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Philip G. Kreyenbroek

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in the Good Religion:
Opera Minora on Zoroastrianism

Edited by
Kianoosh Rezania

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Dedicated to
Dr. Azhideh Moqaddam
in friendship and admiration

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Foreword

The present volume contains the most important articles by Philip Kreyenbroek on Zoroastrianism, written over the period of a quarter of century, from 1987 to 2012. The article “Zoroastrianism under the Sasanians” is the only one which is published here for the first time. Most other articles included here are photographic reproductions of the original publications. An exception is the article “The Term *Bagān Yasn* and the Function of *Yašts* in the Zoroastrian Ritual”, which has undergone typesetting corrections. However, the page numbers of the first publication are also given here, so that reference can be made to the page numbers of the original version. These are put between vertical lines (||) which indicate the end of the corresponding page in the original publication.

We would like to express our sincere thank to all those editors and publishers who have granted us permission to reproduce the articles in this volume. Moreover, we would like to thank Mr. Shervin Farridnejad who has given us a great deal of help in technical matters regarding formatting. We are also indebted to Mr. Arif Biter for his excellent work in formatting this volume. We hope that this volume will be useful to scholars and students of Zoroastrianism, and to scholars in other fields of study who are interested in the Good Religion.

Philip G. Kreyenbroek
Göttingen, January 2013

Kianoosh Rezania
Göttingen, January 2013

Introduction

Philip Kreyenbroek's articles on Zoroastrianism which are collected in this volume shows the wide range of themes which he has studied carefully and enthusiastically over the past decades. Each article not only draws rigorous conclusions, but offers fresh ideas which may lead the readers to new hypotheses and invite them to a novel interpretation of well-known data.

Although the articles are concerned with a range of different subjects connected with Zoroastrianism, they are to some extent interconnected, and in several cases one sees lines of argument emerging in one article, which the author develops in subsequent papers. For this reason articles are not presented in chronological sequence here, but arranged by subject. This will help readers to find articles related to a specific theme more easily, and allows them to follow the development of certain topics. In what follows, abstract of the each article will be presented, so as to provide the reader with a quick overview. As the Editors have found it impossible to provide meaningful Index to the many themes that are addressed, explicitly or implicitly, in these papers, this Introduction may also be used as an thematic index to the contents.

The three articles of the first chapter, 'History,' deal with the appearance of Zoroastrianism, its construction under the Achaemenids, and its development in Sasanian times. In the first article (I), the author studies the social milieu which gave rise to Zoroastrianism. He describes Zarathustra's words as being informed by actual tensions in society, which led to conflict between representatives of the proto-Indian and Iranian branches of the common Indo-Iranian tradition, which had developed along different lines under dissimilar social conditions: the former may have become integrated into a partly urban civilization in Central Asia, while the latter had continued its non-sedentary way of life for much longer (see also article VI). In this context Philip Kreyenbroek reviews the significance of some key concepts of the *Gathas*, such as Zarathuštra and the 'morality' pervading his worldview, the term *saošiiant*, eschatology, and the nature of the Entities who later came to be called *Aməša Spənta*. He argues that it was the first time in the history of the Indo-Iranian peoples that holding a worldview, rather than belonging to an ethnic group, became the main criterion for membership of a new 'religious' social group – a phenomenon that is relatively rare in the ancient world. Furthermore, the author discusses the emergence of the idea of a 'holy book' in Sasanian Zoroastrianism, and the role this played in the subsequent written codification of the Avestan texts.

The emergence of Zoroastrianism in western Iran, and the construction of new forms of that religion under the Achaemenids as a result of contacts with the earlier religious traditions of western Iran, are discussed in detail in the second article (II), but these questions are briefly alluded to in the first article also. While scholars have discussed a wide range of topics in connection with the religion of the early

Achaemenids, Kreyenbroek focuses on the crucial question of the history of the god *Mazdā*. He argues that *Ahura Mazdā* was neither an ancient Indo-Iranian divinity nor a pre-Zoroastrian, Iranian one, but originated in the worldview of the *Gathas*. On the basis of this conclusion, he argues that the presence of this name in the Achaemenid inscriptions demonstrates that the Achaemenids, at least from Darius I onward were Zoroastrians, or at least significantly influenced by Zoroastrian teaching. Kreyenbroek seeks to trace the development of Zoroastrianism in the Achaemenid empire using a ‘non-essentialist’ approach. The form of Zoroastrianism that emerged during and after the Achaemenid period is here described as the result of a long process of interaction between at least three religious traditions: those of the Elamites, the pre-Zoroastrian, western Iranian Magi, and the Zoroastrian priests who brought novel ideas and recited their liturgy in Avestan. From this perspective, he interprets Darius I’s claims in the Behistun Inscription about his antagonist ‘Gau-mata the Magian’, not as descriptions of historical fact, but rather as a brilliant attempt to describe the position of Darius in terms of the early, western Iranian reception of Zoroastrian teachings. Furthermore the author shows that the Gathic belief that a man’s moral quality depends on the extent to which he realizes positive abstract qualities in his life on earth (or, put differently, accepts certain divinities as ‘guests’ in his being), formed part of the teachings that were accepted at the time of Darius, and can thus be regarded as core elements of Zoroastrianism as it first came to be understood in western Iran.

The first two articles further contain remarks about the adaptation of certain Avestan concepts in Achaemenid Zoroastrianism (e.g. *ašauuan-/artāvan-*, *druj-/drauga-*) and about the development of the Zoroastrian priesthood in western Iran.

The third article (III) deals with the Sasanian era, the second, well-attested period of interaction between Zoroastrianism and political power. The author starts with an evaluation of the sources. Then the question of the interpretation of the various sources are discussed: texts are presented as reflections of the conditioning of the cultures that produced them rather than as faithful representations of historical reality. Furthermore questions of orality, homeostasis, and the relationship between priestly and popular perceptions of religion are considered. While stressing the impossibility of offering a full account of the history of Sasanian Zoroastrianism owing to the dearth and ambiguity of the sources, the author focuses on certain significant elements of that history: the relations between church and state, the reception of Avestan texts and the emergence of a written Avesta; the structures of the priesthood and the character of learning; temples and pilgrimage; cult and ritual; and last but not least, beliefs.

The first section of the paper discusses the relationship between church and state under the early Sasanian Kings Ardashēr I and Šāhpuhr I, and pays particular attention to the role of Kirdīr. The paper goes on to explore the reactions of Church and State to Christianity under Šāhpuhr II and Yazdegerd I, and official attitudes towards to Mazdakism under Kawād I and Xusraw I. There follows a study of the history of the Avesta and Zand. The sections on priestly learning and priesthood touch on vari-

ous priestly titles and functions in early Islamic and Sasanian times (on which see also article XIV), as well as the function of the priestly schools (*hērbedestān*), and different *cāštāgs* in these periods. In the section on temples and pilgrimage, the author studies the various fires mentioned in the Zoroastrian Middle Persian texts, *viz.* the prominent fires Ādur Burzēn-Mihr, Ādur Farnbag and Ādur Gušnasp as well as the hierarchy of fires including Bahrām, *Ādurān*, *Ādurōg* and ‘named’ fires. The paper then reviews certain rituals and observances. The final section deals with Zoroastrian beliefs under the Sasanians; although the author stresses virtual impossibility of adequately describing the actual ‘beliefs’ held by individuals and communities at this time, he discusses some key elements of such beliefs, and analyzes the evidence of the inscriptions of Kirdīr in this respect. Moreover, the question of ‘Zurvanism’ is addressed briefly.

The next chapter, ‘Tradition,’ begins with a pioneering article (IV) in the study of Zoroastrianism, in which Philip Kreyenbroek focuses on the oral character of the early Zoroastrian tradition, a subject he refers to in many of his writings. The conclusions of this article have now come to be fairly widely accepted by students of the transmission of the Avestan texts. Taking into account his knowledge of the oral traditions of two other religious groups, the Yezidis and the Ahl-e Ḥaqq, he contrasts an oralist’s approach to the Avestan text to a purely philological one. Stressing the oral transmission of Avestan texts, he points out that such texts had existed for a long time before their fixation. He claims that, long before the Avestan texts were committed to writing, these texts ceased to be handed down in free transmission and became ‘fixed’ when the Persian Magi took over the ritual role of the earlier Avestan-speaking priests (*aēθrapaiti*) in Achaemenid times, and began to learn the texts by heart without an active command of Avestan. Furthermore, Kreyenbroek discusses the evidence of the *Zand*, a word-for-word translation of Avestan texts, which for the most part were no longer intelligible to Zoroastrian priests in post-Achaemenid times. Nevertheless, he shows that, when e.g. the Avestan word *aši/Aši* is translated, the Middle Persian version usually differentiates correctly between the name of the divinity and the common noun, which in his view shows that a careful exegetical tradition must have played a role at a time when the *Zand* came into being, and Avestan was still at least partly understood. Furthermore, he argues against the assumption that signs of linguistic corruption in a text indicate that it is a late text. To an oralist, such phenomena suggest that a text was recited infrequently and in the presence of only one specialist, while the presence of a second priest during the liturgy, for instance, ensured that mistakes in recitation could be corrected before they became part of the transmitted text.

The question of the development of a Zoroastrian ‘theology’ is the subject of the next two articles. In the first (V), the ‘theological’ efforts of the Zoroastrian priesthood are illustrated by a study of the concepts of the goddess Aši and the god Vərəθraγna. The author first describes Aši’s a-moral character in many parts of her *Yašt*, which he associates with the pre-Zoroastrian concept of the goddess, comparing those with the Gathic passages, where she acquires a ‘moral’ side, as a

goddess of Retribution who also has an eschatological role. However, it is the pre-Zoroastrian concept that is essentially preserved in her *Yašt* in the extant Avesta, not her Gathic concept. In the case of Vərəθraϥna, his ‘theological’ integration into a Zoroastrian worldview includes the prohibition of certain sacrificial offerings to him which are referred to in his *Yašt* as *daēvic*. He seems to have been linked with Cistā in priestly speculation, sharing with her the responsibility for the protection of travelers. In this way, moreover, he may have come to be associated with missionary activities. The author therefore suggests a link between the name of the Bahrām fire and Vərəθraϥna’s role as a symbol of the triumph of the Zoroastrian priest (*ratu*) whose house fire has become the central fire of a new Zoroastrian community. Furthermore, the article studies the development of the functions of this *Yazata* in the Sasanian and post-Sasanian periods. After this the author discusses the concept of *hamkārs*, a group of *Yazatas* who are the ‘collaborators’ of an *Amāša Spəntas*. The connection of this group with the Zoroastrian calendar and its possible ritual significance are also discussed.

In the last article (VI) of the chapter on ‘Tradition,’ the author discusses the way the Zoroastrian priesthood dealt with theological questions in a religious culture that was still largely oral. Compared to the previous article (V), the definition of the concept of ‘Theology’ is narrower here. Whereas in the previous article the term ‘theology’ is used to include implicit theology, i.e. any attempt to categorize or systematize elements of the religious tradition, in this article it is restricted to ‘explicit’ theology, i.e. theological-philosophical debates and their role in the development of the religion. The author shows that the question as to whether Zoroastrianism reflects a monolatrous, dualistic, or polytheistic worldview can be answered differently depending on the texts one selects and the aspect of the religious tradition one emphasizes. Moreover, he discusses both the similarities and the crucial differences between scriptural religions and orally transmitted ones, such as Zoroastrianism, as regards their perception of sacred texts and priestly tradition. He concludes that Zoroastrianism probably has not known a coherent theological tradition, and that the religious lives of priests and laity spheres remained largely separate.

In the first four articles (VII – X) of the chapter on ‘Cosmogony, Cosmology and Eschatology,’ Kreyenbroek postulates an Indo-Iranian myth of the cosmogony, traces of which he finds in the Cosmogonies of Yezidis and Ahl-e Ḥaqq as well as in the Ṛgvedic tradition, Zoroastrianism and Mithraism. This brilliant theory which now seems to have met with general acceptance can only be fully understood if one reads all four articles. It is well known that the Indian and the Iranian sacrificial rituals (*yajñā/yasna*) make some allusions to the key acts of their cosmogonies. With regard to this, the central question for the author is why certain cosmogonical acts that are attributed to the Evil Spirit in the Zoroastrian cosmogony (as attested in the *Great Bundahišn*) correspond to acts carried out by the Indo-Iranian sacrificial priest: viz. the sacrifice of an animal and the crushing of a plant. He points out that according to all relevant these Cosmogonies, the process of Creation consists of two

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phases. He therefore contrasts cosmogonical texts in which the second act of the creation, which sets the world in motion, is represented as a positive act (e.g. passages of the *Frawardīn Yašt* and the *Rgveda*), with versions of the myth where this act is described as demonic (such as the *Great Bundahišn* and the *Anthology of Zādspram*). In the hypothetical, original Indo-Iranian cosmogony, Kreyenbroek argues, it was Mit(h)ra whose primeval sacrifice brought the world from a static state into its present, dynamic one.

The author shows, moreover a number of sub-themes of the myth of creation in Mithraic, Rgvedic and Zoroastrian Cosmogonies, which may derive from the hypothetical Indo-Iranian cosmogony. In article VII, it is argued that the Tauroctony, Mithra's rock-birth, and his connection with caves can be regarded as sub-themes of the myth. In regard to this, he concludes that Roman Mithraism may have been inspired at least partly by a pre-Zoroastrian, Western Iranian cult, although the Roman cult probably differed significantly from this in many other respects. In article VIII, the author investigates the connections between this Indo-Iranian cosmogony and the Cosmogonies of 'West Iranian' religious traditions of the Yezidis and Ahl-e Ḥaqq, as well as a Luri tradition attested in Mīrdrakvandī's *Irradiant*. The author seeks to establish a chronological and conceptual relationship between these four Cosmogonies on the one hand, and the Zoroastrian ones on the other. Article IX discusses the 'orthodox' version of the Zoroastrian cosmogony as found in the Pahlavi Books, and the cosmogonical passages in the Avestan texts, while taking note of the plurality of Zoroastrian Creation myths, such as the myth of Zurwān. Moreover, the author shows that even in a single cosmogonical account, e.g. in *Great Bundahišn*, elements from different myths have become interwoven. Various aspects of the Zoroastrian Cosmology, such as "Sky, lights, and fire," "Oceans, rain and rivers" and "Earth, mountains and plants" are examined in this article. In article X, the development of the postulated Indo-Iranian myth of cosmogony in the later Avestan and Pahlavi versions is discussed in rich detail. The author focuses on Spənta Mainiiu's role in the Avestan cosmogony. It is suggested that a rivalry between cultures prominently worshipping Mithra and Indra respectively, may have given rise to the belief that the affairs of this world are in the hands of two opposed two spirits. It is shown that Spənta Mainiiu has acquired – as can be seen particularly in Old Avestan texts – some of Mit(h)ra's characteristics related to the cosmogony. Moreover, the identification of Spənta Mainiiu with Ahura Mazdā in the Young Avestan period gave Ahreman the status of a direct opponent of Ahura Mazdā.

The last article of this chapter (XI), deals with millennialism and eschatology in Zoroastrianism. Firstly, the author presents an overview on the history of the world according to the Zoroastrian tradition, and a survey of the history of Zoroastrianism and its textual tradition. Furthermore, the eschatological ideas in the *Gathas* and the Young Avestan texts are represented. Attention is drawn to the interesting point that in Zoroastrian eschatology the last things mirror the first ones almost completely. Afterwards, the existence of a link between millennialism and 'Zurvanism' is called into question. Finding the first references to Zoroastrian millennialism in Plutarch's

De Iside et Osiride, the author ascertains that it is a relatively late phenomenon in Zoroastrianism, and concerns only the three millennia of the last period of the world history. Each these three millennia will end with the appearance of one of the saviour-figures, who in a sense mirror the three ‘naturally-born’ sons of Zarathustra. Moreover, the author studies Zoroastrian apocalyptic ideas, specially the ‘metallic ages’ of the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn*. Taking into account the oral nature of the Zoroastrian tradition, he proposes two possibilities for the emergence of such ideas in Zoroastrianism.

The next chapter, ‘Priesthood,’ begins with article XII, in which the relationship between religious specialists and laity is examined. The author discusses the *ratus* of different socio-spatial units attested in some Avestan passages, specially the head of their hierarchy, *zaraθuštrō.təma-*, as well as the concept *ratu* itself. Moreover, he argues that in Sasanian times the term *dastwar* partly replaces the word *ratu*. The need for each Zoroastrian to choose a good *dastwar*, and the *dastwar*’s responsibilities are then discussed in the light of the contents of the Pahlavi Books. Finally, the article draws attention to the striking similarities between Zoroastrian and Shi‘ite practices in the sphere of spiritual authority.

The *Zand*, the translation and interpretation of Avestan texts, is the subject of article XIII. This deals, firstly, with the Avestan exegetical texts, *Y.* 19–21. The author further concludes that doctrinal considerations did play a role – though not a prominent one – in Sasanian times. Thirdly, some priestly titles, such as *hērbed* are discussed, and the author points to the absence in modern times, of representatives of religious authorities who could arbitrate in the religious debates in the Zoroastrian community.

In the last two articles of this chapter (XIV and XV), Kreyenbroek investigates the functions of the bearers of different priestly titles in post-Sasanian times. Article XIV deals with a relatively long time span, focusing on the adaptation of the earlier, Sasanian priestly organization to the new social conditions of Islamic Iran. The other paper studies the evidence of the *Dādestān ī dēnīg* and is therefore concerned with the latter half of the 9th century. Article XIV, shows the existence of a Sasanian religious-administrative hierarchy that was organized along socio-spatial lines and is reminiscent of the hierarchy found in the Avestan texts. Besides this administrative priesthood, however, there were learned priests (*hērbed*), and ritual priests (*hāwišt*) who were mainly responsible for celebrating rituals. Furthermore, taking the modern usage of the priestly titles as his point of departure, the author analyses the changes in their functions from Sasanian times onwards. To this end he studies the evidence of Zoroastrian priestly literature from early Islamic times, particularly the *Epistles of Manuščīhr* and the *Dādestān ī dēnīg*. The fact that, unlike the earlier, anonymous Pahlavi Books, *Manuščīhr*, the author of these texts, is a historical religious figure, helps us to date these changes. The paper sheds light on the later functions of *hērbed*, *mōγ*, *mōγmard* and *dastwar*. Moreover, some passages from *Rivāyat ī Ēmēd Ašawahištān* are introduced to illustrate the functions of *mōbed*, *rad*, *hērbed* and *dastwar*. Finally the development of the priestly titles *hērbed*, *mōbad* and *dastūr* in

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the Parsi milieu is discussed; some these may have been adopted by the Zoroastrians of Iran.

Article XV studies the relationship between the community's finances and its religious and ritual life at the time of Manuščihr. It discusses the practice of 'arranging' and 'commissioning' rituals, showing the role of the laity as clients, and that of a learned priest as an 'accepter', who organizes the ritual and acts as a supervisor of the ritual priests taking part. It is shown that Manuščihr sought to regulate the 'market', aiming to prevent the acceptance of an offer to perform two rituals for the price of one; in doing so he sought to prevent the deterioration of priestly standards, and indeed of the livelihood of future generations of priests. Moreover, the paper offers a detailed analysis of the spheres of competence of the two competing priestly groups, *hērbed* and *hāwišt*, on the basis of certain key chapters of the *Dādestān ī dēnīg*.

The last chapter, 'Ritual,' contains two articles. The first (XVI) consists of two parts. The initial discussion deals with the rules informing the performance of rituals generally, constituting a first attempt to analyze the contents of certain *Zand* text in the *Nērangestān*. This part of the paper also discusses ritual imperfections, their punishments and consequences. The second part focuses on individual rituals, viz. the *Drōn*, the *Yasna* and the different *Vīsparads*. The characteristics of the ceremony referred to in the *Nērangestān* as *Bagān Yasn*, and the possible role of the texts we know as *Yašts* in this ritual are explored both at the end of this article, and more extensively in the next (XVII). The author poses the legitimate question why these (usually) long texts, which have no clear role in modern Zoroastrian ritual and are merely recited as prayers, came to be handed down to us. He notes that the popular use of *Khorde Avesta* texts as individual prayers seems to depend on the availability of these texts in book form. It is therefore relatively recent, so that the use of the *Yašts* as prayers can hardly have been the reason why these texts were preserved down to modern times. The author therefore tries to find a solution to this problem in the evidence of the *Nērangestān*. After discussing the terms *yasn*, *yašt* and *yazišn*, he reviews the passages concerning the *Bagān Yasn*. Kreyenbroek concludes that the *Yašts* formed part of two distinct rituals, a short ritual for the *Yazad* of the day, and the liturgy of a 'high' ceremony whose liturgy – like the *Wīdēwdād* – was based on that of *Vīsparad*, but with the interpolation of some *Kardas* of a *Yašt*.

Kianoosh Rezania
Göttingen, January 2013