 1925 under the government of Reza Shah (Zirinsky 1992, 649 and Stausberg 2012, 183). The calendar was reformed by introducing a solar year (with Mohammad's migration from Mecca to Medina as the starting point for that era), while the twelve months were given the names of Zoroastrian deities and divine beings, in agreement with the Zoroastrian calendar (Stausberg 2012, 183).

<sup>123</sup> For most Iranians, the New Year tradition includes a "haft-seen" decoration, which translates as "seven-S" and thus consists of seven items which begin with the letter "S." It represents the seven "bounteous" creations of the Universal Spirit (Shahbazi 2003, 1). The letter "S" corresponds to the word "Spenta" which translates as bounteous or generous. On the last Wednesday of the year, Iranians jump over fire during "Chaharshanbe Suri," which is a celebration that translates as the "Wednesday Feast." The festival and tradition may predate Zoroastrianism, but since Zoroastrians considered fire to be a symbol of truth, the act is believed to be a cleansing ritual.

I begin this chapter by examining the relationship between Zoroastrianism and Shia Islam. Then I will briefly review the Iranian Revolution and how the movement affected the status of Zoroastrians. A small portion of this chapter will focus on the recent protests and demonstrations in Iran and their connection to Zoroastrianism. I will also cite various speeches by leaders of the Islamic Republic such as Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that refer to Zoroastrianism. Most of these speeches discourage Iranians from celebrating Zoroastrian holidays and suggest that these traditions are incompatible with Islamic society. I will then cite various newspaper articles and primary sources which confirm that these warnings make these rituals even more important while provoking more protest.

### **The Iranian Connection to the Shia Movement**

Although there are Shias from a variety of cultures, the Shia movement has a particularly Iranian character. Iran is the largest Shia country in the world. Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan, and Bahrain are the only countries with a Shia majority. The region which consists of present day Iraq was part of the Iranian province of Suristan before the Muslim conquest in 637. Bahrain and Azerbaijan were also part of Iran. Iran's overall population is about 80 million people and approximately 90% are Shia (99% Muslim overall).<sup>124</sup> Iraq's overall population is about 32 million with about 60 to 70 percent Shia (97% Muslim overall).<sup>125</sup> The major Shia intellectual centers and historic battle sites are

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<sup>124</sup> Data from the Statistical Center of the Islamic Republic of Iran retrieved from [www.Amar.org.IR/Portals/1/Iran/Census-2.pdf](http://www.Amar.org.IR/Portals/1/Iran/Census-2.pdf) and data from the CIA World Factbook retrieved from [www.CIA.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook](http://www.CIA.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook).

<sup>125</sup> Data from the CIA World Factbook retrieved from [www.CIA.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook](http://www.CIA.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook).

part of present day Iran and Iraq. Pakistan and Yemen also have large Shia populations.<sup>126</sup> Pakistan's Shia population outnumbers Iraq's Shia population but the Shias are a minority.

The story of the Shia movement begins with the death of Mohammad and the election of the new spiritual leader. The Shias regard the overall chain of events following the death of Mohammad as a dramatic injustice (Jafri 1979, 14, Halm 1999, 5, and Nasr 2006, 36). For Shias, the choice of the first successor was the root of the problem, and it was based on human folly rather than God's mandate (Nasr 2006, 36). Mohammad died in 632 BCE and Abu Bakr began ruling as Caliph. Although Ali ibn Abi Talib did not particularly challenge the election of Abu Bakr, a portion of the population suggested that Ali was the true Imam and should have been the first Caliph. The term imam translates as "leader of the community" while the term caliph translates as "representative or successor" (Halm 1999, 3 and Nasr 2006, 35). The initial supporters of Ali can be described as the "Proto-Shia." The A in Shia refers to Ali and the term Shia means supporter of Ali (Jafri 1979, 3 and Lewis 1987, 21). However, the defining moment of the Shia movement was the martyrdom of Ali's son, Hossayn.

Mohammad was Ali's cousin and he was adopted by Ali's father Abi Talib who took him into his home. Later, when Abi Talib became impoverished, "Mohammad took his young cousin Ali into his own household to relieve his uncle's burden" (Halm 1999,

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<sup>126</sup> Pakistan's population is about 10-15% Shia (CIA World Factbook) and Yemen's population is around 45% Shia (Data from the United Nations Refugee Agency retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/topic,45a5199f2,45a5f8b22,488f180d1e,0.html>).

3). In turn, Mohammad was almost like an older brother for Ali and most Shias regard Ali as the first male to accept Mohammad's message (Jafri 1979, 25).<sup>127</sup> Unlike most of the population in Mecca and Medina, the acceptance of Islam by people like Ali and Mohammad is typically not regarded as conversion since they were lifetime monotheists.<sup>128</sup>

Ali was a heroic warrior who was feared by his enemies. He was admired for his bravery and loyalty in battle. According to some accounts, during the early attacks against the Muslims, Ali helped Mohammad safely escape from Mecca by lying in his bed while wearing his clothing (Halm 1999, 4). Ali married Mohammad's daughter Fatima who gave birth to Hassan and Hossayn.

During the time of Mohammad, the Arab-Islamic Empire was limited to the Arabian Peninsula. As Caliph, Abu Bakr initiated a transnational policy which began with the conquest and conversion of Arabs living under Roman territories but culminated in an attack against Iran in 633. The attack against Iran was an unpopular decision at the time since most Muslims believed it would lead to the spread of their religion among a foreign people deemed unworthy of it. Nonetheless, Iran was a rich empire with a large

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<sup>127</sup> The comparatively few early writers who mention Abu Bakr as the first Muslim among men do so because of Ali's young age (Jafri 1979, 25). Ali was thirteen years old when he accepted Islam (Jafri 1979, 18), and he was the first to pray with Mohammad and his wife, Khadija. Abu Bakr publicly announced his faith in Islam before Ali (Jafri 1979, 25).

<sup>128</sup> The religion of the Arabs, which varied in strength and importance from locality to locality throughout the peninsula, was originally the worship of tribal symbols, which later became identified with forces of nature represented by numerous deities. The tribal deity, symbolized in a sacred stone, was called the lord of its temple. There was no organized priestly hierarchy, but certain clans acted as guardians of temples and sanctuaries (Jafri 1979, 6). In the Quran, Allah, the supreme deity of the Meccan sanctuary, is described as the "Lord of the House" (Quran 106.3).

population of potential taxpayers making it an attractive target for Abu Bakr and his eventual successor, Omar ibn al Khatab (Jafri 1979, 111).

Iran was a vulnerable target for various reasons. The Sassanian rulers were involved in costly wars over Roman-Byzantine territories. During the first century BCE, the Sassanian government achieved a regional balance of power with the rival Roman Empire (Yarshater 1983, 600). Both empires maintained alliances with Arab tribes who were used as a buffer population in the border regions (Yarshater 1983, 600). They also protected the empires from attacks by Bedouin Arabs. The balance of power between the Romans and Iranians continued until the second century CE when the Arab tribes revolted in response to a Byzantine consolidation of power and an internal rebellion within the Iranian Empire (Yarshater 1983, 600-601). The pre-Islamic Arabian poets occasionally refer back to Zoroastrian practices, and it must have been either in central Iraq or in eastern Arabia that they came into contact with the faith with the stationing of Iranian troops and officials (Yarshater 1983, 603).

The Sassanian rulers were able to crush the rebellion but their strategy to control the Syrian Desert forced them into burdensome wars with the Byzantines. These wars significantly exhausted the military and fiscal strength of both the Iranian and Roman Empires (Yarshater 1983, 603). The initial internal rebellions against the Sassanian rulers were caused by tense class struggles within Iran. The Sassanian rulers divided classes into a hierarchy of priests, warriors, secretaries, and commoners. Although the



Sassanian Empire was a monarchy, its system of government was analogous to today's Islamic Republic in which the Zoroastrian priests were like Ayatollahs.<sup>129</sup> Meanwhile, the commoners were the poorest class and the only tax base. Most of them were unwilling to maintain their loyalty to the Sassanian rulers which made the Iranian people a vulnerable target (Yarshater 1983, 134).<sup>130</sup>

The Iranians were able to repel the invasions which came from southwest Iran in 633 and the Arab forces retreated several times. Meanwhile, Abu Bakr died in 634 and Omar was named the next Caliph. Once again, Ali did not challenge the election of Omar as Caliph. Meanwhile, after winning several key battles against the Byzantines, the Arabs were able to attack Iran from the less fortified northwestern border and eventually conquered Iran in 637. The Sassanian government disbanded after a decisive Arab victory at the Battle of Nahavand in 642 (Jafri 1979, 111-114).

The extensive Zoroastrian community in Iran lost the privileges that came with belonging to the religion of the ruling aristocracy. Previously, the Zoroastrian

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<sup>129</sup> In the spirit of the main point of this study, it is important to emphasize that the political influence of Zoroastrian priests during the Sassanian period was largely overlooked by the people who regretted their initial support for the Ayatollahs after the Iranian revolution in 1979.

<sup>130</sup> The Sassanian kings identified themselves and were identifiable as Zoroastrian kings roughly a century before Constantine became the first of the Christian Roman emperors. Besides the affirmation of religious identity, and their use of religious symbols in official documents and their patronage of religious institutions such as ritual fires, they strongly interlinked religion with the State in terms of administration and law. (This is why many scholars speak of a Sassanian 'state church'). The tightening control over the religious field is also reflected in religious tensions aiming at the destruction of certain sanctuaries and at the elimination of religious variation ('heresy') and 'irreligion' and in reported codifications of the religious tradition. Zoroastrian religious texts from the Islamic era articulate the ideology of a 'religiocracy' by affirming the inseparable unity of kingship and religion. While this idea may well have had its supporters in Sassanian times, reality was far more complex (Stausberg 2012, 174).

community possessed the power to determine and enforce its own rules for coexisting and interacting with the non-Zoroastrian communities within the empire (Choksy 1987, 17). After the Arabs conquered Iran, the Zoroastrians lost their political power base and were compelled to negotiate terms for survival with the Muslim Arabs from a position of political and military weakness (Choksy 1987, 17). Meanwhile, Caliph Omar gave orders to wipe out “the sciences of the Persians” (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 39). When one of Omar’s main generals, Saad ibn Abi Waqqas, wrote him and asked if he could distribute a large number of Iranian books and scientific papers as spoils of war among the victorious Muslims, Omar replied that they should be thrown in the water (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 373). Omar wrote that “if what they contain is right guidance, God has given us better guidance, and if it is error, God has protected us against it” (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 373).<sup>131</sup>

Omar died on November 7, 644 after an attack that was organized by a diverse group of conspirators who were seeking revenge for the Muslim conquest of Iran. The group included an Iranian who was forced to convert to Islam, a former Jewish Rabbi who had converted to Islam, an Assyrian Christian, and a former Iranian soldier named Pirouz Nahavandi, who was Zoroastrian, and the person who stabbed Omar a few days before he died. The death of Omar is re-enacted and celebrated in present day Iran and

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<sup>131</sup> There is a variant of this famous story, according to which Omar ordered the destruction of the celebrated Greek library in Alexandria, Egypt (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 373). “The works catalogued under the name of Zoroaster in the library of Alexandria contained two million lines” (Cumont 1911, 138).

many Shias regard Omar and Abu Bakr as the unjust usurpers of Ali's rightful position. According to the Shia, most of the Companions of Mohammad conspired after his death to dispossess Ali and his descendants of their right to the leadership of the Muslim community (Zaman 2002, 112). In their view of history, the Companions and their successors were hypocrites and usurpers who never ceased to subvert Islam for their own interests (Zaman 2002, 112).

Omar was replaced by Osman Ibn Affan who focused on stability and economic development. Osman was elected by a six-member council which convened after the death of Mohammad (Jafri 1979, 69 and Halm 1999, 4). Ali was part of the council and accepted the decision even though he was clearly in opposition (Jafri 1979, 65 and Halm 1999, 4). Osman was a descendant of the same tribe as Mohammad but his descendants embraced Islam after they attacked Mohammad and were defeated in battle. Mohammad was part of the Hashemite clan within the tribe of Quraysh. Osman, "who was also an outstanding war comrade of Mohammad, represented the Umayyad clan, the established urban [upper class] of Mecca, which long remained heathen—certainly a bone of contention for [Mohammad]" (Halm 1999, 4). The Umayyad clan "had since accepted Islam—albeit as an act of expediency—and now they were set once again to regain their previous supremacy within the framework of the new Islamic community" (Halm 1999, 5). Most Shia historians regard Osman as a greedy political leader who believed economic prosperity superseded spiritual matters (Jafri 1979, 81-83 and Zaman 2002,

112). Osman knew that his strength was based on the support and goodwill of his powerful clansmen, and he did what he could do to satisfy their demands (Jafri 1979, 81). The people were disillusioned when they found the Caliph committed to the improvement of the lot of his own family rather the welfare of the community as a whole (Jafri 1979, 81). This created a large opposition movement, and he was eventually killed by a group of Muslim rebels.

The mainstream Shia view is that after the assassination of Osman, the sole legitimate successor to Mohammad finally took power (Halm 1999, 5). Many Shias suggest that all the transitional chaos could have been avoided if Ali had served as the second Caliph (as Mohammad intended) in the first place. Nevertheless, it exemplifies the core principle of the Shia movement, which is to carry on the struggle for justice even if you are destined for a world of injustice.

Ali's opportunity to rule can also be interpreted as an accident. Ali was never meant to rule as "Caliph" because Mohammad never intended for his legacy to evolve into a transnational political empire. While some people regard Islam as a purely political system of government, Mohammad's message can also be interpreted as a spiritual and metaphoric return to a puritan form of monotheism (the legacy of Zoroaster, Abraham, and/or "Ibrahim Zardusht"). After the assassination of Osman, the Islamic Empire was essentially in a state of civil war with various rebel factions on one side and the relatives of Osman on the other. According to some accounts, Ali was asked to rule

and eventually agreed after the rebels made several convincing arguments. In another account, Ali was essentially forced to lead as the rebels threatened to kill him if he refused. In both accounts, Ali initially tried to deny the request to serve as Caliph since he predicted his eventual assassination by his opponents and figured there was no hope for a legitimate spiritual and political empire without widespread martyrdom.

There are many reasons why Iranians admire Ali. Ali struggled against Arabs who regarded non-Arab Muslims as inferior. He remained uninvolved during the most eventful years of Omar's caliphate, which included the conquests of Iranian and Byzantine provinces (Jafri 1979, 65). Ali's policies did not discriminate against non-Arab Muslims and if there was any sort of favoritism, it was on the side of Iranian culture. As Caliph, Ali was forced to leave Medina and moved his capital to Kufa, which is in present day Iraq and was part of Iran before the Muslim conquest (Halm 1999, 5). This was a very symbolic move by Ali since the region had a large population of Iranians and many historic cities that were associated with the legacy of the Persian Empire and the Assyro-Akkadian Empire (Jafri 1979, 114-115). Ali is considered one of the pioneers of the Kufic style script which was based on the earlier forms of writing that were used in these empires. The Kufic style script is an elongated flatter version of the Arabic script and is used on the modern Iranian and Iraqi flags.

During the Arab conquest of Iran, there were a considerable number of women among the prisoners of war in Kufa who had fallen to the lot of their Arab conquerors (Jafri 1979, 114). "These women became the lawful wives of their Arab captors and bore

them children” (Jafri 1979, 114). The result was that in less than twenty years’ time, by the time Ali came to Kufa, there was a youthful generation of Kufan Arabs with Iranian mothers (Jafri 1979, 114).

The Iranian population of Kufa also included various Iranian nobles, traders, artisans, and soldiers who converted to Islam. Some of these soldiers were prisoners of war who converted to Islam in order to escape a life of slavery (Jafri 1979, 115). The Iranian population of Kufa also included peasants whose towns and villages were destroyed during the Muslim conquest (Jafri 1979, 115). Due to the collapse of the Sassanian feudal system, these peasants were able to leave their cultivable land and move to Kufa in search of other work (Jafri 1979, 115). Before Ali arrived, most Iranians in Kufa were not granted the same social rights as their Arab co-citizens (Jafri 1979, 115).

Ali observed equality in the allotment of stipends to Arabs and non-Arabs which angered the tribal authorities of Kufa (Jafri 1979, 101). He appointed Salman al Farsi (Salman the Persian) to replace Osman’s descendants as governor of a province in Iraq. Salman was a friend of Mohammad who converted to Islam after initially converting from Zoroastrianism to Christianity (Razwy 1999, 19-25). Salman is credited with the idea of digging a trench around Medina in order to defend the early Muslims from the Meccans (Razwy 1999, 78). Salman “the Persian” was a lot more familiar with static war tactics than his Arab companions, who were more experienced in hit-and-run style desert warfare. Ali appointed Salman governor of Madaen (part of Iraq) but Salman died at the age of 88 shortly after his arrival (Razwy 1999, 99). Salman is contrasted with the

rapacious governors appointed by other caliphs as he is said to have rented half a shoemaker's stall as his office (Fischer 1980, 149). Similarly, there are accounts that Ali conducted business at night under a tree by candle light but would extinguish the flame when he left for personal matters since the candle belonged to the community (Fischer 1980, 149). During his time as governor, "Salman wished to demonstrate that the true message and mission of Islam was very broad in orientation and scope, and was not confined to an isolated thing called 'religion,' and that it was a way of life encompassing the whole range of thought, feeling, speech, and deed" (Razwy 1999, 98). Ali's decision to appoint Salman governor of Madaen demonstrates his admiration for non-Arabs.

Ali was eventually assassinated in 661 by a plot organized by his major opponents, some of whom were traitors who supported him in the beginning. Ali was killed by Abdol Rahman Ibn Moljam (Halm 1999, 6), who attacked him with a poisoned sword while he was praying. Ali's death led to the rule of Moaviyeh (Muawiyah), who was a relative of Osman. Although he lacked religious authority, Sunni Muslims accepted Moaviyeh's rise since he guaranteed the basic order that the faith was thought to need (Nasr 2006, 36). During his rule, Osman assigned Moaviyeh a position as governor of Syria. As Caliph, Ali removed him from his position but Moaviyeh resisted. "Aside from the mentioned tension in the umma, regional differences also surfaced in the conflict between Ali and Moaviyeh: Syrian Arabs opposed Iraqi Arabs [Damascus versus Kufa]" (Halm 1999, 6). Some of Moaviyeh's opponents became supporters of Ali once they recognized him as a champion of the political independence of Iraq who would stand

up to Syrian domination (Jafri 1979, 80). These opponents “were for the time being of the same mind as the religious supporters of Ali, who believed in his right to the caliphate based on the theocratic principle” (Jafri 1979, 80). After Ali was assassinated, Moaviyeh proclaimed himself the leader of the Caliphate and moved the capital from Kufa to Damascus.

Ali’s sons Hassan and Hossayn refused to recognize the political rule of Moaviyeh and his successors. However, while Hassan resisted passively, Hossayn resisted actively. Hassan did not die in battle, but according to both Shia and Sunni accounts, he was poisoned by one of his wives (Ju’da bint al-Ashath) during the rule of Moaviyeh which caused his death in 669 (Al-Masudi 1894, 426, Halm 1999, 8, and Jafri 1979, 158). Moaviyeh appointed his son Yazid as the next Caliph, and he called for an oath of allegiance once he took power (Nasr 2006, 159). Hossayn refused and was killed in the Battle of Karbala (680) where his supporters were greatly outnumbered by Yazid’s forces (Halm 1999, 9-15).<sup>132</sup> The martyrdom of Hossayn was the defining moment in the history of the Shia movement.

The Shia movement may be described as a protestant struggle for Islamic justice. Due to their lust for power and wealth, Ali’s opponents created a violent empire which

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<sup>132</sup> The earliest reports of the events of Karbala were written down by Abu Mikhnaf (died 774) of Kufa, a Shia who was the first to transcribe the stories that had been circulating by oral tradition. His collection has been used by both Sunni and Shia historians (Halm 1999, 15).



attacked Iran and persecuted its people. They tried to destroy Iran's culture and ignored its long history of monotheism.

Iranians shaped the Islamic tradition in many ways. "Apart from ritual requirements, to maintain simple physical cleanness is a basic duty for a Zoroastrian, for cleanliness is an absolute good, a characteristic of Ohrmazd's creation; unless the believer is clean in body as well as soul, his [or her] good works, it is said, do not accrue to his [her] account" (Boyce 1975, 310). "Prior to each of the five daily prayers, the Zoroastrian should wash [his or her] face, hands, and feet, which is a prescription adopted, with the times of prayer, by Islam" (Boyce 1975, 310). According to Ibn Khaldun, Mohammad said that "if scholarship hung suspended in the highest parts of heaven, the Persians would attain it" (Ibn Khaldun 1967, 313). While this quote seems to give some level of recognition to the diligence of Iranian scholarship, it may have a much deeper meaning. Perhaps this is a reference to Zoroaster, who found truth through astronomical observation. There are also passages which suggest that the Magians, a term that refers to Zoroastrians, are entitled to the same status as the "people of the book" (Quran 22.17). Throughout the Islamic scriptures, the Jews and Christians are referred to as "people of the book" in reference to the divine revelations in the form of written texts.

Zoroastrians were initially treated as people of the book during the early stages of Islamic conquest in Iran but this policy ended with the Umayyad Caliphate (Tabari 1994, 67 and Tabari 1998, 23). There are records from Mohammad bin Jareer Tabari (838-923 CE) which indicate that under the Umayyads, Arab tax-collectors mistreated Zoroastrians

(Tabari 1994, 67, Choksy 1987, 26, and Boyce 2001, 148). According to Mary Boyce, “a further blow came when Iranian Muslims succeeded in shaping a tradition which made Islam appear as a partly Iranian religion (which indeed by remote origin it is), so that national pride was disarmed” (Boyce 2001, 150-151). “Many Iranian converts espoused the Shia cause, which enabled them to oppose the Umayyads with their harsh executions and narrow Arab nationalism, to uphold the claims of the heirs, through the princess Shahrbanu,<sup>133</sup> of the Sassanian royal house; and so it was no longer the Zoroastrians alone who stood for patriotism and loyalty to the past” (Boyce 2001, 151).

#### Mazdak of Bamdad

Before the Shia movement, Sassanian rule was highlighted by a major socialist and cultural movement led by Mazdak of Bamdad. Mazdak was the son of Bamdad and gained notoriety during the sixth century under Sassanian King Kavadh. Mazdak was known to support vegetarianism and early forms of communitarian thought. During periods of drought where there were threats of famine, Mazdak encouraged the people to loot storage sites belonging to the aristocracy (Dorraj 1990, 69). Mazdak believed he was a Zoroastrian puritan and strongly criticized religious ritualism and materialism (Yarshater 1983, 150). His ideas are comparable to the ancient cynicism associated with Diogenes of Sinope (Diogenes Laertius 1972, 39). Diogenes minimized his material

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<sup>133</sup> In an effort to synthesize Iranian and Arab cultures, many Shia historians, and a substantial number of Sunni historians, maintain that Hossayn Ibn-Ali married a Sassanian Princess called Shahrbanu, who gave birth to a son named Ali Ibn-Hossayn (Al-Qummi 1982, 195-196, Boyce 1967 33-34, and Boyce 2001, 151-152).

possessions and lived in a ceramic wine-vat (barrel) in order to ensure his free movement throughout the community (Diogenes Laertius 1972, 25 and 39).<sup>134</sup> Like Diogenes, Mazdak embraced the human condition and supported altruism. Mazdak had numerous followers including King Kavadh himself. Opponents of his ideology alleged that Kavadh offered Mazdak a chance to sleep with his wife in order to prove his communitarian loyalty (Yarshater 1983, 150). Mazdak is said to have refused the offer after his close friends and the Crown Prince suggested that it was not a good idea. Manochehr Dorraj claims that “any serious attempt at a historical overview of Irano-Islamic populism must refer back to the social thought of Mazdak” (Dorraj 1990, 66).

#### Magi and Sufis

The mystical approach to religion is characterized by a desire to attain a more direct path to God through extraordinary circumstances. “Sufism can be described as a specific kind of mysticism developed by Muslims” (Küçük 2008, 292). “Brought up in the highly developed and seasoned philosophical climate of the Greco-Roman world of Zoroastrianism, of the Hebrew-Christian tradition and of the Buddhism of Balkh and Bukhara, Sufis readily and implicitly acknowledged the spiritual affinities with and borrowings from one another’s mystical traditions” (Qamber 1991, 59).<sup>135</sup> “The idea of

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<sup>134</sup> Socrates was commonly confused with Diogenes (Ibn Khaldun 1989, 373).

<sup>135</sup> “That is not to say that all mystical systems of the world are the same in essence. Nor are goals, for that matter, the same even within the Sufi mystical tradition—much less within one tradition and another. Essence and goals are broad, friendly and generous terms and miss out on fine differences. The mysticism of Plotinus and Porphyry would not have come into being without Plato, nor Zen without Buddhism, nor Sufism without Islam. All mystical endeavors are an exploration into the mystery of Ultimate Reality (Haqiqat) and the human longing to have direct, personal experience of it” (Qamber 1991, 59).

Zoroastrian mysticism might at first glance seem a contradiction in terms. The Good Religion, after all, is *cimig*, ‘rational,’ above all else: Zoroaster elegantly solved the most intractable mystery of all faiths, theodicy, by the revelation of cosmic dualism” (Russell 1993, 73).<sup>136</sup> Regardless, “Zoroastrians are associated in New Persian literature, from its very beginning to the present time, with mystical practices and religious intoxication.<sup>137</sup> These associations may be clichés; if not, they have the typical ambiguity of a Sufi poem linking wine and love to the mystical state of nearness to God” (Russell 1993, 74).

The most notable Iranian Sufi was Mohammad Jalal al-Din Balkhi (1203-1273), also known as Rumi. “Few have experienced as deeply the amazing mystery of love—both human and divine—as did Rumi, a brilliant teacher, religious scholar, philosopher, poet, and lover” (Qamber 1991, 64). The Seljuq Prince Ala al-Din Kayqobad (1188-1237) offered Rumi a teaching position at a religious school in Qonya (Konya), and after he traveled to Syria to formally study Islamic law, he eventually gained recognition as an Islamic jurist and returned to Qonya to resume teaching (Masroori 2010, 245). However, the turning point in Rumi’s life was his meeting with Shams al-Din Tabrizi in 1244 (Masroori 2010, 245). Shams’s name means “sun,” and he converted Rumi from an

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<sup>136</sup> “The mere assertion that there are esoteric doctrines within Zoroastrianism has been criticized” (Russell 1993, 73).

<sup>137</sup> “We find an early New Persian poem in the *Tarikh-e Sistan* dedicated to the sacred fire of Karkoy in Sistan, cited from the earlier *Ketab-e Garshasp* of Abu’l-Mu’ayyad Balkhi. The fire temple in that work is itself reputed to have been built by two Iranian epic heroes, Kaykhosrow and Rostam. In that poem, the hos, ‘consciousness’ of Karaspa (an Avestan hero discussed below) is supposed to reside, and the worshipper is invited to *nush kon may nash/dast bar aghish*, ‘Imbibe ambrosial wine,/The loved one in (thine) embrace’” (Bosworth 1984, 4 and Russell 1993, 74).

Orthodox Sufi to a Rejoicing one.<sup>138</sup> Shams asked Rumi to show his humble devotion to God in radical ways, including drinking alcohol and dancing in public. Although Rumi was reluctant at first, considering he was a respected Islamic jurist and teacher, he eventually realized that Shams wanted to show that Rumi's devotion to God was much more important than his reputation within the community.

Rumi preached about the unity of faith. "Some Sufis, like Rumi, argue that the essence of all religions is the same. In Rumi's words, 'Ahmad's name is the name of all prophets'" (Masroori 2010, 249).<sup>139</sup> Meanwhile, he closely experienced the relationship between Islam and Zoroastrianism, as well as debates concerning the enduring problem of evil. For instance, "the notion of 'two principles' [good and evil] is perceived [by many] as being at odds with the Islamic concept of *tawhid*, the unity or oneness of God. Rumi in his *Fihi ma Fihi* ('Discourses'), remarks that it is this Magian (Zoroastrian) teaching that good and evil come from separate sources which leads to debate with Muslims, for whom good and evil cannot be separate, since there is only one God, not two pre-existent forces. From Rumi's perspective, the co-existence and inseparability of good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, is necessary to propel humans towards God"

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<sup>138</sup> "Orthodox Sufis believed in the austere following of religious edicts and obligations as prescribed by the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet Mohammad. They believed exact obedience to be essential to salvation. Meanwhile, Rejoicing Sufis sometimes argued that literal following of Quranic obligations was only for the masses, who had not achieved the spiritual awareness of the real Sufis. They believed in reaching God through spiritual awakening. Among means to such awakenings were playing music, singing, and ritual (ecstatic) dancing, behaviors frequently and strongly condemned by the Orthodox" (Masroori 2010, 245).

<sup>139</sup> Ahmad is one of the titles of Prophet Mohammad. Ahmad and Mohammad have a common linguistic root known as "hamd," which translates as praise.

(Rumi 1975, 159 and Rose 2011, 169).<sup>140</sup> Rumi was also influenced by ancient Iranian traditions concerning life after death. “The Zoroastrian concept that the thoughts, words and actions of the individual meet the soul of the deceased prior to judgment seems to have had a profound impact on both Hakim Sanayee (1080-1131) and Rumi, for they both expressed the idea that every thought would be made visible on the day of judgment, and that ‘death will meet each human like a mirror, which either a beautiful or an ugly face according to their good or evil deeds’” (Rose 2011, 169).

#### The Shia Character and the Birth of Modern Iran

The rule of the Safaviyeh dynasty was highlighted by a major cultural revival. Their rule further solidified the connection between the Shia movement and Iranian identity. The people of Iran were especially susceptible to Shia influences because they generally despised the Arabs by whom they had been conquered, and in espousing the cause of Ali and his descendants they found an opportunity for expressing their national spirit and maintaining something of their independence (Miller 1974, 5). The Safaviyeh claimed to be descendants of the Sassanian rulers, the Prophet Mohammad, and his cousin Ali Ibn-Abi Talib (Newman 2006, 13). They also claimed to be descendants of Safi al-Din, the founder of the Safaviyeh, which is a prominent Sufi order in the Azerbaijan region of Iran. Safi al-Din lived from 1252-1334 and was from the Iranian region of Ardabil (Newman 2006, 2). He is believed to be of Aryan origin, either Iranian

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<sup>140</sup> “So evil and good are one and indivisible” (Rumi 1975, 159).

or Kurdish. In the fifteenth century, the Safaviyeh began adapting an extremist Shia stance, and declared their intentions to rule Iran. In 1501, Esmael Safavi, a Grandmaster of the Safaviyeh order, believed to be of Iranian, Turkic, and Pontic Greek origin consolidated control of the Azerbaijan province (Newman 2006, 14). The Safaviyeh were strongly supported by the local Turkish speaking tribes, as well as many of the tribes that were fighting against persecution of the Shia in the Ottoman Empire (Newman 2006, 15). In 1502, Esmael declared that Iran was under the control of the Safaviyeh, whose dynasty eventually established full control of Iran by 1510, including Baghdad, and several Shia shrines in Najaf and Karbala. In an effort to appeal to the heterodox sentiments of his subjects, Esmael declared the Shia view as the state's official denomination of the Islamic faith. It significantly increased the loyalty of his subjects. It also helped Esmael differentiate himself from the Sunni Ottoman Turks who were planning on annexing Iran (Hiro 2005, 212).

The prevalent Shia character of Iran was largely influenced by the rule of Esmael and the Safaviyeh. During his rule, Esmael implemented a policy of mandatory conversion to the Shia faith (Newman 2006, 14). The rulers of the Safaviyeh dynasty also encouraged many philosophers and Shia scholars (olama) to study in Iran (Newman 2006, 14). In the sixteenth century, the Iranian Shia olama made a deal in which they agreed to affirm the monarchy's legitimacy as long as the throne defended Shia identity and the Shia realm (Nasr 2006, 121). This partnership remained in place until the

nineteenth century when European commercial interests and political pressure weakened the Qajar Monarchy's ability to support the Shia character of Iran (Nasr 2006, 121). Since they were worried that the Shah's power would remain a tool of colonialism, the ulama leaned toward vesting more authority than ever in the people (Nasr 2006, 122). This led to an increase in popular support for the ayatollahs who stepped in to defend national rights and interests.

The Shia movement is a synthesis of Iranian culture and Islamic conquest. It can be described as a Persianization of Islam as well as Zoroastrian Islam (Dorraj 1990, 9). It is essentially a protestant form of Islam which emphasizes populism and political justice. The complex historical relationship between Zoroastrianism and Shia Islam continues to influence the political status of Zoroastrians in the Islam Republic of Iran.

#### Zoroastrianism in Modern Iran

According to the Statistical Center of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the number of Zoroastrians counted in Iran was 25, 271 at the time of the 2012 census.<sup>141</sup> Zoroastrians are currently a recognized religious minority in Iran with guaranteed representation in the Majles [National Council] (Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran Article 13). According to Article 13 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the only recognized religious minorities, who, within

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<sup>141</sup> Data from the Statistical Center of the Islamic Republic of Iran retrieved from [www.amar.org.IR/Portals/1/Iran/Census-2.pdf](http://www.amar.org.IR/Portals/1/Iran/Census-2.pdf).



the limits of the law, are free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies, and to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education. This can be traced to the 1905 Constitutional Revolution in which minority religions such as Christians, Zoroastrians, and Jews were guaranteed representation (Iranian Constitution Article 13).<sup>142</sup> This small measure was part of a much larger populist movement during the Qajar era which tried to impose limits on the power of the Shah as well as the clerics. After the revolution in 1979 and the establishment of the Islamic Republic, there were certain factions that viewed the Zoroastrian legacy as a dormant threat to the Islamic character of Iran. While the Zoroastrian community was not directly persecuted, the pre-Islamic identity of Iran was perceived as having a somewhat subversive character. This section focuses on how the establishment of the Islamic Republic affected Zoroastrianism in modern Iran.

During the Pahlavi Era, the government emphasized the glory of the pre-Islamic history of Iran (Ansari 2001, 3 and Hiro 2005, 120). Although the government mainly focused on political symbols and achievements, Zoroastrianism inevitably re-emerged as a symbol of Iranian nationalism. The second Pahlavi monarch, Mohammad Reza Shah, largely emphasized the connection between the Persian Empire and Modern Iran. There were a few cases in which he relaxed the policies of his father and made some

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<sup>142</sup> During the early twentieth century Constitutional Revolution, the leading Zoroastrians contributed by providing shelter, weapons, and funds for the revolutionaries (Stausberg 2012, 179).

concessions to supporters of Islamic practices.<sup>143</sup> Nevertheless, he gradually pushed to revive the Persian identity of Iran hoping to facilitate the survival of a secular authoritarian regime with close ties to the United States and Europe. However, American diplomats often grew impatient and urged him to modernize at a much more rapid pace (Ansari 2001, 1-8). Many Iranians viewed the Shah's cultural policies as authoritarian and hypocritical since his sense of nationalist pride was clearly supported by foreign powers. The alienation of Islamic culture by the supporters of the Imperial Government was a major factor which led to the eventual establishment of a Shia rogue state.

In 1971, a rebellious Ayatollah named Ruhollah Khomeini criticized the Shah for a controversial celebration organized by the government.<sup>144</sup> Khomeini was exiled from Iran for previously criticizing the Shah and was declared an Ayatollah to save him from

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<sup>143</sup> Mohammad Reza Shah practically abolished the enforcement of his father's laws against hejabs, chadors, and veils. Ironically, there are accounts that Reza Shah himself was very religious and reluctantly asked his own family to abandon Islamic dress for the sake of political modernity (Chehabi 1993, 213-214). Similarly, in order to attain important social positions or government jobs, some Iranian men were known to hire stunt doubles to temporarily pose as a "modern" wife at social gatherings arranged by the government (Chehabi 1993, 221). The veil became a marker of backwardness for educated Iranians, which gave unveiling a measure of societal support (Chehabi 1993, 211). Since the nineteenth century, upper class Iranians who traveled to Europe began adopting the local dress in order to fit in, and maintained this style when they returned to Iran since it was believed to symbolize progress (Chehabi 1993, 209). As the French writer Pierre Loti noted when he visited the Crown Prince of the Qajar Dynasty Sho'a' al-Saltaneh in 1900, "if it had not been for the precious silk rugs on the floor and, on foreheads, the little astrakhan caps, the last vestiges of oriental dress, one could have fancied oneself in Europe: what a pity, what error of taste! ... I could still understand this imitation in the case of Hottentots and Kaffirs [African Bushmen]. But when one has the honor of being Persian, Arab, Indian, or even Japanese, in other words, our precursors by many centuries in matters of refinements of all sorts . . . then copying us is really a downfall" (Loti 1988, 253-254 and Chehabi 1993, 210). Nevertheless, Mohammad Shah Qajar argued that the adoption of European dress was a return to the pre-Islamic customs that were inscribed on the walls of Persepolis (Sipih 1966, 359-361, Tavakoli-Targhi 1990, 83, and Chehabi 1993, 223). Later, Reza Shah encouraged Iranians to wear trendy cosmopolitan hats and claimed that they were influenced by the brimmed hats of the Sassanian rulers (Wilber 1975, 166 and Chehabi 1993, 226).

<sup>144</sup> Khomeini's family name may also be transliterated as Khomeini.

execution.<sup>145</sup> The law which specifically prohibited the execution of an Ayatollah was established during the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1906 (Iranian Constitution Article 2). Although he was arrested and eventually exiled, Khomeini continued to criticize the Shah until the revolution in 1979.

The controversial celebration of 1971 commemorated the 2,500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Persian Empire and government officials proudly served imported wine and caviar to foreign delegates and guests of the Shah. The feast was held at the site of the ruins from a major administrative palace of the Achaemenian Empire known as “Takhte Jamshid” and “Persepolis.” During the celebration, students and local merchants organized a hunger strike in order to undermine the extravagant event arranged by the monarchy (Hiro 2005, 120). The protest symbolized the virtue of the faithful Muslims and their opposition to the insatiable elitism of the materialistic Imperial Government. They mocked the Shah’s claim that his rule allowed Cyrus to rest in peace by shouting, “wake up Cyrus, and look at the mess the Shah made.” Mohammad Reza Shah’s extravagant event which aimed to bring respect to the long history of monarchy in Iran probably helped to end the tradition it sought to celebrate (Stausberg 2012, 183).

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<sup>145</sup> An Ayatollah is a high-ranking Shia cleric and the virtual equivalent of a Doctorate of Philosophy in the art of Islamic jurisprudence. It translates to “reflection of God” or “sign of God.” The term for sign (ayah) is also used to refer to the verses of the Quran. According to the Quran, there are signs of God on earth (Quran 51.20).

In 1975, Khomeini condemned the government for their establishment of a monopolistic political party that favored the monarchy (Hiro 2005, 121). It motivated the other clerics to close a seminary in Qom (Hiro 2005, 121). The closure of the seminary, as well as the Algiers Agreement which promoted safe travel between Iran and Iraq, increased the amount of Iranian pilgrims traveling to Shia sites in Najaf and Karbala (Hiro 2005, 121). These travelers helped Khomeini smuggle his subversive cassette tapes across Iranian borders (Hiro 2005, 121). The tapes assisted the opposition in their efforts to organize operations, demonstrations, and worker strikes (Hiro 2005, 121).

The tectonic shifts in Iranian Shia politics that took place under Mohammad Reza Shah coincided with a period of strong socialist activism in Iran (Nasr 2006, 126). “Young clerics read Marxist works and found themselves impressed by communist ideas and activism” (Nasr 2006, 126). Some shared jail cells with socialist activists and learned more about revolution and organizational values from these prison-mates (Nasr 2006, 126). Realizing that the Quran would have to match the *Communist Manifesto* if religion were to remain relevant in modern Iran, many clerics, including Ayatollah Mahmoud Taleghani, became determined to show that Islam was just as progressive and revolutionary as Marxism (Nasr 2006, 126). Ali Shariati (1933-1977), one of the most influential intellectuals in the movement against the Shah, saw Imam Khomeini as a seventh-century Che Guevara and Karbala as a revolutionary drama (Nasr 2006, 128).

For Shariati, “Shia history was none other than the famous dialectic of class war, culminating in a revolution” (Nasr 2006, 128).

Shariati believed that the revolutionary drama that began in Karbala would end with an Iranian revolution. He criticized the Shia ulama for having turned a revolutionary creed into a quietist faith (Nasr 2006, 128). In his opinion, the Shia movement had lost its way during the Safaviyeh period, to become a creed of scholarship and piety rather than social justice and revolution (Nasr 2006, 128-129). Shariati’s attacks against the ulama caused some people to perceive him as a “closet Sunni” (Nasr 2006, 128-129).

The Iranian Revolution in 1979 was the last great social revolution.<sup>146</sup> Although the Shah’s opponents were a diverse group of ideologues including secular nationalists and socialists, the history of covert operations created a dramatic sense of paranoia which facilitated the consolidation of power by Islamic radicals during the rule of the Interim Government. In other words, a person wearing a tie would be suspected of collaborating with the CIA. A popular slogan during the revolution was, “neither East nor West” (Keddie 1990, 6).

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<sup>146</sup> A social revolution is a drastic political, economic, and cultural change which affects every aspect of daily life. The prime examples are the French Revolution (1789), the Russian Revolution in (1917), the Chinese Revolution (1949), the Cuban Revolution (1959), and the Iranian Revolution (1979). The Iranian Revolutionary Guard evolved from a group that was initially known as the “Komiteh,” which was a direct reference to the French Revolution (Arjomand 1988, 135 and 208-210 and Fisk 2007, 111).

## Tradition and Modernity

The militant nationalism associated with the Pahlavi dynasty may be attributed to their genuine admiration for Iran's pre-Islamic past, but it clearly served a political purpose. It undermined the social role of the priestly class and glorified the monarchical tradition. As Abdolkarim Soroush noted, "We observed how a group of literati and historians entered the service of the monarchy, and how, in the name of establishing authenticity and superiority of the Iranian race over the aliens, they perpetrated inequities, deceptions, and the worship of false idols. Their mission was to promote the pure Persian, to expel every Arabic word from the books and peoples' daily language and to propagate a form of 'extremist nationalism'" (Soroush 2002, 159).<sup>147</sup> "There was a certain policy at the time of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi to bring Zoroastrians of India to Iran. Of course, Iran is a haven for Zoroastrians and as Iranians they are welcome to come here and live in peace whenever they wish to return. But those policies had a different aim: fattening one part of our culture while starving the rest" (Soroush 2002, 159). Meanwhile, in order to attract foreign investment and facilitate the development of larger industries and ambitious public projects, the Imperial Government gradually imposed trade restrictions and heavier taxes on the local population which reduced the relative income of the priestly class who relied on large donations from traditional

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<sup>147</sup> "The Academy of Persian language, a worthy institution in itself, also followed extremist paths and attempted to wipe out the religious culture under the guise of cleansing the vestiges of alien cultural domination" (Soroush 2002, 159).

merchant classes known as *bazaaris*.<sup>148</sup> The paradoxical vision of Iranian nationalism under the Pahlavi regime was further complicated by Iran's close relationship with the West.

In *Gharbzadegi*, which can be translated as “West toxication, Westoxification, Westruckness, and Occidentosis,” Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923-1969), described European influences as a plague or disease that is threatening and exploiting Iran's traditional culture and crafts (Al-e Ahmad 1982, 11, Al-i Ahmad 1984, 27, and Soroush 2002, 160).<sup>149</sup> Al-e Ahmad (also transliterated as Al-i Ahmad) accepted the reality of slow gradual change through traditional cultural values. However, in order to avoid the exploitation of Iran's culture and natural resources, he believed that Iranians must transition to the level of the “producers,” which is impossible when they are uncritical consumers of Western goods and lifestyles (Al-i Ahmad 1984, 31).<sup>150</sup> He traced Iranian interactions with the West back to ancient times. “We have always looked westward. We even coined the term ‘Western’ before the Europeans called us ‘Eastern’” (Al-i Ahmad 1984, 36). “If we go back a couple millennia and look about us, we see that it is

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<sup>148</sup> As Mehdi Moslem noted, mosques were often built inside marketplaces, or *bazaars*, and were frequently used for discussion concerning political and business interests. (Moslem 2002, 55-56).

<sup>149</sup> “What Al-e Ahmad meant by West toxication was the coming of Western customs, manners, and technology, causing our evictions from our native home, the sacrifice of our noble and gracious traditions at the feet of the Western practices and industry. It meant the nauseating imitation of everything Western even at the expense of immolating the most eminent cultural assets and legacies of our own: speaking with their tongue, thinking with their brain, looking through their eyes, and wailing their pain. For these reasons, the message and slogan of Al-e Ahmad was ‘back to traditions’” (Soroush 2002, 160).

<sup>150</sup> “So long as we remain consumers, so long as we have not built the machine, we remain occidentotic. Our dilemma is that once we have built the machine, we will have become mechanotic, just like the West, crying out at the way technology and the machine have stampeded out of control” (Al-i Ahmad 1984, 31).

our region—the Middle East, extending from the Indus Valley to the Nile Valley—giving birth to Chaldea, Assyria, Elam, and Egypt, to the Hebrews, to Buddha and Zoroaster, to the sources of all that Western civilization contains” (Al-i Ahmad 1984, 36).<sup>151</sup> “Perhaps we have turned to the West because, in this parched plain, we have always expected Mediterranean clouds. The light rises in the east, but for us denizens of the Iranian plateau, the rain-bearing clouds have always come from the west” (Al-i Ahmad 1984, 41).

Based on its connections to Christianity, Al-e Ahmad claimed that even when turning to Islam, Iranians were still turning to the West (Al-i Ahmad 1984, 41). He argued that “Islam was a response to the call of Mani and Mazdak three centuries earlier” (Al-i Ahmad 1984, 41). “That the Prophet was able to elaborate such a call, Al-e Ahmad allusively claims, is due to his childhood encounter with Christian monks in Syria” (Algar 1984, 18). Al-e Ahmad also claimed that “Salman ‘the Persian’ played a role in the development of Islam unrivaled by what any Zoroastrian astrologer Magi had in the creation of Christianity” (Al-e Ahmad 1982, 31 and Al-i Ahmad 1984, 41). He even said that the Islam which we have today, which is a form of civilization and a way of life, was

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<sup>151</sup> “Of course this observation is not meant as a boast. Over these ages, before ‘we’ (this motley of peoples) became engrossed with the Far East (India, China, and Indo-China), eager to receive their chinaware, printing, *korsi*, gnosis, painting, asceticism (Yoga), meditation (Zen), saffron, spices, *samanu* juice, and so on, we looked to the West: to the shores of the Mediterranean, to Greece, to the Nile Valley, to Lydia (Central Anatolia), to the far West and the ambergris-bearing seas of the north” (Al-i Ahmad 1984, 36).



nothing more than primitiveness and Arab poetry until it reached the settled lands of the Tigris and the Euphrates (Al-i Ahmad 1984, 40).<sup>152</sup>

Al-e Ahmad acknowledged that the historical rivalry and competition between “East and the West” was a justification for territorial expansion, but it still had its benefits.<sup>153</sup> “We thus brought cedar from Lebanon and gold from Lydia. We propagated the works of Aristotle during the European dark ages through our translations. We imported the Roman legion and Roman architecture. Whatever may be said of these two thousand years of transactions with the West, for all the reciprocal destruction (itself emblematic of life), each side came out the winner. Neither lost a thing. We contributed silk and oil. We provided a pass to India, to Zoroaster and Mithra. We traveled in the quiver of Islam as far as Andalusia. We placed turbans from India to Khorasan on the heads of Islam. We transformed the divine *Farr* (Farrah) into the halo and set it about the heads of the saints of Christianity and Islam” (Al-i Ahmad 1984, 43). Nevertheless, there is a difference between competition and worship, as one side declines into a helpless state of regret. During the time of Al-e Ahmad (the age of the machine), the Islamic character of Iran seemed to be the nation’s last line of defense against Western domination (Al-i Ahmad 1984, 30).

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<sup>152</sup> As mentioned, this region was part of the Iranian province of Suristan before the Muslim conquest in 637.

<sup>153</sup> Al-e Ahmad stated that “all this rancor and competitiveness was a justification or motive for us to further extend the Assyrian domains, while tempering Assyria’s crudity” (Al-i Ahmad 1984, 43).

Al-e Ahmad was the son of Shaykh Al-e Ahmad, who was a religious cleric and prayer leader in the Pachinar district of south Tehran. “The family was relatively prosperous until 1932, when Ali Akbar Davar, Reza Shah’s minister of justice, deprived the clerical class of its notarial function and the income they derived from it” (Algar 1984, 9). Al-e Ahmad went to work so he could save up enough money to eventually train at a religious academy but he secretly enrolled in night classes at Dar al-Funin in Tehran and obtained his high school diploma in 1943 (Algar 1984, 9). He joined the Tudeh party, which was the most notable Marxist organization in Iran, but eventually left the party after criticizing their lack of support for autonomous government in the Iranian province of Azerbaijan (Algar 1984, 11). Many Iranians sympathized with the socialist values of the Tudeh party, but they were disappointed when it became clear that the party supported Soviet interests rather than the people of Iran. Although he was “not a traditionally pious man, Al-e Ahmad opposed neither Western science nor technology. He had first turned his back to religion, but his aversion toward religion gradually diminished. Religion was significant for him only as one of the components of the tradition: it was Al-e Ahmad’s respect for tradition that attracted him to religion, not vice versa” (Soroush 2002, 160). The main purpose of Al-e Ahmad’s book, along with his solution to “Westoxication,” was to encourage Iranians to maintain their traditions and culture, and pursue an education in a field that will not only help their nation industrialize and build more factories, but also ensure that Iranians manage these factories (Al-i Ahmad 1984, 79-81). Al-e Ahmad’s views on Iran’s relationship with the West

illustrated the core principles of the 1979 revolution. The Islamic Republic renamed a main expressway in Tehran after him.

Another major ideologue who died before the revolution was Ali Shariati (1933-1977). According to Hamid Algar, “Al-e Ahmad appears as the precursor of the lecturer, writer, sociologist, and ideologue, Ali Shariati, the figure who bears a closer resemblance to him than any other member of Iran’s literary intelligentsia” (Algar 1984, 16). Algar noted that “the two men are known to have met at least twice, in 1968, and to have felt great sympathy for each other” (Algar 1984, 16-17). “Themes such as cultural authenticity, the role of the socially committed intellectual, the problems posed by the presence of the machine in a traditional society, discussed cursorily, even impressionistically, by Al-e Ahmad, were taken up in greater detail by Shariati and made the subject of a series of lectures and books” (Algar 1984, 17).<sup>154</sup>

Like Al-e Ahmad, Shariati also came from a family of clerics and chose to pursue a different career. However, his appreciation for religion was not based on a return to traditional values. Shariati admired the unifying power of religious movements, particularly the revolutionary character of Shia Islam. “His association with supporters of the Algerian revolution radicalized him on Third World issues, and he encompassed Marxist theories of class struggle, capitalist exploitation and imperialism within a

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<sup>154</sup> Algar argued that Shariati was more influential than Al-e Ahmad mainly because he was “a lecturer, an orator, and only secondarily a writer, whereas Al-e Ahmad was above all a man of the pen” (Algar 1984, 17). Algar also emphasized that “the intellectual climate of Iran had matured by the early 1970s to a point of greater receptivity for critical ideas” (Algar 1984, 17).

religious framework, constructing a Muslim Theology of Liberation” (Cole 1981, 157).<sup>155</sup> Shariati attributed the passive mode of religious thought associated with most of Iran’s clerics to the spread of Shia Islam under the Safavi rulers. He sought to revive the principles of social justice and political activism associated with the early followers and descendants of Ali. He emphasized the difference between the “Savafi brand of Shia Islam and the Alavi type,” in which he described the Safavi as an institution rather than an active political movement (Shariati 1981, 92).<sup>156</sup> He believed that the social unity associated with religion was the key to a successful political movement was the unification of people through religion. “Now look at the Iranian drawings of Ali and Mohammad; they both look like Persians. The prophet looks like Zoroaster, his Arabic attire has changed, and so has his makeup! These are indicative of the fact that the spirit of nationality of a race manifests itself in religious symbols, traditions, and mottos” (Shariati 1981, 88-89).<sup>157</sup>

Since the revolution of 1979, Iranian scholars and intellectuals have gradually shifted their attention away from criticizing the Pahlavi regime, but they still concentrate on West toxication and the complex relationship between tradition and modernity.

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<sup>155</sup> While studying in Paris, Shariati met Frantz Fanon, who was an influential member of the Algerian National Liberation Front.

<sup>156</sup> Safavi Shia Islam, which “combined the three elements of royalty, nationalism, and Sufism, gave birth to the existing Iranian national banner which was chosen as a result of confrontation with the Turks, Arabs, and Russians” (Shariati 1981, 87).

<sup>157</sup> Shariati also noted that Mary, who was a Palestinian Jew in the Christian tradition, is typically seen as blond with maroon eyes. Similarly, Jesus is typically seen as a blond with blue eyes and fair skin, because “Christianity has nothing to do with either Jesus or Palestine, it is the manifestation of the followers of Jesus. The manifestation of Jesus in Europe was turned into the manifestation of the western’s collective spirit (unrelated to Jesus), and the European spirit emerged as Christianity” (Shariati 1981, 88).

Abdolkarim Soroush is a notable Rumi scholar and professor also specializing in Islamic philosophy and liberalism. He was a major supporter of the Iranian revolution of 1979 and Khomeini appointed him as one of the seven members of the Advisory Council of the Cultural Revolution (Soroush 2002, 11-12 and Fletcher 2005, 536).<sup>158</sup> Their job was to ensure that the universities would re-open as soon as possible once they completely removed all of the course materials that either supported the previous regime or otherwise undermined Islamic values. “During the 1990s, Soroush distinguished himself as one of the most prominent intellectuals to emerge within the Islamic methodological and political discourse” (Fletcher 2005, 527). However, Soroush left Iran in 2000 after criticizing the consolidation of governmental power and authority by conservative clerics. “Soroush is one of the most important and innovative thinkers in the contemporary Muslim world. The man and his ideas have attracted a remarkably large following in his native Iran, especially among students, but at the same time his public meetings have frequently been broken up by right-wing vigilantes. The Iranian clergy meanwhile are ambivalent about an intellectual who, although not himself a mullah, has impressive Islamic credentials, supports the idea of enlightened Islamic government, but eloquently questions the right of the clergy to rule” (Hardy 2001, 197).

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<sup>158</sup> According to Soroush, “in the Advisory Council on Cultural Revolution our main task was reopening the universities. This is a point that is unknown to many people. Universities had been closed for political reasons. It was after this event that the council was appointed by Mr. Khomeini, who was the political leader of the government at the time. This council was composed of seven people and its mandate was to revise the curriculum and to lay down the procedures for reopening the universities with the help of the professors who had been released from their routine duties” (Soroush 2002, 12).

Although Soroush believes in the divine roots of Islamic law, he points out that the understanding of it is a distinct concept which changes over time. Like any pursuit of practical knowledge, it can be improved by involving all forms of human sciences. This ultimately leaves the clerics, also known as the “guardians of interpretation,” with less formal and legal authority in society (Fletcher 2005, 546). “Soroush was known to occasionally use his mastery of the seminarian language of critical discourse to win followers among scholars at the holy cities of Qom and Mashad. Besides his undisputed claim to the mantle of a *roushanfekr* [open-minded] intellectual, Soroush wears the charismatic halo of a serious traditional scholar; even the ideologically correct scholars of the establishment no longer challenge his scholastic credentials” (Sadri and Sadri 2002, xii).

Reformers and intellectuals in Iran tend to focus on strategies which gradually increase the political and economic freedom of Iranians without completely abandoning the religious values of both the nation and the revolution. While they mainly discuss the democratic principles of Islam, authors like Al-e Ahmad and Soroush still recognize that Zoroastrianism was Iran’s pre-Islamic national religion, and its remnants are part of Iran’s culture. Before he criticized the way Zoroastrianism was used by the Pahlavi regime to support their extremist nationalism, he described how Iranians preserved their identity and language after the Islamic conquest (Soroush 2002, 157). He also mentioned that Iranians still recite Ferdowsi’s poems (Soroush 2002, 157). He stated that “the twine of our nationality is firm and enduring. The writings of Abulfazl Beihaqi, who wrote a

thousand years ago, do more than teach us history; they teach us our language as well, and an agreeable and charming language at that! Unlike such pre-Islamic sects as the Manichaean or Mazdaki faiths which have now perished, the main creed of pre-Islamic Iranians, Zoroastrianism, was recognized by Islam and to this day flows as a minor brook alongside the mainstream of Islam” (Soroush 2002, 157). He goes on to state that “our calendar is uniquely Persian, Now Rooz prevails as our most important holiday, and our literature is permeated with expressions born of ancient Iranian rites and customs” (Soroush 2002, 157). Although the 1979 revolution culminated in the establishment of an Islamic Republic, its purpose was not to create an Islamic society. This revolution occurred in a particular country at a particular time, and like any country which endured Muslim conquests, it cannot ignore its national identity and pre-Islamic past.

Soroush believes that Iran is a nation with three cultures, consisting of Iranian, Muslim, and Western (Soroush 2002, 156).<sup>159</sup> “As long as we ignore our links with the elements of our triple cultural heritage and our cultural geography, constructive social and cultural action will elude us” (Soroush 2002, 156). Our problems may be attributed to “seeking the salvation of our people in the hegemony of one of these cultures over the two” (Soroush 2002, 156). Although it is helpful to describe Iran as a nation with three cultures, it is difficult to make these cultures compatible. Soroush himself points out that Islamic culture is “qualitatively and quantitatively the dominant culture of Iran,” but he

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<sup>159</sup> “We Iranian Muslims are the inheritors and the carriers of three cultures at once” (Soroush 2002, 156).

also suggests that “we do not have a ‘fixed’ ethnic or religious ‘self,’ these identities are fluid and expansive” (Soroush 2002, 162-164). “Our task is to discover—if not reconstruct—who we are instead of assuming the answer at the outset” (Soroush 2002, 164). Even if we take away “the honor that the Persian language has as a carrier of Islamic culture, it is still worthy of love and respect on its own. The same is true of other aspects of our national culture, including the Now Rooz holiday, the solar calendar, Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh*, Rumi’s *Masnavi*, Greek philosophy, Newtonian physics, traditional music, fine crafts, and mechanized production” (Soroush 2002, 168). You can strive for authenticity and promote cultural exchange at the same time.

### The Green Movement

Just as the Shah provoked an Islamic revival in Iran by repressing the role of the clerics, the clerics seem to be provoking a Zoroastrian revival by repressing Iran’s pre-Islamic past. A large number of Iranians who are opposed to the Islamic Republic use Zoroastrian traditions and holidays to express dissatisfaction with the regime.

Zoroastrian traditions played a small role during the Green movement protests against the Islamic Republic because it is part of the pre-Islamic identity of Iran. The Green movement protests followed the June 2009 presidential Election. The Green movement refers to the rise of the civil rights movement in Iran in the aftermath of the elections (Dabashi 2010, 9). However, “identifying the post-electoral crisis in Iran as a ‘civil rights movement’ is not to disregard the profound anger and sentiment mobilized



against the very constitution of the Islamic Republic, which may indeed one day result in a complete collapse of the system and the establishment, in the near or distant future, of a democratic republic” (Dabashi 2010, 59). The protests began after the population accused the government of rigging the election and demanded the removal of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as President.

Many protestors wore green wristbands, masks, and hats. The universal color of Islam is green (Nasr 2006, 19). Green was also the color of reform party candidate Mir Hossayn Mousavi but the Green movement goes far beyond the election results. Meanwhile, the color red symbolizes the principles of martyrdom which is strongly associated with the core foundations of the Islamic Republic. The Green movement reflects general dissatisfaction with the government and system in which Iranians are forced to choose candidates approved by the Guardian Council. To make matters worse, the large protests after most elections suggest that elections in Iran are more like opinion polls which are mostly meant to gauge the level of dissatisfaction with the overall system of government.

In 2009, Iranians gathered on major streets immediately after Ahmadinejad was announced as the winner of the presidential election. These protests led to extensive violence and destruction which sparked larger protests. Since these protests began, it is quite common for Iranians to go on their rooftops and yell “Allah o Akbar,” which translates as “God is great.” This is a reference to the revolutionary period in which

shouts of “Allah o Akbar” were used to intimidate the Imperial Government. The Iranians are cleverly using the revolutionary slogans of the Islamic Republic against its current leaders in order to demoralize them. The Islamic Republic further contributed to the ironic success of this clever tactic by discouraging this act. “Every night when people chant ‘Allah o Akbar’ and ‘shame on the dictator,’” they are in fact creatively, employing both religious and secular significations in order to communicate their peaceful resistance to the fraudulent election, to express their objection to the brutal crackdown of their dissent, and to gain legitimacy for their movement” (Jahanbegloo 2012, 163). Meanwhile, Iranians replaced chants of “death to America” with “death to the dictator,” “death to Russia,” and “death to China” (Dabashi 2010, 49). Many protests have also included chants that “Iranians will die before they surrender” along with calls to “keep on fighting.”<sup>160</sup>

Ironically, the Islamic Republic accomplished one of the Shah’s most elusive goals, which was to try to uproot the appeal of Islam in Iran. Mohammad Reza Shah’s imposition of a purely “Aryan” identity on his people’s history went so far as changing the Iranian calendar altogether, from its point of origin in the migration of Prophet Mohammad from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE, to the coronation of Cyrus the Great some two thousand years ago (Dabashi 2010, 209). For over thirty years, the Islamic Republic has done the exact opposite, suppressing and denying the people’s Iranian identity and

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<sup>160</sup> Video footage from protests against the 2009 Iranian Election are available at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQKe\\_Y7IgeM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQKe_Y7IgeM).

overemphasizing their Islamic heritage, while trying to “Islamize” International Labor Day (Dabashi 2010, 209). If appealing to an Islamic calendar of events constituted revolt over thirty years ago, identifying with the Iranian calendar today serves the same function (Dabashi 2010, 209). History clearly illustrates how Iranians tend to rebel against authoritative and coercive cultural assimilation. Nevertheless, Khomeini himself claimed “that if you leave Iranians alone, they will drink all day and dance all night.” In his statement to the public on March 21, 1980, he stated that “the Islamic Revolution is not about fun, it is about morality, in fact there is no fun to be had in the Islamic Republic” (Mahdavi 2007, 448).<sup>161</sup> He believed that the only hope for the survival of the Islamic culture within Iran was to maintain the connection between religion and politics. Khomeini may have been too optimistic. The strict policies of the Islamic Republic have indirectly caused some Iranians to question their Islamic identity.

Many of the protests in Iran coincided with religious and national holidays.<sup>162</sup>

The single most important event on the Iranian calendar is the two-week-long celebration of Nouruz (New Year) which runs from the last Wednesday of the year, Chaharshanbe Suri (Festive Wednesday or Wednesday Feast), to “Sizdeh Bedar (thirteenth day picnic),”

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<sup>161</sup> Ruhollah Khomeini’s statement to the public on March 21, 1980.

<sup>162</sup> One glance at a daily calendar used by Iranians to organize their daily lives shows that there are in fact three different set of dates that remind them where and when in the world they are – Iranian, Islamic, and the globalized Christian calendar. The triple calendar is the place where Iranian *multiple consciousness* is palpably evident. The Iranian calendar is solar and has survived from the pre-Islamic period, with distinct pre-Islamic Persian names for the months (Farvardin, Ordibehesht, Khordad, etc.). The seasons have logical and natural divisions and again all have distinctly Persian names (Bahar, Tabestan, Pa’iz, and Zemestan) [spring, summer, fall, and winter] (Dabashi 2010, 206).

a day of outings with family and friends, which usually coincides with April Fool's Day (Dabashi 2010, 206). On the last Wednesday of the year, Iranians jump over fire during the festival. In March 2010, authorities warned citizens not to celebrate the Zoroastrian tradition of Chaharshanbe Suri. The festival and tradition may predate Zoroastrianism, but since Zoroastrians considered fire to be a symbol of truth, the act is believed to be a cleansing ritual. In turn, this cleansing ritual is largely associated with the transition to the spring season and the celebration of the Iranian New Year. In 2010, the last Wednesday of the Iranian year was on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March. "This happy and jubilant occasion was the culmination of nine months of uninterrupted revolt against the tyranny of the Islamic Republic" (Dabashi 2010, 208). According to government publications, Khamenei claimed the Wednesday festival has no place in an Islamic society since it produces harm and corruption.

Prior to the celebration, the Deputy Commander of the Police in Tehran used a state television broadcast to warn protestors that they would be arrested if they blocked the streets.<sup>163</sup> Meanwhile, many people anticipated that the opponents of the government would use the event to stage a large protest. Reform party candidate Mir Hossayn Mousavi told supporters of the Green Movement that they should not use the event to stage protests because it provokes hardliners in Iran.<sup>164</sup> These speeches mainly

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<sup>163</sup> Islamic Republic of Iran News Network March 11, 2010 broadcast available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8T4h1MC9gBs>.

<sup>164</sup> New Year Message available at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=A1L6lpWN-Iw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=A1L6lpWN-Iw).

encouraged Iranians to celebrate the holiday and further solidified the connection between rebellion and the pre-Islamic identity of Iran. According to Ramin Jahanbegloo, “All the evidence points towards a creative use of religious rituals and imaginative re-readings of Islamic and non-Islamic religious texts by the people. The ancient wisdom of Zoroastrianism has survived alongside more recent Islamic teachings and is deeply rooted in the collective Iranian psyche and it still plays a powerful role in how people relate to one another in their private and public life” (Jahanbegloo 2012, 163). During the protests, “many people were seen carrying signs with the guiding Zoroastrian principles ‘good thoughts, good words, and good deeds’ written on them. At one point, a young woman was carrying a placard with these words written on it, and placed the placard right in front of the face of an angry soldier, inviting him to read the words and calm down” (Jahanbegloo 2012, 163).<sup>165</sup>

### Religious Minorities in Iran

Unlike the Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians, the religious community in Iran known as the Bahai suffered years of open political persecution. The persecution of the Bahai is based on the mainstream interpretation of the Quran. As far as the Islamic

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<sup>165</sup> “What seems to be distinct and different from the revolution of 1979 is the purpose for which religious sayings are used in the public sphere. Whereas in 1979 religion was mainly used to mobilize people for radical and militant struggle against the late Shah of Iran (and for economic justice and independence from superpowers), this time around people are referring to their religious texts and traditions in order to demand individual rights and freedoms, gender equality and democracy and to promote the use of non-violence in the struggle to achieve these aims. This shift is important in two respects. First, it points to the fact that religious teachings are being read in a more inclusive and democratic spirit and second, that various religious traditions are slowly finding ways to peacefully coexist with each other in the public realm” (Jahanbegloo 2012, 163).

Republic of Iran is concerned, the history of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity do not directly challenge any core Islamic teachings simply because they are older and monotheistic. In the Islamic tradition, most of the characters associated with Judaism and Christianity are part of a Semitic line of prophets which culminated in the religion of Mohammad. Consequently, Mohammad is considered the final messenger of the Abrahamic faith (Quran 33.40). However, the followers of the Bahai faith accept the “Bab” as a messenger who came after Mohammad. This makes them obvious heretics as far as most Muslims are concerned (Fischer 1980, 186). The persecution of the Bahai community in Iran dramatically increased after the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. The Bahai faith evolved from the Babi movement. The “Bab,” also known as Mohammad Ali, lived during the nineteenth century. Building on a millenarian branch of the Shia tradition which anticipates the emergence of a messianic spiritual and political leader known as “the Mehdi,” the Bab claimed to be a “Gate of God,” the “Manifestation of God,” a prophet, and a new messenger of divine knowledge (Miller 1974, 16-18). “When asked what he meant by the title ‘Bab’ (Gate), he replied that it meant the same as in the tradition attributed to Mohammad, who said, ‘I am the city of knowledge, and Ali is its gate’” (Miller 1974, 22). He also said that “I am the person whose appearance you have awaited a thousand years, namely, the Mehdi” (Miller 1974, 22).

The Bab and many of his early followers angered the Iranian clerics and many top ranking officials of the Qajar government (Miller 1974, 19). Most of the Bab’s early supporters were attacked and killed (Miller 1974, 35-38). The Bab was arrested by local

authorities who eventually began to accept some of his claims (Miller 1974, 40). Nevertheless, he was officially executed by the Qajar government in 1850 (Miller 1974, 42). One of his closest followers named Mirza Hossayn Ali Nuri, also known as Bahollah, took over his movement after he was executed. Bahollah “saw himself, after all, as a universal messiah-the promised one of the Jews, the symbolic return of Christ for Christians and Muslims, and the Shah-Bahram [Spiritual Triumph] of the Zoroastrians” (Cole 1992, 3). The Babi movement survived through a small community of early followers. Although many people claimed to be his successor, the most significant one was Bahollah, who eventually left Iran and was imprisoned by the Ottoman authorities for his controversial religious claims. He was forced to live in Ottoman Palestine where he was buried after his death in 1892 (Cole 1992, 4).

The establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty reduced the persecution of the Bahai community in Iran. Since they were such a small minority, they served as a potential ally for a secular regime seeking to rule an Islamic country. However, in an effort to appease some of the clerics, Mohammad Reza Shah would occasionally permit or support attacks against members of the Bahai community. Before the revolution in 1979, Mohammad Reza Shah was accused of appointing Bahai individuals to prominent government positions and the Bahai community was associated with Israel and the United States. After the establishment of the Islamic Republic, Islamic radicals destroyed historical buildings associated with the Bahai faith and threatened the Bahai community with violence. The variation in the treatment of the Bahai community in comparison to the

Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian communities demonstrates how the chronology of monotheistic religions has a major impact on Iranian politics.

### The New Magians

The common tradition of priesthood in various religions goes back to ancient Iran and as it says in the Avesta, “Zoroaster seeks to be heard beyond the Magians” (Yasna 33.7; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). For Zoroaster, the Magians referred to the “magnificent” priestly class who were diligently trained in a formal school system so they could accurately recite ancient hymns (Boyce 1970, 22).<sup>166</sup> Nevertheless, Zoroaster rebelled against the socioeconomic order of his society and launched a major political upheaval. Although his message was composed in a priestly language, it was meant to be heard by the people.

The metaphoric rituals that were associated with priests, herbs, water, and fire had a much more profound meaning for Zoroaster (Boyce 1970, 25). He lived in a chaotic period in which wild nomads incessantly raided pastoralists for the sake of animal sacrifice. As it says in the Yasna, Zoroaster prayed for the Holy Spirit to satisfy both the Good Mind and the Soul of the bovine creation (Yasna 28.1; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). In turn, he preached against wild nomads and ridiculed the priests who “mumbled their prayers with little thought to their meaning.” He claimed that the only purpose for structured

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<sup>166</sup> Among the Brahmans, as among the Zoroastrians, boys begin to perform ceremonies as soon as they are qualified, in association with an older priest. There is a form of congregational Vedic recitation called *ghosam*, in which the *ghosi* recites four steps, and the others present (sometimes as many as 100) repeat them after him thrice, quickly. It is suggested that the *ghosam* originated in teaching practices, which would indicate an old custom of the group-learning of hymns and texts (Boyce 1970, 24).



religious rituals is material gain (Yasna 32.12 and Yasna 46.4; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914, and Haug 1865, 15).

Long after the fall of the Persian Empire, the Sassanian rulers divided the people into classes with a hierarchy of priests, warriors, secretaries, and commoners (Yarshater 1983, 644). During this period, the commoners were the lone tax base which caused tremendous class struggle and eventually culminated in the Islamic conquest of Iran (Yarshater 1983, 644). Nevertheless, the Iranian tradition of priesthood continued and spread into the Islamic tradition of legal scholarship.

### **Conclusion**

The establishment of the Islamic Republic and its rule as a militant Shia state represents a distinct phase in Iranian history. It was established through a major social revolution that shifted the political, economic, and cultural sectors of Iranian society. It demonstrated that Iran's tradition of rebellion and anti-imperialism outweighed its tradition of monarchy. Although the revolution did not formally change the political status of Zoroastrians, the pre-Islamic traditions of Iran were no longer valued as a symbol of Iranian nationalism by the government. In turn, they eventually developed a somewhat subversive character as a means to challenge the cultural policies of the Islamic Republic.

The Green movement which began after the 2009 election was violently oppressed, but it was a major statement by a segment of the Iranian people. They showed

the international community that a significant portion of the Iranian population is against the regime. The Iranian people had a chance to elect a new president in 2013, and they elected a moderate cleric named Hassan Rohani. The decision to allow a moderate cleric like Rohani to run for office (and win) was based on the government's willingness to consider a more diplomatic approach both at home and abroad in hopes of avoiding large protests and demonstrations. So far, Rohani has fulfilled expectations of significant reform. Meanwhile, many critics of the Islamic Republic are still calling for a secular regime. They hope a change of the state's laws and institutions will overcome Iran's long history of religious fanaticism. In any case, it might be useful to draw some attention to the collective spirit of Iran's culture and religious traditions.

## **Epilogue**

Throughout the history of religion in West Asia, there were numerous efforts to revive a more puritan form of spiritual devotion, which resulted in more conflict or the creation of a whole new religion in itself. This pattern can be traced back to the first priest who decided to challenge the socioeconomic order of his time and rebel against the idea of organized religious rituals, Zoroaster. The early spread of Zoroaster's ideas influenced the history of political thought in many places, but his legacy was obscured and nearly destroyed by foreign conquest. It mainly survived through oral sources.

The accounts of European travelers and explorers who visited Iran and India after the fifteenth century drew attention to this legacy which gave many European scholars a fresh perspective on the history of faith and reason. These accounts influenced many post-Enlightenment European philosophers of history who played a role in the rise of Aryan Nationalism. Although the Nazis disgraced the Eastern philosophies of religion, Zoroastrianism is still admired among the Iranians of today. Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic, Zoroastrian traditions and rituals have developed into a form of protest against government policies. In any case, the history of Zoroastrianism should never be ignored by political historians and historians of political ideas.

## **Appendix: Notes on Avestai and Post-Achaemenian Sources**

The following appendix consists of expanded summary and notes for major Avestai sources such as the Gathas, Yasna, Yashts and Sirozahs, as well as Post-Achaemenian sources such as the Vendidad.

### **The Gathas**

Zoroaster proclaimed that the Creator is the Universal Spirit which presides over man, and the human mind is the manner in which the Creator interacts with the universe. The content and style of presentation in the Gathas is characterized by the dialectical interaction of opposites which culminates in progressive motion. As translated by Guthrie, “I pray for you, O Ahura Mazda, through Vohu Manah (good mind or disposition), to grant me both lives, that of the body and of the mind, with the felicity with which Mazda, through truth, supports those to whom Mazda gives the two-lives for their comfort” (Yasna 28.2; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). A good disposition meant that a person was “mindful to watch over the soul of the Bovine creation” (Yasna 28.4; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). In other words, justice was personified by the compassionate guardians who protected sheep and cattle from religious sacrifices. “O Ahura Mazda (lord mindful), crown with attainments the desire of such clever (persons) – As thou knowest, through Asha (justice) to be both worthy and of Vohu Manah (good disposition) – (And this I pray because) I know that supplicatory words reach You, and are effective” (Yasna 28.10; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). “I who am to protect (the worship of) Asha-(justice) and Vohu Manah (good disposition) for ever, (I beg) thee, Mazda Ahura (mindful lord) to

reveal to me (the truth), so that I may (be able) to proclaim life out of thy Mainyu (mentality) (as if it was being uttered through thy mouth)” (Yasna 28.11; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914).

In the following hymn known as the Exterior Call of Zarathustra, the Bovine Creation demands protection. Zoroaster stated, “The soul of the Bovine (creation) complained to You: For whose benefit did ye fashion me? Who shaped me? Fury (rages) against me; violence and cruelty, maltreatment and roughness oppress me; I have no herdsman except You: therefore it is You (I beg) to procure me good pasture” (Yasna 29.1; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). In this passage, Zoroaster draws attention to our ability to imagine how animals feel when they are mistreated. This particular passage is a unique relic of the transition from settled pastoral society to an agricultural society within ancient Iran.

In the thirtieth Hymn of the Yasna, Zoroaster proclaimed the Doctrine of Dualism and taught the necessity of taking sides in the battle between light and darkness (justice and deception). Zoroaster sang praises for “Ahura (lord)” and “hymns (worthy) of Vohu Manah (good disposition), and things well remembered with the aid of Asha (justice), and the propitious (omens) beheld through the lights (of the stars, or the altar of the flames)” (Yasna 30.1; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). The battle between light and darkness is determined by the perception and choices of humans. Zoroaster stated, “Listen with your ears to the best (information); behold with (your) sight, and with your mind; Man by man

[woman by woman], each for his [or her] own person, distinguishing between both confessions, before this great crisis. Consider again!” (Yasna 30.2; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914).

In the following passages, Zoroaster explained the point of the contrast between antithetical forces which ultimately leads to greater wisdom and success. “At the beginning both-these Mentalities became conscious of each other, the one being a Mentality better in thought, and word, and deed, than the (other Mentality who is) bad. Now let the just (man) discriminate between these two, and choose the benevolent one, not the bad one” (Yasna 30.3; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). Zoroaster stated later, “and may we be those who shall make life progressive (Lawrence H. Mills’s translation) or purposeful (Christian Bartholomae’s translation)!<sup>167</sup> Assemble together, along with Asha (justice), O Ahuras Mazda (lords mindfuls) and come hither, So that here where our thought formerly developed (separately), they may now mature together, (fuse, or culminate) and become wisdom (Yasna 30.9; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). Zoroaster believed that the wisdom of the contrast between the twin mentalities would lead to the right choice between prosperity and adversity. “(When, I repeat, you have realized the significance of this contrast, I feel quite sure none of) you all, will (hesitate or delay to) enter the desired abode of praise” (Yasna 30.11; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914).

The thirty-first Hymn of the Yasna consists of prayers for Enlightenment which is synonymous with Asha (Justice) for Zoroaster. The thirty-second Hymn consists of a

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<sup>167</sup> In certain sections, Guthrie included varying translations of keywords from both Christian Bartholomae and Lawrence H. Mills along with labels for comparison.

critique of the rival priest Grehma, who was essentially the High Priest of the Daevas [Spirits of Darkness] (Yasna 32.1; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). The thirty-third Hymn consists of High-priestly Prayers for Acceptance, General Conversion, and Paradise. The thirty-fourth Hymn consists of a Congregational Prayer for Protection and Instruction.

The Gathas resume with the forty-third Hymn of the Yasna known as the “Interior Call of Zarathustra” in which he prays for the fulfillment of human aspirations. The forty-fourth Hymn of the Yasna consists of theological content and lessons about the benefits of righteous disposition. Ahura Mazda was identified as “the first father of justice, who established the sun (lit day) and the star (glistening sphere) and the (Milky) Way, who [also] established (the law) by which the moon waxes and wanes” (Yasna 44.3; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). In regard to the benefits of righteous disposition, Zoroaster said, “(O People, you might as well obey me, as I shall let you judge for yourselves), have you prospered under the Daevas?” Under the leadership of the priests our property has been seized and the cattle lament exceedingly. Meanwhile, through Asha (justice) we protect the cattle and maintain proper pasturage (Yasna 44.20; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914).

The forty-fifth Hymn of the Yasna is a “Repeated Sermon on Dualism Teaching Agriculture as the Road to Paradise.” The forty-sixth Hymn of the Yasna contains “War Preliminaries of Heart-searchings and Encouragement.” Zoroaster was a man of rank from a good family (Duchesne-Guillemin 1952, 4-5), but in Yasna forty-six, he seems to complain about his lack of possessions and followers. “I know, O Ahura Mazda (mindful lord), the reason why I am so (despised as to be) impotent—It is only because I possess

such few flocks and followers” (Yasna 46.2; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). In other words, he complains of possessing few animals and few men (Duchesne-Guillemin 1952, 4). He realizes the reasons for his past failures were his lack of resources which were also the cause of this powerlessness (Duchesne-Guillemin 1952, 4). He ultimately asks for instruction “(as to how to attain) through Asha (justice) the possession of Vohu Manah (good disposition)” (Yasna 46.2; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). “(O Ahura Mazda, mindful lord, grant) Khshathra (the power of the coming kingdom [or realm]) through Vohu Manah as a Compensation to the doers-of-right; (namely) Whatever any man or woman may contribute or give to me, (do Thou, O Lord, reward with) What (spiritual gifts) Thou, O Ahura Mazda (mindful lord), knowest to be best for life (or people)” (Yasna 46.10; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914).

Zoroaster also offers “Praise for the Supporters of his Cause,” such as Kavay Vishtaspa, who is known as the first King who Zoroaster converted to the faith (Boyce 1984, 7). Vishtaspa means “Sustainer of Horses” while Kavay can be translated as chief (Avestai) or priestly poet (Sanskrit). Zoroaster stated, “(Would you like to know) who is (one of these, namely,) a friendly Ashaist? (One) who would like to be-heard-from-for-the-Magian-Cause along with Zarathustra – In the crisis (of political establishment)? (It is) Kavay Vishtaspa!” (Yasna 46.14; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914).

The forty-seventh Hymn of the Yasna is the hymn of Spirit intended to inspire the Ashaists (seekers of justice) to contest the evil Drujists (deceptive mentality). “With Spenta Mainyu (bounteous mentality), and with the best Manah (disposition), With the



Khshathra (power), and Armaiti (love), Ahura Mazda (the mindful lord) Gives Haurvatat (health) and Ameretat (immortality) For the deeds and speeches caused by Asha (justice)” (Yasna 47.1; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). “The Drujists have apostacized from this bounteous (Father) of the Mentality (namely, Thyself), O Ahura Mazda (mindful)! But not thus the Ashaists; (for) Though a man be no more than poor, yet should he, to the best of his ability, to entertain the Ashaists; (And, in addition,) if a man is powerful, he should effect evil for the Drujists” (Yasna 47.4; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914).

In the forty-eighth Hymn of the Yasna, Zoroaster hopes for rewards in this life. “May not bad rulers rule over us! (Rather,) may good rulers rule – With deeds (inspired by) good doctrinal thoughts, O Armaiti (love), (Thou) Best one! (Who), for (1) mortal men, dost perfect an additional-or-later-or-especial-birth, But (2) for the cattle (perfecting) that pasturage which should fatten It for our food” (Yasna 48.5; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). In the forty-ninth Hymn of the Yasna, Zoroaster “utters imprecations on his successful opponents.” “Let not him who (utters or, possesses) the just Words have any communion with the Drujists [deceivers]” (Yasna 49.9; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914).

The fiftieth Hymn of the Yasna is the Ordination of Disciples to Form New Settlements. Zoroaster asks, “How, O Mazda (mindful), might (a man) seek (possession of) a fortune-bringing cow, if he desire both (1) her and (2) the pasture? By living justly among the many men who appreciate the comforts (or, agricultural benefits) of the sun; By settling open lands (or, bad lands, as yet belonging to the bad Drujists) to be acquired, or settled-down ‘as a clever man’ would do, cleverly; or, which may be given as gifts”

(Yasna 50.2; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914).<sup>168</sup> Zoroaster hopes for prosperity in these lands even though they are not yet free from the presence of nomadic Drujists (Yasna 50.3; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914).

In the fifty-first Hymn of the Yasna, Zoroaster proclaims the Kingdom of Compensation (Yasna 51.1; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). “O Mazda (mindful), (Thou who are the) Fashioner of the Bovine (creation), the waters and the plants! Through the most (bounteous Mentality) Spenta Mainyu, grant me Ameretat (immortality) and Haurvatat (health) – Which are full-of-vitality, and are, through Vohu Manah (good disposition), enduring in the holy doctrines” (Yasna 51.7; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). It is essentially inhumane to oppose the doctrine of Zoroaster. “(Wherefore I am fearless; even those who would kill me here are only bringing me closer to my reward)—Whereas, he would wish to kill me, not considering this coming event, O (mindful) Mazda, He (punishes himself by becoming) malicious towards the creatures that are existent, (and thereby becomes) a son of the Druj [deception] (and will therefore share their fate), While I, (even though killed) will, for myself, call Asha (justice), that He may come with a good Compensation” (Yasna 51.10; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). Consequently, Zoroaster’s supporters were heroes and saints. “Kava Vishtaspa attained (more than) [the rewards of Asha and Vohu Manah]; together with the rule over the Magian tribe, Through Asha (justice) as

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<sup>168</sup> Guthrie observed that, “the text is in hopeless condition. This interpretation is as faithful as possible, yet is partially suggested by the context. It possesses the merit of agreeing with the practical interests of that civilization” (Yasna 50.2; Guthrie 1914).

advisory-manager, and through the Verses of (good disposition) Vohu Manah, he attained Chisti (Sophia, or wisdom); Thus, for us (the faithful) is Ahura Mazda (the mindful lord) bounteous-at-wish” (Yasna 51.16; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). In a possible metaphor, Chisti (Pouruchista) is also the name of one of Zoroaster’s daughters who married Jamaspa Hovgva (Yasna 51.18; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). According to Boyce, the Yanhe hatam (Yasna 51.22; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914) is one of the most sacred prayers in the Yasna, along with the Gatha Ahunavaiti (Yasna 28-34; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914), Ahuna Vairya (Yasna 27.13; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 281), and Ashem Vohu (Yasna 27.14; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 281) (Boyce 2001, 37-38). “If (the mindful lord) Mazda Ahura knows among (any of the men) who were, and who (yet) are (living, Any persons) to whom because of their hymns the best (reward) Asha (justice, is) yet (to come), These (men, like the above-mentioned four heroes), even by their names I will worship (publicly and individually); and into their presence I will enter with praise” (Yasna 51.22; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). The purpose of this line is to give credit to all of the efforts which culminated in the worship of Ahura Mazda. The marriage ceremony of Zoroaster’s daughter is the subject of the fifty-third Hymn of the Yasna, which is the next and last section of the Gathas.

In the fifty-third Hymn of the Yasna, Zoroaster gives his youngest daughter to secure a champion (Yasna 53.3; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). “O Pouruchista, daughter of Haecataspa, Thou youngest of the daughters of Zarathustra, (Zarathustra) gives to thee this (Jamaspa as a husband who will) impress (on thee) communion with Vohu Manah (good disposition), Asha (justice), and Mazda (mindful); So take counsel with thy

understanding (so that it may become) most bounteous (when it has become full) of well-disposed Armaiti (love)” (Yasna 53.3; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). The bride then states, “Him will I emulate!” followed by the bridegroom stating that “(Her) will I choose—Who shall-generously-distribute-service to father, husband, pasturer, gentleman, Ashaist and pagan!” (Yasna 53.4; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). “(Vagabond nomads) shall reach the Place of Decay with the Malefactors who, being law-scorning, and, as to their bodies, doomed, Are seeking to degrade the worthy (Magians). Where is the (Ashaist) lord who will deprive them of freedom and of life, (And establish) the (Kingdom) Khshathra, by which, O (mindful) Mazda, Thou shalt give, to the Poor man, who lives justly, that Better (part)?” (Yasna 53.9; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914).

The main lesson we can learn from the Gathas is that Zoroaster lived in a chaotic period of history in which wild nomads incessantly raided pastoralists for the sake of animal sacrifices. Meanwhile, the priests were essentially tricking nomads into stealing food for them. Duchesne-Guillemin recognized that “the nomad is a thief of cattle, which he sacrifices and eats” (Duchesne-Guillemin 1952, 5). Although Zoroaster was a priest who underwent formal training, he rebelled against the socioeconomic order of his society and launched a major political upheaval. This upheaval coincided with the transition from semi-nomadic pastoral society to an agricultural society. In an effort to facilitate this process, Zoroaster preached against raiding nomads, and ridiculed priests who “mumbled” their prayers with little thought to their meaning (Boyce 1975, 12). Based on his belief in a single Creator, Zoroaster urged people to abandon nomadic

lifestyles and share natural resources such as water and land. He taught the fertilization of the meadows which makes permanent settlements possible (Duchesne-Guillemain 1952, 5).

Zoroaster's religion was drawn down from the nebulous region of speculation into the clear, sane light of historical actuality which makes it shine all the brighter by contrast with greater obscurity (Guthrie 1914, 141). Guthrie noted that "it only adds to his glory that he was willing and able successfully to implant his monotheism, his personal devotion, his passion for righteousness and his humanitarianism among those blood-stained nomads" (Guthrie 1914, 141). Although his message was composed in a priestly language, it was meant to be heard by everyone. Zoroaster was a meditative thinker and a visionary, but he was also a priest, and as we have seen in the Gathas, "he continued to pursue this calling while preaching his new message" (Boyce 1975, 214). As stated in the Gathas, "Zoroaster seeks to be heard beyond the Magians" (Yasna 33.7; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). He certainly succeeded in this matter. His campaign against raiding nomads and dishonest priests culminated in the first expression of monotheistic thought which had more influence on world religions than any other single faith.

### **Yasna**

Yasna means worship and sacrifice (Mills 1887, 195). It is now hardly necessary to say that the *Yasna* is the chief liturgy of the Zarathustrians, in which confession, invocation, prayer, exhortation, and praise are all combined as in other liturgies (Mills 1887, 195). The *Yasna*, like many other religious compositions, is made up of more or

less mutually adapted fragments of different ages, as well as modes of composition (Mills 1887, 195). As mentioned, the Gathas are sung in the middle of the Yasna starting with the twenty-eighth Hymn.

In the first Hymn of the Yasna, the sacrifice commences. “I announce, and I (will) complete (my Yasna) to Ahura Mazda, the Creator, the radiant and glorious, the greatest and the best most beautiful (?) (to our conceptions), the most firm, the wisest, and the one of all whose body is the most perfect, who attains His ends the most infallibly, because of His Righteous Order, to Him who disposes our minds aright, who sends His joy-creating grace afar; who made us, and has fashioned us, and who has nourished and protected us, who is the most bounteous Spirit” (Yasna 1.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 195-196). “I announce and I (will) complete (my Yasna) to the Good Mind, and to Righteousness the Best, and to the Sovereignty which is to be desired, and to Piety and Bountiful, and to the two, the Universal Weal and Immortality, to the body of the Kine, and to the Kine’s Soul and to the Fire of Ahura Mazda, that one who more than (all) the Bountiful Immortals has made most effort (for our succor)!” (Yasna 1.2; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 196). The next few lines continue with similar announcements for intentions to worship “Asnya, the day lords of the ritual order, with similar praise to Havani the holy, the lord of the ritual order, to Savanghi, Visya, and to Mithra of the wide pastures of the thousand ears, and the myriad of eyes, to Yazad, Roman Hvasra, Zarathustrotema, Sraosha, the Fravashis of the Saints, Yairya, the yearly feasts, and to Mathra, the revelation given against the Daevas; the Zarathustrian revelation and to the long descent of the good

Mazdayasnian faith, along with various other Spirits and metaphors” (Yasna 1.2-1.13; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 196-200). “I would confess myself a Mazda-worshipper, of Zarathustra’s order, a foe to the Daevas,” devoted to Havani for his “praise of the lords of the days in their duration, and of the days during daylight, for those of the monthly festivals, and for those of the yearly ones, and for those of the seasons!” (Yasna 1.23; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 202-203).

The sacrifice continues in the second Hymn of the Yasna with particular praise to Ahura Mazda. “I desire to approach the Zaothras with my worship. I desire to approach the Baresman with my worship. I desire to approach the Zaothra conjointly with the Baresman in my worship, and the Baresman conjointly with the Zaothra. Yea, I desire to approach this Zaothra (here), and with this (present) Baresman, and I desire to approach this Baresman conjoined with this Zaothra with my praise; and I desire to approach this Baresman with praise provided with its Zaothra with its girdle, and spread with sanctity” (Yasna 2.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 203).<sup>169</sup> The term Zaothra is the Avestai term for a Zoroastrian priest.<sup>170</sup> “In this Zaothra and the Baresman I desire to approach Ahura Mazda, with my praise, the holy lord of the ritual order, and the Bountiful Immortal, (all) those who rule aright, and who dispose of all aright, these also I desire to approach and with my praise” (Yasna 2.2; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 203-204).

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<sup>169</sup> Baresman, also known as baresma, and barsom, is a bundle of sacred twigs which the priest holds in his hand while reciting the prayers (Darmesteter 1879, 22 and Boyce 1975, 167)

<sup>170</sup> There are a variety of Avestai terms which may translate to a priest, scholar, or ritual specialist. The list includes “zoatar, athravan, ahu, maga, magauno, magavan, mogh, aethrapaiti, and sraoshavareza” (Yasna 8.9; Mills 1887, 230, Yasna 33.7; Guthrie 1914, Boyce 1970, 22, and Stewart 2007, 144).

The third Hymn of the Yasna identifies the objects of appeasement. “I desire to approach the Myazda-offering with my praise, as it is consumed, and likewise Ameretat (as the guardian of plants and wood) and Haurvatat (who guards the water), with fresh meat, for the propitiation of Ahura Mazda, and of the Bountiful Immortals” (Yasna 3.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 207-208).<sup>171</sup> “I desire to approach Haoma and Para-Haoma (Haoma-juice) with my praise for the propitiation of the Fravashi of Spitama Zarathustra, the saint. And I desire to approach the (sacred) wood with my praise, with the perfume, for the propitiation of thee, the Fire, O Ahura Mazda’s son!” (Yasna 3.2; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 208). Also, “I desire to approach the Haomas with my praise for the propitiation of the good waters which Mazda created; and I desire to approach the Haoma water, and the fresh milk with my praise, and the plant Hadhanaepata, offered with sanctity for the propitiation of the waters which are Mazda-made” (Yasna 3.3, Mills (Tr.) 1887, 208).<sup>172</sup>

Also, “I desire to approach Ahura Mazda and Mithra, the lofty and imperishable two, the

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<sup>171</sup> According to Mills, “the modern Parsis, Haug following, render ‘butter’ [instead of meat]. However, [Friedrich von] Spiegel is inclined to discredit this later tradition, holding that ‘flesh’ was originally intended. Milk was erroneously used as a substitute since meat was not used in India” (Mills 1887, 207). Boyce noted that animal sacrifices have been abandoned at the major rituals by both communities, Parsi and Irani, probably since the end of the last century; but they are still offered on some other occasions by a minority of Irani Zoroastrians (Boyce 2001, 148).

<sup>172</sup> Hadhanaepata is the Avestai term for evergreen, which in this case specifically refers to the pomegranate tree. “To judge from the similarity in ritual offerings still made by Zoroastrians and Brahmans, these belong to a tradition deriving from an Indo-Iranian past. Those of the Zoroastrians include, in the various major rituals, milk, pure water, and the sap of plants, i.e. *haoma* and the pomegranate; corn (in wheaten cakes; fruit and vegetable; butter and eggs; domestic animals and fowls. In lesser ceremonies wine also is consecrated. The general term for such offering appears to have been *myazda*, Sanskrit *miyedha*, *medha*, which was often used of the blood sacrifice, but probably meant originally the pith or essence of any offering, that part of it was especially assigned to the gods. Thus in Avesta usage, *myazda* plainly comprised both solid and liquid offering, and could be qualified as being of “flesh and wine” (Boyce 2001, 148-149).



holy, and with the Yasht of those stars which are the creatures of Spenta Mainyu, and with the Yasht of the start of Tistrya, the radiant, the glorious, and with that of the moon which contains the seed of cattle, and with that of the resplendent sun, the eye of Ahura Mazda, and of Mithra, province-lord of the provinces, and with that of Ahura Mazda (as He rules the day) the radiant, the glorious, and with that of the Fravashis of the saints, (who rule this month) (Yasna 3.13; Mills 1887, 210).<sup>173</sup> “With thy Yasht, the Fire’s, O Ahura Mazda’s son! with all the fires, and to the good waters with the Yasht of all the waters which are Mazda-made, and with that of all the plants which Mazda made” (Yasna 3.14; Mills 1887, 210).

The offering takes place in the fourth Hymn of the Yasna. “These good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, these Haomas, meat-offerings, and Zaothras, this Baresman spread with sanctity, this flesh, and the two, Haurvatat and Ameretat, even the flesh, the Haoma and Haoma-juice, the wood-billets, and their perfume, this sacred lordship and chieftanship, and the timely prayer with blessing, and the heard recital of the Gathas, and the well-said Mathras, these all we offer, and make known with celebration (here) (Yasna 4.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 213). “Yea, we present these hereby to the Creator Ahura Mazda,

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<sup>173</sup> As Mary Boyce noted, what complicates the study of ancient Iranian beliefs about the hereafter is the use of another term besides *urvan* for the departed spirit, namely “*fravarti*,” Avestai “*fravashi*.” The etymology of this word (like that of *urvan*) is doubtful; but it seems possible that it may derive from the same verbal root as *Ham-vareti* “*Courage*,” and that the *fravashi* was originally the departed soul of a hero, one particularly potent to help and protect his descendants. If this was so there must have existed a hero-cult among ancient Iranians, as among the Greeks. The *fravashis* were conceived, something like Valkyries, as female beings, winged and inhabiting the air, through which, if satisfied by offerings, they would fly swiftly to men’s aid (Boyce 2001, 15).

the radiant, the glorious, and the heavenly spirit, the sacrifice, homage, propitiation, and praise of the Bountiful Immortals (all)” (Yasna 4.7; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 215). The early part of the Yasna contains repetitive hymns, with the content of the some hymns being very similar (Yasna 3.13, 3.14, 4.16, and 4.17).<sup>174</sup> “And these we announce and we present to Ahura and to Mithra, the lofty, and imperishable, and holy two, to the stars, the creatures of Spenta Mainyu, and to the star Tistrya, the radiant, the glorious, and to the Moon which contains the seed of cattle, and to the resplendent Sun, of the swift horses, Ahura Mazda’s eye, and to Mithra, the lord of provinces, for their sacrifice, homage, their propitiation and their praise; yea we present hereby to Ahura Mazda (as here rules this day) and to the Fravashis of the saints (as they rule this month), for their sacrifice, homage, their propitiation and their praise” (Yasna 4.16; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 216). “And these we announce hereby to thee, the Fire, O Ahura Mazda’s son! with all the fires for thy sacrifice, homage, propitiation, and praise, and to the good waters, for the sacrifice, homage, propitiation, and praise, of all the waters Mazda-made, and to all the plants which Mazda made” (Yasna 4.17; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 216-217).

The fifth and twenty-seventh Hymns of the Yasna are identical.<sup>175</sup> “This is to render Him who is of all the greatest, our lord and master (even) Ahura Mazda. And this to smite the wicked Angra Mainyu, and to smite Aeshma of the bloody spear, and the

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<sup>174</sup> Mills labeled the last part of chapter four with a footnote which read, “Elsewhere with slight change in verbage” (Yasna 4.26; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 218).

<sup>175</sup> In the translation by Mills, the reader must jump to Chapter 27 of the Yasna to read the content for chapter 5.

Mazainya Daevas, and to smite all the wicked Varenya Daevas” (Yasna 27.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 280). “One group of the Gathas, known as the ‘Gatha Ahunavaiti,’ is by far the longest, and it was placed before the seven chapters as Yasna 28-34; and the four other groups follow them as Yasna 43-51, 53” (Boyce 2001, 37). “The Gatha Ahunavaiti was accompanied by the Ahuna Vairya [prayer] (Yasna 27.13; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 281) (from which it takes its name), together with two other short and very sacred prayers” known as the Yenhe hatam (Yasna 51.22; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914) and the Ashem Vohu (Yasna 27.14; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 281) (Boyce 2001, 37-38). “As the Ahu is excellent, so is the Ratu (one who rules) form (his) sanctity, a creator of mental goodness, and of life’s actions done for Mazda; and the Kingdom (is) for Ahura, which to the poor may offer a nurterer” (Yasna 27.13; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 281). “(What is Your Kingdom, Your riches; how may I be Your own in my actions, to nourish Your poor, O Mazda? Beyond; yea, beyond all we declare You, far from Daevas and Khrafstra-accursed mortals!” (Yasna 27.14; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 281).

Meanwhile, the “sacrifice continues with fuller expression” in chapter six of the Yasna (Yasna 6.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 219). “We worship the Creator Ahura Mazda with our sacrifice, and the Bountiful Immortal who rule aright, and who dispose of all aright” (Yasna 6.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 219). Yasna six differs from Yasna two only in having “yazamaide” instead of the formula” ahmya zaothre baresmanaeja—ayese yesti” (Yasna 2.1-18 and 6.2-6.21; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 203-7 and 219-222). Yasna six includes praise for Fire, Waters, and Plants (Yasna 6.3-10; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 219-220). It also contains

praise and references to yearly festivals and “the Seasons (in which they are)” (Yasna 6.8; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 220). The seventh Hymn of the Yasna includes a presentation of offerings by the priest to Ahura Mazda, Mithra, Zarathustra, and several others (Yasna 7.1-5; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 222-223). In the eighth Hymn of the Yasna, the faithful partake in the meat-offering while they praise Ahura Mazda (Yasna 8.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 228). “Propitiation to Haoma who brings righteousness (to us) for sacrifice, homage, propitiation, and for praise. (The Zaotar?) As the Ahu to be (revered and) chosen, the Zaotar [priest, sacrificer] speaks forth to me. (The Ratu.) As an Ahu to be (revered and) chosen, the Zaotar speaks forth to me. (The Zaotar.) So let the Ratu from his Righteousness, holy and learned, speak forth!” (Yasna 8.9; Mills 1887, 230). The ninth Yasna is known as the Hom-yasht or Haoma-yasht. The term yasht or yast means “venerate” or “praise,” and may also refer to a collection of 21 hymns that are preserved in younger Avestai.

The Haoma-yasht has claims to antiquity (owing to its subject, but not its dialect), next after the Sros-yasht (Mills 1887, 230). According to Mills, Haoma, also known as Soma, referred to a deity which flourished not only before the Gathas, but before the Riks of the Veda, in Aryan ages before Iranian and Indian became two peoples (Mills 1887, 230). According to the Haoma-yasht, “At the hour of Havani. Haoma came to Zarathustra, as he served the (sacred) Fire, and sanctified (its flame), while he sang aloud the Gathas” (Yasna 9.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 231). Haoma told Zoroaster about “the reign of Yima the brilliant, (he of many flocks, the most glorious of those yet born, the sunlike-

one of men),” which was a period when “there was neither cold nor heat, there was neither age nor death, nor envy demon-made” (Yasna 9.4-5; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 232).

There was also plenty of water and food for people, plants, and cattle (Yasna 9.4-5; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 232).

Yima is also known as Yama, Jam, Jamshid, and Gamshed. In the Vedas, Yama, as the first man, is the first priest too; he brought worship here below as well as life, and ‘first he stretched out the thread of sacrifice’ (Mandala 1.66.8; Oldenberg 1897, 57, Mandala 1.38.5.; Müller (Tr.) 1891, 81-88, and Darmesteter 1879, 12). “Although in the existing Yasna, Yama/Yima is represented as the ruler, not progenitor, of the human race, the Vedas know as a consort for him, namely his twin sister Yami, by whom he has children. Her existence is not mentioned in the Avesta, but there is an Avestai common noun meaning (like Sanskrit *yama*) “twin,” and later forms of this word occur in Middle Iranian Languages (Boyce 1975, 95-96).<sup>176</sup> However, it seems inevitable that with priestly speculation about the origins of mankind, Yima, the first ruler, should have been drawn into association with the first man (Boyce 1975, 96). In the second chapter of the Vendidad, Ahura Mazda mentions that Yima was the first person to speak with Ahura Mazda (Fargard 2.2; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 11). The Vendidad is a collection of Younger Avestai oral accounts concerned with the laws of purity, and its name means

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<sup>176</sup> Since the name Yima seems to have meant “twin,” it suggests variations here on an ancient legend concerning the origins of man (Boyce 1975, 97).

“the antithesis of evil spirit” (Boyce 1984, 2).<sup>177</sup> According to the ninth Hymn of the Yasna, Zoroaster, born of Pouraspa, was the first to recite the Ahuna Vairya (Gathas or Gathic Hymns) (Yasna 9.13-14; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 235). The Ahuna Vairya (Yasna 27.13; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 281) precedes the Gatha Ahunavaiti which consists of Hymns 28-34 of the Yasna.

The physiology of the Haoma plant is described in the tenth Hymn of the Yasna. “O Haoma, thou growest on the mountains, apart on many paths, and there still may’st thou flourish. The springs of Righteousness most heavily thou art, (and the fountains of the ritual find their source in thee” (Yasna 10.4; Mills (Tr) 1887, 240). “Grow (then) because I pray to thee on all thy stems and branches, in all my shoots (and tendrils) increase thou through my word!” (Yasna 10.5; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 241). Haoma, the famed drink which brings good health (Yasna 10.7: Mills (Tr.) 1887, 241), “goes hand in hand with friendship” (Yasna 10.8; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 241). “Praise be to thee, O Haoma, (for he makes the poor man’s thoughts as great as any of the richest whomsoever). Praise be to Haoma, (for he makes the poor man’s thoughts as great as when mind reacheth culmination). With manifold retainers dost thou, O Haoma, endow the man who drinks thee mixed with milk; yea, are more prosperous thou makest him, and more endowed with mind” (Yasna 10.13; Mills (Tr) 1887, 242). Haoma then spoke and said, “to five do I belong, and to five others I do not; of the good thought am I, of the evil am I not, of the

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<sup>177</sup> James Darmesteter published an English translation of the *Vendidad* in 1879 (Darmesteter Tr., 1879).

good word am I, of the evil am I not, of the good deed am I, and of the evil, not” (Yasna 10.16; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 243). “To Obedience am I given, and to deaf disobedience, not; to the saint do I belong, and to the wicked, not; and so from this on till the ending shall be spirits’ parting. (The two shall here divide)” (Yasna 10.16; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 243).

“Thereupon spake Zarathustra: Praise to Haoma, Mazda-made” (Yasna 10.17; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 243). “These are thy Gathas, holy Haoma, these thy songs, and these thy teachings, and these thy ritual words, health imparting, victory giving, from harmful hatred healing giving” (Yasna 10.18; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 243-244).

The eleventh Hymn of the Yasna is the prelude to the Haoma offering. It includes a piece in the Gathic dialect, “I celebrate my praises for good thoughts, good words, and good deeds for my thoughts, my speeches, and (my) actions” (Yasna 11.17; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 247). The twelfth Hymn of the Yasna is the Mazdayasnian Confession. “I drive the Daevas hance; I confess as a Mazda-worshipper of the order of Zarathustra” (Yasna 12.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 247). The thirteenth Hymn of the Yasna includes invocations and dedications to Ahura Mazda (Yasna 13.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 250). “Thus the two spirits thought, thus they spoke, and thus they did;” and therefore as Thou, O Ahura Mazda! So we would worship thee with our sacrifices” (Yasna 13.4-5: Mills (Tr.) 1887, 252). According to Mills, “the recognition of a strong dualism here is imperative, [but] Ahura Mazda alone is praised” (Mills 1887, 252). The fourteenth Hymn of the Yasna contains more dedications to Ahura Mazda (Yasna 14.4; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 254).

The sacrifice to the Bounteous Immortals continues in the fifteenth Hymn of the Yasna “with the blessing of the good ritual and the blessings of the good Mazdayasnian faith” (Yasna 15.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 254). The sacrifice continues with increased fullness of expression in the sixteenth Hymn of the Yasna (Yasna 16.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 255). The seventeenth Hymn of the Yasna is nearly identical to the sixth Hymn. The eighteenth Hymn of the Yasna only has one line. “Grant me, Thou who are maker of the Kine, plants and waters, Immortality, Mazda! Grant, too, Weal, Spirit bounteous—” (Yasna 18.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 259).

The nineteenth Hymn of the Yasna is “Zand, or Commentary on the Ahuna-Vairya [Gathic] Formulas” (Yasna 19.5; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 260-261). This commentary (Zand) suggests that the Ahuna Vairya, which “Ahura Mazda pronounced as thine” when speaking to Zoroaster, existed long before Ahura Mazda created the sky, the waters, the land, and the cattle (Yasna 3-4; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 260). “It was these part(s) of the Ahuna Vairya, O Spitama Zarathustra! which especially belongs to me, and when each is intoned aloud without (needless) repetition of verses and of words, and without their omission, it is worth a hundred of their other stanzas, even although they are prominent in the ritual, and likewise equally as well recited without additions or omissions; nay, further, when it is intoned imperfectly but added to, and with omissions, it is even then in effect equivalent (not to a hundred indeed, but) to ten other (stanzas) that are prominent” (Yasna 19.5; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 261). The last five lines of this Zand



are characterized by a question and answer pattern which Mills labeled the “Catechetical Zand” (Yasna 19.16-21; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 264).

The twentieth Hymn of the Yasna is “Zand, or Commentary on the Ashem Vohu” (Yasna 20.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 266). As mentioned, the Ashem Vohu is one of the most important prayers for Zoroastrians (Boyce 2001, 38). “A blessing is Righteousness (called) the best; there is weal, there is weal to this man when the Right (helps) the Righteousness best, (when the pious man serves it in truth). Ahura Mazda spake forth: Ashem vohu vahistem asti [Righteousness is the best of all good]. To this Asha, the holy ritual sanctity, one attributes the qualities of ‘good’ and ‘best,’ as one attributes property to an owner; thus this sentence vohu vahistem asti is substantiated (at once)” (Yasna 20.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 266-267). This Zand also contains “Catechetical Additions” (Yasna 20.4; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 267).

The twenty-first Hymn of the Yasna consists of a “Catechetical Zand, or Commentary upon the Yenhe hatam” (Yasna 21.5; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 269). As mentioned, the Yenhe hatam is also one of the most sacred prayers for Zoroastrians (Yasna 51.22, Guthrie (Tr.) 1914) (Boyce 2001, 37). “(The Yenhe. (To that one) of begins do we offer, whose superior (fidelity) in the sacrifice Ahura Mazda recognizes by reason of the sanctity (within him; yea, even to those female saints also we sacrifice) whose (superior fidelity is thus likewise known; thus) we sacrifice to (all, to both) the males and females (of the saints!) A word for the Yasna by Zarathustra, the saint. Yenhe, &c. Here the worshipper indicates and offers the Yasna (which is the sacrificial worship) of Mazda as

by the command (or as the institution) of Ahura. Hatam. Here the worshipper indicates and offers the Yasna (which is the sacrificial worship) of Mazda as by the command (or as the institution) of Ahura. Hatam. Here the worshipper offers the sacrificial worship as if with the beings who are among those who are destined to live” (Yasna 21.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 268-269).

The sacrifice continues in the twenty-second Hymn of the Yasna. “With the Baresman brought hither together with the Zaothra, for the worship of the Creator Ahura Mazda, the resplendent, the glorious, and for that of the Bountiful Immortals, I desire to approach this Haoma with my praise, offered (as it is) with punctilious sanctity (or, for a blessing), and this fresh milk, and this plant Hadhanaepata” (Yasna 22.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 270). “I desire to approach this branch for the Baresman with my praise, and the memorized recital and fulfillment of the Mazdayasnian law, and the heard recital of the Gathas, and the well-timed and persistent prayer for the blessings (uttered) by the holy lord of the ritual order, and this wood and perfume, even thine, O Fire, Ahura Mazda’s son, and all good objects Mazda-made for the propitiation of Ahura Mazda, the resplendent, the glorious, and of the Bountiful Immortals, and of Mithra of the wide pastures, and of Raman Hvasra, and of the resplendent sun, immortal, radiant, of the fleet horses, and of Vayu, (of predominant influence and working on high, set over the other beings in the creation” (Yasna 22.22-24; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 271).

In the Iranian philosophy of religion, sacrifices were analogous to a contractual obligation between various spirits. “In any sacrifice there is an act of abnegation since

the sacrificer deprives himself and gives. Often this abnegation is even imposed upon him as a duty. For sacrifice is not always optional; the gods demand it.... But this abnegation and submission are not without their selfish aspect. The sacrificer gives... partly in order to receive. Thus sacrifice shows itself in a dual light; it is a useful act and it is an obligation. Disinterestedness is mingled with self-interest. That is why it has so frequently been conceived of as a form of contract” (Hubert 1964, 100). This quote fully applies to observances in ancient Iran. “To this day Zoroastrians put all major acts of worship, which are invariably accompanied by offerings, under the protection of Mithra, lord of the contract” (Boyce 2001, 148).

The twenty-third Hymn of the Yasna consists of “Prayers for the approach of the Fravashi Saints of Ahura Mazda,” which is typically reserved for funeral occasions (Yasna 23.1-2; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 272-273). “I desire to approach with my praise those Fravashis which have existed from of old, the Fravashis of the houses, and of the villages, of the communities, and of the provinces, which hold the heaven in its place apart, and the water, land, and cattle, which hold the children in the wombs safely enclosed apart so that they do not miscarry” (Yasna 23.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 272-273). Subsequently, the twenty-fourth Hymn of the Yasna consists of Haoma, Myazda, and Zaothra presentations to Ahura Mazda. The twenty-fifth Hymn of the Yasna also identified objects of worship with content that overlapped with the third and fourth Hymn of the Yasna (Yasna 25.1-6; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 276-277). The twenty sixth Hymn of the Yasna consists of “Sacrifice

and Praise to the Fravashis” (Yasna 26.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 278). The fifth and twenty seventh Hymn of the Yasna are identical.<sup>178</sup>

The thirty-fifth Hymn of the Yasna begins the Yasna Haptanghati (Worship in Seven Sections). “With the Yasna of the ‘Seven Chapters’ which ranks next in antiquity after the Gathas, we already pass into an atmosphere distinct from theirs. The dialect still lingers but the spirit is changed.” (Mills 1887, 281).<sup>179</sup> “We sacrifice to Ahura Mazda, the holy Lord of the ritual order, and to the Bountiful Immortals, who rule aright, who dispose of all aright; and we sacrifice to the entire creation of the clean, the spiritual and the mundane, with the longing blessing of the beneficent ritual, with the longing blessing of the benignant Religion, the Mazdayasnian Faith” (Yasna 35.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 282). “We are praisers of good thoughts, good words, and good actions, of those now and those hereafter” (Yasna 35.2; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 282). “That, therefore, would we choose, O Ahura Mazda! and thou, O Righteousness the beautiful! that we should think, and speak, and do those thoughts, and words, and actions, which are the best for both worlds” (Yasna 35.3; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 283).

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<sup>178</sup> For Yasna 28-34, see above section on the Gathas.

<sup>179</sup> “We have advanced personification of the Bountiful Immortals; that is, their personification seems more prominent, while the ideas of which they are the personification seems more prominent, while the ideas of which they are the personification already, and to a proportionate degree, have grown dim. The name Amesha Spenta occurs: the Fravashis appear; the Fire [is] worshipped, the Earth, and the Grass. A considerable amount of time must have elapsed since the Gathas had been composed, and a lengthy period must also be supposed to have passed before the Avesta of the later type began to be sung and recited” (Mills 1887, 281).

The thirty-sixth Hymn of the Yasna consists of prayers to Ahura Mazda along with praise for the creation of Fire. “We would approach You two, O (Ye) primeval ones in the house of this Thy holy Fire, O Ahura Mazda, Thou most bounteous Spirit!” (Yasna 36.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 284).<sup>180</sup> The thirty seventh Hymn of the Yasna consists of praise to Ahura Mazda, the Fravashis, and the Bounteous Immortals (Yasna 37.3; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 286). “Thus therefore do we worship Ahura Mazda, who made the Kine (the living creation), and the (embodied) Righteousness (which incarnate in the clean), and the waters, and the wholesome plants, and the stars, and the earth, and all (existing) objects that are good (Yasna 37.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 285-286).

The thirty-eighth Hymn of the Yasna consists of praise to the earth and the sacred waters. “And now we worship this earth which bears us, together with Thy wives, O Ahura Mazda! yea, those Thy wives do we worship which are so desired for their sanctity” (Yasna 38.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 286). “O ye waters! Now we worship you, you that are showered down, and you that stand in pools and vats, and you that bear forth (our loaded vessels?) ye female Ahuras of Ahura, you that serve us (all) in helpful ways, well forded and full-flowing, and effective for the bathings, we will see you and for both the worlds!” (Yasna 38.3; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 287). “Therefore did Ahura Mazda give you names, O ye beneficent ones! When He who made the good bestowed you” (Yasna 38.4; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 287).

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<sup>180</sup> According to Mills, the “house” may refer to the service of the Fire. Fire temples did not exist [during this period], but some shelter must have been afforded (Mills 1887, 284).

The thirty-ninth Hymn of the Yasna consists of praise and sacrifice to the soul of the Kine. “We sacrifice to the Kine’s soul, and to her created body, and we sacrifice to the souls of cattle who are fit to live (for us), and whose (we?) are, such as are the same to them” (Yasna 39.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 287-288). “We worship the souls of those beasts which are tame and broken in, and of wild herds, and the souls of the saints where they were born, both of men and of women, whose good consciences are conquering the strife against the Daevas, or will conquer, or have conquered” (Yasna 39.2; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 288).

The fortieth Hymn of the Yasna consists of prayers for blessings from Ahura Mazda. “O Ahura Mazda! do Thou wisely act for us, and with abundance with Thy bounty and Thy tenderness as touching us; and grant that reward which Thou hast appointed to our souls, O Ahura Mazda!” (Yasna 40.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 288-289). The forty-first Hymn of the Yasna is a prayer to Ahura Mazda as the King, the Life, and the Rewarder (Yasna 41.2; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 289-290). “To Thy good Kingdom, O Ahura Mazda! may we attain for ever, and a good King be Thou, over us; and let each man of us, and so each woman, thus abide, O Thou most beneficent of beings, and for both worlds!” (Yasna 41.2; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 289-290). The forty second Hymn of the Yasna is “A Supplement to the Haptanghaiti” (Yasna 42.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 290-291). “We worship You, O Ye Bountiful Immortals! with the entire collection of this Yasna, Haptanghaiti (as we sum up all). And we sacrifice to the fountains of the waters, and the fording of the rivers, to the forkings of the highways, and to the meetings of the roads”

(Yasna 42.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 290-291).<sup>181</sup> The fifty-second Hymn of the Yasna is a prayer for sanctity and its benefits (Yasna 52.1-4; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 292-293).<sup>182</sup>

The fifty-fourth Hymn of the Yasna is a sacrifice to Airyaman, who was a healer and a friend of the community (Boyce 2001, 57). “Let the Airyaman, the desired friend and peersman, draw near for grace to the men and to the women who are taught of Zarathustra, for the joyful grace of the Good Mind, whereby the conscience may attain its wished-for recompense. I pray for the sacred reward of the ritual order which is (likewise so much) to be desired; and may Ahura Mazda grant it, (or cause it to increase)” (Yasna 54.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 293). The fifty-fourth Hymn is very old and it was preserved in the Gathic dialect (Mills 1887, 293).

The fifty-fifth Hymn of the Yasna seems to designate a new part of the Yasna which begins with the “Srosh Yasht” (Yasna 55.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 294). “We worship the part(s) of the praises of the Yasna, and their recitation as it is heard, even their memorized recital, and their chanting, and their offering (as complete)” (Yasna 55.6; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 295). The fifty-sixth Hymn is an introduction to the “Srosh Yasht.” “Let Sraosha (listening obedience) be present here for the worship of Ahura Mazda, (the most beneficent, and holy, of him) who is desired by us as at the first, so at the last; and so again may attentive Obedience be present here for worship of Ahura Mazda, the most beneficent and the holy who (is so) desired by us” (Yasna 56.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 296).

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<sup>181</sup> For Yasna 43-51, see above section on the Gathas.

<sup>182</sup> For Yasna 53, see above section on the Gathas.

The fifty-seventh Hymn of the Yasna is the “Srosh Yasht.” “We worship Sraosha, (Obedience) the blessed, the stately, him who smites with the blow of victory, and who furthers the settlements, the holy, (ruling) as the ritual lord. Him do we worship, who in the creation of Mazda the first adored Ahura, with the Baresman spread, who worshipped the Bountiful Immortals (first), who worshipped both the protector and the Creator, who are (both) creating all things in the creation” (Yasna 57.2; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 298). According to Mills, since Sraosha is the only divinity of the later groups mentioned in the first four Gathas, this Yasht would seem to have claims to antiquity next after the pieces in the Gathic dialect. “With Yasna 28.6 in view, where Sraosha ‘finds the way’ to Ahura, or ‘finds His throne,’ we may understand that the worshippers who first heard this yasht, praised listening, obedience, or repentance, as they did nearly all the remaining abstract qualities, together with their principal prayers, and hymns themselves. The rhythm of the original has been somewhat imitated in the rendering given, as it is somewhat difficult to avoid doing so, and to avoid other objectionable features at the same time” (Mills 1887, 297 and Yasna 28.6; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 14).

The fifty-eighth Hymn of the Yasna has claims to an antiquity as high as the twelfth Hymn of the Yasna, and recalls the Gathas in many ways (Mills 1887, 306). “(To the increase of our homage and praise of God) we offer this service which, as our defense, may shield us, which is worship with its beneficent results; and Blessedness is with it of a verity, and Piety as well. Let this our worship shelter us from the Daeva and from the evil-minded man” (Yasna 58.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 306). “The owner of the herd



is the righteous (one), and he is victorious when he strikes, and thus he is the best; for the herd-owner is the father of the Kine by the help of him who follows the ritual order” (Yasna 58.4; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 307).

The fifty-ninth Hymn of the Yasna contains content which overlaps with content from the seventeenth and twenty sixth Hymn of the Yasna. The first seventeen lines of Yasna fifty-nine correspond to the first seventeen lines of Yasna seventeen while lines 18-27 correspond to the first 10 lines of Yasna twenty-six.<sup>183</sup> “(The Zoatar speaks): May that happen to you (likewise) which is better than the good, and may that not happen which is worse than the evil, and may that likewise not be my lot” (Yasna 59.31; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 309).

The sixtieth Hymn of the Yasna consists of prayers for the dwelling of the sacrificer. “Thus that better than the good may he approach, who shows to us straight paths of profit appertaining to this bodily life and to the mental likewise, in the eternal (?) realms where dwells Ahura; yea, may he approach it, who is Thy worthy servant, and good citizen, O Great giver Lord” (Yasna 60.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 310). These prayers continue in the sixty-first Hymn of the Yasna. “Let us peal forth the Ahuna-vairyain our liturgy between heaven and earth, and let us send forth the Asha Vahishta in our prayer the same, and the Yenhe hatam. And let us send forth in our liturgies between the heaven and earth the pious and prayer of the pious man for blessings, for the encounter with, and

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<sup>183</sup> Mills asked his readers to see the lines from the previous Hymns he translated (Yasna 59.1-27; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 309, Yasna 17.1-17; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 258-259, and Yasna 26.1-10; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 278-279).

for the displacement of Angra Mainyu with his creatures which are likewise evil as he is, for he is filled with death (for those whom he has made)” (Yasna 61.1-2; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 312-313).

The sixty-second Hymn of the Yasna consists of praise to the Fire. “I offer my sacrifice and homage to thee, the Fire, as a good offering, and an offering with our hail of salvation, even as an offering of praise with benedictions, to thee, the Fire, O Ahura Mazda’s son!” (Yasna 62.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 313-314). The sixty-third Hymn of the Yasna includes content which overlaps with Yasna fifteen, thirty-eight, and sixty-six.<sup>184</sup> Similarly, the sixty-fourth Hymn of the Yasna includes content which overlaps with Yasna forty six and Yasna fifty.

The sixty-fifth Hymn of the Yasna consists of praise to the water of Ardvi Sura Anahita.<sup>185</sup> “I will praise the water of Ardvi Sura Anahita, the wide-flowing (as it is) healing in its influence, efficacious against the Daevas, devoted to Ahura’s lore, and to be worshipped with sacrifice within the corporeal world, furthering all living things (?) and holy, helping on the increase and improvement of our herds and settlements, holy, and increasing our wealth, holy, and helping on the progress of the Province, holy (as she is)” (Yasna 65.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 316-317).

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<sup>184</sup> Mills asked his readers to see the lines from the previous Hymns he translated (Yasna 63.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 316, Yasna 15.2; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 254, and Yasna 38.3; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 287).

<sup>185</sup> Anahita refers to the Spirit of the waters (Aban).

The sixty-sixth Hymn of the Yasna consists of an offering to the Ahurian One. “I am now offering this Zaothra here with sanctity, together with the Haoma and the flesh, and the Hadhanaepata lifted up with sacred regularity as to thee, O Ahurian One, for the propitiation of Ahura Mazda, of the Bountiful Immortals, of Sraosha (Obedience) the blessed, and of the Fire of Ahura Mazda, the ritual’s lofty lord” (Yasna 66.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 320). The rest of this Hymn contains content which was previously translated. The sixty-seventh Hymn of the Yasna also contains material that was previously translated. The sixty-eighth Hymn of the Yasna consists of additional offerings to the Ahurian One and the waters. “We offer this to thee, O Ahurian (daughter) of Ahura! As a help (?) for life. If we have offended thee, let this Zaothra then attain to thee (for satisfaction), for it is thine with its Haoma, and its mile, and its Hadhanaepata” (Yasna 68.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 321).

The sixty-ninth Hymn of the Yasna is composed of fragments from Yasna fifteen and fifty one (Yasna 15.2; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 254, Yasna 51.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 178-179, and Yasna 51.22; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 187). The seventieth Hymn of the Yasna is dedicated to the Bountiful Immortals and the Institution of Religion (Yasna 70.2; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 325). “I would worship these (the Bountiful Immortals) with my sacrifice, those who rule aright, and who dispose (of all) aright, and this one (especially) I would approach with my praise, (Ahura Mazda). He is thus hymned (in our praise-songs). Yea, we worship in our sacrifice that deity and lord, who is Ahura Mazda, the Creator, the gracious helper, the maker of all good things; and we worship in our sacrifice Zarathustra

Spitama, that chieftain (of the rite)” (Yasna 70.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 325). We declare those institutions established for us, exact (undeviating as they are)” (Yasna 70.2; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 325). The seventy-first Hymn of the Yasna begins the concluding section of the Yasna. “Frashaostra, the holy, asked the saintly Zarathustra: Answer me, O thou most eminent Zarathustra, which is (in very truth) the memorized recital of the rites? What is completed delivery of the Gathas?” (Yasna 71.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 327). Upon which Zoroaster replied, “We worship Ahura Mazda with our sacrifice (as) the holy lord of the ritual order; and we sacrifice to Zarathustra likewise as to a holy lord of the ritual order; and we sacrifice also to the Fravashi of Zarathustra the saint. And we sacrifice to the Bountiful Immortals, (the guardians) of the saints” (Yasna 71.2; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 327). The seventy-second and final Hymn of the Yasna is a duplicate of Yasna sixty one.

### **The Yashts and Sirozahs**

As mentioned, the term yasht or yast means “venerate” or “praise,” and may also refer to a collection of 21 hymns that were preserved in younger Avestai. Yasht also means the act of worshipping, the performance of the Yasna, and it is often used in Parsi tradition as synonymous with the Yasna (Darmesteter 1883, 1). However, it has also been particularly applied to a certain number of writings in which the several Izeds (deities) are praised and magnified (Darmesteter 1883, 1). According to Darmesteter, “these writings are generally of a higher poetical and epical character than the rest of the Avesta, and are the most valuable records of the old mythology and historical legends of Iran (Darmesteter 1883, 1). The Yashts are hymns which were chanted by private

individuals or their family priests, but had no place in the “inner” worship of the pavi (Boyce 1975, 270).<sup>186</sup>

The Parsis believe that formerly every Amshaspand (Bounteous Immortal) and every Ized had his or her particular Yasht, but we now possess only twenty Yashts and fragments of another (Darmesteter 1883, 1).<sup>187</sup> The order in which the Yashts have been arranged by the Parsis follows exactly the order of the Sirozah, which is the proper introduction to the Yashts (Darmesteter 1883, 1). Sirozah means “thirty days,” which refers to the name of a prayer composed of thirty invocations addressed to the several Izeds (deities) who preside over the thirty days of the month (Darmesteter 1883, 1).<sup>188</sup> Some of these names were also used to identify certain months. “The very idea of the Sirozah, that is to say the attribution of each of the thirty days of the month to certain gods, seems to have been borrowed from the Semites; the tablets found in the library of Assurbanipal contain an Assyrian Sirozah, that is, a complete list of the Assyrian gods that preside over the thirty days of the month” (Darmesteter 1883, 1).

The *Yashts* begin with the Ormazd Yasht, which lists the names of Ahura Mazda. Zoroaster said, “Reveal unto me that name of thine, O Ahura Mazda! That is the greatest, the best, the fairest, the most effective, the most fiend-smiting, the best healing,

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<sup>186</sup> Pavi refers to a “pure place,” or a small flat space that can be marked out as a sacred precinct (Boyce 1975, 166).

<sup>187</sup> James Darmesteter published an English translation of the *Yashts and Sirozahs* in 1883 (Darmesteter Tr., 1883).

<sup>188</sup> There are two versions of the Sirozah, but the only difference between them is that the formulas in the former are shorter, and there is also occasionally some difference in the epithets, which are fuller in the latter (Darmesteter 1883, 1).

that destroyeth best the malice of the Daevas and Men” (Yasht 1.5; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 24). Ahura Mazda replied, “My name is the One of whom questions are asked, O holy Zarathustra!” (Yasht 1.7; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 24). Ahura Mazda, known “as the revealer of the laws, which are generally expounded by a process of questions from Zoroaster and answers from Ahura” (Darmesteter 1883, 24). The first Yasht also includes a list of seventy two names for Ahura Mazda (Yasht 1.7-16; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 24-28). Ahura Mazda also stated, “Worship me, O Zarathustra, by day and by night” (Yasht 1.7-9; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 24-25). The Ormazd Yasht, which corresponds to the first day of the Sirozah, leads to a fragment of the Bahman Yasht, which is in a “state of the utmost corruption” (Darmesteter 1883, 22). The Bahman Yasht corresponds to the second day of the Sirozah, which describes the creation of the world and the final triumph of Ahura Mazda over Ahriman and the Daevas (Yasht 1.24; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 31).

The Haptan Yasht, also known as the Yasht of the seven Amshaspands, is recited on the first seven days of the week. In other words, the days consecrated to the Amesha Spentas (Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 35). The first part states, “To Ahura Mazda, bright and glorious, and to the Amesha Spentas; Vohu Manah, Asha Vahishta, Khshathra Vairya, Spenta Armaiti, Haurvatat, Ameretat. Be propitiation, with sacrifice, prayer, propitiation, and glorification” (Yasht 2.1-5; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 36). It also mentions Mithra, the

lord of the wide pastures, as well as Rama Hvastra (Yasht 2.4; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 36).<sup>189</sup>

The Ardibehesht Yasht, which corresponds to the third day of the Sirozah, mainly focuses on the glorification of Asha Vahishta. Ardibehesht, also known as Ordibehesht, is the Parsi form for Asha Vahishta (Darmesteter 1883, 41). Ahura Mazda said to Zoroaster, “That thou mayest increase Asha Vahishta, O Spitama Zarathustra, with hymns of praise, with performance of the office, with invocations, holy words, sacrifice, blessings, and adoration – once to abide in the shining luminous space, in the beautiful abodes – for the sacrifice and invocation of us, the Amesha Spentas” (Yasht 3.1; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 42). Zoroaster said, “Say unto me the right words, such as they are, O Ahura Mazda, that I may increase Asha Vahishta, with hymns of praise, with performance of the office, with invocations, holy words, sacrifice, blessings, and adoration, once to abide in the shining luminous space, in the beautiful abodes, for the sacrifice and invocation of you, the Amesha Spentas” (Yasht 3.2; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 42-43). Asha Vahishta is a force against sickness, darkness, and falsehood.

The Khordad Yasht, which corresponds to the sixth day of the Sirozah, begins with praise for Haurvatat.<sup>190</sup> “Ahura Mazda said to Zarathustra, I created for the faithful

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<sup>189</sup> Rama Hvastra, also known in the Indian tradition as Vayu, refers to the god that gives good folds and good pastures to cattle, and as a good shepherd, acquired a connection to Mithra, the lord of the wide pastures (Darmesteter 1879, xiv and 23).

<sup>190</sup> The fourth (Shahrevar), fifth (Sepandarmad), seventh (Mordad), eighth (Dai pa Adar), ninth (Adar), fifteenth (Dai pa Mihir), twenty second (Bad), twenty third (Dai pa Din), twenty seventh (Asman), twenty ninth (Mahraspand), and thirtieth (Aneran) day of the Sirozah are all missing their corresponding Yashts.

the help, the enjoyments, the comforts, and the pleasures of Haurvatat. We united them with him who would come up to thee as one of the Amesha Spentas, as he would come to any of the Amesha Spentas, Vohu Manah, Asha Vahishta, Kshathra Vairya, Spenta Armaiti, Haurvatat, and Ameretat” (Yasht 4.1; Darmesteter 1883, 49). The second part of the Khordad Yasht emphasizes the importance of the Bareshnum rituals. Zoroaster asked how does the way of the faithful diverge from the way of the wicked, and Ahura Mazda answered, “It is when a man pronouncing my spell, either reading or reciting it by heart, draws the furrows (for the Bareshnum purification) and hides there himself” (Yasht 4.5; Darmesteter 1883, 50). The Bareshnum ritual is also mentioned in the ninth Fargard (chapter) of the Vendidad, which consists of a series of ceremonial baths that coincide with various recitations of important hymns from the Yasna by both a priest and the main participant (Fargard 9.1-36; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 119-129, Yasna 20.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 266-267, and Yasna 49.10; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914).

The Aban Yasht, which corresponds to the tenth day of the Sirozah, is devoted to Ardvi Sura Anahita, the great goddess of the waters, (Darmesteter 1883, 52). This is one of the longest and apparently most ancient of the Yashts. Ahura Mazda said, “Offer up a sacrifice, O Spitama Zarathustra, unto this spring of mine, Ardvi Sura Anahita, the wide-expanding and health-giving, who hates the Daevas and obeys the laws of Ahura, who is worthy of sacrifice in the material world; life increasing and holy, the herd-increasing and holy, the fold-increasing and holy, the wealth-increasing and holy, the country-increasing and holy” (Yasht 5.1; Darmesteter 1883, 54). The Aban Yasht also contains a reference



to Airyana Vaego (Iran Vaej), which refers to the area inhabited by the Aryans (Fargard 1.3; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 4-5). “To her (Anahita) did the Maker Ahura Mazda offer up a sacrifice in the Airyana Vaegah, by the good river Daitya, with the Haoma and meat, with the baresma, the wisdom of the tongue, with the holy spells, with the words, with the deeds, with the libations, and with the rightly-spoken words” (Yasht 5.17; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 57). The Aban Yasht portrays Anahita as a beautiful strong maiden, with beautiful white arms, clad in beaver skins, who drives a chariot drawn by four horses – wind (*vayu*), rain, cloud, and sleet (Yasht 5.7; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 55, Yasht 5.11; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 56, Yasht 5.120; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 81, and Boyce 1975, 72).

The Khorshed Yasht is devoted to the sun and corresponds to the eleventh day of the Sirozah. Khorshed means sun in Farsi. “We sacrifice unto the undying, shining, swift-horsed Sun” (Yasht 6.1; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 85). “When the sun rises up, then the earth, made by Ahura, becomes clean, the running waters become clean, the waters of the wells become clean, the waters of the sea become clean, the standing waters become clean; the holy creatures, the creatures of the Good Spirit, become clean” (Yasht 6.2; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 86). The Khorshed Yasht also offers sacrifice to Mithra, the “lord of the wide pastures, who has a thousand ears, ten thousand eyes” (Yasht 6.5; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 86-87).

The Mah Yasht is devoted to the moon and corresponds to the twelfth day of the Sirozah. Mash means moon in Farsi. “Hail to Ahura Mazda! Hail to the Amesha Spentas! Hail to the Moon that keeps in it the seed of the sacred Bull! Hail to thee when we look at thee! Hail to thee when thou lookest at us” (Yasht 7.1; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 89). When asked how the moon waxes and wanes, Ahura Mazda said, “For fifteen days does the moon wax; for fifteen days does the moon wane, as long as her waxing, so long is the waning; as long as her waning, so long is the waxing” (Yasht 7.2; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 89).

The Tir Yasht is devoted to the stars. It corresponds to the thirteenth day of the Sirozah. Ahura Mazda said unto Zoroaster, “We worship the lordship and mastership [of Tistrya], whereby he protects the Moon, the dwelling, the food, when my glorious stars come along and impart their gifts to men, and I will sacrifice unto the star Tistrya, that gives the fields their share [of waters] (Yasht 8.1; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 92). “We sacrifice unto Tistrya, the bright and glorious star, that afflicts the Pairikas, that vexes the Pairikas, who, in the shape of worm stars, fly between the earth and the heavens, in the sea Vouru Kasha, the powerful sea, the large-sized, deep sea of salt waters” (Yasht 8.8; Darmesteter 1883, 95-96). Pairika, also known as pari, refers to a deceptively beautiful female daeva. It is rooted in the demonic pattern of shooting stars which are described as witches [pairikas] that hover beneath earth and sky (Yasht 8.8; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 95-96 and Lincoln 2009, 279). As Antonio Panaino has shown, the sinister shooting stars

in question are to be understood as the seasonal meteor showers of late summer, associated with the period of drought that normally ends when Sirius gains ascendance and the meteor showers desist (Panaino 1990, 97 and Panaino 1995, 1, and 19-23). The image thus aligns another set of binary oppositions—Sirius versus the meteors, the moist versus the dry, healthy versus unhealthy times of the year, divine versus demonic forces—giving particular stress to the contrast between two different forms of celestial motion (Lincoln 2009, 275).

The Gos Yasht corresponds to the fourteenth day of the month. The Gos Yasht is devoted to the cow, as a symbol of the animal kingdom which she maintains and protects (Darmesteter 1883, 110). Gos, the cow, is also called Drvaspa and Gosurun: Drvaspa means ‘she who keeps horses in health,’ and is nothing more than an epithet of Gos: Gosurun (from the Avestai Geus urvan) which means ‘the soul of the bull’ (the primeval Bull)” (Darmesteter 1883, 110). “We sacrifice unto the powerful Drvaspa, made by Mazda and holy, who keep the flocks in health, the young ones in health; who watches well from afar, with a wide-spread and long-continued welfare-giving friendship” (Yasht 9.1; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 111). The majority of the Gos Yasht consists of prayers addressed to Drvaspa by the Iranian heroes, Haoshyangha, Yima, Thraetaona, Haoma, Husravah, Zarathustra, and Vishtaspa (Darmesteter 1883, 110).<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Haoshyangha has the epithet *Paradhata*, thought to mean the “first appointed,” that is, to rule over the world (Boyce 1975, 104). Thraetaona is invoked for warding off fevers and maladies, and in living Zoroastrian observance it is he who, as King Fredon (Faridun), is turned to for help, through religious services, prayers and amulets, to keep away or cure sickness (Boyce 1975, 98). Husravah, also known as

The Mihir Yasht is devoted to Mithra, and corresponds to the sixteenth day of the Sirozah.<sup>192</sup> “The ruffian who lies unto Mithra brings death unto the whole country, injuring as much of the faithful world as a hundred evil-doers could do.”<sup>193</sup> Break not the contract, O Spitama, neither the one that thou hadst entered into with one of the unfaithful, nor the one that thou hadst entered into with one of the faithful who is one of thy own faith, for Mithra stands for both the faithful and the unfaithful” (Yasht 10.2; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 120). “For his brightness and glory, I will offer him a sacrifice worth being heard; we sacrifice unto Mithra, the lord of the wide pastures, sleepless, and ever awake” (Yasht 10.11-12; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 122).

Some of the latter passages of the Mihir Yasht seem to provide a short account of the social constitution and morals of Zoroastrian Iran (Darmesteter 1883, 149). “O Mithra, lord of the wide pastures, thou master of the house, of the borough, of the town, of the country, thou Zarathustrotema (chief of the sacerdotal order, the so-called Maubedanmaused). Mithra is twentyfold between two friends or two relations; Mithra is

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Khosrow, was an ancient Iranian King who “united the Arya nations into one kingdom” (Yasht 9.21; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 115).

<sup>192</sup> According to Darmesteter, the Mihir Yasht, one of the longest of the Avesta and one of the most interesting from a literary point of view, is not very instructive for mythology [history]. It consists of long descriptive pieces, sometimes rather spirited, and of fervent prayers and invocations for mercy or protection. Originally Mithra was the god of heavenly light; and in that character he knows the truth, as he sees everything; he is therefore taken as a witness of truth, he is the preserver of oaths and good faith; he chastises those who break their promises and lie to Mithra, and destroys their houses and smites them in battle. Particularly interesting are Yashts 10.115-10.118, as giving a sketch of moral hierarchy in Iran, and Yasht 10.121-122, as being perhaps the source of the (priestly initiation) trials in the later Roman Mithraicism (Mithraism) (Darmesteter 1883, 119, Yasht 10.12; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 122, Yasht 10.115-118; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 149-150, and Yasht 10.121-122; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 151-152).

<sup>193</sup> The Mithradrug [Mithra-deceiver]: one might translate “who breaks the contract,” since Mithra, as a common noun, means “a contract” (Darmesteter 1883, 120).

thirtyfold between two men of the same group; Mithra is fortyfold between two partners; Mithra is fiftyfold between wife and husband; Mithra is sixtyfold between two pupils (of the same master); Mithra is seventyfold between the pupil and his master; Mithra is eightyfold between the son-in-law and his father-in-law; Mithra is ninetyfold between two brothers; Mithra is a hundredfold between the father and the son; Mithra is a thousandfold between two nations; Mithra is ten thousandfold when connected with the Law of Mazda (the contract between the faithful and the Law, the covenant), and then he will be every day of victorious strength” (Yasht 10.115-117; Darmesteter 1883, 149-150). In this passage, Mithra (the contract) is twentyfold, that is, twenty times more strictly binding than between any two strangers, and thirtyfold between two men of the same group, etc. The metaphoric account of a moral contract (covenant) is a common theme in the Abrahamic tradition (Jeremiah 31.31 and Quran 2.40).

Darmesteter suggested that Yasht 10.121-122 may be the source of the trials and initiation rituals of later Roman Mithraicism (Mithraism) (Darmesteter 1883, 119).<sup>194</sup>

Zoroaster asked Ahura Mazda to tell him how the faithful man shall drink the libations

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<sup>194</sup> Early references to Christ as the sun, the prevalence of his sunlike halo in Christian art, and the Church’s decision to fix the commemoration of the Nativity on December 25 (a day traditionally celebrated by sun-worshippers as the annual “birth” of the sun following the winter solstice) all seem to point to some possible “solar” origin of Christianity. More specifically, particularly given the evangelical association of the Nativity with the Persian Magi, they may indicate some possible early contact between Christianity and Mithraism, a Persian religion that flourished throughout the Roman Empire during the second and third centuries, and which actually revolved around the cult of the sun. The correspondence between the Mithraist “day of the sun” and the day claimed by the Church to have been the day of the Resurrection may indeed have been purely coincidental. Nevertheless, its observance probably added to the Church’s legitimacy among Mithraists, who observed it anyway. Furthermore, particularly given the great popularity of Mithraism, it may have also contributed considerably to the Church’s success in proselytizing pagans throughout the Roman Empire (Zerubavel 1985, 25).

cleanly prepared in order to please Mithra, and Ahura Mazda replied, “Let them wash their bodies three days and three nights; let them undergo thirty strokes for the sacrifice and prayer unto Mithra, the lord of wide pastures. Let them wash their bodies two days and two nights; let them undergo twenty strokes for the sacrifice and prayer unto Mithra, the lord of the wide pastures. Let no man drink of these libations who does not know the staota yesnya (the last chapters of the Yasna): Visperatavo (the first words of the) Visperad (Visparad)” (Yasht 10.121-122; Darmesteter 1883, 151-152). The Visparad refers to a set of Younger Avestai prayers dedicated to the Yasna (Hintze 2002, 33). It contains evidence indicating that, by the time of its composition, the Gathas were already arranged in the sequence in which we have them today (Hintze 2002, 33). This sequence is also supported by the Vendidad (Fargard 10.4-10.12; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 134-136).

The Srosh Yasht is devoted to the Sraosha (spirit of divine worship), and corresponds to the seventeenth day of the Sirozah. Sraosha may be described as “observance” and “discipline,” as it shares many traits with its close companion, Mithra (Boyce 1975, 60). “In the Avesta, he is the only divinity to have two hymns in his honor (Yasna 57 and Yasht 11), and subsequently he became the only Zoroastrian divine being to be honored in Muslim Persia, where he is known as Saros (Soroush), the angel who carries messages between God and Man” (Boyce 1975, 60, Yasna 57.2; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 298, and Yasht 11.1; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 160). “We sacrifice unto the holy, tall-formed, fiend smiting Sraosha, who makes the world increase the holy and master of

holiness. Good prayer, excellent prayer to the worlds, O Zarathustra” (Yasht 11.1; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 160).

The Rashn Yasht is devoted to Rashnu Razista, “the truest True, who is the Genius of Truth” (Darmesteter 1883, 168). The Rashn Yasht corresponds to the eighteenth day of the Sirozah. Rashnu, is known as one of the three judges of the departed along with Mithra and Sraosha (Darmesteter 1883, 168). Ahura Mazda said, “The most glorious Holy Word (itself), this is what in the Holy Word is created true, what is created progress making, what is fit to discern, what is healthful, wise, and happy, what is more powerful to destroy than all other creatures” (Yasht 12.2; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 169). “We invoke, we bless Rashnu, the strong” (Yasht 12.5; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 170).

The Farvardin Yasht is devoted to the Fravashi, and corresponds to the nineteenth day of the Sirozah. As mentioned, Fravashi was originally the departed soul of a hero, the same as the Pitris of the Hindus or the Manes of the Latins, that is to say, the everlasting and deified souls of the dead (Darmesteter 1883, 179 and Boyce 2001, 15). According to Darmesteter, it is “the inner power of every being that maintains it and makes it grow and subsist” (Darmesteter 1883, 179). Ahura Mazda said to Zoroaster, “Do thou proclaim, O pure Zarathustra, the joy, vigor, and strength, the glory, the help, and the joy that are in the Fravashis of the faithful, the awful and overpowering Fravashis; do thou tell how they come to help me, how they bring assistance unto me, the awful Fravashis of the faithful” (Yasht 13.1; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 180).

The Bahram Yasht corresponds to the twentieth day of the Sirozah. Bahram is also known as Verethraghna, as well as the genius of truth. Bahram is characterized as a protector, “who is the best-armed of the heavenly gods” (Yasht 14.1; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 231-232). The Bahram Yasht describes the variety of ways in which Bahram reveals itself. “Verethraghna made by Ahura, came to him first, running in the shape of a strong, beautiful wind, made by Mazda; he bore the good Glory, made by Mazda, the Glory made by Mazda, that is health and strength” (Yasht 14.2; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 232). The power of the wind is associated with glory, also known as “Verethraghna, made by Ahura, who came to him the tenth time, running in the shape of a man, bright and beautiful, made by Mazda: he held a sword with a golden blade, inlaid with all sorts of ornaments” (Yasht 14.27; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 238).

The Ram Yasht is devoted to Rama Hvasra, the Genius who presides over the twenty first day of the Sirozah (Darmesteter 1883, 249). Rama Hvasra is praised as the expert of good abodes and good pastures (Yasht 15.15-16; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 252-253). However, the Ram Yasht mostly mentions Vayu, which as the atmosphere, is the place in which the conflict of the two principles takes place, one part of which belongs to the Evil Spirit (Yasht 15.1; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 250). Hence came later the notion that between Ormazd and Ahriman there is a void space or neutral zone known as Vai, in which their meeting takes place (Bundahishn 1.15; Anklesaria (Tr.) 1956, 47 and Darmesteter 1879, lxiv). The Ram Yasht ends with a special enumeration and



glorification of the names of Vayu (Yasht 15.42-58; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 258-263 and Darmesteter 1883, 249).

The Din Yasht is devoted to Daena (Din), who presides over the twenty fourth day of the Sirozah. Daena translates as “vision, insight, consciousness, and conscience.” As a person’s conscience, daena is the faculty which should see and determine proper conduct (Boyce 1975, 239). According to Darmesteter, Daena is the personification of the Zoroastrian Law or Religion (Darmesteter 1883, 264). In the Din Yasht, Daena is invoked in the company of Kista (religious knowledge), which is the knowledge that leads to bliss (Darmesteter 1883, 264). “We sacrifice to the most right Kista, made by Mazda and holy: we sacrifice to the good Law of the worshippers of Mazda, the supplier of good stores, who runs quickly to the goal and frees one best from dangers, who brings libations, who is holy, clever, and renowned, speedy to work and quick of work; who goes quickly and cleanses well; the good Law of the worshippers of Mazda” (Yasht 16.1; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 264-265).

The Ashi Yasht is devoted to Ashi Vanguhi or the good Ashi, which is a feminine personification of piety. She is, at the same time, the source of all the good and riches that are connected with piety (Darmesteter 1883, 270). Literally, ashī means the “thing attained,” which can ultimately be interpreted as fortune and recompense (Boyce 1975, 65). The Ashi Yasht corresponds to the twenty fifth day of the Sirozah. “We sacrifice to Ashi Vanguhi, who is shining, high, tall-formed, well worthy of sacrifice, with a loud-

sounding chariot, strong, welfare-giving, healing with fullness of intellect, and powerful” (Yasht 17.1; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 270).

The Astad Yasht is devoted to Arstat, which is Truthfulness. The Astad Yasht corresponds to the twenty sixth day of the Sirozah. Ahura Mazda said, “I made the Aryan Glory, rich in food, rich in flocks, rich in wealth, rich in Glory; provided with full store of intelligence, with full store of money, to withstand Need, and to withstand enemies” (Yasht 18.1; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 283). “Let Ashi, with fullness of welfare, follow the man who gladdens the faithful with his gifts (gives alms to the poor Mazdayasnians), she comes in, inside his family; she comes in, inside his fine royal place” (Yasht 18.4; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 284).

The Zamyad Yasht, which is inscribed to the Genius of the Earth, is devoted to a description of the mountains and the kingly Glory (Kavaem Hvareno) (Darmesteter 1883, 286). The Zamyad Yasht corresponds to the twenty eighth day of the Sirozah. “The first mountain that rose up out of the earth, O Spitama Zarathustra, was the Haraiti Barez (Alborz Mountain Range). That mountain stretches all along the shores of the land washed by the waters (of the Caspian Sea) towards the east” (Yasht 19.1; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 287). “I bless the sacrifice and prayer, and the strength and vigor of Mount Ushi Darena, made by Mazda, the seat of holy happiness; of the kingly Glory, made by Mazda; of the Glory that cannot be forcibly seized, made by Mazda” (Yasht 19.97; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 308-309). Mount Ushi Darena refers to the Mountain of Understanding which is located in Seistan (Sistan) (Bundahishn 9.18; Anklesaria (Tr.)

1956, 76). The Zamyad Yasht is the final Yasht which corresponds to the Sirozah. The twentieth Yasht is a supplement to the Tir Yasht which ought to follow immediately after it is recited (Darmesteter 1883, 310). The twenty first and twenty second Yashts are fragments.<sup>195</sup>

### **Post-Achaemenian Sources**

During the Ashkanian (Parthian) period (248 BCE-224 CE), Zoroastrian scholars compiled mixed sets of prose texts in late Younger Avestai. This collection is known as the *Vi Daevo Data* (Videvdat), later corrupted to the *Vendidad* (Boyce 1975, 274). These texts were concerned with the laws of purity, and its name means “the antithesis of evil spirit” (Boyce 1984, 2). This is the only congregational text that is not recited entirely from memory. The ancient Avesta as presented by Zoroaster to Vishtaspa, king of Bactria, was supposed to have been composed of twenty-one books, the greater part of which was burnt by Alexander the Great (Darmesteter 1879, xxxii). After the death of Alexander the priests from the Zoroastrian religion met together, and by collecting the various fragments that had escaped the ravages of the war and other that they knew by heart, they formed the present collection, which is a very small part of the original book,

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<sup>195</sup> The fragment of the twenty first Yasht is a eulogy of the Ashem Vohu prayer (Darmesteter 1883, 311). The fragment of the twenty second Yasht is a description of the fate that attends the soul of the righteous and the soul of the wicked after death (Darmesteter 1883, 314). When one of the faith departs this life, its soul “takes its seat near the head, singing the Ushtavaiti Gatha and proclaiming happiness: ‘Happy is he, happy the man, whoever he be, to whom Ahura Mazda gives the full accomplishment of his wishes!’ On that night his soul tastes as much of pleasure as the whole of the living world can taste” (Yasht 22.1-2; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 314). The Ushtavaiti Gatha refers to the second set of the Gathas which begins with the word “ushta” (Yasna 43.1; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914). In contrast, when the soul of a wicked person departs this life, it tastes as much suffering as the whole of the living world can taste (Yasht 22.20; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1883, 318).

as out of the twenty-one books there was only one that was preserved in its entirety, the Vendidad (Darmesteter 1879, xxxii).

The Vendidad functions as a code or manual for Zoroastrian priests. As mentioned, it is one of twenty one volumes, but the only one that was preserved in its entirety. It is linguistically distinct from Avestai and Younger Avestai portions of the Avesta which suggests that it was originally composed shortly before the development of the Median and Persian Empires. The Vendidad has often been described as the book of the laws of the Parsis; it may be more exactly called the code of purification, a description, however, which is itself only so far correct that the laws of purification are the object of the largest part of the book (Darmesteter 1879, xxxiii). According to Mary Boyce, the Videvdat, “the code abjuring daevas, is a collection of miscellaneous pieces of varying antiquity, put together at some relatively late date to form a night office celebrated to smite the powers of darkness” (Boyce 1975, 274). The core sections of the Videvdat concern “the purity laws, to which were added various heterogeneous works such as the first *fargard*” (Boyce 1975, 274).

The first *fargard* (chapter) begins with a dialogue between Ahura Mazda and Zoroaster. As it says in the first line of the Vendidad, “Ahura Mazda spake unto Spitama Zarathustra, saying: I have made every land dear to its dwellers, even though it had no charms whatever in it, had I not made every land dear to its dwellers, even though it had no charms whatever in it, then the whole living world would have invaded Airyana Vaego” (Fargard 1.1-2; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 4). “The first of the good lands and

countries which I, Ahura Mazda created, was the Airyana Vaego, by the good river Daitya” (Fargard 1.3; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 4-5). Airyana Vaego (Iran Vaej) refers to the area inhabited by the Aryans. “Thereupon came Angra Mainyu, who is all death, and he counter-created by his witchcraft the serpent in the river and winter, a work of the Daevas” (Fargard 1.3; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 5). “There are ten winter months there, two summer months, and those are cold for the waters, cold for the earth, cold for the trees. [So] winter falls there with the worst of plagues” (Fargard 1.4; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 5).<sup>196</sup>

Airyana Vaego is the first of sixteen other “good lands” which were described in the first chapter of the Vendidad. “Various suggestions have been made as to why this list was originally drawn up, the most reasonable (in the light of its preservation as a religious work) seeming to be that these were lands which early accepted Zoroastrianism (though later, evidently, than the wholly unknown regions named in the Farvardin Yasht)” (Boyce 1975, 275).<sup>197</sup> “The second of the good lands which I, Ahura Mazda, created, was the plains in Sughdha (Soghd)” (Fargard 1.5; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 5). “Thereupon came Angra Mainyu, who is all death, and he counter-created by his

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<sup>196</sup> In the Zoroastrian tradition, “it is known that [in the ordinary course of nature] there are seven months of summer [relatively warm weather] and five months of winter [relatively cold weather]” (Bundahishn 25.1-26; Anklesaria (Tr.) 1956, 114-115 and Darmesteter 1879, 5).

<sup>197</sup> “Khwarezmia does not appear among them; and its absence has been explained as due to its identification, as the land of the prophet’s own people, with Airyanem Vaejah (Airyanem Vaego), the traditional homeland of the Aryans, where all the greatest events in their prehistory were held to have taken place – although it must be admitted that the lines devoted to Airyanem Vaejah, which introduce the text, are plainly late in composition” (Boyce 1975, 4 and 275).

witchcraft the fly Skaitya (cattle fly), which brings death to the cattle” (Fargard 1.5; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 6).

The third of the good lands Ahura Mazda created refers to Margu, also known as Merv and Margiana, which is an area that overlaps with modern day Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. “The third of the good lands and countries which I, Ahura Mazda, created, was the strong, holy Mouru, [and] thereupon came Angra Mainyu, who is all death, and he counter created-by his witchcraft sinful lusts” (Fargard 1.6; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 6). The fourth of the good lands refers to Bakhdhi, also known as Bakhtri, Bactria, and Balkh, which is a region in Northern Afghanistan. “Thereupon came Angra Mainyu, who is all death and he counter-created by his witchcraft, the Bravara” (Fargard 1.7; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 6).<sup>198</sup>

Bactria and Margiana is the site of the Bactria-Margiana Archeological Complex, which is a modern label for a Bronze Age civilization which dates back to 2200 BCE, and faded away some 500 years later (Lawler 2003, 979). “Four thousand years ago along the banks of the ancient Oxus River, which now separates Afghanistan from Uzbekistan, there were people who lived in vast compounds protected by high walls, produced their own bronzes, ceramics, and stone seals, and traded their wares as far as the Persian Gulf and Palestine” (Lawler 2003, 979).<sup>199</sup> “When the Persians arrived in

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<sup>198</sup> Bravara refers to the “corn carrying ant” (Fargard 14.5; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 167).

<sup>199</sup> Although these people would have been key players in Bronze Age Central Asia, their civilization remains an enigma due to twentieth century politics. For decades Soviet archeologists labored in this region but revealed little to their Western colleagues, and the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the

these regions, however, in the mid sixth century BCE, the dominant power seems to have been Bactria; and a legend persisted, down into Sassanian times and beyond, which associated both Zoroaster and his patron Vishtaspa with the Bactrian capital of Balkh” (Boyce 1975, 275-276). “Presumably this, like the legend which set the *kavis* in Seistan (Sistan) and made the Hamun Lake holy, was a product of that mixture of piety and patriotism which led various Zoroastrian peoples to associate the prophet with their own homelands” (Boyce 1975, 276).

The fifth of the good lands Ahura Mazda created was Nisaya, which lies between Mouru and Bakhdhi, where Angra Mainyu counter-created “the sin of unbelief” (Fargard 1.8; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 6). The sixth of the good lands Ahura Mazda created was Haroyu (Herat) with its (river) lake, where Angra Mainyu counter-created the stained mosquito (Fargard 1.9; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 6-7). The seventh of the good lands Ahura Mazda created was Vaekereta, of the evil shadows, where Angra Mainyu counter-created “the Pairika Knathaiti, who clave unto Keresaspa” (Fargard 1.10; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 7). According to Darmesteter, it is possible that in later traditions, the accounts of the seventh land were localized to Kabulistan, also known as Kapul and

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Iranian revolution closed off those countries for study. Now a growing number of scientists are focusing their attention on what is dubbed the Bactrian-Margiana Archeological Complex (BMAC) to understand its extent and its influence on the neighboring Mesopotamian and Indus civilizations. Material from BMAC had long been found in archeological sites across the region, but researchers did not know where it originated. The collapse of the Soviet Union and now the cautious re-opening of Iran give Western scientists a chance to explore this neglected culture, which left traces across the Middle East and likely reached far beyond the confines of the Asian steppes (Lawler 2003, 979).

Kabul, which is the largest city in Afghanistan. The eighth of the good lands Ahura Mazda created was Urva of the rich pastures, whereupon Angra Mainyu counter-created pride and tyranny (Fargard 1.11; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 7).

The ninth of the good lands Ahura Mazda created was Khnenta in Vehrkana, and thereupon Angra Mainyu created “a sin for which there is no atonement, [which is] the unnatural sin” (Fargard 1.12; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 7). Vehrkana is also known as Varkana, Hyrcania, and Gorgan, which means land of the wolves in Farsi.<sup>200</sup> The tenth of the good lands created by Ahura Mazda was the beautiful Harahvaiti, where Angra Mainyu counter-created a sin for which there is no atonement, the burying of the dead (Fargard 1.13; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 7-8).<sup>201</sup> Harahvaiti is also known as Harût, Arakhaj, and Arachoisia (Boyce 1975, 274-275). The eleventh of the good lands Ahura Mazda created was Haetumant (Sistan), where Angra Mainyu counter-created the evil witchcraft of the Yatus (wizards) (Fargard 1.14; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 8). The twelfth of the good lands Ahura Mazda created was Ragha (Rai) of the three races, where Angra Mainyu counter-created the sin of utter unbelief (in which they doubt themselves and cause other people to doubt) (Fargard 1.16; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 8).

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<sup>200</sup> Khnenta refers to a river in Vehrkana, consequently the river Gorgan (Darmesteter 1879, 7). Gorgan possibly refers to a large area around the southeastern shore of the Caspian Sea which is part of Iran and Turkmenistan. This area includes the city of Gorgan, which was formerly known as Astarabad up until 1937. The city of Gorgan is located in the province of Golestan, which is known for a heavy presence of wolves.

<sup>201</sup> Zoroastrians associate a corpse with impurity, so they avoid instances in which a corpse will defile the earth and fire.



The thirteenth of the good lands Ahura Mazda created was the strong, holy Kakhra, where Angra Mainyu created a sin for which there is no atonement, the burning of corpses (Fargard 1.17; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 8-9). The fourteenth of the good lands Ahura Mazda created “was the four-cornered Varena, for which was born Thraetaona, who smote Azis Dahaka” (Fargard 1.18; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 9). The fifteenth of the good lands Ahura Mazda created was the Seven Rivers, or the basin of the affluents of the Indus, also known as Panjab, which means Five Rivers (Fargard 1.19; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 9). Thereupon Angra Mainyu counter-created “abnormal issues in women and excessive heat” (Fargard 1.19; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 9). The sixteenth of the good lands Ahura Mazda created was the land by the floods of the Rangha, where people live without a head, and thereupon Angra Mainyu counter-created by his witchcraft winter, a work of the Daevas (Fargard 1.20; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 9).<sup>202</sup> “There are still other lands and countries, beautiful and deep, desirable and bright, and thriving” (Fargard 1.21; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 10).

The second chapter of the Vendidad begins with Zoroaster asking about the first mortal who conversed with Ahura Mazda. “The fair Yima, the great shepherd, O holy Zarathustra, he was the first mortal, before thee, Zarathustra, with whom I, Ahura Mazda, did converse, whom I taught the law of Ahura, the law of Zarathustra” (Fargard 2.2;

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<sup>202</sup> The expression “people without a head” could be a political metaphor which describes a people without a chief, or a “rebel against the law,” which would apply in the Sassanian ages to the people of Arvasthan-i-Rum (Eastern Mesopotamia), but it could also be a literal expression of mythic origin based on tales which can be traced back to ancient Indian and Greek traditions (Darmesteter 1879, 10).

Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 11). According to the Vendidad, after Yima claimed that he could be the preacher and bearer of the law of Ahura, Ahura Mazda said, “then make thou my worlds thrive, make my worlds increase: undertake thou to nourish, to rule, and watch over my world” (Fargard 2.3-4; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 12). “On the approach of dire winter, which is to destroy every living creature, Yima, being advised by Ahura, builds a Vara (also Var, meaning boat) to keep there the seeds of every kind of animals and plants, and the blessed live there a most happy life under his rule” (Darmesteter 1879, 10). In the “Mazdaean cosmology, the world was made to end by fire, so this dire winter was no longer the last incident of its life, and therefore, the Var of Yima came to be nothing more than a sort of Noah’s ark” (Darmesteter 1879, 11).

The third chapter of the Vendidad begins with Zoroaster asking about the conditions which support and harm the Earth. Ahura Mazda replied, the first place is whereon one of the faithful steps forward, O Spitama Zarathustra, with the holy wood in his hand, the baresma in his hand, the holy meat in his hand, the holy mortar in his hand, fulfills the law with love, and beseeching aloud Mithra, the lord of the wide pastures, and Rama Hvastra (Fargard 3.1; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 22-23). The second place is “whereon one of the faithful erects a house with a priest within, with cattle, with a wife, with children, and good herds, within; and wherein afterwards, cattle go on thriving, the dog is thriving, the wife is thriving, the child is thriving, the fire is thriving, and every blessing of life is thriving” (Fargard 3.2-3; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 23). In contrast, the

first place where the Earth feels the sorest grief is the place where the hosts of fiends rush forth from the burrow of Drug, followed by a place wherein most corpses of dogs and men lie buried (Fargard 3.7-8; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 24).<sup>203</sup> The third part of this chapter contains funeral laws, one of which states, “Let no man alone by himself carry a corpse” (Fargard 3.44; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 26). In the Zoroastrian tradition, in general no ceremony can be performed by one person alone (Darmesteter 1879, 26).

The fourth chapter of the Vendidad concerns contractual conduct. “He that does not restore (a thing lent), when it is asked for back again, steals the thing; he robs the man” (Fargard 4.1; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 34). It includes the six types of contracts with Ahura Mazda, which begins with the “word contract,” followed by the “hand contract,” which could literally be a handshake which confirms that people will keep their word (Fargard 4.2; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 34-35). The hand contract is backed by a contract for the price of a sheep, followed by an ox, a man (cost of marriage or a contract between teacher and pupil), and a field (Fargard 4.2; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 34-35).

Chapters five through twelve of the Vendidad deal chiefly with uncleanness arising from the dead, and with the means of removing it from men and things. In the fifth chapter of the Vendidad, Ahura Mazda makes it clear that a person shall not be held responsible for building a fire using wood that contains pieces of a corpse that were carried by an animal or otherwise wound up on the wood through natural forces (Fargard

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<sup>203</sup> Drug, also written as druj, means deception.

5.1-3; Darmesteter 1879 (Tr.), 49). In addition, a person is also not held responsible if dead matter winds up in a river (Fargard 5.5-6; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 50). “There is no sin upon a man for any dead matter that has been brought by dogs, by birds, by wolves, by winds, or by flies” (Fargard 5.3; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 49).

The sixth chapter of the Vendidad provides instructions on how to maintain the purity of the elements when laying a body to rest. It mentions that the earth remains unclean for a year when defiled by the dead, and provides specific instructions on how to cleanse water and Haoma (Fargard 6.1-43; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 66-72).<sup>204</sup> In order to properly lay a body to rest, “the worshippers of Ahura Mazda shall erect a building out of the reach of the dog, of the fox, and of the wolf, and wherein rain water cannot stay” (Fargard 6.50; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 73). If they cannot afford it, “they shall lay down the dead man on the ground, on his carpet and his pillow, clothed with the light of heaven, and beholding the sun” (Fargard 6.51; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 74).

The seventh chapter of the Vendidad mainly deals with the impurity of death when it takes hold of a corpse. Ahura Mazda told Zoroaster that impurity rushes upon the corpse immediately after death (Fargard 7.2; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 75). Zoroaster then asks if a person can be clean again if he has eaten a dead dog or person, and Ahura

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<sup>204</sup> Since haoma is the plant of life; when strained for the sacrifice, it is the king of healing plants (Bundahishn 24.1; Anklesaria (Tr.) 1956, 109); the dead shall become immortal by tasting of the white haoma (Bundahishn 34.23; Anklesaria (Tr.) 1956, 141 and Darmesteter 1879, 72).

Mazda replies that the impurity “takes hold of him even to the end of nails, and he is unclean thenceforth, for ever and ever” (Fargard 7.23-24; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 79-80).

In the eighth chapter of the Vendidad, Zoroaster asked Ahura Mazda what worshippers shall do when a man dies under the timber-work of a house (Fargard 8.1; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 93). Ahura Mazda replied that they should remove the body and let the house stand after perfuming it with benzoin resin, aloe, pomegranate, or any other sweet smelling plants (Fargard 8.2; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 94). If the house is simply a small hut or a tent and they “find it easier to remove the house than to remove the dead, they shall take away the house, they shall let the dead lie on the spot, and they shall perfume the house with Urvasni (benzoin), Vohu kereti (aloe), Hadhanaepata (pomegranate), or any other sweet smelling plants” (Fargard 8.3; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 94).

The ninth chapter of the Vendidad describes the ceremony of the “nine nights,” also known as the Barashnum nu shaba. “Although it was initially intended to cleanse the man defiled by the dead, it became, during the Parsi period, a pious work which might be performed without any corpse having been touched” (Darmesteter 1879, 119). The word Bareshnum refers to the “top of the head, the skull,” the part of the body that is first to be washed (Fargard 9.15; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 119). As mentioned, the Bareshnum ceremony is a series of ritual baths which coincide with various recitations of important hymns from the Yasna by both a priest and the main participant (Fargard 9.1-

36; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 119-129, Yasna 20.1; Mills (Tr.) 1887, 266-267, and Yasna 49.10; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914).<sup>205</sup> Although the hymns which must be recited to cleanse oneself are mentioned in the ninth chapter of the Vendidad, the tenth and eleventh chapter of the Vendidad contain detailed lists of words and phrases from the Yasna which are to be spoken twice, thrice, or four times (Darmesteter 1879, 133). For instance, the first hymn of the Gathas is to be spoken twice but it is unclear whether it is to be repeated as often as the unclean one is washed, or whether they are intended to close the ceremony (Darmesteter 1879, 33, Fargard 10.4; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 134, and Yasna 28.1; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914).

In the twelfth chapter of the Vendidad, Ahura Mazda tells Zoroaster how long the impurity of death remains within the relatives of a recently deceased person along with additional instructions for cleansing them. If one's father or mother dies, the son for his father and the daughter for her mother, he or she shall stay for thirty days if they are righteous and sixty days if they are sinners (Fargard 12.1; Darmesteter 1879, 145). On this account, the relatives of the recently deceased were shut out of the frequented parts of the house (Darmesteter 1879, 144). After Zoroaster asked Ahura Mazda how he shall cleanse the house, Ahura Mazda answered, "They shall wash their bodies three times, they shall wash their clothes three times, they shall chant the Gathas three times, they shall offer up a sacrifice to my Fire, they shall offer up the bundles of the baresma, they

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<sup>205</sup> The Bareshnum ceremony involved the use of consecrated bull's urine which was a common disinfectant in the early history of soap production.

shall bring libations to the good waters; then the house shall be clean, and the waters may enter, then the fire may enter, and then the Amesha Spentas may enter, O Spitama Zarathustra” (Fargard 12.2; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 145).

The thirteenth chapter of the Vendidad offers praise for “the Dog.” The dog is “the good creature among the creatures of the good spirit that from midnight till the sun is up goes and kills thousands of the creatures of the evil spirit” (Fargard 13.1; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 152). The dog has always been a valuable ally for shepherds who were hoping to deter attacks from wolves and thieves (Fargard 13.17; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 156). The followers of Ahura Mazda are advised to treat all dogs well and feed them good food even if they are stray dogs who are unable to protect sheep (Fargard 13.19-22; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 156-157).<sup>206</sup>

According to the Vendidad, a dog has the character of eight different sorts of people, beginning with a priest, warrior, husbandman, strolling singer, thief, wild beast, courtesan, and child (Fargard 13.44; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 161-162). “He eats broken food, like a (wandering) priest, he is grateful, like a priest, he is easily satisfied, like a priest; he wants only a small piece of bread, like a priest; in these things he is like unto a

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<sup>206</sup> When Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda about which is more deserving of death, between a wolf that is born of a he-dog and of a she-wolf or the one that is born of a she-dog and of a he-wolf, Ahura Mazda answered that they could both be shepherd’s dogs or house dogs, but they can also be more murderous, more mischievous, and more destructive to the folds than any other wolves (Fargard 13.41-43; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 161).

priest” (Fargard 13.45; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 162). Similar to a warrior, the dog marches in front, fights for the beneficent cow, and is first out of the house (Fargard 13.45; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 162). Like a husbandman, the dog is watchful and sleeps lightly, is the first out of the house, and returns last into the house (Fargard 13.46; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 162). Like a strolling singer, the dog sings, he is intrusive, meager, and poor (Fargard 13.46; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 162). Like a thief and a beast, he likes the darkness, he prowls about in darkness, and he is a shameless eater; an unfaithful keeper (Fargard 13.47; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 162-163). Like the courtesan, he is intrusive, walks about the roads, he is meager and poor (Fargard 13.48; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 163). Finally, like a child, he likes sleeping, he is apt to run away, he is full of tongue, and he goes on all fours (Fargard 13.48; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 163).

The fourteenth chapter of the Vendidad is an appendix to the last clauses of the previous chapter, which provides a full length description for the atonement of a murder of a water dog (Darmesteter 1879, 165).<sup>207</sup> The water dog is the holiest of all dogs, as it is a link between the dog and God (Darmesteter 1879, 165). The process of atonement is extraordinary, which includes the provision of thousands of loads of wood, scented plants, water, fresh clean meat, and the capture of ten thousand specific species that were

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<sup>207</sup> At the end of the thirteenth chapter, Zarathustra asks Ahura Mazda what happens to the ghost of a dog when it dies (Fargard 13.50; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 163-164). “Ahura Mazda answered, it passes to the spring of the waters, and there out of every thousand dogs and every thousand she-dogs, two water dogs are formed, a water dog and a water she-dog” (Fargard 13.51; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 164). A person who kills a water dog brings about a drought that dries up pastures (Fargard 13.52; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 164).



detested, such as snakes, tortoises, frogs, water frogs, corn-carrying ants, and flies (Fargard 14.2-12; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 165-170). While there seems to be no atonement for the senseless murder of a water dog, this passage suggests that everything in the *Vendidad* is not meant to be taken literally.

The fifteenth chapter of the *Vendidad* describes five major sins which justify severe punishment. These punishments include heavy payments, and it is possible that the riches of the fire-temples came from these sources (Darmesteter 1879, xcix). The first of the five sins is when a man knowingly teaches one of the faithful a foreign, wrong creed, or a foreign wrong law (Fargard 15.2; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 172). The second of these sins is when a person feeds a dog food that is too hot or bones that are too hard (Fargard 15.3; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 173). The third of these sins is to chase or intimidate the mother of newborn puppies which could eventually harm the puppies or lead to the mother's death (Fargard 15.6; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 173). The fourth of these sins is when "a man has intercourse with a woman who has an issue of blood, either out of the ordinary course or at the usual period" (Fargard 15.7; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 173). The fifth of these sins is when "a man has intercourse with a woman quick with child, whether the milk has already come to her breasts or has not yet come" (Fargard 15.8; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 173-174).

After identifying the five major sins, the fifteenth chapter seems to discourage drug induced abortions. "If a man come near unto a damsel, either dependent on the

chief of the family or not dependent, either delivered unto a husband or not delivered, and she conceives by him, let her not, from the dread of the people, produce in herself the menses, against the course of nature, by means of water and plants” (Fargard 15.10; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 174). It also says that the father is equally responsible for such an act, as well as any other person who provides assistance (Fargard 15.12-14; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 175). A man is also responsible for the life of the child if he does not support the mother until the child is born (Fargard 15.15; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 176). “If a mother is left without support it lies with the faithful to watch over her in the same way that they would look after every pregnant female, either two-footed or four-footed, either woman, or [animal]” (Fargard 15.19; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 176).

The sixteenth chapter of the Vendidad is concerned with the uncleanness of women during their sickness. A man who brings a woman food during this period should keep a distance of three paces (Fargard 16.6; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 182).<sup>208</sup> The seventeenth chapter of the Vendidad is concerned with hair and nails. Since hair and nails are considered dead matter, the Zoroastrians believed that they could strengthen the Daevas (Fargard 17.1-3; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 186-187).<sup>209</sup> Zoroastrians are advised to

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<sup>208</sup> The food is held out to her from a distance in a metal spoon (Darmesteter 1879, 182).

<sup>209</sup> “Chapter seventeen, which has given full scope to the ironical humor of many, is an invaluable document in the eyes of the mythologist, as he finds in it, if not the origin and explanation, at least the oldest record of world-wide superstitions. Not only in Bombay, but all over the world, people are found who believe that hair and nails are weapons in the hands of the evil one. The Estonians, on the shores of the Baltic, take the utmost care not to drop the pairings of their nails on the ground, lest the devil should pick them up, to make a visor to his cap, which will give him full power to injure men, unless the sign of the cross has been made over them. The Gauchos in the Chilean pampas fear to throw their hair to the winds, but deposit it in the holes dug in a wall. In Liège good people are advised not to throw their hair

dig a deep hole (ten fingers deep) and put the hair down there as they say aloud these fiend-smiting words, “Out of him by his piety Mazda made the plants grow up” (Fargard 17.5; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 187). They also dig a hole in similar fashion for nails (Fargard 17.7; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 187-188).

The eighteenth chapter of the Vendidad is concerned with the unworthy priest. “He who sleeps on throughout the night, neither performing the Yasna nor chanting the hymns, worshipping neither by word nor by deed, neither learning nor teaching, with a longing for (everlasting) life, he lies when he says, ‘I am an Athravan,’ do not call him an Athravan, O holy Zarathushtra!’ thus said Ahura Mazda” (Fargard 18.5; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 190). After Zoroaster asked what makes the unseen power of death increase, Ahura Mazda answered, “It is the man that teaches the wrong law (religion), it is the man who continues for three years without wearing the sacred girdle,<sup>210</sup> without chanting the Gathas, without worshipping the good waters” (Fargard 18.8-9; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 191).

In the nineteenth chapter of the Vendidad, Angra Mainyu remains unsuccessful in his attempts to deceive and harm Zoroaster. In response, Zoroaster stated, “The sacred mortar, the sacred cup, the Haoma, the Words taught by Mazda, these are my weapons,

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away, nor to leave it in the teeth of the comb, lest a witch take hold of it and cast a spell over them” (Darmesteter 1879, 186).

<sup>210</sup> The Kosti, also known as koshti and kushti, refers to a sacred girdle which must be worn by every Parsi man or woman, from their fifteenth year of age (Darmesteter 1879, 191).

my best weapons! By this Word will I strike, by this Word will I repel, by this weapon the good creatures (will strike and repel thee), O evil-doer, Angra Mainyu! To me Spenta Mainyu gave it, he gave it to me in the boundless Time; to me the Amesha Spentas, the all-ruling, the all beneficent, gave it” (Fargard 19.9; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 206-207). “Zoroaster chanted aloud the Ahuna Vairya. The holy Zoroaster said aloud: This I ask thee: teach me the truth, O Lord, which is the beginning of a Gathic hymn, in which Zarathustra applies to Ahura Mazda to be taught the mysteries of the world and of the law” (Fargard 19.10; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 207).<sup>211</sup>

The twentieth chapter of the Vendidad discusses “Thrita, the First Healer” (Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 219). Thrita was the “first of the healthful, the wise, the happy, the wealthy, the glorious, the strong man of yore, drove back sickness to sickness, drove back death to death, and first turned away the point of the poniard and the fire of fever from the bodies of mortals” (Fargard 20.2; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 220). The twenty first chapter of the Vendidad offers praise to the holy bull, the holy waters and rain, as well as the light of the sun, the moon, and the stars. As it says, “Let showers, shower down new waters, new earth, new trees, new health, and new healing powers” (Fargard 21.3; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 225). However, in the twenty second chapter of the Vendidad, Angra Mainyu created diseases which caused Ahura Mazda to apply for healing to the holy word and Airyaman. Ahura Mazda, the maker of all good things, made paradise,

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<sup>211</sup> As mentioned, the Ahuna Vairya is a prominent hymn in the Gathas (Yasna 44.1; Guthrie (Tr.) 1914).

but “then the ruffian looked at me, the ruffian Angra Mainyu, the deadly, wrought by his witchcraft nine diseases, and ninety, and nine hundred, and nine thousand, and nine times ten thousand diseases. So mayst thou heal me, O Mathra Spenta, thou most glorious one” (Fargard 22.1-2; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 230). “The will of the Lord is the law of holiness, and the riches of Vohu-Mano shall be given to him who works in this world for Mazda, and wields according to the will of Ahura the power he gave him to relieve the poor (Fargard 22.25; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 235). “Keep us from our hater, O Mazda and Spenta, perish, O fiendish Drug, perish away to the regions of the north, never more to give unto death the living world of the holy spirit” (Fargard 22.25; Darmesteter (Tr.) 1879, 235).

In addition to the Vendidad, there are various composite works and prayers such as the Nyayesh, the Gah, and the Little Avesta that were grouped together with all other major Zoroastrian works which established the “Great” Avesta. The Great Avesta included the sources mentioned above, some of which were previously unwritten. It also included stories about the life of Zoroaster, apocalyptic works, and sources for law, cosmogony, and scholastic science (Boyce 1984, 3). The Great Avesta was completed during the Sassanian period around the fifth and sixth century CE (Boyce 1984, 3).

The Sassanian authorities placed copies of the Great Avesta in the libraries of the chief fire temples but they were all destroyed during the Arab, Turkic, and Mongol invasions. However, the scope of its content is known from a detailed summary given in

the Denkard (Boyce 1984, 4). The Denkard (Acts of Religion) is a massive compilation of very diverse materials concerning the history of Zoroastrianism made in the ninth and tenth centuries (Boyce 1984, 4).<sup>212</sup> It was written in the Pahlavi script, which was the written form of Middle Farsi that was based on the Phoenician and Aramaic alphabet.<sup>213</sup> The first three books of the Denkard were edited by Adurbad of Emedan, who also wrote the remaining six books which are dated to 1020 CE (Sanjana 1874, 26). Various undated fragments of the Denkard survived through oral transmission and were rewritten centuries later by the Parsis. The only manuscript that is nearly complete is now in Bombay, dated to 1659 (Gignoux 1994, 284). The Denkard includes portions of a liturgical text, as well as two very cryptic and difficult works on priestly rituals (Boyce 1984, 3).

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<sup>212</sup> Dastur Peshotanji Behramji Sanjana, Darab Peshota Sanjana, and Ratanshah Kohiyar published an edition of the *Dinkard* in Bombay (1874) based on the fragments of the original compilation by Adurbad of Emedan dated to 1020 CE.

<sup>213</sup> Iranians refer to their language as “Farsi,” which is known in English as “Persian.”

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