

# IRIDISCENT IRAN: PERSIAN PALIMPSEST, MAZDEAN MOSAIC

*Burzine Waghmar*

Statecraft, hegemony, the arts of war, fine cuisine and the composition of dishes, medicine, clothing, public works, *savoir-vivre*, chanting, oratory, intelligence, perfect cleanliness and appearance, and royal gravitas, in all of which the precedence is theirs [= Persians].

— Mas'udi, *Akhbar al-zaman*<sup>1</sup>

If faith [*iman*] were hung from the Pleaides, then men of Persia would obtain it.

— Prophetic *hadith* [saying]<sup>2</sup>

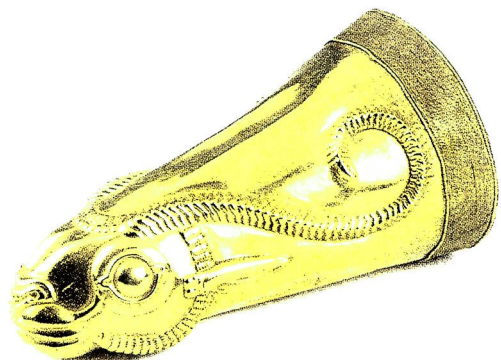
Despite the glories of art and literature produced by the Iranian peoples, the Zoroastrian religion must be acknowledged as their greatest cultural and spiritual achievement.

— Ehsan Yarshater<sup>3</sup>

Zoroastrianism's near-fatal encounter with Islam left it a remarkable remnant by the historical wayside.<sup>4</sup> It lacked recuperative power, following the Arab annexation of Iran, but just as Hellenic civilisation was to Christianity, its three-millennia-old legacy transformed Islam, a tribal cult, into an international credo with an unassailably Iranian impress. Early Islamic theology, whether as a receiver or rejecter of its dualist philosophical attitudes, was remoulded

considerably if unconsciously.<sup>5</sup> No less uninfluenced were Islam's Abrahamic forebears, Judaism and Christianity. For R. C. Zaehner observed:<sup>6</sup> "The importance of Zoroastrianism, however, like that of Judaism, lies not in the number of those who profess it, but rather in the influence it has exercised on other religions, and particularly on Christianity [which] claims to be the heir of the prophets of Israel. If there is any truth in this claim, it is no less heir to the Prophet of ancient Iran, little though most Christians are aware of this fact. ...Zoroastrianism has practically vanished from the world today, but much of what the Iranian prophet taught lives in no less than three great religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam."<sup>7</sup>

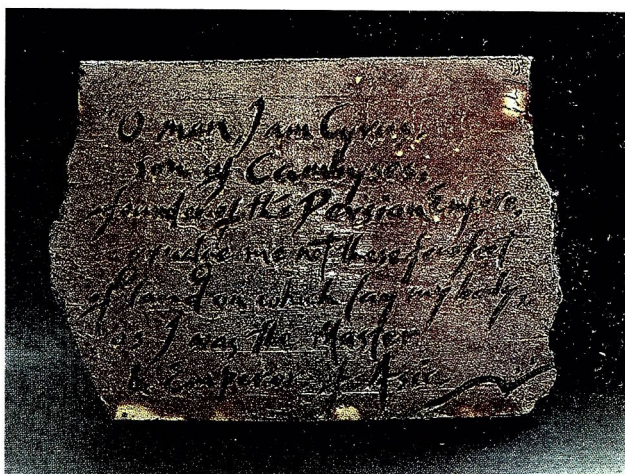
The *Pax Persica* was the 'largest empire by share of population' and 'accounted for approximately 49.4 mn of



FACING  
ZOROASTRIAN  
PHOTO: Z  
PARZOR

LEFT  
GOLD RH  
CUP, AGE  
COURTESY  
OF TEHRA

the world's 112.4 mn people in around 480 BC — an astonishing 44%.<sup>8</sup> The Achaemenids (Old Persian *hakhamanishiya*; r. ca. 559-330 BC), designating themselves 'Aryan' (Old Persian *ariya*), were suzerains from Punjab to Libya, including Central Asia, Anatolia, Caucasus and the Black Sea, with their imperial heartland in the historic plateau of Iran (Middle Persian singular *er* 'aryan', plural *eran* 'aryans', *eran-shahr* 'land of Aryans'). They had adopted a faith founded by the Persian poet-prophet, a 'historical Zarathustra' (Middle Persian *Zardu(kh)sht*, Modern Persian and Arabic *Zardusht*, Greek *Zoroastres*, Latin *Zoroaster*) who preached between the Aral Sea and southern Central Asia, and whose dates have divided Iranists as either the thirteenth or sixth century BC.<sup>9</sup> Slightly better known is the *Avesta* (probably 'pure/praise instruction': Avestan \**upa-stauka-*, Middle Persian *abestag*, Modern Persian *avasta*, Arabic *bista*), a compilation of ritual hymns and pacans orally composed presumably between 1500 and 500 BC by those Iranians who later defined their tradition as Zoroastrianism or Mazdaism



RIGHT  
CERAMIC — "O MAN,  
'S, SON OF CAMBYSES,  
NDER OF THE PERSIAN  
RUDGE ME NOT THESE  
OF LAND ON WHICH I  
MY BODY, AS I WAS THE  
MASTER AND EMPEROR  
OF ASIA."  
ARTIST: ADIL WRITER,  
PUDUCHERRY

(Avestan *mazda-yasna* 'one who sacrifices to Ahura Mazda'). The *Avesta* was committed to writing, having been transmitted verbally, just after AD 600 by Sasanian clergy who practiced the *den mazdesn* (Middle Persian 'den [religion] of the Mazdayasnians', Armenian *denimazdezn*).

Its most distinguished sovereign and founder was Cyrus II the Great (r. 558-530 BC; Old and Modern Persian *Kurush*, Hebrew *Koresh*, Arabic *Kirash*, Greek *Kyros*, Latin *Cyrus*). Cyrus has gone down for history's consumption: he conjures Ashokan connotations as does that ruler for Indian identity and was, arguably, the earliest honorary gentile blessed by Jews for their liberation from 'Babylonian captivity' (587-539 BC). As the Lord's messiah or 'anointed' (*Isaiah* 45:1-2), Yahweh enjoined upon Cyrus: 'You shall be my shepherd to carry out all My purpose' (*Isaiah* 44:28). This politic tolerance towards the Jews, by permitting them in 538 BC to rebuild the Second Temple in Jerusalem (515 BC), was also extended to other subjects of what was a multi-national if unwieldy empire who, in exchange for fealty and taxes, 'were free to follow their own laws and religious traditions, continue their artistic norms, retain their own languages, write in their own script, and maintain their own social system.'<sup>10</sup> The Achaemenids originated monolithic administration, theocratic absolutism, political hegemony, and a well-organized provincial administration.<sup>11</sup> But Achaemenid sovereigns, formally Zoroastrians, tolerated religious syncretism and were not averse to the propitiation of Greek and Syrian deities including others in their Iranian pantheon besides Ahura Mazda 'omniscient Lord' (Old Persian *Auramazda*, Middle Persian *Ormazd*, Armenian *Aramazd*, Modern Persian *Ormazd*), such as Anahita (Old Persian *Anahita*, Middle Persian *Anahid*, Armenian *Anahit*) and Mithra (Old Persian, Vedic Sanskrit *Mitra*, Middle Persian *Mihir*, Bactrian *Miro*), as protectors. The hitherto held contention that the Achaemenids were not Zoroastrians is untenable.<sup>12</sup> Likewise the Cyrus cylinder, politically inspired then and popularly regarded now as an ecumenical charter, was but a bid by Babylonian priests currying favour with an alien ruling elite.<sup>13</sup>

Ahura Mazda made 'happiness' (Old Persian *shyati*) for humankind and supported (Old Persian *upastambara-*) the king-of-kings in his activities.<sup>14</sup> The king-of-kings (Old Persian, *khshayathiya khshayathiyānam*, Middle and Modern





LEFT  
CYLIS  
FIGUR  
GRIFF  
AHUE  
PERIC  
MARI  
COUR  
TEHR

Persian, *shahanshab*) ruled through 'divine glory/fortune' (Old Persian probably *farnah*, Avestan *khwarnah*, Middle Persian *khwarrah*, Modern Persian *khorrab*, *farr*) divinely bestowed upon him as well as prophets, heroes and poets.

The sovereign, should he stray from *asha* 'right order', would be bereft of it. The Shia *imams* as well as Muhammad, who received revelation at the time of his birth, were also deemed imbued with such 'divine light', an esoteric ideal permeated into Islam.<sup>15</sup> The ruler was assisted by the sacerdotal class of *magi* (Old Persian *magu*, Greek *magos*, Latin *magus*, Sanskrit *maga*), the only recorded collective of western Iranian priests who were historically experts on cultic rituals and customs of Iranian tribes. As hereditary clergy they became official exponents of Zoroastrianism. In Arabic, *majus* 'Zoroastrians' (*Quran*, 22:17) and *din al-majus* 'Zoroastrianism', retain currency for the faith and its followers.

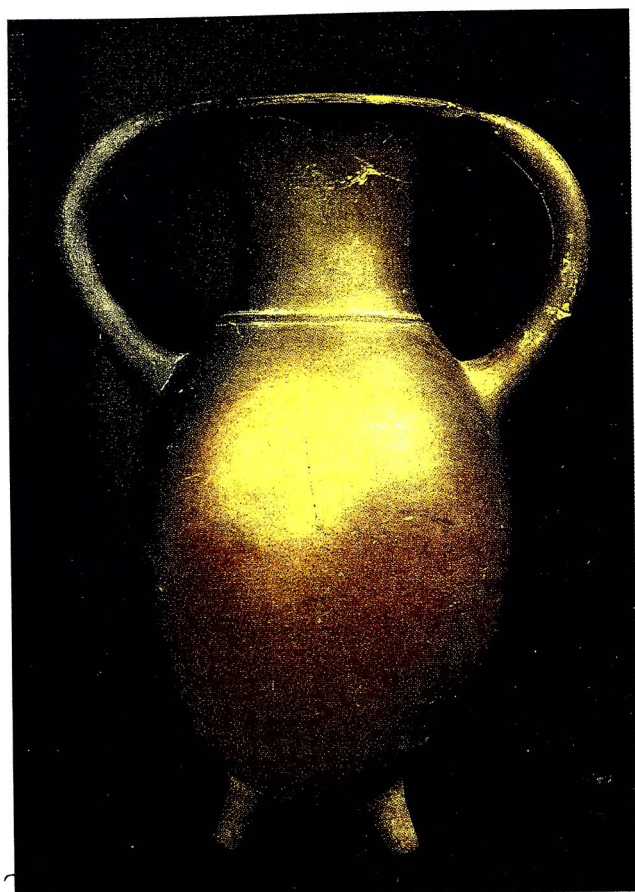
During Parthian times these magi, being skilful sages, were appropriated in the gospel (*Matthew* 2.1-12), as 'wise men from the east' (*magoi apo anatolon*) adoring the Christ child in Bethlehem. It is to be read as a midrashic explication of the outside gentile world, unlike Israel, which recognized the saviour's universal kingship.<sup>16</sup> The 475-year-old Parthian period (247 BC–AD 224) was the longest but was frequently disregarded as neither Iranian nor Zoroastrian. Scholarship has sought to revise the prejudices of their Sasanian successors who erased them from communal memory.<sup>17</sup> Our scant, crabbed evidence permits a limited sketch of their legacy following the

Alexandrine invasion and Seleucid *interregnum*. It was the Parthians who adopted the Zoroastrian calendar and its holy months and deployed Avestic references in Parthian minstrelsy.<sup>18</sup> (Acknowledged in the lyrics of the Islamic republic's new national anthem adopted in 1990 is *bahman mah-i farr-i izadi mast* 'Bahman [month] is the glory of our faith.')<sup>19</sup> By mid-Parthian times were probably instituted the three greatest 'victory fires' (Middle Persian *adarwarabran*) whose patrons were priests (*adurfarnbag*), rulers (*adurgushnasp*) and husbandmen (*adurburzenmehr*). The last was particularly exalted by the Parthians—eulogised in Gorgani's Parthian romance, *Vis u Ramin*—and it is to them we owe not only the oldest descriptions of tending a sacred 'place of burning fire' (Middle Persian *ataroshan* attested via Armenian), but also, at the initiative of Walagash I (r. ca. AD 51–ca. 76–80; Greek *Vologeses*, Middle and Modern Persian, Arabic *Walash*, *Balash*), codification of a dispersed, post-Alexandrine *Avesta*, and the oldest surviving fire-temple, *Kuh-i Khwaja* (probably first century AD).<sup>20</sup> In the *Shahnama* Firdawsi highlights how Bahram Gur returned with Sepinoud from India and both visited the *adurgushnasp* fire temple where she was instructed in the Mazdean creed.<sup>21</sup>

Eighth-century Europeans would check Arab *jihad* west of the Pyrenees thanks to the Parthian strategy of 'armoured cavalry' or cataphract (Greek *kataphraktoi*).<sup>22</sup> It overwhelmed the Romans, as did their fatal 'Parthian shot', from expanding east of the Tigris for nearly three centuries—Sanskrit *Pahlava* 'Parthian' whence Modern



RIGHT  
PHORA, PARTHIAN  
GHAN, COURTESY:  
SEUM OF TEHRAN



Indo-Iranian languages *pahlavan* 'hero, champion'. But they also originated the Islamic *iwān*, a three-sided, barrel-vaulted, open-fronted reception or roofed hall.<sup>23</sup> Parthia (Chinese *an-shi*) was famed for its 'Parthian fruit', pomegranates (Chinese *shih-liu*), saffron (Chinese *fan-hung-hua*), and ostrich or 'Parthian bird' (Chinese *tuoniao*). Although the peach (Chinese *t'ao*, Latin *prunus persica*)<sup>24</sup> went west, its identity remain attached to its Iranian intermediation and was one among a host of other Silk Road exotics that created prosperity for the Parthians and their Sasanian successors, the last empire of pre-Islamic Persia (Assyrian *Parsua*, Old Persian *Parsa*, Hebrew *Paras*, Bactrian *Parso*, Sogdian *p'rs*, Middle and Modern Persian *Pars*, Arabic *Fars*, Greek *Persis*, Latin *Persia*, Chinese *Bosi*; Middle Persian *parsig*, Bactrian *parsigo*, Sogdian *p'rsyk/q* and Sanskrit *parasika* 'Persian'; Sanskrit *parasika samayan* 'Persian religion', *parasi-* 'Persian language'; *Parsi*, the ethnonym for South Asian Zoroastrians, means *pars* 'Persia' plus adjectival suffix *-i* 'related to' hence 'Persian').

Zoroastrianism became the official faith of Sasanian Iran (AD 224-651), a centralised, cosmopolitan society with a

'tradition of chivalry and courtesy generally lacking in the Greco-Roman world.'<sup>25</sup> Each of the classes, *waspuhragan* 'feudal peers', *mowbedan* 'priests', *wuzurgan* 'nobles', *azadan* 'free men and women', *dibiran* 'scribes', *wazaraganan* 'merchants', *hutukhshan* 'artisans', *dahigan* 'farmers', *wastaryoshan* 'herdsmen' and *anshahrgan* 'slaves' pursued their *khweshkari* 'proper function'. This West Asian empire, where crown and clergy were inextricably identified with the religion, was one where the former's political credentials were spiritually bolstered by the latter's dictum acknowledged in the Zoroastrian encyclopaedic compendia, *Dinkard* 'acts [of the] religion', that 'kingship is religion and religion kingship' (*Dk.* 3.58). This *modus vivendi* was, as Hugh Kennedy observed, the Muslim model because Sasanian Iran 'provided the most pervasive of the legacies to the Islamic world [and] it would be possible to argue that Khosro I and Muhammad shared the honor of being the two begetters of Muslim statecraft.'<sup>26</sup> Indeed the wellsprings of Muslim political thought on this hark back to Middle Persian precepts (*andarz*) evinced in two treatises, the *Testament of Ardashir* (*Ahd Ardashir*) and the *Epistle of Tansar* (*Tansar namag*). In the former is the classic counsel attributed to Ardashir towards Shapur I: 'Religion and kingship are two brothers, and neither can dispense with the other.'<sup>27</sup> As the renowned Muslim theologian and philosopher, Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (1058-1111), reminded the Seljuq ruler:<sup>28</sup>

'It is recorded among the chronicles that the Magians held this world for 4,000 years and that kingship remained in their family because they maintained justice among the subjects and looked after them. According to their religion they did not consider tyranny or oppression permissible and they made the world prosperous by justice.'

And from the social standing of these magi or 'Pahlavi sages' (Arabic *hukama' fahlawiyun*), conceptually evolved Modern Arabic *dustur* 'constitution, statute' (classical Arabic *dustur* 'set of rules, formulary', Classical and Modern Persian *dastur* 'religious leader, high priest', Middle Persian *dastwar* 'one in authority').<sup>29</sup>

Mary Boyce plausibly posited that the *Testament*, whose antecedents must be sought in the late Sasanian period and the reign of Khosro I Anoshirwan 'immortal soul' (r. AD September 531-February/March 579; Greek and Latin *Chosroes*, Arabic *Kisra*), was consciously attributed to Shapur I (r. AD 240-270; Greek *Sapores*, Arabic *Sabur*) to



privilege its origins, but did 'evidently contain a core of matter transmitted from that period.'<sup>30</sup> To Khosro I—celebrated by Suhrawardi for his *hikmat-i khusrawani* 'khusrawan theosophy'—is also owed a legal code, fiscal and land reforms and a canonical compilation of the *Avesta*. According to variant *Dinkard* traditions, it was delegated to the aforementioned priest, Tansar, by the dynasty's founder and father of Shapur I, Ardashir I (r. AD 224-240; Greek *Artaxerxes*, Arabic *Ardas(h)ir*).<sup>31</sup> Under Shapur I were added secular subjects to the Avestic corpus covering astronomy, geography, medicine, philosophy and science. Much of this came from Greece and India (Avestan *hi(n)du-*, Old Persian *hi(n)du-*, Middle Persian *hendugan*, Sogdian *'yntukstn*, Bactrian *iundo*, Modern Persian *hindustan* 'India').<sup>32</sup> From India came backgammon, chess and the *Fables of Bidpai* or *Pancatantra* 'five topics'. Written in Sanskrit ca. AD 300, its westward sojourn began with a Middle Persian (*Kalila gud Dimnag*) translation by Khosro I's physician, Burzoy, and from Middle Persian into Arabic (*Kalilawa Dimnah*) by Ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. AD 759). The antecedents and frame narrative of the Arabian, correctly, 'Thousand and One Nights' (Arabic *Alf layla wa-laylah*) are situated in the Sasanian 'Thousand Tales' (Middle Persian *Hazar Afsanag*, Classical and Modern Persian *Hazar Afsaneh*).<sup>33</sup>

Translation and learning flourished at the winter capital founded by Shapur I, Gundeshapur (Middle Persian *Web-antiok-shapur* 'better Antioch [of] Shapur'; Syriac *Bet Lapat*, Classical Persian *Jundishapur*, Arabic *Jundaysabur*). Gundeshapur was the bridgehead between Graeco-Sasanian and Arabic sciences: the city boasted not only a famed hospital and medical school but also scriptoria where Nestorian (Dyophysite) Christians, fleeing persecution by Monophysite Byzantines, translated Middle Persian and Greek learning into Syriac, and subsequently Arabic, thus laying the foundations of collated research at the Abbasid royal depository or 'house of wisdom' (*bayt al-hikma*), whose forerunner was the Sasanian palace library (Middle Persian *ganj* 'treasury, storehouse'), where were preserved volumes on pre-Islamic lore, romances and warfare.<sup>34</sup> History which informed the Sasanian worldview, both semi-legendary and real, was committed to the *Khwadaynamag* 'book of lords', known to us from a lost Arabic translation by Ibn al-Muqaffa among Arabo-Persian sources, and the prototype of Firdaws's eleventh-century

*Shahnama* 'book of kings'.

Zoroastrianism, by then, had collapsed with the fall of the Sasanian state. It unobtrusively rehabilitated itself — such is the Persian capacity for resilience — within the matrix of Islam. For a new convert its shadowy presence was noticeable: upon hearkening the call to prayer from a minaret, a Sasanian spiral structure, one entered a kiosk (Arabic *kushk*) mosque, a free-standing square base with its domed roof supported on squinches resembling a Zoroastrian *chahartaq* 'four-arched', open vaulted fire-temple.<sup>35</sup> On this dome was mounted a *hila* 'crescent' and star, symbols of caliphal authority whose earliest evidence comes from Arabo-Sasanian coinage depicting a crescent with five- or six-pointed star, now a ubiquitous Muslim motif in flags, military banners and religious architecture. Islamic iconography borrowed it from the crescent and globe resting on the winged crown of Sasanian *shahs*.<sup>36</sup>

Pursuant to completion of ablutions (Zoroastrian *pad'yab kusti*, Islamic *wudu'*), and expression of 'intention' (Arabic *niyya*, Avestan *fravarane* 'confession of faith' *Yasna* 11.16-13.8), an aspect shared with the older faith,<sup>37</sup> the Muslim, as his Zoroastrian counterpart, was in a ritual state of purity and ready to offer the 'canonical prayer', *namaz* (Sanskrit *namaste* and Avestan *nemaste* 'homage to you!', Middle and Modern Persian *namaz* 'reverence, prostration'), the second 'pillar' of Islam which enjoins five, mandatory, diurnal prayers, unique to Zoroastrians only in the Near East, and lacking a Quranic basis.<sup>38</sup> It was devotionally ascribed to a prophetic tradition founded in Muhammad's *miraj*, the nocturnal, celestial ascent through the 'seven heavens' to the 'Divine presence'. Zoroastrian literary models considerably adumbrated the *miraj* which, centuries later, influenced Dante's *Divine Comedy* for such soul-journeys to heaven and hell are elaborated in the *Arda Wiraz namag* 'book of Wiraz'; Zarathustra's seven meetings with Ahura Mazda; and the Sasanian high-priest Kirdir's extra-terrestrial vision to hell undertaken for the Shah's soul so as to contain his empathy for Manichaeism, a third-century, gnostic, anti-cosmic dualism propounded by Mani (AD April 216-February 277).<sup>39</sup>

Mani was regarded as the 'Seal of the Prophets'. In this he anticipated Muhammad whose similar epithet (*Quran* 33:40) has endured on the Persian palimpsest sketched here. What truly sealed Persia's fate with that of the Arabian

prophet and his family was the alleged matrimonial alliance between Husain b. Ali, Muhammad's grandson, and Shahrbanu, daughter of its last ill-fated dynast, Yazdgird III (r. AD 632-651), thus siring the fourth Shia imam, Ali

Zayn al-Abidin. Her tomb rests, on the outskirts of the old town of Rayy, where this shrine of the 'Mother of the Nine Imams' now assimilates that of an earlier one, where was venerated 'Anahid the Lady'.<sup>40</sup>

## Notes and References

Diacritics have been dispensed for the benefit of general readers. Specialists are familiar with what is stated in simplified transcription.

- 1 *Encyclopædia Iranica*, 'Mas'udi' (by Michael Cooperson), <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/masudi>; Zoroastrian cleanliness was remarked upon by several observers down the ages including the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605) who was taken in by this as well as their pragmatism and industriousness. See Annemarie Schimmel, *The Empire of the Great Mughals: History, Art and Culture*, tr. Corinne Attwood, ed. Burzine Waghmar (London, 2004), p. 116.
- 2 Sarah Bowen Savant, *The New Muslims of Post-Conquest Iran: Tradition, Memory, and Conversion* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 71. On other attestations of this utterance by Muhammad see Bernard Lewis, tr. and ed. *Islam: from the Prophet Muhammad to the Capture of Constantinople*, Vol. II: Religion and Society (Oxford, 1987), p. 196, including a variant where 'faith' is replaced with 'knowledge'. The fourteenth-century historiographer Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), recorded this tradition as: 'If scholarship hung suspended in the highest parts of heavens, the Persians would attain it.' Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: an Introduction to History*, tr. Franz Rosenthal, abridged ed. N. J. Dawood, introd. Bruce Lawrence (Princeton, 2004), p. 430. In March 2007, Iran's Central Bank released a new 50,000-rial note depicting electrons in orbit alongside this *hadith*. See 'Iran defiant with atomic bank note', [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/6441777.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/6441777.stm); for a sound conspectus on the whole question consult *Encyclopædia Iranica*, vol. XI, 'Hadith v. As Influenced by Iranian Ideas and Practices' (by Shaul Shaked), 2003, pp. 453-57.
- 3 Foreword to Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrianism: its Antiquity and Constant Vigour*, Columbia Lectures in Iranian Studies 7 (Costa Mesa, CA), 1992, p. ix.
- 4 Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, The Library of Religious Beliefs and Practices, rev. edn. (London, 2001), pp. 145-95; *eadem*, 'Zoroastrianism in Iran after the Arab conquest', in Pheroza Godrej and Firoza Punthakey Mistree, eds. *A Zoroastrian Tapestry: Art, Religion and Culture* (Ahmedabad, 2002), pp 229-45; Jamsheed Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation: Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elites in Medieval Iranian Society* (New York, 1997); Aptin Khanbaghi, 'De-Zoroastrianization and Islamization: the two phases of Iran's Religious Transition, 747-837 CE', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 29, 3 (2009): 201-12; Michael Stausberg, 'From Power to Powerlessness: Zoroastrianism in Iranian History', in Anne Sofie Roald and Anh Nga Longva, eds. *Religious Minorities in the Middle East: Domination, Self-Empowerment, Accommodation*, Social, Economic and Political



- Studies of the Middle East and Asia 108 (Leiden, 2011), pp. 171-93; Touraj Daryaee, 'Zoroastrianism under Islamic Rule', in Michael Stausberg and Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina, eds. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*, with Anna Tessmann (Chichester, 2015), pp. 103-18.
- 5 Patricia Crone, recently deceased, analysed this in her final monograph, a customarily learned study with some contentious conclusions, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge, 2014).
  - 6 R. C. Zaehner, 'Zoroastrianism', in *idem*, ed. *The Hutchinson Encyclopedia of Living Faiths*, 4th edn. (London, 1994), pp. 200, 213. Previous generations of Indian readers will recall Zaehner was Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan's successor as the Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics, University of Oxford, upon the latter's departure to become India's first Vice-President in 1952. Zaehner was invited to deliver the Westcott lectures at St. Stephen's College, New Delhi and subsequently Bishop's College, Calcutta and Christian College, Tambaram in 1969. By this time his focus had shifted from Zoroastrianism to Hinduism and Comparative Religions. His output on these topics remained prolific until his demise in 1974. Still in print and consulted are his *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (1960); *Hinduism* (1962); *Hindu Scriptures* (1966); and *The Bhagavad-Gītā: with a Commentary based on the Original Sources* (1969).
  - 7 Shaul Shaked, 'Iranian influence on Judaism: first century B.C.E. to second century C.E.', in W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein, eds. *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, Vol. 1: Introduction: the Persian Period (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 308-25 is a prudent assessment; briefly also *idem*, 'Zoroastrianism and Judaism', and Alan Williams, 'Zoroastrianism and Christianity', in Godrej and Punthakey Mistree, *Zoroastrian Tapestry*, pp. 199-209, 210-25; Anders Hultgård, 'Postscript: Zoroastrian Influences on Judaism, Christianity and Islam', in Michael Stausberg, *Zarathustra and Zoroastrianism*, tr. Margret Preisler-Weller (London, 2008), pp. 101-12; Yaakov Elman and Shai Secunda, 'Judaism' and Marco Frenschkowski, 'Christianity', in Stausberg and Vevaina, *Companion to Zoroastrianism*, pp. 423-36, 457-76.
  - 8 *Guinness World Records 2012*, ed. Craig Glenday ([London], 2011), p. 74.
  - 9 The historical veracity of Zarathustra's personage and preaching, based on traditional accounts, has been long regarded a scholarly given. The Harvard Iranist, P. Oktor Skjærvø, has questioned these presumptions in discussions that cannot be dismissed out of hand: see his 'The Literature of the most Ancient Iranians', in Sarosh Manekshaw and Pallan Ichaporia, eds. *Proceedings of the Second North American Gatha Conference Houston, Texas 1996*, Journal of the Research and Historical Preservation Committee Vol. II (Womelsdorf PA, 1996), pp. 221-35; *idem*, 'The State of Old-Avestan Scholarship', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117, 1 (1997): 103-14; *idem*, 'Zarathustra: a Revolutionary Monotheist?', in B. Pongratz-Leisten, ed. *Reconsidering the Concept of Revolutionary Monotheism* (Winona Lake IN, 2011), pp. 325-58; *idem*, 'Zoroastrian Dualism', in E. M. Meyers *et al.*, eds. *Light against Darkness: Dualism in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and the Contemporary World*, (Göttingen, 2011), pp. 55-91. The latest state of research surveys on Zarathustra's spatial and temporal horizons are Frantz Grenet, 'Zarathustra's Time and Homeland: Geographical Perspectives', and Almut Hintze, 'Zarathustra's Time and Homeland: Linguistic Perspectives' in Stausberg and Vevaina, *Companion to Zoroastrianism*, pp. 21-30, 31-38. Two critiques by academics outside the ambit of Iranistics are James Boyd and William Crosby, 'Is Zoroastrianism Dualistic or Monotheistic?', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 47, 4 (1979): 557-88; John Kronen and Sandra Mennsen, 'The defensibility of Zoroastrian dualism', *Religious Studies* 46, 2 (2010): 185-205.
  - 10 A. Shapour Shahbazi, 'The Achaemenid Empire (550-330 BCE)', in Touraj Daryaee, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Iranian History* (Oxford, 2012), p. 131.
  - 11 Peter Green, *The Greco-Persian Wars*, (Berkeley and London, 1998), p. 4.
  - 12 Martin Schwartz, 'The Religion of Achaemenian Iran', in Ilya Gershevitch, ed. *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 2: the Median and Achaemenian Periods (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 664-97; Philip Kreyenbroek, 'Zoroastrianism under the Achaemenians: a non-essentialist approach', in John Curtis, ed. *The World of Achaemenid Persia: History, Art and Society in Iran and the Ancient Near East. Proceedings of a conference at the British Museum 29th September-1st October 2005*

- (London and New York, 2010), pp. 103-09; P. Oktor Skjærø, 'Achaemenid Religion', *Religion Compass* 8, 6 (2014): 175-87.
- 13 The cylinder, contrary to contemporary misconception, is unconcerned with human rights. Such incorrectly inflated appeal notwithstanding, it does represent a departure, both in tone and content, as well as in previous measures by emancipating Jews and other forcibly deported denizens of Neo-Babylonian despots. *Encyclopædia Iranica*, vol. VI, 'Cyrus iv. The Cyrus Cylinder' (by Muhammad Dandamayev), 1993, pp. 521-22; John Curtis and Nigel Tallis, eds. *Forgotten Empire: the world of Ancient Persia* (London, 2005), p. 59. Comprehensively Irving Finkel, ed. *The Cyrus Cylinder: the King of Persia's Proclamation from Babylon* (London and New York, 2013). It was formerly maintained that the edict, like other Mesopotamian building inscriptions, was typically buried in the foundation deposit. But in fact versions were produced and circulated 'as part of Persian state politics' (p. 2).
  - 14 P. Oktor Skjærø, 'Zoroastrianism', in Michele Renee Salzman, ed. *The Cambridge History of Religions in the Ancient World*, Vol. 1: from the Bronze Age to the Hellenistic Age (Cambridge, 2013) p. 120f.
  - 15 Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 2nd edn. (Chicago and London, 1979), p. 176 cites here the esoteric interpretation adduced by Henry Corbin, 'A Theory of Visionary Knowledge', in idem, *The Voyage and the Messenger: Iran and Philosophy* (New York, 1998), p. 123, who discerned this in the philosophy of the Illuminationists (*ishraqiyya*), notably Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi (1153-91), for whom the *khwarnah* was analogous to *nur muhammadiyya* ('light of Muhammad'). Robert Hillenbrand, 'The Symbolism of the Rayed Nimbus in Early Islamic Art', *Cosmos: the Yearbook of the Traditional Cosmology Society*, 2 [Special issue: Kingship, Emily Lyle, ed.] (1986) [1988]: 1-52 is a rigorous examination.
  - 16 Overviewed in Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, 'The Wise Men from the East in the Western Tradition', *Papers in honour of Professor Mary Boyce*, *Acta Iranica* 24 (Leiden, 1985), pp. 149-57. Antonio Panaino has extensively published in English and Italian on several historical and legendary aspects of the magi as has Albert de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature*, *Religions in the Graeco-Roman World* 133 (Leiden, 1997); idem, 'The Contribution of the Magi' in Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis and Sarah Stewart, eds. *Birth of the Persian Empire*, *The Idea of Iran* vol. 1 (London, 2005), pp. 85-99. Also see Phiroze Vasunia, ed. *Zarathustra and the Religion of Ancient Iran: the Greek and Latin Sources in Translation* (Mumbai, 2007), a valuable, updated reference source of W. Sherwood and R. Pemberton Fox, *Passages in Greek and Latin Literature relating to Zoroaster and Zoroastrianism* (*Journal of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute* 14, 1929: 1-145).
  - 17 Ehsan Yarshater, 'Were the Sasanians heirs to the Achaemenids?', in *La Persia nel Medioevo*, Accademia nazionale dei Lincei 160 (Rome, 1971), pp. 517-31; Touraj Daryaee, 'The Construction of the Past in Late Antique Persia', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 55, 4 (2006): 493-503. Cf. Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis, 'The Legacy of Ancient Persia', in Curtis and Tallis, eds. *Forgotten Empire*, pp. 250-63 who demonstrates how the Achaemenids were still present, at least artistically, in the recesses of early modern Iranian thinking.
  - 18 Excellently recapitulated in Albert de Jong 'Religion and Politics in Pre-Islamic Iran', in Stausberg and Vevaina, *Companion to Zoroastrianism*, pp. 92-95.
  - 19 *Bahman* 22, 1357 (= February 11, 1979) is commemorated as the anniversary of the Islamic revolution for on that day monarchy ended and the royalist *farr* turned republican.
  - 20 Jamsheed Choksy, 'Reassessing the Material Contexts of Ritual Fires in Ancient Iran', *Iranica Antiqua* XLII (2007): 248; James Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, Harvard Iranian Series V (Cambridge MA, 1987), p. 482; Fakhraddin Gorgani, *Vis and Ramin*, tr. and ed. Dick Davis (London, 2009), pp. xiii, 494; Almut Hintze, 'The Avesta in the Parthian Period', in Josef Wiesehöfer, ed. *Das Partherreich und Seine Zeugnisse / The Arsacid Empire: Sources and Documentation. Beiträge des Internationalen Colloquiums Eutin, 27-30 Juni 1996*, *Historia Einzelschriften* 122 (Stuttgart, 1998), p. 148; Daniel Potts, 'Iran', in Timothy Insoll, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Ritual and Religion* (Oxford, 2011), p. 817.
  - 21 Abolqasem Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh: the Persian Book of Kings*, tr. Dick Davis (London and New York, 2007), p. 672.



- 22 Clive Irving, *Crossroads of Civilization: 3000 years of Persian History* (London, 1979), p. 71; Josef Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia: from 550 BC to 650 AD*, tr. Azizeh Azodi, new edn. (London and New York, 2007), p. 148.
- 23 Malcolm Colledge, *Parthian Art* (Ithaca NY, 1977), p. 63f.; Oleg Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, rev., enl. edn. (New Haven and London, 1987), p. 197; *Encyclopædia Iranica*, vol. III, 'Ayyân' (by Oleg Grabar), 1989, pp. 153-55; Abbas Alizadeh and (rev. by) Ali Mousavi, 'Archaeology of Iran', in Neil Ascher Silberman, ed. *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology*, Vol. 2, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 2012), p. 123.
- 24 Berthold Laufer, *Sino-Iranica: Chinese contributions to the history of civilization in Ancient Iran, with special reference to the history of cultivated plants and products*, Anthropological Series XV/3 (Chicago, 1919), pp. 280, 320f.; Edward Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: a study of T'ang exotics* (Berkeley, 1985), pp. 10-26, 102f.; Frederick Simoons, *Food in China: a Cultural and Historical Inquiry* (Boca Raton FL, 1991), pp. 245, 397; A. D. H. Bivar, 'Trade Between China and the Near East in the Sasanian and Early Islamic Periods', in William Watson, ed. *Pottery & Metalwork in T'ang China: their chronology & external relations. A Colloquy held 29 June to 2 July 1970. Colloquies on Art & Archaeology in Asia no. 1* (London, 1970), pp. 1-11; Richard Frye, 'Sasanian-Central Asian Trade Relations', *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 7, [Iranian Studies in Honor of A. D. H. Bivar, eds. D. W. MacDowall *et al.*] (1993) [1994]: 73-77.
- 25 Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East: a brief history of the last 2,000 years* (New York, 1997), p. 136.
- 26 Hugh Kennedy, 'Islam', in G. W. Bowersock *et al.*, *Late Antiquity: a Guide to the Post classical World* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1999), pp. 221, 225.
- 27 A. K. S. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam: an introduction to the study of Islamic political theory: the jurists*, London Oriental Series vol. 36 (Oxford, 1981), p. 45. Mary Boyce, tr. *The Letter of Tansar*, Serie Orientale Roma XXXVIII-Persian Heritage Series 9 (Rome, 1968).
- 28 Al-Ghazali, *Nasihāt al-mulūk* [Counsel for Kings] was written in Persian for the then ruling Seljuq dynasty. Lambton, *op. cit.*, p. 144. S. A. Arjomand, 'Perso-Indian Statecraft, Greek Political Science and the Muslim Ideal of Government', *International Sociology* 163, 4 (September, 2001): 455-73. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3/1, 'Advice and advice literature' (by Louise Marlow), 2007, pp. 34-58. *Eadem*, 'Mirrors for Princes' in Gerhard Bowering *et al.*, *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, (Princeton and Oxford, 2013), pp. 348-50.
- 29 Its earliest post-Islamic occurrence is in the *Kalīla wa Dimnah* implying 'counsellor', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. II, 'Dustūr' (by editors), 1965, p. 638. Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*, Exxon Foundation and Committee on Social Thought Lectures (Chicago, 1988), p. 114; *idem*, 'On Modern Arabic Political Terms', in Bernard Lewis, *Political Ideas and Words in Islam* (Princeton, 2007), p. 142; *Encyclopædia Iranica*, vol. VII, 'Dastūr' (by Mansour Shaki), 1996, pp. 111-12.
- 30 Mary Boyce, 'Middle Persian Literature', in Bertold Spuler, ed. *Iranistik: Literatur*, Handbuch der Orientalistik I.IV.2 (Leiden and Cologne), 1968, p. 61.
- 31 Hintze, *art.cit.*, p. 148.
- 32 For references to India see J. J. Modi, 'India in the Avesta of the Parsis', *Journal & Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, n.s., IX (1913): 427-36; A. V. Williams Jackson, 'Notes on Allusions to Ancient India in Pahlavī Literature and in Firdausi's Shāh-Nāmā', *Festschrift Ernst Windisch zum siebenzigsten Geburtstag am 4. September 1914, dargebracht von freunden und schülern* (Leipzig, 1914), pp. 209-12; P. V. Kane, 'The Pahlavas and Pārāsikas in Ancient Sanskrit Literature', in *Dr. Modi Memorial Volume: Papers on Indo-Iranian subjects written by several scholars in honour of Shams-ul-Ulama Dr. Jivanji Jamsbedji Modi ...* (Bombay, 1930), pp. 352-57; Daryoosh Akbarzadeh, 'The Hindūgān of Bundahīšn', *Iranica Antiqua* XLV (2010): 419-26.
- 33 *Encyclopædia Iranica*, vol. I, 'Alf Layla wa Layla' (by Charles Pellat), 1985, pp. 831-35. 'Hezār Afsân(e)', and 'Persia' in Ulrich Marzolph and Richard van Leeuwen, eds. *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, with contributions by Hassan Wassouf, vol. 2 (Santa Barbara, 2004), pp. 588-89, 671-72. Ulrich Marzolph, 'Links between the *Arabian Nights* and

- Iranian Culture', in *idem*, ed. *The Arabian Nights in Transnational Perspective*, Series in Fairy-tale Studies (Detroit, 2007), pp. 221-44, especially pp. 225-27. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3/1, 'Arabian Nights' (by Ulrich Marzolph), 2007, pp. 137-45, especially pp. 138-40.
- 34 *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3/2, 'Bayt al-Hikma' (Dimitri Gutas and Kevin van Bladel), 2009, pp. 133-37. Hans Daiber, *Islamic Thought in the Dialogue of Cultures: a historical and bibliographical survey*, Themes in Islamic Studies vol. 7 (Leiden and Boston, 2012), p. 48f.
- 35 André Godard, *The Art of Iran*, tr. Michael Heron, ed. Michael Rogers (London, 1965), pp. 261f., 275; Richard Ettinghausen, 'The Man-made setting: Islamic art and architecture', in Bernard Lewis, ed. *The World of Islam: Faith, People, Culture*, corr. repr. (London, 1992), p. 64; David Stronach, 'Iran, ancient, II, 3: Architecture, 1000 BC-AD 651', in Jane Turner, ed. *The Dictionary of Art*, vol. 15 (New York, 1996), p. 912f. Editors, 'Mosque 2 (ii): Four-iwan mosques', in Jane Turner, ed. *The Dictionary of Art*, vol. 22 (New York, 1996), p. 194f.; Judith Lerner, 'Sasanians, Islamic Traditions', in Josef Meri, ed. *Medieval Islamic Civilization: an Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (New York and London, 2006), p. 698.
- 36 Lerner, *ibid.* *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. III, 'Hilāl: ii. In Islamic Art' (by Richard Ettinghausen), 1971, p. 381; *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3/4, 'Crescent (symbol of Islam)', 2014, p. 47.
- 37 Muslims offer the *niyya* prior to their ablutions; Zoroastrians do so subsequent to it.
- 38 As first pointed out by that Hungarian rabbi and father of modern Islamology, Ignaz Goldziher, 'Islamisme et Parsisme', *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 43 (1901): 15; repr. in Joseph Desomogyi, ed. *Gesammelte Schriften*, IV (Hildesheim, 1970), p. 246. Translated by G. K. Nariman with an afterword as 'The Influence of Parsism on Islam', in C. P. Tiele, *The Religion of the Iranian Peoples*, part I, (Bombay, 1912), pp. 162-186; repr. in G. K. Nariman, *Persia and Parsis*, part I (Bombay, 1925), pp. 39-74. P. O. Skjærvø, 'Goldziher and Iranian elements in Islam', in *Goldziher Memorial Conference June 21-22, 2000, Budapest. Oriental Collection: Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences*, eds. A. Éva and O. István (Budapest, 2005 [2006]), pp. 245-250. On its origins traced to the *miraj* see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. VIII, 'Salāt: v. Salāt and Islam' (by Guy Monnot), 1995, p. 932; Muzammil Siddiqi and (rev. by) Tazim Kassam, 'Salāt' in Lindsay Jones, ed. *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 12, 2nd edn. (Detroit, 2005), p. 8058. On differing traditions, given the lack of any authoritative basis, in Gerhard Böwering, 'Prayer' in Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed. *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol. 4 (Leiden and Boston, 2004), p. 228.
- 39 William St. Clair-Tisdall, *The Sources of Islam: a Persian treatise*, tr. and abrdg. William Muir (Edinburgh, 1901), p. 76; Miguel Asín, *Islam and the Divine Comedy*, tr. Harold Sunderland (London, 1926), pp. 76 n. 1, 107, 227. 'Night Journey', in Cyril Glasse, *The New Encyclopedia of Islam*, 4th edn. (London, 2013), p. 405f. These studies followed that of the pioneering one by Edgar Blochet, 'Études sur l'histoire religieuse de l'Iran II: l'ascension au ciel du prophète Muhammad', *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 40 (1899): 1-25, 203-36. Frédéric Rosenberg, *Le livre de Zoroastre (Zarāthushtr Nāma) de Zartusht-i Bahrām ben Pajdū* (St. Petersburg, 1904), p. 65f. P. O. Skjærvø, "'Kirdir's vision": translation and analysis', *Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*, 16 (1983) [1985]: 269-306. A Perso-Islamic example of an infernal visit, *Sayru'l- 'ibadila'l- ma'ad* 'the Journey of God's creatures to the Afterworld', by the mystical poet Sana'i (d. 1131) was pointed out in R. A. Nicholson, 'A Persian forerunner of Dante', *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, n.s., 19 (1943): 1-5. Most recently Burzine Waghmar, 'The *Mi'rajnameh* or ascent of the Prophet Muhammad', in Sarah Stewart, ed. *The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination*, with contributions by Firoza Punthakey Mistree, Ursula Sims-Williams, Almut Hintze and Pheroza Godrej (London and New York, 2013), pp. 142-45, which accompanied the panels displayed at the London and New Delhi exhibitions.
- 40 Nicholas Baker-Brian, *Manichaeism: an ancient faith rediscovered* (London, 2011), p. 53 and n. 46. Guy Stroumsa, "'Seal of the Prophets": the nature of a Manichaean Metaphor', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 7 [From Jāhilyya to Islam colloquium 2] (1986): 61-74. Mary Boyce, 'Bībī Shahrībānū and the Lady of Pārs', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 30, 1 [Fiftieth Anniversary Volume] (1967): 30-44. Mahbanoo Alizadeh and Roxane Zand, 'Bībī Shahrībānū', in Wilfred M. de Groot and Farhad Daftary, eds. *Encyclopaedia Islamica*, vol. 4 (2013), pp. 712-14.