

HISTORY, PHILOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGY OF ZOROASTRIANISM

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Mapping the Religious Communities of Sulaymaniyah Province in the Sasanian Period

Kozad AHMAD (University of Sulaimani)

The region of modern Sulaymaniyah province was more diverse in the past culturally, socially and religiously. This has been shown by the literary sources as well as material remains discovered so far. These source materials indicate the presence of Christian, Jewish and Mithraic communities side by side with Zoroastrians, pagans and other minor sects. This paper intends to show this diversity and then try to map the distribution of the different communities according to the available materials and evidence extracted from them. The discovery of pottery sherds stamped with crosses, inscriptions mentioning Jewish personal names, place names denoting the presence of fire temples or Mithraea, all are important evidence in the collection of information for the subject of this paper.

Fire Temples and Christian Churches in Iraqi Kurdistan: Archaeological Study of the Architectural Transformations and Identity Meanings

Narmin ALI AMIN (Salahaddin University-Erbil)

Sacred spaces within churches and Zoroastrian temples coexisted in different architectural forms during the Sassanid era (224–651 AD). The architecture then reflects as much the crossing of tradition as the continuities, giving to those places an identity and a power. The archaeological work and recent survey carried out in Iraqi Kurdistan represent an important step, which makes it possible to bring new elements of study and comparative analysis between the churches and the fire temples. This paper will thus examine and analyse the archaeological and historical data between Christianity and Zoroastrianism in this region through three examples: Qalat Bazyan, Qalai Shila and Bankan.

Creationism vs. Emanationism: Political Use of Creation Theory in a Middle Persian Zoroastrian Text (Dēnkard IV)

Samra AZARNUSH (École Pratique des Hautes Études)

In the summary of a treatise by the high priest Ādurfarraibay ī Farroxxzādān (early 9th century), an emanationist theory is developed that is directly borrowed from Neoplatonism, including

important adaptations according to the Zoroastrian doctrine. This theory, according to which beings emanate in successive chains from the god Ohrmazd, is opposed to the theory of the individual creation of each being in an independent manner. This paper aims to shed light on how the treatise of the Dēnkard IV articulates this conception of the creation of beings with the concept of the diffusion of Sasanian royal power, bringing to light what may appear as a discourse of political theology.

King Narseh's Zoroastrian Creed According to the Paikuli Inscription

Carlo CERETI (Università degli Studi "La Sapienza" di Roma)

In this presentation, the author will study the contents of King Narseh's inscription at Paikuli, in Iraqi Kurdistan, outlining his religious creed against the background of what we know about Zoroastrian religion in Sasanian Iran. Like his fathers and ancestors, Narseh was a Mazdean (Mazdēsn) who held in high regards both Ahura Mazda and Anahita, as shown by his words in the Paikuli inscription and by the fact that in his investiture relief at Naqsh-e Rostam, it is Anahita who hands him over the divine xwarrah. Studying Narseh's religious beliefs allows us to better understand the development of Zoroastrian thought in a historical moment that saw the Sasanians engaged in fostering a new understanding of Iranian National History, merging ancient Avestan traditions with their own beliefs.

Gratitude in Zoroastrianism

Jamsheed CHOKSY (Indiana University Bloomington)

This presentation explores indigenous origins and foreign influences for development, spread, and impact of ethical ideas and writings within ancient Iranian society through its Zoroastrian or Mazdean religion. A range of ancient Iranian religious and secular sources will be cited.

The Great Zoroastrian Schism of the Third Century

Touraj DARYAEE (University of California, Irvine)

This paper discusses the apparent Zoroastrian schism which took place in the third century CE, with the coming of Ardashir I (224–240 CE), the first Sasanian king to power. There are two sets of documents which suggest that Ardashir's attack the Caucasus-Caspian region with its own Zoroastrian practices created a schism. The first is the Armenian textual and archaeological evidence which states that Ardashir attacked the sanctuaries of the Armenian Zoroastrian deities, such as that of Vahagn (Wahrām) and Anahit (Anahitā), while allowing that of Armazd (Ohrmazd) to survive and thrive. This act by the Sasanians whose religious views may be seen as a form of militant piety, began what came to be known as an "Orthodox" Zoroastrian movement. It is all-together possible that the Armenian nobility's distaste for their Iranian co-religionists was not the adoption of Christianity in the fourth century, but the religious difference in how to worship the traditional Zoroastrian deities, in the third century CE. There is also a late Persian text, namely that of the Letter of Tansar, where Ardashir is accused by the Magi from the Caspian region of putting out fires and attempting to create a new set of Zoroastrian practices.

While Tansar attempts to argue for the correctness of Ardashir's actions, we understand that the king's vision of religion was not accepted in the north. Thus, one can suggest that there may have been a regional schism between the northern (including northern Mesopotamia), and that of southern Zoroastrian tradition in the province of Persis.

Kurds and Ossetes: Common Traces of Pre-Zoroastrian Iranian religion

Richard FOLTZ (Concordia University, Montreal)

It is a common misconception that Zoroastrianism was the predominant pre-Islamic religion among the various Iranian peoples. In fact the Pahlavi polemic texts make clear that the Mazdaean priests of the Sasanian period were engaged in a constant ideological battle against religious practices outside of their control, which in many cases can be interpreted as rival expressions of an ancient Iranian worldview. The Kurds, Sogdians, Bactrians, and even many Persians likely followed such rival traditions, while the Iranian nomadic groups of the steppes seem to have had little or no exposure to Zoroastrianism at all. A comparison of ritual and mythological elements found among these various Iranian groups can suggest some common features that may point to an earlier form of Iranian religiosity dating back to the second millennium BCE or even earlier.

Sustaining Abundance: The Role of the Divine River in the Economy of Ancient Persia

Tobin HARTNELL (American University of Iraq-Sulaimani)

A comparison of archaeological survey and ethnography with the Zoroastrian textual corpus reveals the cultural and economic dimensions of an ancient water management system in northern Persia (southern Iran). The results highlight how humanity's destructive impact on nature is ubiquitous, yet not all impacts are equivalent. The explanation is partly cultural, as Sasanian (r. 208–641 CE) notions of the Divine River promoted particular types of engagements with local rivers that respected their innate character. For believers, Zoroastrian water rituals promoted material abundance, just as ancient irrigation systems prioritized smaller barrages that allowed the river to flow. In contrast, modern dams severely restrict the water's flow, which degrades the quality of the water. Even though ancient irrigation systems achieved a similar scale to modern ones, they were ultimately more sustainable because they respected the river as an important entity in its own right.

Zend Temple in Akre Castle

Bekas HASSAN (General Directorate of Antiquities, Duhok)

The archaeological castle of Akre is located in the Duhok governorate (Iraqi Kurdistan). It is located on the top of a mountain above sea level with an altitude of 1010 m and covers an area of 150 × 135 m². The name of Akre derives from a word that means fire, and the town is known in ancient sources as "The House of Fire". Still today, the town is important due to the celebrations of Newroz, which involves parading with torches of fire. In 2010, some archaeological excavations were undertaken and has highlighted that the alleged castle was in

fact a temple containing many religious features belonging to Mithraism and Zoroastrianism. Later, it was used as a military fort, especially in the Islamic periods. The focus of this presentation will be on the architectural facilities and properties that relate to the Zoroastrianism, which was the dominant religion at the time of the Median empire, Parthian empire and Sasanian empire.

The Arsakids and Zoroastrianism in the Parthian Empire

Marek Jan OLBRYCHT (University of Rzeszów)

In the Arsakid age, the Parthian dynasty pursued a multi-layered monarchical ideology that invoked several different cultural and religious traditions. These included elements of Zoroastrianism, Oriental cults of pre-Arsakid Iran, and Hellenistic components originating in the composite socio-political structure of the Arsakid Empire. We do not have a comprehensive description of the Arsakid religion in ancient sources but we can understand a lot by analyzing episodes concerning e.g. Arsakes I, Gotarzes II or the Arsakid king of Armenia Tiridates I and their cultic activities.

Avestan Texts in Perso-Arabic Alphabet and Their Pronunciation in the 15th – 18th Century

Hamid MOEIN (FWO/Ghent University)

The pronunciation of Avestan alphabets has gone through some variations since the 19th century by western scholars. Among the most popular ones, there are those of Christian Bartholomae and the most favored version and still used to this day, the one proposed by Karl Hoffmann. Nevertheless, a question that is immediately raised is, how were these the Avestan texts pronounced prior to the participation of western scholars, keeping in mind that it is indeed impossible to know hothe different pronunciations during its existence. Fortunately the manuscripts of the famous rivāyāt epistolary exchanges (1478 -1773AD) contain a number of texts where the Avestan language has been written in the Perso-Arabic script. Despite the limitations of this script to represent the sophisticated Avestan phonology, we could clearly see clues about the pronunciation of this dead language at least between 15th-18th century, by these communities.

Mihr Worship in Lākh Mazār and Kāl Jangāl

Parvaneh PURSHARIATI (New York City College of Technology)

Twenty-nine kilometers southeast of Bīrjand, in the present day province (ostān) of Southern Khurāsān, stand the rock inscriptions of Lākh Mazār. About 35 kilometers to the southwest of Bīrjand, in this same province, is a second unique set of rock inscriptions, those of Kāl Jangāl. The mountains on which these inscriptions are carved are strategically located in the thoroughfares that run from northeast to the southeast and southwestern Iran. The inscriptions have been read and interpreted many times – from Henning (1953) to Altheim (1958), to Frye (1966), and finally Livshits (2002), all have studied it. Most comprehensive reading and translation of the text have thus far been given by Rasul Bashshash, which the

author mostly follows. In this paper, however, the author argues that the Parthian inscriptions and rock carvings of Lākh Mazār and Kāl Jangāl, give solid evidence of Mehr worship along with its rituals in these parts of Southern Khurasan. The fact that these inscriptions invoke Mihr and are akin to proselytizing texts makes their strategic locations and their import even more remarkable.