

MITHRA, MITHRAISM
CHRISTMAS DAY
&
YALDA

K. E. Eduljee

Zoroastrian Heritage Monographs



Time saving Truth from Falsehood and Envy.

Falsehood holds the mask of deceit in his hand.

A 1737 painting by Francois Lemoyne (1688-1737). The artist suffered from severe depression and killed himself the day after he completed this painting.

In the Zoroastrian scriptures, the *Avesta*, **Mithra** is the guardian of truthfulness, keeping one's word and the bonds of friendship. Zoroastrianism presages a world when goodness will overcome evil, and truthfulness will overcome deceit and the Lie.

Every person needs to do her or his part to enable that goal to be reached – and to battle falsehood at every step.

*This monograph is dedicated to the memory of my mother Katayun Eduljee
née Katayun Kaikhoshro Irani.
Her brother, Darius Kaikhoshro Irani's leadership and motivation have inspired my
study and writing.*

*Detailed edition
First edition published, November 2015.
This second edition published, November 2016
by K. E. Eduljee
West Vancouver, BC, Canada*

The monograph has been published in two versions:

- 1. Complete version with notations and source texts,*
- 2. Abridged version without notations and source texts.*

*For further enquiries and pdf or printed copies:
eduljee@heritageinstitute.com
www.zoroastrianheritage.com*

This pdf copy in full form may be distributed freely.

*© K. E. Eduljee
No part of this book may be reproduced in any other form
without permission from the author,
except for the quotation of brief passages in citation.*

Zoroastrian Heritage Monographs

MITHRA, MITHRAISM, CHRISTMAS DAY & YALDA

CONTENTS

PART I – MITHRA & MITHRAISM.....	1
1. <i>Who is Mithra?</i>	1
A. In Zoroastrianism.....	1
B. In Hinduism.....	1
C. In Pre-Christian Rome.....	2
2. <i>What is Mithraism?</i>	2
3. <i>Roman Mithraic Bull-Slaying, the Tauroctony, & Zoroastrianism</i>	3
A. The Bull Killing (Tauroctony) Scene.....	3
B. Was Mithraism a Zoroastrian Sect?.....	4
4. <i>Yazidi Mithraic-Like Bull Sacrifice & Sun Cult</i>	5
A. Who are the Yazidis?.....	5
B. Lalish Pilgrimage Town & Sheikh Adi.....	6
C. Yazidi Relationship to Other Religions.....	6
D. Two Important Yazidi Festivals.....	7
(i) Evening Dance.....	7
(ii) Sacrifice of the Bull.....	8
E. Sheikh Shams – Lord of the Sun.....	8
F. Shared Bull Sacrifice Ritual & Roman Mithraic Sect’s Origins.....	9
5. <i>Roman Contact with Asian/Aryan Mithraists</i>	9
6. <i>When did Mithraism Reach Europe?</i>	11
A. First Evidence of Mithraism in Roman Europe.....	11
7. <i>Was Roman Mithraism a Public Religion or a Masonry-like Private Society?....</i>	11
A. Mithraea – Mithraic Lodges.....	11
B. Masonic-Like Mystery & Secret Sect.....	12
8. <i>Roman sect of Jupiter Dolichenus</i>	12
A. Doliche, Turkey (Syriac) Sites.....	13
B. Blended Religions.....	13
C. Sol – a Shared God.....	14
D. Sub-sects of the Popular Native Roman Religion.....	14
E. Relative Size of Membership.....	14
9. <i>Zurkhanes – Iranian Houses of Strength</i>	15
10. <i>Summary of Findings</i>	15
PART II – MITHRA & THE SUN.....	17
1. <i>Is Mithra the Sun? Was Mithra a Sun God?</i>	17
A. The Problem.....	17
2. <i>Roman Worship of the Sun, Sol as God</i>	17
A. Modern Myth.....	17
B. Sol, One of the Oldest Indigenous Roman Gods.....	18
C. Sol Indiges.....	19

VII. References

D. Romans Worshipped Sol Long before Mithras	19
E. Scholarly Bias.....	19
3. <i>Sol Invictus</i>	20
4. <i>Are Mithra & Sol the Same in Roman Mithraism?</i>	20
A. Images Show Sol & Mithra Separately & Ethnically Different	20
B. <i>Dual Mention of Gods e.g. Mithra Varuna</i>	22
C. Mithraic Inscriptions	22
D. Interim Summary of Findings	22
5. <i>Is the Aryan Mithra the same as the Sun?</i>	23
A. Sun & Mithra have Separate Dedicated Chapters in the <i>Avesta</i>	23
B. Mithra – the Bond of Friendship between the Sun & Moon.....	23
C. Mithra is Conflated with the Sun in Later Times	23
D. Mitra & the Sun in the Rig Veda Hindu Scriptures.....	23
5. <i>Conclusions</i>	23
PART III – ZOROASTRIAN CALENDAR.....	25
1. <i>Overview</i>	25
A. Texts Describing the Organization of the Zoroastrian Calendar	25
B. Year & Month Lengths.....	25
C. Intercalary Days & Gahambars	25
D. Days & Months Named not Numbered	25
E. Name Day Celebrations.....	25
F. Preciseness of the Zoroastrian Calendar	25
2. <i>Month Length & Sidereal Degrees</i>	26
3. <i>Spring Equinox – Hamaspathmaedya</i>	26
4. <i>Nowruz – New Year’s Day</i>	26
5. <i>Other Solstices & Autumn Equinox</i>	26
PART IV – CHRISTMAS DAY & MITHRAISM	27
A. Early Attempt to Determine Jesus’ Birth Date.....	27
B. Christianity Establishes Itself in Rome.....	27
C. December 25 Chosen as Jesus’ Birth Date	27
D. Opposition to December 25 as Jesus’ Birth Date	27
2. <i>Roman Festival of Saturnalia</i>	28
3. <i>Natalis Invicti</i>	29
A. <i>Chronography of 354. N. Invicti</i>	29
B. The Claim & Problem	30
3. <i>Christian Accounts of ‘Heathen’ Celebrations on December 25</i>	30
A. Tertullian’s Account	30
B. Pope Leo I’s Homilies	31
C. Could December 25 Celebrate Natalis Solis Invicti?.....	32
4. <i>Summary of Findings</i>	33
PART V – MEHERGAN, AUTUMNAL FESTIVAL.....	34
1. <i>Zoroastrian Calendar’s Mehergan Devoted to Mithra</i>	34
2. <i>Mehergan According to Biruni</i>	34

VII. References

A. Historical & Regional Context to Biruni’s Information	34
B. Mihr (Mithra) As another Name for the Sun	34
C. Significance of ‘Mihragan’. Mihr as Sun	34
D. Mihr as Light.....	34
E. Former & Other Calendar Systems.....	35
F. No Mention of a Winter Solstice Festival.....	35
PART VI – YALDA, OTHER WINTER SOLSTICE CELEBRATIONS & A SUGGESTION	36
1. <i>No Zoroastrian Winter Solstice Celebration</i>	36
2. <i>Greek Calendar’s Winter Solstice Celebration</i>	36
3. <i>Assyrian Christian Worship during the Winter Solstice</i>	36
4. <i>The Shamsi – People of the Sun</i>	37
A. Sun Temple under Deyrul Zaferan Christian Monastery.....	38
B. Mor Gabriel Christian Monastery.....	38
5. <i>Yalda</i>	39
A. Modern Iranian Reports on Yalda	39
B. Modern Iranian Reports on Yalda	40
6. <i>Conclusions – Our Historical Search</i>	40
7. <i>The Conundrum & a Suggestion</i>	41
A. The Desire to have a Joyous Zoroastrian Winter Celebration	41
B. Zoroastrian Festivals of Mehrgan & Daegan-Adar.....	41
C. Mailyarem Gahambar	41
D. Our Suggestion.....	42
PART VII REFERENCES	43
1. <i>Zoroastrian Scriptures & Texts</i>	43
2. <i>Other Scriptures & Religious Texts</i>	43
3. <i>Classical & Medieval Texts</i>	43
4. <i>Scholarly Texts</i>	45
5. <i>Website References</i>	46
A. Mithraism.....	46
B. Yazidis & Yazidi Religion	46
C. Masonry & Mithraism	46
D. Roman Coinage.....	47
E. Christmas; When Jesus was Born.....	47
F. Greek Calendar & Solstice Celebrations.....	47
F. Yalda	47
6. <i>Zoroastrian Heritage Webpage References</i>	47
A. General Pages.....	47
B. Calendar Pages	47
PART VIII – APPENDICES.....	48
1. <i>Etymology, Word Forms and Related Words</i>	48
A. Mithra.....	48
B. Khvar.....	48

VII. References

C. Fravashi / Farohar / Fravahar	48
D. Raya / Raocha	49
E. Gao: Kine / Bovine / Cattle	49
D. Gao-spenta: Animals (Useful / Beneficent / Livestock).....	49
2. <i>Passages from Zoroastrian & Classical Texts</i>	49
A. Geush Urvan (Bovine / Creation's Soul) in Zoroastrian Scriptures	49
(i) Geush Urvan's (Bovine / Creation's Soul's) Lament.....	49
(ii) Geush Urvan & Pasu Urvan. The Souls of Earthly Life, Humans & Animals.....	51
(iii) King Jamsheed as a Sinner for Eating Meat	51
(iv) Jamsheed's Transgression, Meat Eating & Mortality	54
(v) Possible Contrary Opinion – Divs & not Jamsheed Ordered the Killing of Animals.....	54
(vi) Dead Matter & Sin.....	55
B. Orthodox Zoroastrian Calendars in Zoroastrian Texts	55
(i) Dinkard.....	55
(ii) Greater Bundahishn & Lesser Bundahishn	59
C. Creation of Stars and all Creation during the Gahambars	75
(i) Creation of the Stars (also Stars of Constellations), Sun & Moon	75
(ii) Creation during the Gahambars	75
D. Farvardigan Days at End of Winter.....	76
(i) Contents – Calendar & Seasonal Festivals.....	76
(ii) Farvardigan Days at the End of Winter.....	77
(iii) Need to Welcome & Honour Fravashis	77
(iv) Need to be Charitable to the Poor	77
(v) Patet(?).....	77
(vi) Miscellaneous	77
GLOSSARY	79



ABBREVIATIONS

abbr.	-	abbreviation/abbreviated
Av.	-	<i>Avesta</i> or Avestan
Dk.	-	<i>Dinkard</i>
Eng.	-	English
FT	-	free translation
GB	-	<i>Greater Bundahishn</i>
Gr.	-	Greek
Lt.	-	Latin
LB	-	<i>Lesser Bundahishn</i>
m.	-	masculine
MP	-	Middle Persian (Pahlavi)
NP	-	New Persian
OP	-	Old Persian
p.	-	page
pp.	-	pages
Sk.	-	Sanskrit
Tr.	-	translation
Vd.	-	Vedas/Vedic
Y.	-	<i>Yasna</i> *
Yt.	-	<i>Yasht</i> *
V.	-	<i>Vendidad</i> *
Vol.	-	Volume

[*Italicized when referring to books. Not italicized when referring to the chapters.]

LATIN TERMS & ABBREVIATIONS

c.	-	Abbreviation for circa, Latin for approximately or about.
cf.	-	Abbreviation for confer and used in place of 'compare with'.
ibid.	-	Previously cited work in a footnote. To find the ibid. source, look at the reference preceding it. Ibid. is short for the Latin word 'ibidem' meaning 'the same place' and its use avoids repeating a work's title.
q.v.	-	Abbreviation for 'quod vide' used in our text to indicate more information is available elsewhere.

PURPOSE OF THIS MONOGRAPH

The festive December season brings with it a constant discussion about links between Christmas and Roman Mithraism. In recent years, another element has been added to the discussion – that of the Iranian festival of Yalda celebrated on December 21 (or on the winter solstice). This article examines the main claims around Yalda and December 25 – that:

1. When Mithraism (originally from Iran) was imported to Rome, the pre-Christian Romans celebrated the birth of Mithra on December 25 – the date of the winter solstice in those days;
2. An Iranian winter solstice festival called Yalda also celebrates the birth of Mithra (Zayesh-e Meher).
3. The current Zoroastrian calendar is in error and needs to mark all the solstices and equinoxes, which Zoroastrians should celebrate.

We will examine the basis for these claims by looking at the earliest documents and images available to us. We will also examine the role or influence of Mithra in each of these claims and start with a discussion on who is Mithra and what is Mithraism?



MITHRA, MITHRAISM, CHRISTMAS DAY & YALDA

PART I – MITHRA & MITHRAISM

1. Who is Mithra?

A. In Zoroastrianism

Mithra and its modern form Meher mean friend and ally. The name carries with it the qualities of kindness and friendship. The name Meher is given to both boys and girls, while its older form, Mithra or Mitra, is predominantly a girl's name.

In Zoroastrianism, Mithra is a Fereshteh or Yazata (Izad), an angel and guardian of truthfulness, honesty, keeping of one's word – one's promises – and bonds. Mithra is also one of three angels who greet a soul on the fourth dawn after a person's demise. These angels are the guardians of a person's core values – a person's moral and ethical constitution.

The Hamazor handclasp is a gesture that carries with it all the values of Mithra. 'Hama' means 'all' or 'all together' and 'zor' means 'strength'. The gesture seeks to cement a beneficial, sincere and trustworthy connection as well as a bond of mutual respect, help and friendship.



Hamazor handclasp. Photographer & source unknown.

B. In Hinduism

In the oldest Hindu scriptures, the *Rig Veda*, we find Mithra called Mitra, a deity belonging to a group called Asuras. The *Vedas* often mention Mithra paired with another Asura called Varuna. Together, Mitra and Varuna are the guardians of the cosmic and moral laws of Rita (similar to the Zoroastrian Asha).

While the *Vedas* tend to give all its deities human forms and gender (anthropomorphic characteristics), according to Jatindra Mohan Chatterji, a noted Vedic and Avestan scholar, Asuras such as Varuna, Mithra and Agni were originally perceived to be invisible, non-anthropomorphic, genderless, non-iconic deities.¹ While later Hindu tradition gave them human shapes in

¹ J. M. Chatterji, *The Hymns of Atharvan Zarathushtra*, published by the Parsi Zoroastrian Association of Calcutta, (Calcutta, 1967) pp. xx-xxvi.

a manner similar to other Hindu deities, we are still hard-pressed to find old Hindu images of Mitra.

C. In Pre-Christian Rome

In Pre-Christian Rome, the name Mithra became Mithras, a god portrayed in human form with little or no relationship to the Zoroastrian Mithra. The earliest evidence of Mithra worship – Mithraism – in Europe dates to between 80 and 100 CE.

2. What is Mithraism?

‘Mithraism’ is the modern name given by scholars to the beliefs of a sect focused on the worship of the Roman god Mithras. We have not yet come across an old Iranian, Indian or Roman name for ‘Mithraism’. Rather what we read in Classical Greek writer Plutarch’s work are “secret rites”². Roger Beck translates the references as ‘mysteries of Mithras’ and ‘mysteries of the Persians’ and further concludes, “The (Roman) Mithraists, who were manifestly not Persians in any ethnic sense, thought of themselves as cultic Persians.”³ While there is ample evidence that a Mithraic sect existed in the Roman Empire during the first to third centuries CE, here is no similar direct evidence that an independent religion that worshipped Mithra existed in the ancient Irano-Indian (Aryan) lands, Aryana.

Persia

Since Persia was the dominant Aryan/Iranian nation when ancient Greeks wrote their histories, Classical Greeks writers called all of Aryana (later Iran-shahr), Persia. It is like calling Britain, England.

It is, however, reasonable to conclude that some form of a rather compelling and attractive Mithraic belief existed during the Zoroastrian Parthian era (c. 300 BCE- c.220 CE) in order for it to have been adopted by

Romans battling the Parthians (part of the ‘Persian’ i.e., Iranian milieu) in the Middle East.

The Roman Mithras acquired distinct Greco-Roman anthropomorphic characteristics and Roman Mithraism added Roman gods to the belief system making it a syncretized religion. Later, we will discuss another blended religion, the Yazidi religion, which is still practiced today in the Middle East. Like Roman Mithraism, the Yazidi religion also has a

Aryan

We use the word ‘Aryan’ in its original sense – before the term was appropriated and racialized by Europeans. Forms of the term Aryan are plentiful in the Zoroastrian *Avesta* and to a lesser extent in Hindu texts. The term Airyana-Vaeja (meaning Aryan homeland) evolved to Eran-vej and then Iran. ‘Aryan’ is simply an older way of saying ‘Iranian’.

² Plutarch’s Lives, Pompey 24.5. “καὶ τελετὰς τινὰς ἀπορρήτους ἐτέλουν, ὧν ἡ τοῦ Μίθρου....” (celebrated secret rites/ceremonies, among which those of Mithras....).

³ Roger Beck in ‘Mithraism’ at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/mithraism>.

bull sacrifice and a solar cult within it.

The primary image in surviving Mithraic temples (Mithraeums) is humanlike Mithra killing a bull with the Sun god and Moon goddess looking on.

Other images show Mithras offering the sacrificed bull's meat to Sol, the Sun god. Mithraic iconography also has zodiac signs and scenes indicating the possible journey a soul must make through the cosmos in order to reach its final destination – the Sun and the dwelling place of Sol, the Sun god.

3. Roman Mithraic Bull-Slaying, the Tauroctony, & Zoroastrianism

A. The Bull Killing (Tauroctony) Scene

The principle image in a Mithraic temple is of Mithras – wearing clothes that in Greco-Roman art identifies him as a 'Persian' (i.e. Iranian) – killing a



Mithra in 'Persian'/Aryan garb & the tauroctony (bull-killing) scene. Roman deities Sol, the Sun god, and Luna, the Moon goddess, are in the top left and right corners respectively. This scene is on one side of a 2nd-3rd cent. CE two-sided altar slab. Other reliefs and frescos show the Sun god Sol participating in a feast sharing the meat of the sacrificed bull. Image credit: Wikipedia.

bull. The scene is called a tauroctony – meaning bull killing. While several authors interpret the scene in cosmic terms, others have determined that as part of a Mithraic feast, a bull was ‘sacrificed’ after which the temple’s members ritually ate its meat (see below). The scene can of course have both meanings.

B. Was Mithraism a Zoroastrian Sect?

Late third century CE Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry⁴, a Levantian (from today’s Lebanon & W. Syria region) credits Mithraism’s origins to Zoroaster in ‘Persia’. Porphyry stated, “The Persians [Mithraists] call the place [the Mithraeum temple] a cave where they introduce the initiate to the mysteries, revealing to him the path by which souls descend [to the earthly body] and go back again [to the spiritual realms of the cosmos]. For Eubulus tells us that Zoroaster was the first to dedicate a natural cave in honour of Mithras, the creator and father of all. Located in the mountains near Persia, it had flowers and springs.”⁵

Zoroastrian books have no such story and Zoroaster’s own hymns, the Gathas, do not even mention Mithra. The Gathas in fact start with a cry for help by the soul of the cow (also a metaphor for all of creation) to save it from the violence that surrounds it. Porphyry – perhaps a Mithraist sympathizer – has replaced Ahura Mazda with Mithra. However, since Zoroaster was famous and respected by Greeks, making him a worshipper of Mithra would have given the Mithraist sect credibility.

There are indications that some Magi (otherwise Zoroastrian priests, the Mobeds) became Roman Mithraist priests. If so, they may have promoted the idea that Zoroaster started Mithra worship, or in other words, that he founded Mithraism – a claim that is false.

Remarks by Classical Greco-Roman writers such as Porphyry have led modern authors such as Franz Cumont (1868-1947), a noted but controversial Belgian researcher on Mithraism, to embellish this claim and directly link Roman Mithraism to mainline Zoroastrianism.⁶ Cumont sought to draw a connection between the slaying of the bull (the tauroctony) by Mithra and the Middle Persian Zoroastrian *Bundahishns’* account of the death of the primordial Gav (bovine) before the onslaught of Ahriman (the devil) as well as an end times account.⁷ Prof. John Hinnells of Liverpool Hope University emphatically refutes the assertion as



⁴ Porphyry lived c.234 to c.305 CE.

⁵ Porphyry’s *De Antro Nympharum* 6 tr. J. M. Duffy in *The Cave of the Nymphs in the Odyssey* (Buffalo, 1969). (q.v. Homer’s *Odyssey* at 13.103-12.)

⁶ Franz Cumont in *Mysteries of Mithra* tr. by T. J. McCormack (Chicago, 1903) p. 7.

⁷ *Lesser Bundahishn* at LB 3.18 & 30.27; *Greater Bundahishn* at GB 4.20.

mere speculation. He also states, “In no known Iranian text [either Zoroastrian or otherwise] does Mithra slay a bull.” Hinnells decries the method of speculative scholars whose work he says is “so weak and ambiguous that this is merely adding theory to theory without any secure evidential basis. ...Indeed, one can go further and say that the portrayal of Cumont is not merely unsupported by Iranian texts but it is in serious conflict with known Iranian theology.”⁸

4. Yazidi Mithraic-Like Bull Sacrifice & Sun Cult

A. Who are the Yazidis?

The Yazidis who speak a Kurdish dialect, are said to be a half-million strong religious group mainly from Iraqi and Syrian Kurdistan, who recently gained the media spotlight because of their persecution by the Islamic State. The Islamic State also forcibly and brutally enslaved Yazidi women and preteen young girls and children, as sex slaves for their perverted men.



Northern Iraqi Kurdistan showing areas where Yazidis live. They are not restricted to this area and can be found north in Armenia.

Image credit: Joshua Project.

Before the Islamic State’s assault, the Yazidis could be found spread out over the region. They are currently building their largest temple in Armenia.



Yazidi solidarity with Hindus & plea for help.

Some Yazidis consider India to be their original homeland and others that they are connected to India. Their traditions claim they are one of the ten lost tribes of Israel. However, because of the great Biblical flood of the Tigris/Euphrates Rivers, “the Yazidis moved from their homeland in Northern Iraq to India, Afghanistan,

⁸ John Hinnells in ‘Reflections on the bull-slaying scene’ at *Mithraic Studies II* (Manchester, 1975) p. 291-2.

and North Africa. Then about 4,000 years ago they returned home.”⁹

National Geographic states, “Yazidis forbid converts and abide by a strict caste system – a vestige, along with a belief in reincarnation, of their time in India thousands of years ago – that prohibits not only marriage with non-Yazidis but also intermarriage between the castes.”

B. Lalish Pilgrimage Town & Sheikh Adi

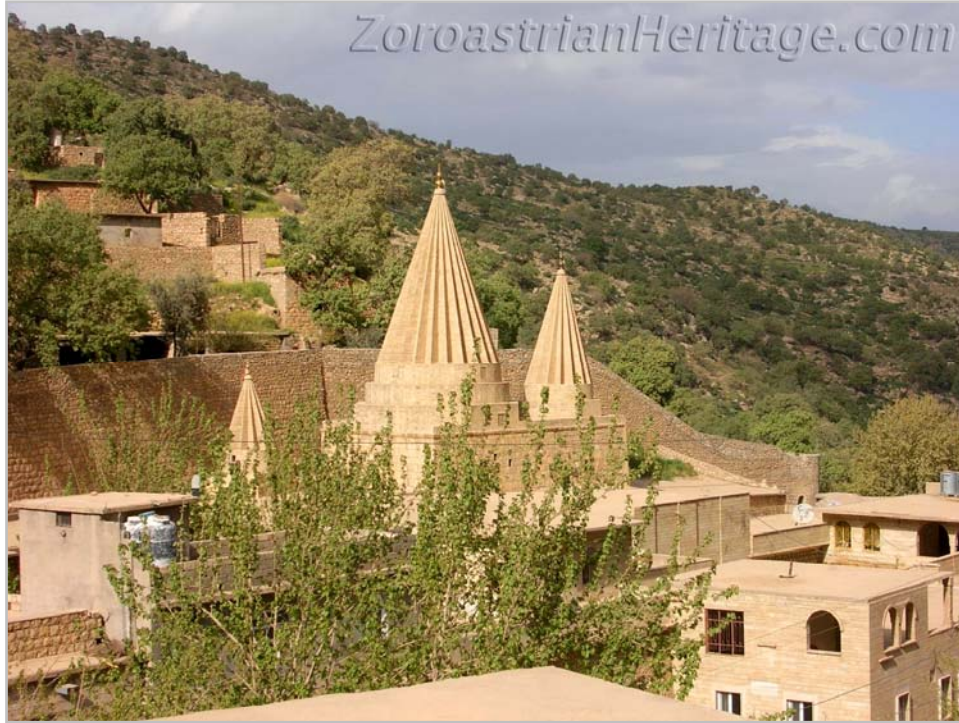


Figure c town and temple. Credit: <http://kurdistanart.blogspot.ca>.

Lalish, a small village located about fifty five km north-east of Mosul – in a mountain valley in Iraqi Kurdistan (northern Iraq) – is home to the holiest temple in the Yazidi faith and the tomb of Sheikh Adi, a 11th century religious leader, reformer and Sufi Master, indicating perhaps that the Yazidis of that time associated themselves with Islamic Sufis.

C. Yazidi Relationship to Other Religions

Besides having their own unique beliefs, the Yazidis have added in beliefs from other religions making theirs a blended religion (as was Roman Mithraism). Yazidism contains beliefs found in Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. However, we read that in a May 2014

⁹ http://www.yeziditruth.org/yezidi_religious_tradition and <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/09/140902-yazidis-iraq-kurdistan-lalish-sheikh-adi-islamic-state/>

article from Gaziantep, Turkey, a Yazidi leader Sheikh Kherto Haji Ismail denied that the Yazidi were linked to Zoroastrians.¹⁰ Indeed, some Yazidi beliefs and customs such as the annual bull sacrifice – one of the two most important Yazidi observances – like the Roman Mithraic bull sacrifice, are antithetical to Zoroastrian beliefs. Incidentally, there is a cave like tunnel with a seating ledge under the Lalish temple.

D. Two Important Yazidi Festivals

The two most important Yazidi annual events held during the Feast of Seven Days held in early October are the Evening Dance and the Sacrifice of the Bull.

(i) Evening Dance

During the Feast of Seven Days, religious leaders perform the Evening Dance every evening just after sunset in the Lalish Sanctuary's courtyard. Two groups of seven men dressed in white, the colour of purity, dance or walk to the music of designated singers and musicians called the qewels. Led by the head of the Faqirs who wears a black fur cape and a conical hat, they dance in a circle around a 'sacred flame' that represents both the Sun and God. The clothes of the head Faqir are copied from those said to have been worn by Sheikh Adi. While alive, the Yazidi sheikhs were prophet-like leaders. After they died, they became god-like.



Assembling for the evening dance. Credit: Reuters.

¹⁰ <http://aranews.net/2014/05/zoroaster-statue-raise-outrage-of-yezidi-community-in->

(ii) Sacrifice of the Bull

The Sacrifice of the Bull takes place on the festival's the last day. It marks the arrival of autumn and is accompanied by prayers for rain during the coming winter followed by a bountiful spring. When the gates of the sanctuary are thrown open, a bull held within races out and is chased by men of the Qaidy tribe. They herd and chase the bull through the city's street and then up a hill to the sanctuary of Sheikh Shams (compare this to the bull running festival in Spain and Portugal followed by the bulls' ritual killing). Here the bull is caught and slaughtered. The scene is reminiscent of the Roman Mithraic bull slaying. Here the bull is caught, slaughtered, its meat cooked and distributed amongst the gathered pilgrims as the feast of the solar Sheikh Shams.

E. Sheikh Shams – Lord of the Sun

Shams means the Sun in Arabic and as his name suggests, he is Lord of the Sun.

The Yazidis consider Sheikh Shams to be Sheikh Adi's vizier or prime minister as well as the essence of the Yazidi religion. Lines in Yazidi texts state, "My Sheikh Shams is Lord of the Disc (of the Sun)." "I testify the Sun has risen, the golden disc Sheikh Shams, head of God's council. The Sun has ascended to the sky; the heavy disc has risen; the light and look of Sheikh Shams has even penetrated to the fish down under in the sea." At dawn, an observant and righteous Yazidi will kiss the spot on the ground where the first rays of the Sun fall. "Sheikh Shams is the, *chirah dini*, the light of the faith; the focal point of worship; the power of the faith; the master of spiritual knowledge; the torch, the flame, of the Yazidi community. Sheikh Shams is *Chaveh Khvadeh*, God's eye." As Lord of the Sun, at time the words of reverence to him become a prayer to God the Creator as



The entrance to Lalish. Nallein Sowilo at <http://peacock-angel.org> captions this image "After death the soul crosses the Sirat Bridge and is judged by Sheikh Adi" perhaps suggesting the gate and lane represent the Sirat Bridge.

efrin/

in, “Sheikh Shams you are compassionate, you are my creator; for all ills you are the remedy; to all creatures you are merciful.” The soul of a deceased person crosses the Sirat Bridge (cf. Chinvat Bridge) and is judged by Sheikh Adi.¹¹

When the Yazidis pray to Sheikh Shams, they face the Sun.¹²

Given that the ritual Yazidi sacrificing of the bull takes place in the sanctuary of the solar Sheikh Shams (perhaps to invoke his blessings) and given that the ritual killing is supposed to have spiritual power in ensuring life sustaining rains and a bountiful spring, the Yazidi bull sacrifice and its spiritual implications might give us some insights into the Roman Mithraic custom – interpreted by Prof. John Hinnells as a bull sacrifice that gives life to man.

F. Shared Bull Sacrifice Ritual & Roman Mithraic Sect’s Origins

The shared ritual of a bull sacrifice between the Yazidis and Roman Mithraists has added interest to us because the Yazidis are located in a region that was once the frontiers of the Roman army’s eastern campaigns. Since both Yazidism and Roman Mithraism are/were syncretized religions, both may have adopted the bull sacrifice practice from a common source – say, a dedicated Mithraic sect located in the western Asian regions of Asia Minor, the Caucasuses, Syria and Mesopotamia – perhaps even based in that part of old Armenia that borders Kurdish lands.

5. Roman Contact with Asian/Aryan Mithraists

Greek biographer Plutarch (45-120 CE) states that Roman General Pompey (106-48 BCE) came in to contact with Asian Mithraists when he engaged Cilician pirates from the west coast of Asia Minor who “celebrated certain secret rites, among which those of Mithras continue to the present time, having been first instituted by them.”¹³ This is one of the earliest descriptions of Greco-Roman contact with Asian Mithraists. It took place during the Roman wars with King Mithradates VI (134-63 BCE) during Parthian rule of Iran. Mithradates is the European version of the Zoroastrian name ‘Meherdad’ derived from the Old Persian ‘Mithradata’ (close to what an Avestan version would be) meaning ‘Mithra-given’. Mithradates VI was king of north-eastern Asia Minor (Turkey today) and parts of Armenia.



Plutarch.

¹¹ Garnik S. Asatrian & Victoria Arakelova in *The Religion of the Peacock Angel: The Yazidis and Their Spirit World* (London, 2014) pp 63-68.

¹² L. Turgut in *Ancient Rites and Old Religions in Kurdistan* (Erfurt, 2013) note #57, p. 15.

¹³ Plutarch (45-120 CE), *Parallel Lives, Vita Pompeii* (Life of Pompey), chap. 24.5.



Gold coins of Roman Emperor commemorating the capture of Armenia by Octavianus/Augustus (27 BCE-14 CE) and minted at Pergamum in 19 BCE.

There are two Roman gold coins struck in the Pergamum/Pergamon mint dating to 19 BCE that show a winged female figure stabbing or cutting the throat of a bull (a tauroctony). Pergamum was a city close to Troy on the western coast of Asia Minor. It was once part of the Achaemenid Persian-Zoroastrian Empire (c.700-330 BCE) and later became part of the eastern Roman Empire. The coins show Roman Emperor Octavianus/Augustus (27 BCE-14 CE) on the obverse and the tauroctony on the reverse with a surrounding legend "Armenia Capta" (Captured/Conquest). 'Capta' was used on commemorative Roman coins with the names of different nations overrun by the Romans, together with a symbol of that country.

Out of the many Augustan coins minted across the Roman Empire, these commemorative coins are the only ones showing a Mithraic-like tauroctony. Somehow, the scene is related to the capture of Armenia. Armenia was then ruled by Iranian-Parthians and was for a period subjugated by the Romans. While the winged female figure has no resemblance to the later Roman

images of Mithras, the tauroctony scene closely resembles the Roman Mithraic scenes minus the creatures gnawing at the bull.

6. When did Mithraism Reach Europe?

One modern theory is that Mithraism arrived in Europe via Armenia – another theory is that it arrived via Syria.

A. First Evidence of Mithraism in Roman Europe

Mithraic archeological sites abound throughout the Roman Empire. The majority of Mithraic sites date to between the 2nd and 4th centuries CE and the earliest Mithraic artifacts discovered have been at sites that date to between 80 and 100 CE. Both Mithraism and Christianity appear to have their footholds in the Rome Empire around the same time in the first century CE – about two thousand years ago.



Mithraic altar fragments found at Novae near Steklen, Bulgaria. Note 'Persian'/Aryan clothing on Cautopates & Cautes (Mithraic associates) on the left and right resp.

Image credit: D. Detschew in 'Antike Denkmaler aus Bulgarien' at *JOAI* (1939).

Among these artifacts are altar fragments found in a Roman legionary site at Novae near Steklen in Bulgaria. The site was then part of Rome's lower Danube province of Moesia. The altar's inscriptions indicate it was dedicated by Philopalaestrus, a collector of import duties and public taxes – in a manner similar to other Mithraic altar dedications by Roman officials.

7. Was Roman Mithraism a Public Religion or a Masonry-like Private Society?

A. Mithraea – Mithraic Lodges

Modern scholars call the windowless cave-like lodges or temples where Roman Mithraists gathered, Mithraea (Latin sing. Mithraeum).

Known Mithraea are usually around 10-12m long and 4-6m wide. Many are located in secluded and dark places – even underground. The open floor space is restricted and narrow with barely enough room for twenty people.



Artist's concept of a 14-person Mithraeum scene.

B. Masonic-Like Mystery & Secret Sect

Modern authors call Mithraism a mystery sect – because entry into a Mithraic temple or lodge was restricted to followers who had undergone an initiation rite. As a result, the public at large did not know much about the sect's beliefs, which were a mystery to the public. Some Masonic websites state that since Roman Mithraism was a secret society like Masonry and since both share common rites such as initiation rites, Masonry likely descended from Roman Mithraism.¹⁴

Given that Roman Mithraism operated more like a private and secret society, it is highly unlikely that Roman Mithraism was a religion followed by a substantial part of the Roman population. We have not been able to find evidence of the claim by several authors that Mithraism was a widely practiced public or imperial religion. It is also unlikely that Roman Mithraists instituted large public festivals.

8. Roman sect of Jupiter Dolichenus

Around the same time that Mithraism flourished in Rome, there existed a rival mystery sect devoted to another imported god Dolichenus also called Jupiter Dolichenus.¹⁵ 'Jupiter' signifies that Dolichenus was the sect's head

¹⁴ See 'Mithraism: Freemasonry and the Ancient Mysteries' by Bro. Haywood at <http://www.mastermason.com/luxoculta/mithras.htm>. "Mithraism masonry" had nearly 10,000 results on Google.

¹⁵ Called Zeus Dolichenus in Greek.



Slab dedicated to the Roman god Sol and the Syrian god (Jupiter) Dolichenus. Sol is identified from other images as wearing a chlamys and emitting solar rays. The bearded god beside him is likely Dolichenus. Moon goddess Luna is shown between them. The slab does not show or mention Mithra. It was dedicated by a priest called Chresimus and was discovered at the barracks of the *Equites Singulares* at via Tasso, Rome. It is dated to between 150 and 200 CE. Image credit: Wikipedia.

god. It does not mean Dolichenus was connected to the Roman god Jupiter.

A. Doliche, Turkey (Syriac) Sites

The name 'Dolichenus' may be derived from the name of a town Doliche in south-central Turkey. The town is not far from the Syrian border, where the ruins of temples were found on a hill nearby. In Roman times, this area was part of Syria.

Two side-by-side underground Mithraea were also discovered in Doliche. The existence of two neighbouring Mithraea rather than one large Mithraeum may be because one Mithraeum was too small to fit in all the local Mithraists or that they had sub-sects. The date on when the Mithraea were established is disputed. While some researchers argue for a date as early as the first century BCE (during the early Parthian era in Aryana and from about the time of the founding of the Roman Empire), others prefer a first century CE dating. The earlier date would make them two of the earliest Mithraea discovered so far.¹⁶

B. Blended Religions

Since Dolichenus was originally a Syrian god, some authors call the Roman Jupiter Dolichenus an 'oriental' god like Mithras. The pairing of the Roman god Sol with a Syrian god Dolichenus (together with the ever-present Roman goddess Luna), indicates the Dolichenus sect had blended beliefs like

¹⁶ A. Schütte-Maischatz and E. Winter in *Doliche* (Bonn, 2004) pp. 79-195.

Mithraism.

C. Sol – a Shared God

The presence of the Roman Sun god, Sol, in the Dolichenus sect demonstrates that Sol was not the exclusive preserve of Mithraism. The inscribed dedication we just reviewed starts with “*Soli Invicto*” (Sun invincible)¹⁷ and we will discuss the use of this title later. Nobody has suggested – as authors constantly do with Mithraism – that Dolichenus was therefore a Sun god.

D. Sub-sects of the Popular Native Roman Religion

The presence of Roman deities Sol and Luna indicate that both Mithraism and Dolicheism were sub-sects of the popular native religion of Rome and not independent religions. There is nothing to indicate the contrary – that Mithraism or Dolicheism were breakaway religions not connected to the majority local religion. They were likely subsets of the native Roman religion in much the same way that Hindu sects that worship one particular deity remain sub-sects within Hinduism.

We read that that were at least four such sub-sects in Rome around the same time. As are many Masons, members of larger popular religions, Mithraists were likely members of the large popular religion as well.

E. Relative Size of Membership

So far, about thirty Mithraea – Roman Mithraic temples – and twenty Dolichenus temples have been discovered in the city of Rome. These numbers give us an idea about the two sects’ membership proportions.

While there were a large number of Mithraea spread across the Roman Empire from east to west – over 500 have been discovered and many more will remain undiscovered – the membership of the sect was still relatively small compared to the Romans who followed their popular native pre-Christian religion. Out of a population that exceeded a million, some researchers estimate the number of Mithraists Rome city as between 20,000 to 25,000¹⁸ or about 5% of Rome’s male population.¹⁹

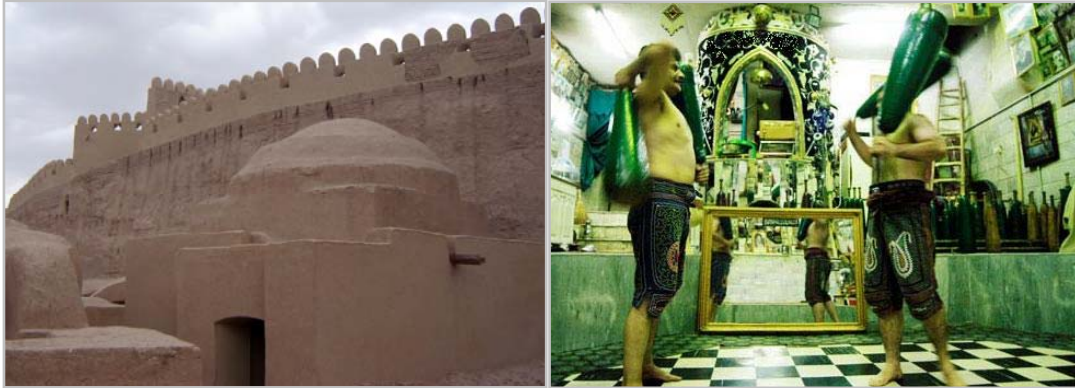
¹⁷ This inscription is catalogued as CIMRM 373: “*Soli Invicto pro salute Imp(eratorum) et Genio n(umeri) eq(uitum) sing(ularium) eorum M. Ulp(ius) Chresimus sace[rd(os)] Iovis Dolich[eni] [dedicavit]*” meaning “[Dedicated to] Sol Invictus for the emperors’ health and to the numerous genius of their singular horses, M. Ulpius Chresimus, priest of Jupiter Dolichenus.”

¹⁸ Wikipedia states that the City of Rome’s population exceeded a million inhabitants and the population of the Roman Empire may have been between 50 and 90 million inhabitants.

¹⁹ Jonas Bjornebye’s ‘Mithraic Movement, Negotiating Topography and Space in Late Antique Rome’ in *The Moving City: Processions, Passages and Promenades in Ancient Rome* (London, 2015) citing Filippo Coarelli.

Once again, a comparison with Masonry bears mention. Masonry has or had a large number of lodges in many countries. Despite the large combined population of these countries, Masonry had or has a relatively small membership.

9. Zurkhanes – Iranian Houses of Strength



Left: An old zurkhane beside the walls of the Sassanian era (224 CE - 649 CE) Rayen fortress in Kerman, Iran. Right: Modern pahlavans exercising with meels, clubs, in a zurkhane.

In Iran, traditional gymnasiums are called Zurkhanes, meaning ‘houses of strength’. Zurkhanes are where Iranian strongmen called pahlavans – in the tradition of ancient warriors – gather, practice and wrestle.

Zurkhanes share some features with Mithraea. The older Zurkhanes are often windowless and cave-like and sometimes underground. They also have a ledge that runs around the centre space that serves as an arena. Instead of an altar, the Zurkhanes have a place for a copy of the poet Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, the Book of Kings.

10. Summary of Findings

Roman Mithraism was likely inspired by an Iranian sect in the western realms of the Persian Empire that had once extended to the Mediterranean coast during the Persian Achaemenid era (c.700-330 BCE).

After overthrowing the Greek overlords left behind by Alexander, the Iranian (‘Persian’) Parthians tried to regain western Asian lands that had been part of the old Persian Empire. In the process, they encountered Roman armies who had occupied areas (now part of Turkey, Syria and Iraq) vacated by the Greeks.

One scenario that comes to our mind is that given Zoroastrianism's suppression by the Greeks and the killing of Zoroastrian priests (Magi/Mobeds), in the vacuum, some native people in this region may have been influenced by various religious traditions including Greco-Roman

I. Mithra & Mithraism

religions, Judaism and Christianity. They could have as a result developed blended religions. Local sects may have in turn been influenced the Romans who had replaced the previous Greek overlords. The Romans would have blended these acquired beliefs – such as Mithraic and Doliche beliefs – with their own native Roman beliefs.

The first evidence of Roman Mithraist artifacts and temples in Europe dates to about two thousand years ago. Roman Mithraism was not a public religion but a secretive Masonic-like sect with no meaningful connection with Zoroastrianism.

Like the Mithraists, a minority Kurdish sect, the Yazidis, also practice a bull sacrifice. It is the only surviving Aryan group know to this writer with such a practice. While Yazidi beliefs have a few Zoroastrian elements blended in with Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Islamic and possibly Mithraic cult beliefs, it is not a Zoroastrian sect and some Yazidi leaders have made statements distancing Yazidism from Zoroastrianism.

We will next examine the claim that Mithra means the Sun and that Mithra was a Sun god.



PART II – MITHRA & THE SUN

1. Is Mithra the Sun? Was Mithra a Sun God?

A. The Problem

On the one hand, Roman images show Mithras and the Sun god Sol as separate ethnically and entirely different entities. On the other hand, some Mithraic inscriptions join their names as in “*Deo Soli invicto Mithrae*” (God Sun Invincible Mithra) leading many to assume that the first part, “*Deo Soli invicto*” is merely a title for “*Mithrae*”.

On the one hand, the old Zoroastrian scripture, the *Avesta*, has separate chapters devoted to the Sun (*Khor*) and Mithra. In these chapters, the two names are used separately and differently. On the other hand, the some later Middle Persian texts refer to the Sun as Mihr (a Middle Persian form of Mithra) leading many to assume Mithra is just another name for the Sun.

Is Mithra just another name for the Sun? We will begin our analysis with an examination of the Roman god, Sol, the Sun.

2. Roman Worship of the Sun, Sol as God

A. Modern Myth

S. E. Hijmans in his thoroughly researched doctoral thesis states, “This remarkable idea that there had been two distinct Sun gods in Rome has been the dominant view in Classical scholarship for well over a century. Nonetheless, this is a modern myth for which there is quite simply no evidence. The evidence we do have suggests, either implicitly or explicitly, that the Romans had venerated Sol as a Roman god for as long as they could



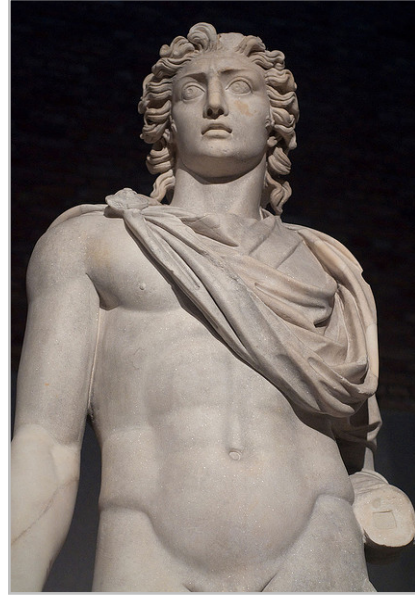
2nd-3rd cent. CE Roman Mithraic altar scene. The personified Sun, Sol (almost nude) is at the top-centre with Mithra in the top right-hand corner & Roman goddess Luna at the top-left. Three of the capped figures – Mithra, Cautopates & Cautes (Mithraic associates) are wearing ‘Persian’/Aryan attire. Sol wears only a chlamys, a Greco-Roman mantle often shown on the Greek Sun god Helios. The four male figures hold barsom-like stick bundles. Roman Mithraic scenes show a syncretic blend of beliefs. This panel was discovered near Fiano Romano, near Rome, Italy in 1926 & is currently in the Louvre Museum, Paris, France. Image credit: Wikipedia.

II. Is Mithra the Sun?

recall, and never ceased to do so until the demise of polytheism.”²⁰

B. Sol, One of the Oldest Indigenous Roman Gods

Ancient Roman scholar and writer Marcus Terentius Varro (116-2 BCE) traces the worship of Sol in Rome back to the days of Titus Tatius, an eight-century BCE Sabine king who battled Romulus the founder of Rome.²¹ We also found an early Roman discussion on the



Roman Sol's counterpart, Greek Sun god Helios wearing only a chlamys, a Greco-Roman mantle, as he does in several Mithraic motifs, and an important identifier of his 'ethnicity'. Image credit: Wikipedia.



Two Roman coins depicting Sol before the introduction of Mithraism. Top: Sol on obverse; crescent, stars and orb on reverse. 217-15 BCE. Bottom: Helmeted Roma head on obverse; Sol wearing chiton and chlamys driving a quadriga (four-horsed) chariot on reverse. Minted by Marcus Aburius 132 BCE.

ancient god Sol in a retort by Christian theologian Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE). Augustine, in response to allegations that Christianity had brought about the decline of Rome, wrote that the Romans worshipped Sol as a god from time of Titus Tatius.²² The implication here is that Romans worshipped Sol from the very outset of Roman history.

²⁰ S. E. Hijmans' doctoral thesis *Sol: The Sun in the Art and Religions of Rome* (2009, University of Groningen) p.1.

²¹ Marcus Terentius Varro's *De Lingua Latina* V, X. "...Et arae Sabinum linguam olent, quae Tati regis voto sunt Romae dedicatae: nam, ut annales dicunt, vovit Opi, Florae, Vediovi Saturnoque, Soli, Lunae, Volcano et Summano, itemque Larundae, Termino, Quirino, Vortumno, Laribus, Dianae Lucinaeque...."

²² Augustine of Hippo's *De Civitate Dei contra Paganos* (The City of God against the Pagans) 4.23.

C. Sol Indiges

Other classical writers also mention the early Roman worship of the Sun god Sol as *Sol Indigitis/Indiges* – the indigenous or native Roman god Sol. In general, the ‘*Indiges*’ were the old indigenous Roman gods while the ‘*Novensides*’ were the new imported gods. The imports complimented the native gods. The imports did not duplicate or replace the native gods.

Hijmans provides a catalogue of source references and adds, “The sources unanimously treat him (Sol) as one of the earliest gods in Rome and the *fasti* (official chronicle) as well as certain late sources refer to him (Sol) specifically as Sol Indiges.”²³

Roman writer Pliny the Elder (23-79 CE) noted that a shrine to Sol stood on the banks of the River Numicius.²⁴ Pliny’s contemporary Quintilianus (c.35-c.100 CE) made note of a temple to Sol on Quirinal Hill in Rome.²⁵ The counterpart to Sol was Janus the Moon.

Sol together with Helios, the older Titanic Greek god of the Sun, and Apollo, the later Greek god of Sun & light, were all part of the ancient Greco-Roman pantheon of gods.

D. Romans Worshipped Sol Long before Mithras

All in all, the oldest available source texts and their scholarly non-speculative analysis demonstrate that Sol was one of the earliest indigenous gods known to have been worshipped Rome– from at least the eighth century BCE and perhaps earlier – nearly a thousand years before the first evidence of the Roman Mithras.

E. Scholarly Bias

Why then have so many scholars sought to promote a contrary and contrived reality? Hijmans says it best. “To understand how that could be, we must first identify a number of basic tendencies that have dominated research into Roman sun cults, although these are difficult to define precisely. Most earlier studies of Sol, whether Indiges or Invictus, were heavily laden with prejudice. Many scholars felt uncomfortable with the concept of a Roman sun cult; some were openly hostile towards it. This hostility, which was ideological in nature, has had a strong influence on research into the cult of Sol at Rome.”²⁶

²³ S. E. Hijmans (see above) at p. 3.

²⁴ Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History* 3.56 as cited by S. E. Hijmans (see above) at p.5.

²⁵ Quintilianus 1.7.12.

²⁶ S. E. Hijmans (see above) at p. 1.

3. Sol Invictus

Romans began to use the title 'invictus'/'invicti' for many of their gods from about the 3rd century BCE.²⁷ The earliest extant inscription (by Publius Aelius Amandus) to Sol Invictus is dated to 158 CE²⁸ – before inscriptions to Mithra.

The title 'invictus' also began to be used for Roman emperors from the time of Emperor Commodus (180-192 CE) onwards.

4. Are Mithra & Sol the Same in Roman Mithraism?

A. Images Show Sol & Mithra Separately & Ethnically Different

Roman Mithraic altar scenes show Mithras and Sol separately. Sol and Luna are also consistently shown driving their own chariots. In some scenes, Mithras is shown mounting Sol's chariot behind Sol. [We are reminded that in Persian and Sanskrit, Mithra mean friend and ally.] Mithras is also consistently shown sacrificing the bull and then serving Sol its meat.

Besides being shown separately, Sol and Mithras are also shown as being ethnically different. In the artistic system used by Greco-Romans, young Greco-Roman men are shown scantily clad or nude while 'Persians'/Aryans are usually shown fully clothed from head to foot. While this is not necessarily an accurate portrayal of regional clothing, it was the one familiar to Romans. In Mithraic iconography, Mithra and his associates are shown fully clothed in a typical 'Persian'/Aryan style, while Sol is shown nude or with just a chlamys, a mantle, around his neck, in the Greco-Roman style – Mithra was 'Persian' while Sol was Greco-Roman.



Inscription by Publius Aelius Amandus dated to 158 CE showing invictus as a title for Sol, the Sun god, at Musei Capitolini, Rome, Italy.

²⁷ S. E. Hijmans (see above) at p. 18.

²⁸ Inscription by Publius Aelius Amandus dated to 158 CE showing invitus as a descriptor for Sol, the Sun god at Musei Capitolini, Rome, Italy: "*Soli Invicto deo ex voto suscepto accepta missione honesta ex num ro eq(uitum) sing(ularium) Aug(usti) P(ublius) Aelius Amandus d(e)d(icavit) Tertullo et Sacerdoti co(n)s(ulibus).*" (Trs.) "Publius Aelius Amandus dedicated this to the god Sol Invictus in accordance with the vow he had made, upon his honourable discharge from the equestrian guard of the emperor, during the consulship of Tertullus and Sacerdos."

II. Is Mithra the Sun?



White marble altar relief (catalogued as CIMRM 1584) discovered at Ptuj (Poetovio), Slovenia. The relief shows Mithras (at right) in Persian clothing, handing pieces of meat speared by a knife (as in a kabob) over an altar flame to a semi-nude Sol (at left) wearing a typical crown with rays of light and chlamys, a mantle. A raven – perhaps representing meat-eating animals – pecks at the meat. A club shaped piece of meat lies on the floor beside the altar. Between their two heads is an inscription: *D(eo) S(oli) i(nvicto) M(ithrae) / pro sal(ute) d(omini) n(ostri) Gallieni p(ii) f(elicis) / invicti Aug(usti) Fl(avius) Aper v(ir) e(gregius) l(ibens) m(erito)*. DSIM are initials for Deo Solis Invicto Mithrae. The gods are shown separately while their names are paired in the inscription.

B. Dual Mention of Gods e.g. Mithra Varuna

The dual mention of Sol and Mithras in inscriptions such as *Deo Soli invicto Mithrae* (*Deus Sol Invictus Mithras*) can be compared with the dual name Varuna Mithra²⁹ (or Indra Agni) in Rig Vedic texts – partners yet separate deities, often mentioned together but depicted separately. This partnership between Sol and Mithras only exists in Mithraic inscriptions. As stated by Hijmans, this partnership “cannot be extended to Sol in other, non-Mithraic contexts, because Mithras does not occur in non-Mithraic contexts....”³⁰

C. Mithraic Inscriptions

Though several Mithraic inscriptions mention Mithra and Sol together as in *Deo Soli invicto Mithrae*³¹ (God Sun Invincible Mithra), the reverse does not hold true – we do not find Sol partnered with Mithra in non-Mithraic settings. Since the title ‘*invictus*’ is frequently used for Sol, in *Deo Soli invicto Mithrae*, it is likely that the title ‘*invictus*’ is attached to Sol and not to Mithra.

D. Interim Summary of Findings

To summarize, while on the one hand Mithraic inscriptions mention ‘Sol Mithra’ in the same manner as ‘Mithra Varuna’ in the *Rig Veda* (the *Vedas* pair several Vedic deities), all the extant Mithraic iconography we have seen do not conflate the two. On the other hand, non-Mithraic inscriptions, iconography and coins, do not mention or show Mithra together with Sol.

We not found any evidence to suggest that we can automatically conflate Sol with Mithra. Mithra is not the Sun. Rather Mithra is a companion of the Sun and perhaps an intermediary between the Sun and the earth.

In inscriptions that pair Mithra with the Roman god of the Sun Sol, the title ‘*invictus*’ (meaning ‘invincible’) is likely attached to Sol and not to Mithra.

While the pairing of their names suggests a close alliance between Sol and Mithra, with Mithra perhaps an earthly agent of Sol, the two are not the same. In Roman Mithraism, Mithra is not in Sun.

We will now examine this claim from an Aryan (Irano-Indian) perspective.

²⁹ *Rig Veda* 1.15 “Mitra Varuna, ye whose ways are firm....”

³⁰ S. E. Hijmans (see x above) at p. 185.

³¹ CIMRM 248 at M. J. Vermaseren’s *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae* (CIMRM) (Hague, 1956/Springer, 2012) p. 436.

5. Is the Aryan Mithra the same as the Sun?

A. Sun & Mithra have Separate Dedicated Chapters in the *Avesta*

The Zoroastrian *Avesta's* book of *Yashts*, the Radiant Sun (Khorshed) and Mithra (Meher) have dedicated and separate chapters to each. The chapter's verses treat the two entirely separately and describe them and their domains separately. This indicates the concepts behind them are entirely different.

B. Mithra – the Bond of Friendship between the Sun & Moon

In a rare mention of Mithra, the Khorshed (radiant Sun) Yasht makes an insightful statement in verse five on the role of Mithra (*Meher*) as the bond of friendship/companionship between the Sun (*Khvar/Khor*) and the Moon (*Mah*).

C. Mithra is Conflated with the Sun in Later Times

James Darmesteter in his translation of the Meher Yasht notes that in the *Avesta*, "Mithra is closely connected with the Sun, but not yet identical with it, as Mithra became in later times."³² What we see is that while in early times Mithra was mentioned separately from the Sun, *Khvar/Khor*, by medieval times Mithra was often conflated with the Sun.

D. Mitra & the Sun in the Rig Veda Hindu Scriptures

If we are to look for proof of a conflation between Mithra and the Sun in ancient Aryan theology, a good place to look is the oldest sacred Hindu text, the *Rig Veda*. The *Rig Veda* mentions Mitra (Mithra) at least 412 times – but only in a couple or so occasions in the same verse as the Sun, Surya. In a chapter dedicated to the Sun, Surya (chapter 50), we find no mention of Mitra at all. Importantly, the *Rig Veda* states, "Indra raised the Sun, Surya, on high in heavens that he may see afar". Similarly, "In the sky's lap the Sun, Surya, assumed its form so that Varuna and Mitra may behold it (the work of the godhead)." In the *Vedas*, the Sun clearly stands separately – physically and conceptually – from Mitra.³³ Mitra means 'friend' and 'ally' in Sanskrit.

5. Conclusions

Is Mithra the Sun? Was Mithra a Sun God? While a later form of Mithra, Mihr, occasionally came to mean the Sun in Zoroastrian literature, we have found no reference in the far older Zoroastrian and Hindu scriptures, the *Avesta* or the *Rig Veda* that equates the Zoroastrian Mithra with the Sun, Khvar, or the Hindu Mitra with the Sun, Surya. Mithra/Mitra and the Sun are entirely separate entities and are conceptually different. In the *Avesta*, Mithra is the guardian of bonds – beneficent bonds.

³² J. Darmesteter in SBE's *The Zend-Avesta* Pt. II (Oxford, 1883) p. 122.

³³ *Rig Veda* at 1.7.3 and 1.115.5 respectively.

II. Is Mithra the Sun?

Further, the claim that Zoroastrians of old may have celebrated either the winter solstice or the day after the winter solstice (say December 23-25 in the northern hemisphere) as the nativity of Mithra has no foundation in Zoroastrian scriptures in general and the Avestan Mithra Yasht in particular.

We will now examine the organization of the Zoroastrian calendar to see if the calendar was designed to mark and celebrate the solstices and the autumn equinox.



PART III – ZOROASTRIAN CALENDAR

1. Overview

A. Texts Describing the Organization of the Zoroastrian Calendar

The calendars in use by Zoroastrians today are fundamentally identical. What makes them different is the manner of intercalary adjustment.³⁴ The organization of the Zoroastrian calendar is outlined in the Middle Persian texts, the *Bundahishns* and the *Dinkard*.³⁵ [Translations of the entire chapters can be found in the Appendix.]

B. Year & Month Lengths

The Zoroastrian calendar has a solar year of 365 days. The year is divided into twelve months (called *Mah* meaning Moon). The months were originally lunar-based but are now standardized months of 30 days each. Five intercalary days called Gatha days are added after the last month to make a total of 365 days in a solar year.

C. Intercalary Days & Gahambars

The five intercalary Gatha days also mark the year's last Gahambar. Gahambars are days of communal sharing and feasting. Six five-day long Gahambars are spread throughout the year and they are the only festivals mentioned in the scriptures, the *Avesta*, and can therefore be considered as scripturally mandated and obligatory festivals.

D. Days & Months Named not Numbered

The Zoroastrian calendar's months & days are named and not numbered.

E. Name Day Celebrations

The Zoroastrian calendar marks – and Zoroastrians celebrate – the days when the names of the day and month are the same. These auspicious days are celebrated as Jashns/Jashans or festivals, feasts and days of thanksgiving.

F. Preciseness of the Zoroastrian Calendar

The Zoroastrian Fasli (seasonal) calendar is one of the most precise and consistent calendars used in the world today. A month always starts with the first day of the week and a month does not contain fractional weeks. One, 365-day calendar grid can be used perpetually. The calendar can also serve as a zodiac and seasonal calendar in temperate regions.³⁶

³⁴ See

<http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/calendar/index.htm#differences>.

³⁵ The *Bundahishns* at Chap. 25 and the *Dinkard* at Sanjana 3.419.

³⁶ For further details on the Zoroastrian calendar, see

<http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/calendar/index.htm>.

The Fasli calendar was based on the system outlined in the *Bundahishms* and the *Dinkard* and proposed by Bombay priest, Khurshedji Cama. Kai Khosrow Shahrokh of Iran adopted the Fasli calendar and called it the Bastani calendar in Iran.

2. Month Length & Sidereal Degrees

The fundamental choice made by the original designers of the Zoroastrian calendar was to keep the month length constant at thirty days as the next whole number based on the cycle of the moon from New Moon to New Moon (29.3 days on average). Since each month is also represented by a constellation of stars that together form the zodiac, each constellation house is 30 degrees in size with each day representing a one-degree movement of the Sun within each constellation at sunrise.

3. Spring Equinox – Hamaspathmaedya

The *Bundahishms* and the *Dinkard* stipulate that the Zoroastrian year shall start on the first day after the Hamaspathmaedya. Hamas-path-maedhya, means ‘mid-path-of all’, meaning the spring equinox. It marks the end of winter. Given the varying lengths of the solar year, allowance is made of the spring equinox to fall with the five days of the Hamaspathmaedya Gahambar though preferably in the last two days.

4. Nowruz – New Year’s Day

The first day of the New Year, Nowruz meaning New Day, is the first full day after the spring equinox. The Zoroastrian day starts at dawn. In the Zoroastrian Fasli calendar synchronized with the Gregorian calendar, Nowruz falls on March 21.

5. Other Solstices & Autumn Equinox

Other than marking the spring equinox on the Hamaspathmaedya, the Zoroastrian calendar does not mark or celebrate any of the other solstices or the autumn equinox. In particular, it does not mark or celebrate the passing of the winter solstice. This feature is critical in understanding our response to the various claims we are seeking to examine.

We will now examine the claim that prior to its designation as Christmas, Romans celebrated the nativity of Mithra on December 25th, the day of the winter solstice in Rome around 300 CE.

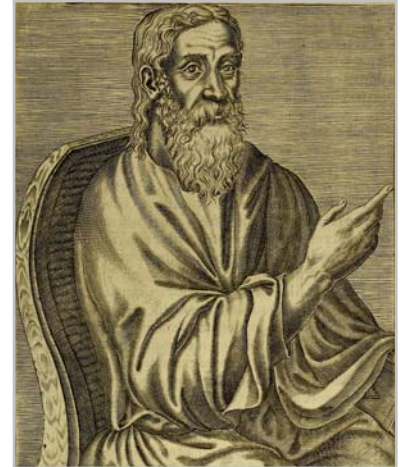


PART IV – CHRISTMAS DAY & MITHRAISM

A. Early Attempt to Determine Jesus' Birth Date

One of the earliest records about the attempt to determine Jesus' birth date is the 2nd century CE account of Christian theologian, Clement of Alexandria (150-215 CE). Clement wrote that various authors placed Jesus' birthday at March 21³⁷, April 15, April 19 or 20, May 20, November 18 and January 6.³⁸

December 25 was not among the dates listed by Clement.³⁹



Early Christian theologian
Clement of Alexandria.

B. Christianity Establishes Itself in Rome

By the fourth century CE, Christianity had begun to establish itself as the dominant religion of Rome under Emperor Constantine (r.306-337 CE). Soon thereafter, the Church of Rome instituted the date for celebrating the birth date of Jesus.

C. December 25 Chosen as Jesus' Birth Date

After a debate within the Christian community, the *Catholic Encyclopedia*⁴⁰ states that Pope Julius I (who served from 337 to 352 CE), officially chose December 25 of the Julian calendar as the birthday of Jesus around 350 CE.

D. Opposition to December 25 as Jesus' Birth Date

About a hundred years later, Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis, Cyprus, campaigned against the choice of December 25 as the date of Jesus' birth. He preferred January 6 as the date of Jesus' birth because "Greeks – I mean idolaters – celebrate a festival which Romans call Saturnalia on December 25 ...which is a solstice. The day begins to lengthen because light increases."⁴¹

This is one of the clearest statements by a Christian leader that December 25 was originally the date of a 'heathen' festival connected to the winter solstice and that consequently, Jesus' birthday should not be celebrated on that date. However, the 'heathen' festival mentioned is Saturnalia and not the nativity of Mithra. [More precisely, the Saturnalia festivities started on

³⁷ The date March 21 (Egyptian Phamenoth 25) stands out, as it is the date of the spring equinox in the Gregorian calendar.

³⁸ Clement of Alexandria in his *Stromata* at 1.3.

³⁹ For a discussion on the internal biblical evidence on when Jesus was born, see 'Rav Sha'ul's Dies Natalis Solis Invicti (Christmas)' at <http://www.sabbathcovenant.com/christianitythegreatdeception/Christmas.htm>.

⁴⁰ *Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, 1917).

⁴¹ Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis, in *Panarion, A Refutation of All the Heresies* (late 300s CE) at 4.22.5-6 & 4.24.1. The English translation is lightly adapted by us for syntax.

IV. Christmas Day & Mithraism

December 17 and likely continued to or past December 25, then the date of the winter solstice – or the day after.]

[Nowadays the first sunrise following the winter solstice occurs usually (depending on the year) between December 21 to 23 of the Gregorian calendar instituted by Pope Gregory XIII on March 1, 1582. Before that date, Romans used the Julian calendar, which by the 4th to 6th century CE was a few days out of phase with the actual occurrence of the solstice.]

2. Roman Festival of Saturnalia



Antoine-François Callet's Saturnalia (1782-3 CE). The revelries culminated in Natalis Invicti. Image credit: Wikipedia.

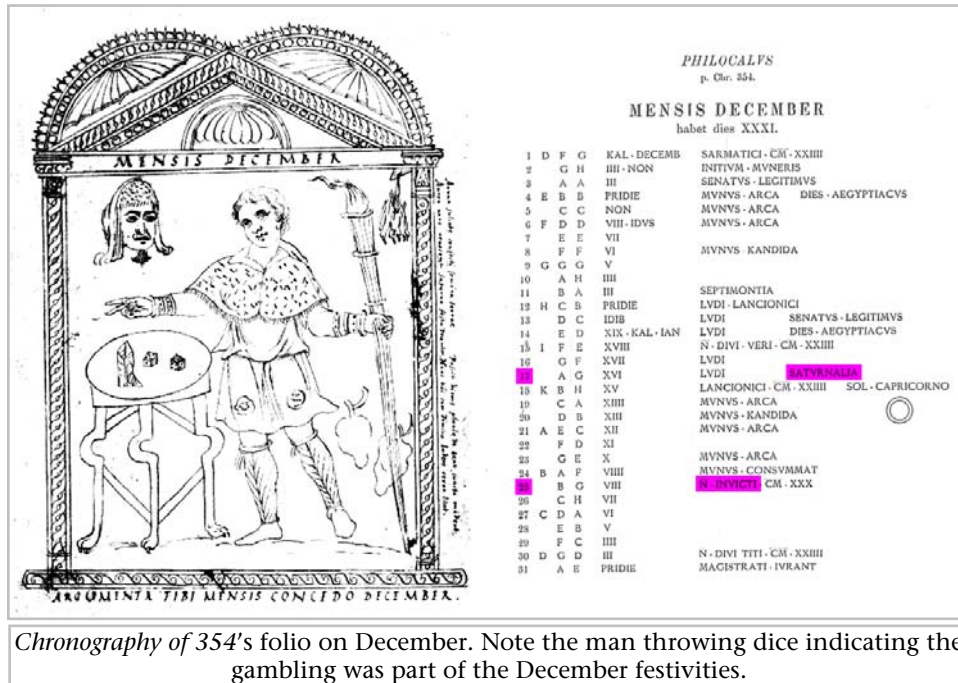
The festival of Saturnalia was dedicated to Saturn, Roman god of the harvest. By all accounts, Saturnalia was a raucous festival. In reality, Rome's festive season started on November 24 with the festival of Bruma.

Fifth century CE Byzantine writer Joannes the Lydian says it best – that the cold season in Europe (starting in November) brought a stop to the work of farmers, hunters and soldiers. Now idle from work, they occupied themselves... well, partying.⁴²

3. Natalis Invicti

A. Chronography of 354. N. Invicti

A Roman calendar of events and festivals later titled the *Chronography of 354* and written and copied by Christians, notes that Saturnalia was followed by a festival on December 25 called “N. Invicti”.⁴³ N. Invicti is likely short for Natalis Invicti meaning the ‘nativity or birth of the invincible’. The *Chronography of 354* does not explain this festival. Since ‘invicti’ was a common title afforded to Roman gods and emperors, Natalis Invicti is not a definitive festival name in itself.



Chronography of 354's folio on December. Note the man throwing dice indicating the gambling was part of the December festivities.

⁴² Joannes the Lydian in *De Mensibus* at 4.158.

⁴³ The *Chronography/Calendar of 354* (354 being the Christian year CE otherwise AD) was produced for Roman Senator Valentinus. The calendar's notation for December 25 is “N invicti cm XXX” i.e., “Nativity (birthday) of the unconquered, games ordered, thirty *circenses missus* (races)”. In another section, the calendar notes that December 25 is “VIII kal. Ian. natus Christus in Betleem Iudeae”, i.e., “8th (day before the) kalends of January (December 25), Birth of Christ in Bethlehem Judea.” Elsewhere beside 1 AD it notes, “dominus Iesus Christus natus est VIII kal. Ian” i.e., “Lord Jesus Christ is born December 25.”

IV. Christmas Day & Mithraism

No other source talks about a festival called Natalis Invicti.

The original text does not survive and what we have is a 17th century CE copy. Given that the author and copyist of the *Chronography of 354* were Christians – and since Jesus' birth-date is listed in another section on December 25th – Natalis Invicti could even have referred to Jesus' birth.

This entry in the *Chronography of 354* begs the question: the birthday of the invincible who?

B. The Claim & Problem

Some claim that Natalis Invicti celebrated the nativity (birth) of Mithra. Others deny the claim, stating it celebrate the birth of Jesus. Who is right? Since no other source lists or names such a festival, can both be wrong? Two early Christian leaders provide us with a possible answer.

3. Christian Accounts of 'Heathen' Celebrations on December 25

A. Tertullian's Account

Tertullian (160-220 CE), a convert to Christianity and Christian author, was a North African Berber from Carthage (Tunis, Tunisia today), a port city reputedly founded by the Asian Phoenicians. He was accused of continuing his worship to the Roman Sun god Sol since he turned east to pray. Nevertheless, he was one of the earliest Christian authors to create a huge corpus of Christian texts and was vociferous in his condemnation of 'heathens' as devil worshippers.⁴⁴



Early Christian writer
Tertullian.

Tertullian warned Christians not to partake in Saturnalia's festivities or to exchange gifts on New Year's Day or Midwinter's day since "every pomp of the devil is frequented" and "games join their noise or else banquets join their din!" He continued to say that since heathens refused to celebrate the Lord's Day and the Pentecost, Christians should similarly refuse to partake in heathen festivals.⁴⁵

The problem Tertullian had with Christians continuing to celebrate heathen festivals continued for over two hundred years as we read in a harsh criticism by Pope Leo I.

⁴⁴ Tertullian in *On Baptism* at 19, *On Idolatry* at 10-14, *Apology* at 16.9ff & *To the Nations* at 1.13.

⁴⁵ Tertullian *On Idolatry* at 10-14.

B. Pope Leo I's Homilies

The 45th Christian Pope, Leo I (c.400-461 CE) was compelled to scold the Christians of Rome repeatedly in his homilies (religious lectures), admonishing them not to pay homage to the Sun on the very doorsteps of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. He said, "From such a [heathen] system of teaching proceeds the ungodly practice of certain foolish folk who worship the Sun as it rises at the beginning of daylight from elevated positions. Some Christians even think it is so proper to do this before entering the blessed Apostle Peter's Basilica. ...When they mount the steps, they turn around and bow towards the rising sun and with bent neck do homage to its brilliant orb."⁴⁶ This was a particular problem on those occasions when the rising Sun would flood in through its main doors and fall on the altar at the rounded far side of the building called the apse.⁴⁷



Pope Leo I confronts Attila the Hun. Altar at St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican, Rome.

In a homily regarding December 25, Leo I sought to banish from people's minds the notion that Christmas also honoured "the rising of the new Sun". In his homily he said, "Dearly beloved ...simpler souls are misled with the pestilent notion that our solemn feast day [Christmas] seems to derive its honour not so much from the nativity of Christ as from the rising of the new Sun. Such men's hearts are wrapped in total darkness and have no growing perception of the true light. They are still drawn away by the foolish errors of heathendom. ...Let not Christian souls entertain any such wicked superstition and portentous lie."⁴⁸

What we learn from Pope Leo I's admonitions is that Romans continued

⁴⁶ Pope Leo I in *Sermon 27 On the Feast of the Nativity* at 7.4 tr. to English from Latin by C. L. Feltoe in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series* Vol. 12 (Buffalo, 1895) tr. edited slightly by this author for brevity and syntax.

⁴⁷ James Eason at <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/>.

⁴⁸ *Sermon 22* at 2.6 (details as above) edited slightly by this author for brevity and syntax.

to celebrate December 25 as the “rising of the new Sun”. Nowhere does he mention a celebration of the nativity of Mithra on December 25.

C. Could December 25 Celebrate Natalis Solis Invicti?

Pope Leo I’s comment about Romans honouring the “rising of the new Sun” on December 25, raises the question if “rising” qualifies as ‘nativity’? It would seem more likely that it means the rising of the new Sun after the shrinking of the days had stopped and the days began to lengthen – i.e., the morning of the first longer day after the solstice.

As such, there is a small possibility that the December 25 ‘Natalis Invicti’ in the *Chronography of 354* meant ‘Natalis Solis Invicti’ meaning ‘birth of the invincible Sun’. This possibility is given a boost by an oft-quoted annotation by a copyist of a manuscript authored by a 12th century CE Syrian bishop Dionysius bar Salibi. The annotation’s translation reads, “It was a custom of the Pagans to celebrate on the same 25 December the birthday of the Sun, at which they kindled lights in token of festivity. In these solemnities and revelries, the Christians also took part. Accordingly when the doctors of the Church perceived that the Christians had a leaning to this festival, they took counsel and resolved that the true Nativity should be solemnised on that day.”⁴⁹ We have not been able to check the original text of this annotation



Decadence (1847) by Thomas Couture (1815-79). A possible Saturnalia feasting scene.

⁴⁹ Multiple references citing R. MacMullen in *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven, 1997) p. 155.

made by a copyist and, which not part of the original text.

4. Summary of Findings

The definitive date of Jesus' birth is not known. Pope Julius I chose December 25 as Jesus' birth date from a variety of possible dates. The 45th Christian Pope, Leo I, stated that some of his parishioners still honoured a 'heathen' (pre-Christian) event that marked the "rising of the new Sun" on December 25. There is a possibility that this meant the morning Sun on the day after the solstice or even the 'nativity of the Sun'.

The only 'heathen' festival named and condemned by early Christian fathers is the celebration of Saturnalia that occurred around the same time.

We have not found mention in an original Latin source, that December 25 celebrated the birth of the god Mithra.

The assumptions made by some modern writers is that,

- the 'rising or birth' of the new Sun means the birth of the pre-Christian Roman Sun god Sol, and that
- we can substitute the Roman Sun god Sol with Mithra. We have previously found this assumption to be unfounded and incorrect.

Zoroastrians do have a celebration dedicated to the angel Mithra and the qualities over which Mithra is a guardian. It falls on October 2 (using the Zoroastrian Fasli calendar) and is called Mehergan.



PART V – MEHERGAN, AUTUMNAL FESTIVAL

1. Zoroastrian Calendar’s Mehergan Devoted to Mithra

The only major Zoroastrian festival dedicated to Mithra/Meher is Mehergan (Meher-day; perhaps Mithragan in ancient times), a name-day jashn celebrated on Meher month’s Meher day. Using the Fasli calendar, Mehergan falls on October 2 and not fall on the autumn equinox. There is about a ten-day difference between the two.

2. Mehergan According to Biruni

A. Historical & Regional Context to Biruni’s Information

Biruni (973-1048 CE), an eastern Iranian historian from Khwarezm (Uzbekistan today) who wrote in Arabic, provides us with some insights into Zoroastrian-Persian festivals celebrated during the tenth and eleventh centuries CE – about the same time that the great poet Ferdowsi lived.

B. Mihr (Mithra) As another Name for the Sun

The time when Biruni copiously gathered his information was also the time when Mithra’s medieval name ‘Mihr’ had become another name for the Sun.

C. Significance of ‘Mihragan’. Mihr as Sun

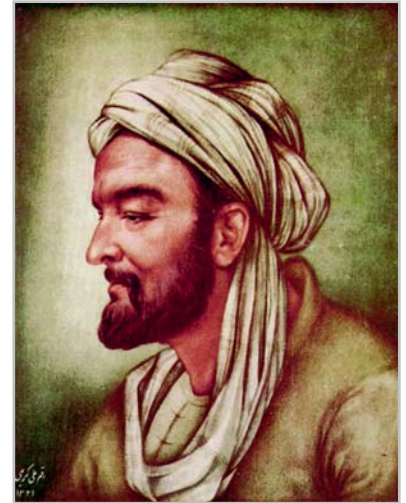
In a chapter of his book *Athar* titled ‘On the Festivals in the Months of the Persians’ Biruni states, “Mihr is the name of the Sun (see above) who is said to have appeared to the world on this day. Therefore this day was called Mihr.” If Biruni means that God created the Sun on Mehergan, this does not agree with Zoroastrian texts, which state the event occurred at the beginning of the year. The erroneous conflation of Mihr/Mithra with the Sun may be one cause for this error.

The Avestan term ‘*khvar-khshaeta*’ (New Persian Khor-sheed) means ‘sun-radiant’ or ‘radiant Sun’. New Persian uses ‘Khor-sheed’ to mean ‘Sun’ and not ‘Meher’. Instead, ‘Meherbani’ means kindness, even affection.

Biruni’s following statement is also not consistent with Zoroastrian texts.

D. Mihr as Light

Biruni continues, “On the same day, God is said to have illuminated [the Moon] with light, for previously God had created the Moon as a black ball without any light. Therefore, they say on Mihragan, the Moon stands higher than the Sun.... Eranshahri says: God made a treaty between light and darkness on Nowruz and Mihragan.” In some ways, Biruni is offering us a



Medieval Iranian historian
Biruni.

commentary on the older Avestan explanation, where Mithra is not the Sun, but rather the bond (like a hamazor clasp?) between the Sun and the Moon.

The *Avesta* does not explain the nature of this bond. Some authors feel the bond is light and therefore translate 'Meher' as 'light' even though the *Avesta* does not support such an interpretation. Avestan '*raya*' and '*roacha*' (New & Middle Persian *Roshan*) mean 'light', 'lit up' and 'brightness'. The *Bundahishms* start by saying that Ahura Mazda dwells in '*Roshnih*' and '*Asar Roshnih*' meaning 'light' and 'endless light' and that out of '*Styi Roshnih*', meaning 'essence of light', Ahura Mazda caused creation to manifest.

Further along Biruni adds that Persians (Zoroastrians) detest the full Moon because it draws the Sun's light leaving people spiritually vulnerable.

E. Former & Other Calendar Systems

Biruni then adds a kicker when he states, "In former times, this [Mihragan] used to coincide with the beginning of winter. Later, it advanced [in the calendar] when people began to neglect intercalation." Biruni goes on to argue that in ancient times, Nowruz, the start of the New Year, was celebrated on the summer solstice (presently around June 21) while Mihragan fell on the winter solstice (presently around December 21).

If we are to give credence to Biruni's assertion, it would demolish the body of symbolism constructed around Nowruz and spring. To add to our woes, according to Prof. Boyce, in 150 BCE, the Parthians promulgated that Mihragan (then celebrated at the autumnal equinox) be the start of the New Year.⁵⁰ This could have happened because Alexander's invasion and Seleucid rule prevented a regular intercalation of the calendar as required.

There are all manner of theories about the organization of a predecessor Zoroastrian calendar. What these theories neglect to accommodate is that in the vast region of Aryana spanning different climatic regions, there could have been several Zoroastrian calendars being used simultaneously by different regions and Zoroastrian denominations. Even today, we have three different calendars used simultaneously. Neglecting to observe a leap day or leap month would have created additional variations. The principal need for a standardized calendar would have been for a national government.

F. No Mention of a Winter Solstice Festival

Most importantly, despite all the discussion on calendar changes, Biruni does not mention the existence of a Zoroastrian winter solstice festival.



⁵⁰ Mary Boyce in 'Mihragan among the Irani Zoroastrians' at *Mithraic Studies* ed. John Hinnells (Manchester, 1975) p. 107 citing G. Le Rider's *Susse sous les Seleucides* etc. (Paris, 1962) pp. 3 ff.

PART VI – YALDA, OTHER WINTER SOLSTICE CELEBRATIONS & A SUGGESTION

1. No Zoroastrian Winter Solstice Celebration

Biruni does not mention any Zoroastrian ('Persian') celebration marking the passage of the winter solstice either in his chapter on Persian (Zoroastrian) festivals or in his chapters on the festivals of (Zoroastrian) Sogdians (from Bukhara-Sugd) and the (Zoroastrian) Khwarezmians.

2. Greek Calendar's Winter Solstice Celebration

The one mention of a winter solstice celebration Biruni makes, is in his chapter 'On the Days of the Greek Calendar'.⁵¹ [There were several old Greek calendars, Biruni does not mention which calendar. We found a winter solstice celebration during Poseidon month in a 3rd-4th century BCE Greek Athenian calendar⁵² that was celebrated in a wild manner like the Roman festival of Saturnalia.]

Biruni's notes that the Greeks called the winter solstice (likely the day after) the "Great Birth". Further, "People say that on this day the light leaves those limits within which it decreases and enters those limits within which it increases, that human beings begin growing and increasing whilst the demons begin withering and perishing." He states, "The Greek year agrees with the solar year; its seasons retain their proper places like the natural seasons of the solar year."⁵³ [The Athenian calendar started in summer.]

Once again, there is nothing to suggest the Greeks who celebrated the passing of the winter solstice were Mithraists. To this point, we have found no direct evidence that a group called 'Mithraists' celebrated the winter solstice anciently.

3. Assyrian Christian Worship during the Winter Solstice

Biruni notes that a Christian writer from Anbar (previously in Assyria and now in present-day Iraq?) stated that the rising-place of the Sun at the time of the winter solstice is the true east and the very midst of paradise. Further, (religious) 'law' ordered Christians to turn in praying towards the east (i.e. the rising place of the Sun). This is a remarkable statement that an eastern Christian law required a special worship on the winter solstice.

This is contrary to Roman Pope Leo I's (c.400-461 CE) earlier statements

⁵¹ Biruni tr. Sachau (see above) p. 238.

⁵² <http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/sexualit1/a/GreekSolstice.htm>

⁵³ Biruni tr. Sachau (see above) p. 231.

condemning the practice of facing east to honour the Sun as ‘heathen’.

4. The Shamsi – People of the Sun

Biruni introduces us to the Shamsiyya sect in a chapter on the feast days of another Middle Eastern group called the Hurrians (who had called themselves Sabians in order to qualify as one of the four religions of the book permitted under Islamic law). ‘Shamsiyya’ is an Arabic word for ‘People of the Sun’. More recently, they were called Shamsi or Shemi for short.

The Shamsi were, as their name suggests, Sun-worshippers. Nowhere are they called Mithraists. Very little is known about them. Biruni’s third-hand information states that some Magi officiated over them.

Researcher Lokman Turgut states, “The traces of a Sun cult (are) found all over Kurdistan.”⁵⁴ He finds these traces embedded in the practices of the Kurdish Alevis and Sunnis. Once again, nowhere are these Sun cults called Mithraists.

Seventeenth to nineteenth century travellers report seeing Shamsis in Mardin and Diyarbakir (now in south-eastern Turkey) and that Diyarbakir’s “Ulu Cami mosque, which is known as the first mosque in Anatolia, was once a sun-worshipper-temple....”

Further, the Turkish Government may have destroyed the last remains of a Shamsi temple while widening a road to Mardin near Diyarbakir.⁵⁵

Turgut cites 18th century traveller and writer Carsten Niebuhr⁵⁶ in stating, “Niebuhr’s Christian informants assured him that Shemis always build their houses with the main entrance facing the sunrise and that they turn their face to the sun when they pray.”

Researcher R. Donef states that the Shamsiyya “seemed to have been absorbed by the Syriac [Christian] Orthodox Assyrians in Mardin.”⁵⁷ Turgut suggests that some Shamsi called themselves Jacobites to escape Islamic persecution.⁵⁸ This is one possible way that a sect (or sub-sect) of Syrian Christians adopted the practice of celebrating the winter solstice.

⁵⁴ L. Turgut in *Ancient Rites and Old Religions in Kurdistan* (Erfurt, 2013) p. 15.

⁵⁵ *ibid.* p.14-15.

⁵⁶ C. Niebuhr in *Voyages en Arabie & en autres pays circonvoisins* Vol. 2 (Amsterdam, 1776) pp. 321-322.

⁵⁷ R. Donef in *The Shemi and the Assyrians* (Sydney, 2010).

⁵⁸ Turgut (as above) p. 16.

A. Sun Temple under Deyrul Zaferan Christian Monastery

Author Erol Sever states that the Christian Deyrul Zaferan monastery six km east of Mardin was built on top of a sun temple in the fifth century⁵⁹ and the author of the Turkish Martine historical tour site claims that the monastery had been in existence since 2,000 BCE. The site also states, “A now-blocked window in the eastern wall enabled the worshippers to watch the sunrise while a niche on the southern wall served as an altar. There is a noteworthy ceiling made of self-supporting stones built without the use of mortar. The monastery was enlarged over the centuries.”

Sever also notes that, the underground hall of the monastery is visited by Yazidis on certain days of the year. Several Christian churches in the area have Sun symbols engraved on their walls.



Underground hall at the Deyrul Zaferan monastery 6 km east of Mardin (now in Kurdish Turkey) used by “Sun worshippers” at <http://www.guide-martine.com>.

B. Mor Gabriel Christian Monastery

About east of Mardin, in the town of Turbadin near Midyat, older parts of the 1,600 year old Mor Gabriel monastery have a most unusual design. It too has self-supporting ceilings and wall openings through which the Sun pours in. [The monastery has been confiscated by the Turkish Government who calls the Assyrian Christians “occupiers”. If anyone is an occupier, it is the Central Asian Turkish invader.]

All of this strengthens the possibility that several Sun cults existed in the northern Tigris-Euphrates and Armenia region – one of which might have been Mithraic – and from whom the occupying Roman armies picked up Mithraic beliefs. This information also supports the contention that it was

⁵⁹ Erol Sever in *Yezidiler ve Yezidilik Kökeni, Berfin Yayınları* (İstanbul, 1993) p.31.

VI. Yalda, Winter Solstice Celebrations & a Suggestion



Unusually constructed hall in the monastery of Mor Gabriel,

through the Syrian Christian route that Yalda, a festival celebrating the passing of the winter solstice, entered Iran. The word 'Yalda' is said to be of Syrian Christian origin.

5. Yalda

Biruni makes no mention of a festival called 'Yalda'. For such an explanation, we must look in modern sources. 'Yalda' is not known to be an Iranian name.

A. Modern Iranian Reports on Yalda

Anna Krasnowolska in her *Encyclopaedia Iranica* article 'Sada Festival' notes, "In Islamic Persia, the night of the winter solstice (the last night of autumn) was known under its Syriac name of Shab-e Yalda (the night of nativity), or as Shab-e Chella (the night opening the initial forty-day period of the three-month winter)." Massoume Price in an article at CAIS also states, "Yalda is a Syriac word meaning birth.... It is not clear when and how the word 'Yalda' entered to the Persian language."⁶⁰ She further states that the Christians who settled in Iran during the Sasanid era "reintroduced" the festival. Krasnowolska continues, "Being the longest and the darkest night of

⁶⁰ M. Price's 'Festival of Zayeshmehr (Yalda)' at <http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Celebrations/yalda.htm>.

VI. Yalda, Winter Solstice Celebrations & a Suggestion

the year, additionally connected with Christianity, Shab-e Yalda usually has negative connotations in Persian poetry.”⁶¹

We can understand the negative connotations since in Zoroastrianism it would be an abhorrent to celebrate the longest night. Rather it is its passing, i.e. the next morning – the first or ‘new’ morning after the longest night – that may be argued as the occasion for celebration.

The earliest Iranian reports on the observance of Yalda appear to be verses by the Sufi poet Sa’adi Shirazi (1193-1291 CE).⁶²

B. Modern Iranian Reports on Yalda

Turning to present-day reports, the online unreferenced claim made at Farsinet⁶³ & at Pars Times⁶⁴ is that on the night of Jashne Yalda/Zayesh-e Meher, ancient Aryans would gather in Alborz mountain caves. These celebrants called ‘*yar-e ghar*’, meaning friends of the cave, gathered and maintained a vigil to bear witness to the first rays of the rising Sun at daybreak the next morning (the start of the Zoroastrian Havan Gah). We also read that during the previous night, communal fires were kept burning throughout the night. Unfortunately, neither publication cites a credible old source for their information.



Yalda spread featuring pomegranates. Source Persianmama.com/

6. Conclusions – Our Historical Search

Despite our best efforts searching old records, we have not found mention in of a traditional mainline Zoroastrian festival named ‘Yalda’, ‘Zayesh-e Mehr’ (meaning ‘Birth of Mithra’) or one that marked the passing of the winter solstice. We must therefore conclude that Yalda – a popular festival in Islamic Iran – has never been an orthodox Zoroastrian festival.

We have also not found any information that an ancient group of Mithra worshippers celebrated the passing of the winter solstice as the birth of the god Mithra – or that Yalda celebrated the birth of Mithra. Instead, what we have found is that Romans and Greeks – who worshipped their native non-Mithraic gods including Sun gods Sol and Helios and many others – celebrated the passing of the winter solstice. For a while, this practice

⁶¹ A. Krasnowolska’s ‘Sada Festival’ at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sada-festival>.

⁶² E.g. “The true morning will not come, until the Yalda Night is gone.” Often cited online translation (by an unknown translator and not verified) of a line from Sufi poet Sa’adi’s *Bostan* (garden) completed in 1257 CE.

⁶³ <http://www.farsinet.com/norooz/yalda.html>.

⁶⁴ http://www.parstimes.com/library/yalda_back.html.

continued even after Romans had converted to Christianity.

7. The Conundrum & a Suggestion

A. The Desire to have a Joyous Zoroastrian Winter Celebration

While we have not been able to find mention of a Zoroastrian festival celebrating the passing of the winter solstice in Zoroastrian or Middle Persian texts, we can understand the desire amongst some Zoroastrian families to have a celebration of their own at a time when families of other traditions are joyously celebrating the season.

In doing so, we need to take care that we do not inadvertently undermine fundamental Zoroastrian values. Unintended as it might be, naming the event as a celebration of the 'birth of Mithra' (Zayesh-e Meher) may infer an association between the festival and a contrived Mithraism with its attendant belief in the birth of an anthropomorphic god from a rock – a belief antithetical to orthodox Zoroastrianism.

Can we instead make use of existing Zoroastrian festivals?

B. Zoroastrian Festivals of Mehergan & Daegan-Adar

December 23 is the auspicious day of Daegan-Adar on the Orthodox Vehizaki (Fasli) calendar's Dae-pa-Adar day, Dae month. The Zoroastrian calendar treats the month of Dae in a special way – it has four auspicious Daegan days of which both the December 16 Daegan and the December 23 Daegan-Adar are three-quarter year festivals honouring Ahura Mazda as Creator and Ahura Mazda's creation.

Those who follow the Shenshai calendar for religious purposes, the Gregorian calendar for secular purposes, and who celebrate Jamsheedi Nowruz on March 21, are in practice following three calendars. If so, in addition to celebrating Jamsheedi Nowruz, they can just add Vehizaki Daegan-Adar on December 23.

C. Maidyarem Gahambar

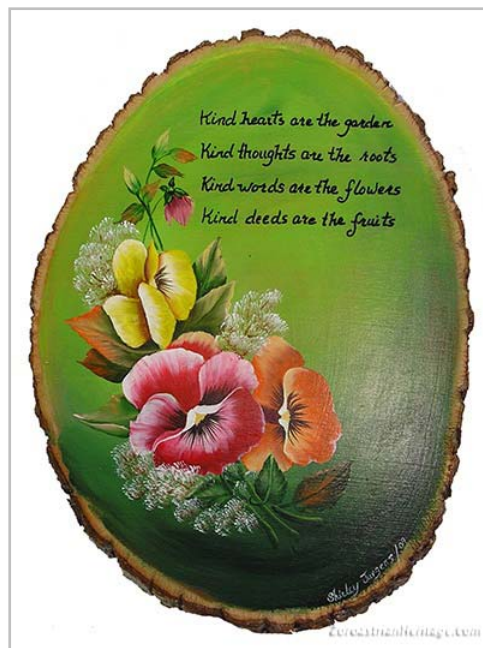
Maidyarem means mid-winter and the Maidyarem Gahambar is celebrated from December 31 to January 4. Gahambars are scripturally mandated and obligatory holidays of sharing and they fall on right over the Gregorian New Year's eve and day. Fortuitously, the period starting on December 23 (Daegan-Adar) to January 4 (Maidyarem Gahambars last day) spans the entire Gregorian Christmas to New Year's festive season. Given these existing Zoroastrian festivals, there is hardly any point in inventing and adding yet another festival to the Zoroastrian calendar.

D. Our Suggestion

Our suggestion is that a 'Jashne Meher' be added to the December 23 Daegan-Adar. In the same manner as Nowruz celebrates renewal just after the spring equinox, the Hamaspathmaedya, Daegan-Adar falling just after the winter solstice can celebrate the triumph of light over darkness.

As a consequence, rather than celebrating the birth of a 'god', Jashne Meher can celebrate light and a renewed avowal to abide by the values of which Meher Izad is a guardian – values of honesty, being truthful, keeping one's word and promises, true friendship and being Meheraban, being kind, loving and peaceful.

Keeping one's word, being honest and truthful while being helpful are amongst the highest values to which Zoroastrians pledge themselves in their prayers. It behoves us to remember and renew that commitment constantly.



Being Meheraban.
Poetry by John Ruskin. Art by Shirley Jergens.



PART VII REFERENCES

1. Zoroastrian Scriptures & Texts

Avesta – Transliterations to the Roman script by this author based on transliterations by I. J. S. Taraporewala (citing Christian Bartholomae), T. R. Sethna, K. F. Geldner, H. Humbach, P. Ichaporia, M. C. Monna. Transliterations to the Devanagari script by J. M. Chatterji⁶⁵. Translations to English by I. J. S. Taraporewala, T. R. Sethna, F. Rustamji, M. F. Kanga, J. M. Chatterji, J. Darmesteter, C. Bartholomae, L. H. Mills, A. Jafarey, H. Humbach, J. H. Moulton, M. C. Monna, K. E. Eduljee.

Bundahishn – Translations to English by B. T. Anklesaria⁶⁶, E. W. West⁶⁷, R. C. Zaehner, S. H. Nasr, M. Aminrezavi.

Denkard – Translations to English by R. E. Kohiyar, B. Sanjana, D. M. Madon, E. W. West, S. Shaked.

Selections of Zadspram – Translation to English by E. W. West in *Sacred Books of the East* Vol. 5 & 46 (Oxford, 1880 & 1897).



2. Other Scriptures & Religious Texts

Rig Veda Rigvedic transliterated to Latin by K. Briggs (Online, 2010).

Rig Veda – Translation to English by R. T. Griffith (London, 1889); A. Kaegi & R. Arrowsmith (Boston, 1886); W. D. O’Flaherty (Harmondsworth, 1984).

Rig Veda Translation to English by A. Kaegi & R. Arrowsmith (Boston, 1886).

Catholic Encyclopaedia – (New York, 1917).



3. Classical & Medieval Texts

Bustan – Saadi (various online sites).

Chronography of 354 – Codex Luxemburgensis. 9th century manuscript copy of 4th century original.

⁶⁵ J. M. Chatterji’s *The Hymns of Atharvan Zarathushtra* (Calcutta, 1967).

⁶⁶ *Zand-Akasiḥ – Iranian or Greater Bundahishn* (Bombay, 1956).

⁶⁷ *Pahlavi Texts in Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. V, F. Max Müller ed., (Oxford, 1880).

VII. References

De Antro Nympharum – Porphyry. Translated to English by T J. M. Duffy in *The Cave of the Nymphs in the Odyssey* (Buffalo, 1969).

De Civitate Dei contra Paganos – Augustine of Hippo. Translated to English by R. W. Dyson in *The City of God against the Pagans* (New York, 1998).

Histories – Herodotus. Translation to English by George Rawlinson (New York, 1875); George Macaulay (London, New York, 1890), Henry Cary (Oxford, 1847) & Alfred Godley (Cambridge, 1920).

Liber De Mensibus – Joannes the Lydian (Leipzig, 1898).

Liber De Mensibus/On the Months – Joannes the Lydian. Translation to English by A. Bandy (Lewiston, 2013).

Naturalis Historia (Natural History) – Pliny the Elder. Translations to English by (1) J. Bostock & H. Riley (London, 1855), (2) H. Rackham, W. Jones & D. Eichholz (London, 1949-54).

On Baptism – Tertullian. Translation to English by Roberts, Donaldson & Cleveland in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* Vol. 3 (Buffalo, 1885).

On Idolatry – Tertullian. Translation to English by Roberts, Donaldson & Cleveland in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* Vol. 3 (Buffalo, 1885).

Panarion, A Refutation of All the Heresies – Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis. English translation by F. Legge (London, 1921).

Plutarch Parallel Lives, Pompei viri illustris vita – Latin translation by Antonius Tudertinus Pacinus (or Jacopo Angeli da Scarperia).

Plutarch's Parallel Lives, Vita Pompeii – Plutarch. Greek text with an English translation by Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, 1917/1949).

Saturnalia – Ambrosius Aurelius Theodosius Macrobiu (Cambridge, 2011).

Sermons – Pope Leo I. Translation to English by C. L. Feltoe in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series* Vol. 12 (Buffalo, 1895).

Stromata – Clement of Alexandria. Translation to English by William Wilson in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* Vol. 2 (Buffalo, 1885).

M. Terenti Varronis De lingua Latina libri – Marcus Terentius Varro. (Berlin, 1885).

The Chronology of Ancient Nations – Biruni. Translation to English by E. Sachau (London, 1879).



4. Scholarly Texts

Asatrian, G. S. & Arakelova, V. – *The Religion of the Peacock Angel: The Yezidis and Their Spirit World* (London, 2014).

Beck, R. – ‘Mithraism since Franz Cumont’ in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (Berlin, 2002) II.17.4, pp. 2002-115 & ‘Mithraism’ at iranicaonline.com (2002).

Boyce, M. – ‘Calendar of Zoroastrian Feasts’ at *British Institute of Persian Studies’ Iran*, Vol. 43 (London, 2005).

Boyce, M. – ‘Mihragan among the Irani Zoroastrians’ at *Mithraic Studies* ed. John Hinnells (Manchester, 1975).

Boyce, M. – *Zoroastrians* (London, 1979).

Bjornebye, J. – ‘Mithraic Movement, Negotiating Topography and Space in Late Antique Rome’ in *The Moving City: Processions, Passages and Promenades in Ancient Rome* (London, 2015).

Chamich, M. – *History of Armenia*. Translation to English by J. Avdall (Calcutta, 1827).

Chatterji, J. M. – *The Hymns of Atharvan Zarathushtra*, (Calcutta, 1967).

Cumont, F. – *The Mysteries of Mithra*. Translation to English by T. J. McCormack (Chicago, 1903).

Donef R. – *The Shemsi and the Assyrians* (Sydney, 2010).

Eduljee, K. E. – *Farohar/Fravahar Motif. What Does It Represent? Use of Icons & Symbols in Zoroastrianism* (West Vancouver, 2013-14).

Hijmans, S. E. – *Sol: The Sun in the Art and Religions of Rome* (2009, Groningen).

Haug, M. – *Essays on the Sacred Language, Writings, and Religion of the Parsis* (London, 1878).

Haywood, H. – *Mithraism Freemasonry And The Ancient Mysteries* (Archive.org).

Hinnells, J. – ‘Reflections on the bull-slaying scene’ at *Mithraic Studies II* (Manchester, 1975).

Humbach H. – *Jamshid King of Paradise* (Mainz, 2005).

Jamaspiji, H. – *An Old Zand-Pahlavi Glossary* (Stuttgart, 1867).

Krasnowolska, A. – ‘Sada Festival’ at *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (Online, 2009).

VII. References

MacMullen, R. – *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven, 1997).

Malandra, W. – ‘Geush Tashan’ at *Iranica* (online, 2001).

Mills, L. H. – *A Study of the Five Zarathushtrian (Zoroastrian) Gathas* (Oxford, 1892).

Niebuhr, C. – *Voyages en Arabie & en autres pays circonvoisins* Vol. 2 (Amsterdam, 1776).

Price, M. - ‘Festival of Zayeshmehr (Yalda)’ at CAIS (Online, 2010).

Russell, P. M. – ‘On Mithraism and Freemasonry’ in *Scottish Rite Society’s Heredom* Vol. 4 (Washington, 1995).

Schütte-Maischatz, A. & Winter, E. – *Doliche* (Bonn, 2004).

Sever E. – *Yezidiler ve Yezidilik Kökeni, Berfin Yayınları* (İstanbul, 1993)

Taraporewala, I. J. S. – *The Religion of Zarathushtra* (Madras, 1926).

Turgut, L. – *Ancient Rites and Old Religions in Kurdistan* (Erfurt, 2013).

Vermaseren, M. J. – *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae* (Hague, 1956).



5. Website References

A. Mithraism

<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/mithraism>.

B. Yazidis & Yazidi Religion

<http://kurdistanart.blogspot.ca>.

http://www.yeziditruth.org/yezidi_religious_tradition

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/09/140902-yazidis-iraq-kurdistan-lalish-sheikh-adi-islamic-state/>

<http://aranews.net/2014/05/zoroaster-statue-raise-outrage-of-yezidi-community-in-efrin/>

C. Masonry & Mithraism

<http://www.mastermason.com/luxoculta/mithras.htm>

<http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/texts/mithraism.html>

D. Roman Coinage

http://www.ancient.eu/Roman_Coinage/

<http://www.romancoins.info/>

<http://www.forumancientcoins.com/catalog/roman-and-greek-coins.asp?vpar=55>

E. Christmas; When Jesus was Born

<http://sabbathcovenant.com/christianitythegreatdeception/Christmas.htm>.

<http://penelope.uchicago.edu/>

F. Greek Calendar & Solstice Celebrations

<http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/sexualit1/a/GreekSolstice.htm>

F. Yalda

<http://www.farsinet.com/norooz/yalda.html>

http://www.parstimes.com/library/yalda_back.html



6. Zoroastrian Heritage Webpage References

A. General Pages

Gahambars at Zoroastrian Heritage –

<http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/gahambar/index.htm>

B. Calendar Pages

Overview & Organization –

<http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/calendar/index.htm>

365-Day Fasli-Bastani/Gregorian Calendar Grid –

<http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/calendar/page2.htm>



PART VIII – APPENDICES

Abbreviations:

abbr.	-	abbreviation/abbreviated
Av.	-	<i>Avesta</i> or Avestan
Dk.	-	<i>Dinkard</i>
ed.	-	edit/edited
Eng.	-	English
FT	-	free translation
GB	-	<i>Greater Bundahishn</i>
LB	-	<i>Lesser Bundahishn</i>
MP	-	Middle Persian (Pahlavi)
NP	-	New Persian
OP	-	Old Persian
Ph.	-	Pahlavi
Sk.	-	Sanskrit
Tr.	-	translation

1. Etymology, Word Forms and Related Words

A. Mithra

- Mithra (Av.) > Mithr > Mihr (MP) > Mehr/Meher/Mitra (NP)
Sk. Mitra (मित्र) / OP Mitra = friend, ally

B. Khvar

- khvar (Av.) = sun
- khvar (Av.) = sun

Related words:

- khvar-khshaeta (Av.) = sun-radiant (radiant sun) > khwarr-khshaeta > khvarsheet / khvarsheed (MP) > khur-sheed (NP)
- Yima-khshaeta (Av.) = Yim-radiant (radiant Yim) (Yima-srira) > Yim-sheet / Jam-sheet / Yam-sheed (MP) > Jam-sheed (NP)

C. Fravashi / Farohar / Fravahar

- fravashi (Av.) > fravarti/fravartish (OP) > frawardi?/fraward (Ph) > farvard(?) / farvardi(?) (NP). Also Fravartish (OP) > Φραόρτης (Gk Fraórtis) / Φραόρτεω (Gk Fraóртеω) > Phraortes (Eng)
- Is farvardin = farvard-din(?) = farohars of the holy (q.v. GB. 3.18). Farvardin Yasht (Yt. 13) that extols and memorializes the farohars (cf. GB. 3.18) / fravashis(?)
- Farvardin Yasht is recited at Farokhshi (cf. frawakhsh) ceremony.

- Farvardigan (farvardi-gan or farvard-i-gan?) are the last ten days of the year dedicated to the fravashis – also called Mukhtad.

Related words / homonyms:

- fra-wa-khsh (Ph.), fra-w-sh / fra-wa-sh (Ph.) > far-okh?(see above)
- fra-wa-hr / fra-wa-har (Ph.) > fr-o-har / far-o-har (Ph.) > for-u-har>fra-va-har / faravahar
- fra-va-rane (Av.) = choose, pledge

D. Raya / Raocha

E. Gao: Kine / Bovine / Cattle

- gao (Av.) = bovine (cow, cattle etc.) > gav (NP) [cf. gav (Sk.) = cow]
- gao (Av.) = bovine (cow, cattle etc.) > gav (NP) [cf. gav (Sk.) = cow]

Related words:

gav-nar (NP) = bull, ox

gopati (Sk.) = bull (cf. Gopatshah MP)

varsha (Sk.) = bull

geush (Av.) = kine, life, creation, mother earth

vaza (Sk.) = cow

varshbha (Sk.) = ox

varza (NP) = working ox

D. Gao-spenta: Animals (Useful / Beneficient t/ Livestock)

- gao-spenta (Av.) = kine-beneficient > go-spand (MP) > gosfand (NP)
gospand (MP) = livestock / herd / beneficent animals e.g. cattle, sheep

2. Passages from Zoroastrian & Classical Texts

A. Geush Urvan (Bovine / Creation's Soul) in Zoroastrian Scriptures⁶⁸

(i) Geush Urvan's (Bovine / Creation's Soul's) Lament

(a) *Avesta – Yasna (Gathas), Vendidad, Yashts, Siroza*

Y. 29.1. *Khshmaibya Geush Urva gerezhda, "Kahmai ma thwarozhdum? Ke [ma] tashat? A-ma aeshemo hazas-cha [remo], a-*

⁶⁸ As in K. E. Eduljee's monograph *Nutrition, Were Ancient Zoroastrians & Aryans Vegetarian?* (Vancouver, 2014) III.2.A.i. See <http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/reference/Nutrition-Eduljee-Abridged.pdf>.

hishaya deresh-cha tevish-cha. Noit moi vasta Khshmat Anyo. Atha moi sasta vohu vastrya."

(Tr. Eduljee) "Unto You Geush* Urvan** lamented, 'What was the purpose of my creation? Why [was I] formed? Surrounding me are wrath and oppression, bondage and rage and destruction. For me there is no herdsman*** save You alone. Alas, I yearn for good pastures.'"

[* The term '*geush*' may be related to '*angeush*' meaning life, the essence of life, creation, the living creation, and being. It may also be related to '*gaya*' as in 'Gaya Maretan' meaning 'mortal life'. J. M. Chatterji⁶⁹ equates *geush* with the Sanskrit '*gon*' meaning 'world' (earth) citing *Nighantu*⁷⁰ 1.1. 'Go' (गो) in Sanskrit also means 'mother', 'cow', 'bull' and 'cattle' – or anything coming from a cow or ox. The multitude of Sanskrit meanings demonstrates how the word can allow the composing of allegorical statements with multiple meanings.

cf. V.21.1. "*Nemase-te gao-spenta, nemase-te gaosh-hudao, nemase-te fradhente....*" (Also compare Av. '*nemase-te*' to the Hindi or Sanskrit '*namaste*' (नमस्ते), a reverential salute.)

cf. Yt. 7.0. & Siroza 1.12. "*Maonghahe gaocithrahe geush-cha aevo-datayao* geush-cha pouru-saredhayao....*" And at 7.1.

[*geush aevo-datayao* (Av.) = *gav-i evdad/evagdad* (MP)]

**Martin Haug⁷¹ notes "*Geush urva* means the universal soul of the earth, the cause of all life and growth. The literal meaning of the term, 'soul of the cow' implies a simile; for the earth is compared to a cow. (*Gaus* has in Sanskrit two meanings, 'cow' and 'earth'.)"

***Likely a metaphorical allusion to a guardian/protector/saviour. Compare the use of '*vasta*/herdsman' above with the use of the term 'shepherd' in the Judeo-Christian tradition and in phrases such as "The Lord (Jehovah/Adonai) is my shepherd, I shall not want, He maketh me lie down in green pastures..."⁷² – perhaps a borrowing from Zoroastrianism, say, at the time of the Babylonian exile or earlier. The Middle Persian (Pahlavi) Zand version has '*gospand*' meaning 'sheep' (or domesticated animals in general), '*gospand rado*⁷³' meaning 'shepherd', and '*vastaridar/vasnidar*' in place of *vasta* meaning pasture or herdsman (also '*vastaryosh*' from the Avestan '*vastaryo*'). We also find '*vastare*' in the last line of the Ahuna Vairya prayer in relation

⁶⁹ J. M. Chatterji in *The Hymns of Atharvan Zarathushtra* (Calcutta, 1967) p.15.

⁷⁰ *Nighantu* is an annotated glossary of obscure ancient Sanskrit terms.

⁷¹ M. Haug in *Essays on the Sacred Language, Writings, and Religion of the Parsis* (London, 1878) p. 148.

⁷² Psalm 23 (of David) King James Version.

⁷³ Avestan '*ratu*' or '*ratush*' meaning 'leader'.

to one becoming a *'vaster'* (herdsman/shepherd i.e. guardian/protector/saviour/pastor) of the *drigubyo*, the meek, poor and those in need (as also mentioned in Y. 53.9). It is significant that *'vaster'* is used in conjunction with both Geush Urvan and the *drigubyo*. As well, compare the use of the words *'pastor'* and *'pastoral'* in these contexts.]

(ii) Geush Urvan & Pasu Urvan. The Souls of Earthly Life, Humans & Animals

(a) Avesta – Yasna

Y. 39.1. *"Itha at yazamaide Geush Urvanem-cha tashanem-cha ahmakeng aat uruno pasukanam-cha yoi nao jijishenti yaeibyasca toi a yae-cha aeibyō a da anghen."*

(Tr. Eduljee) "(Know) this that we revere Geush Urvan and all of our forms as well as the souls of animals (*pasu**) who as we are living. They are to us as we are to them."

[*Our note: Dastur H. Jamaspji states, "*'gospand'* is the translation of *'pasvo'*", *'pasvo'* being the accusative plural word-form of *'pasu'*."⁷⁴ Also compare *'gospand'* with *'gao-spenta'*].

cf. Y. 45.9 (Gatha) and Y. 58.6 for a further reference to the kinship between animals and people (*pasush vireng*) for a quest of welfare for both. Also see Y. 34.14 (Gatha), Y. 12.4 and Y. 37.2.]

(iii) King Jamsheed as a Sinner for Eating Meat

(a) Avesta – Yasna *Gathas* 32.8

Y. 32.8. *"Aesham aenangham Vivanghusho sravi Yimas-chit, ye masyeng chikhshnusho ahmakeng gaush бага khvaremno; aesham-chit a ahmi thwahmi Mazda vichithoi aipi."*

The phrase "*ye masyeng chikhshnusho ahmakeng gaush бага khvaremno*" presents many challenges for arriving at a primary translation in English for it may have been designed to import several meanings. We will discuss the meaning of the individual words below in order to give the reader an understanding of the multiple meanings the words carry. The Middle Persian translations of the verse support the first alternative as the primary translation:

(First alternative free translation – hereafter FT – by Eduljee) "Among the sinners we hear of Yima Vivanghat, who taught humans the enjoyment (craving) of our animals eaten in portions. From all such, apart may I (Zarathushtra) stand in Your ultimate discernment O Mazda."

⁷⁴ Jamaspji, H. – *An Old Zand-Pahlavi Glossary* (Stuttgart, 1867) p. 74.

VIII. Appendices

(Second alternative FT Eduljee) “Among the criminals we hear of Yima Vivanghat, who among humans declared that he was created a god possessing divine grace. From all such, apart may I (Zarathushtra) stand in Your ultimate discernment O Mazda.”

Our notes on the meaning of individual words in the difficult phrase “*ye masyeng chikhshnusho ahmakeng gaush бага khvaremno*”:

‘*Mashye*’ means ‘mortal’ or ‘human’. Mashye and Mashyane are the names given to the first human couple in the creation myth according to the Middle Persian *Bundahishn* (Gayomard having been the primal mortal). The *Bundahishn* also informs us that Mashye and Mashyane first fed upon water, then plants, then milk, and then meat⁷⁵. Parsi scholar Neriosangh Dhaval’s 12th or 13th century Sanskrit translation of the passage has ‘*manushyebhyah*’* translated by L. H. Mills⁷⁶ as ‘men’ as in ‘mankind’ or ‘humankind’ which is the meaning of मनुष्य (*manushya*).

[*In Sanskrit, the case ending ‘*bhyah*’ or ‘*bahyah*’ can also mean ‘not caring’.]

‘*Chikhshnusho*’ is taken to mean ‘desiring to make happy’, ‘appeasing’ or ‘making content’. Mills note that the Pahlavi translation interprets the word as ‘teaching’ and Neriosangh’s Sanskrit translation has ‘*samasvadayati*’ which Mills translates as ‘taught’ but which Sanskrit dictionaries define as ‘taste’ and ‘enjoy’. Perhaps the word can be taken to mean ‘craving’.

‘*Ahmakeng*’ means ‘us’ or ‘our’. Neriosangh’s Sanskrit translation has ‘*asmakam*’ meaning ‘our’.

‘*Gaush*’ can mean ‘kine’ (i.e. ox, cattle, cow...) or ‘meat’ or earthly life/creation as personified by the kine as with ‘*geush*’. ‘*Geush*’ can also mean ‘life’, ‘earthly life’, even ‘creation’. Neriosangh’s Sanskrit translation has ‘*paçunam*’ (pasuman) meaning ‘of/for (the) animals’.

‘*Baga*’ can have a multitude of meanings. It can mean ‘divine being’ or ‘god’. It can also mean ‘portion’ or ‘piece’. Its Sanskrit cognate ‘*bhaga*’ has various related meanings including ‘share’, ‘division’, ‘unit’, ‘pleasure’, ‘passion’, ‘desire’ and ‘craving’. Taraporewala has ‘welfare’. Mills corrects Neriosangh’s Sanskrit translation as ‘*dakshan*’ meaning ‘hen’s egg’ to read ‘*dakshinaya*’ apparently translating it as ‘perquisite’ perhaps meaning ‘condition’ in this context. ‘दक्षिणा’ (*dakshinaa*) means ‘prolific cow’ while ‘दक्षिणीय’ (*dakshiniya*) means ‘venerable’. दक्षिणायन (*dakshiyana*) can mean ‘way to Yama’s quarter’, Yama being the Sanskrit equivalent for the Avestan Yima.

⁷⁵ Lesser *Bundahishn* 30.1.

⁷⁶ L. H. Mills, *A Study of the Five Zarathushtrian Gathas* (Oxford, 1892) p. 97.

'*Khvaremno*' is translated variously. Some authors such as Taraporewala have 'illumined' perhaps having determined the word is associated with '*khvarenah*', 'grace', rather than '*khvaretha*' meaning 'food' and '*khvaro*' meaning 'eat'. Neriosangh's Sanskrit translation has '*khadanam*' (presumably from खादन) meaning 'to eat' or 'eating'.

Below are Middle Persian (Pahlavi) renditions of Y.32.8 as well as Mill's English translation of Neriosangh's Sanskrit version of the Pahlavi renditions.

(1) Zand – Pahlavi Translation of Y. 32.8

Transcribed Pahlavi translation⁷⁷. "(a) *Valmanshan [Shedaan] kinik vinaskar zak i Vivahanan Yim srud, (b) mun avo anshutaan* chashid, aigh: lanmanikano bisraya pavan bagishno vashtamuned [hamazak anshutaano pavan sinak masih va, bazai masih]. (c) Valmanshanich den, [zak i Gasano li pavan Gasanikih bara doshidano], Lak, Auharmazd, bara vijido akhar, [aigh, Lakich pavan khup dashto]."*

[**anshutaan* = *mardoman* = people]

(Tr. adapted by this author from Mills) "(a) Among these [demons] Yima of the Vivahanas is famed to have been a hating sinner, (b) who taught people thus: 'O you of ours, eat you flesh in pieces [O you people ever just as greedy, eat it in pieces according to the size of the breast (the stomach), and the length of the arm (as much as the stomach can hold or the hand can take)]'. (c) From among these [on account of my thorough love of the Gathic doctrine in the Gathas] You, Ahura Mazda, have chosen me ultimately (last [that is, You consider me as possessing goodness])."

(Tr. adapted by this author from Humbach⁷⁸) "(a) Even Yima, the son of Vivahvan, became notorious for these crimes, (b) he who tried to content people (by declaring): 'Our meat should be part of a complete meal....'"

(2) Zand – Neriosangh Dhaval's Translation of Y. 32.8

(Tr. by Mills of Neriosangh's Sanskrit translation of the Pahlavi) "(a) These hateful sinners Yameseda Vivanghana's son has declared forth (by his example?), (b) he who taught men to eat the food of our herds with (or 'for ') a perquisite, [and in pieces with the width of a breast (or 'which would fill the breast'), and with the length of an arm]. (c) And these I (?) have (?) been discerning later there, and Thou also hast been discerning, O Great Wise One the Lord, [that is, they are estimated with clearness (or 'favourably') in the Gathas]."

⁷⁷ *ibid.* p. 96.

⁷⁸ H. Humbach's *Jamshid King of Paradise* (Mainz, 2005) p. 76.

(3) Zand – Denkard’s Translation of Y. 32.8

*Denkard’s*⁷⁹ Middle Persian rendition of Y. 32.8. “*Ud an i Vivanghanan Jam, ash shanyenid mardom ush snayenid gospand* hudahag edon pad gowishn, Zardusht, kash guft o mardom ‘Ashma pad gospand hushnudaged ku ashma pad bazishn khvesh gosht khvared hushnudag. Ma az ray ud ma arishk ray apayman gosht khvared pad bazishn gosht dagr bavashn.*”

[*Note: **Gospand** (New Persian *gosfand* meaning sheep) likely meant any beneficent animals (domesticated and wild i.e. deer) and more specifically ‘useful’ animals used livestock in medieval times. The livestock would have included any domesticated animals raised in an agricultural setting for labour or to produce commodities such as food and fiber: sheep, goats, cattle and perhaps fowl as well. ‘Gosfand’ can also mean ‘mutton’ in New Persian.]

(Tr. Eduljee) “And one (sinner) is Vivanghan’s Jamsheed who pleased (sought favour with) the people and pleased the beneficent animals with these words, Zarathushtra. He said to the people, ‘You be content with the sheep that you (have). Eat your own share (also division/apportionment/part) of meat and be content. Do not for its sake or because of envy (or greed), eat meat immoderately. Be satisfied with (your) share of meat.’”

(iv) Jamsheed’s Transgression, Meat Eating & Mortality**(a) Zand – Pahlavi Translation of Y. 9.1**

Gloss to the Pahlavi translation of Y. 9.1. “*Had ash tan pad fraronih amard kard esteed, ud ne edon chiyon aveshan ke gosht-i Jam jud, ushan andar tan marg kard esteed.*”

(Tr. Eduljee) “A person’s body because of righteousness was made undying, but by devouring the meat of Jamsheed, death entered the bodies of people.”

(v) Possible Contrary Opinion – Divs & not Jamsheed Ordered the Killing of Animals**(a) Pahlavi Rivayet**

Pahlavi Rivayet 31b.1-3.⁸⁰ “*Zardusht een-iz pursid az Ohrmazd, ‘ku Jam pad gehan nekih che veh kard?’ Ohrmazd guft, ‘ku an-i ka devan be o mardoman guft ku gospand* be ozaned.’ Mardoman guft ku pad dastvarih-i Jam be kunem, u-shan kard, ud Jam pad ne ozadan i*

⁷⁹ *Denkard* 9.31.12 (Sanjana, Vol. 17, p. 102) & Madan, p. 838 lines 2ff) as in H. Humbach’s *Jamshid King of Paradise* (Mainz, 2005) p. 75.

⁸⁰ *Denkard* 9.31.12 (Sanjana, Vol. 17, p. 102) & Madan, p. 838 lines 2ff) as in H. Humbach’s *Jamshid King of Paradise* (Mainz, 2005) p. 73.

mardoman gospand, (missing text here?) abag devan edon pahikard. Ish dev be erakht-hend ush margomand ud padifrahomand kard-hend."

(Tr. Eduljee) "Zardusht asked this of Ohrmazd, 'Did Jamsheed do any right and good for the world?' Ohrmazd said, 'That was when the divs (evil beings) said to the people, 'Kill the beneficent animals.' The people said that they would act (only) by the command of Jam, they did, and Jamsheed did not (have the) people kill beneficent animals (missing text here?) ...with the divs thus consulted/battled*. But he blamed/condemned/fought the div and mortality as retribution/punishment resulted.'"

[Our note: *'Pahikardan' means 'consult' while 'pahikar' means 'battle'.

This passage reaffirms the concept that meat eating was the cause of mortality or at the least a untimely death and the shortening of one's life.]

(vi) Dead Matter & Sin

(a) Khordeh Avesta - *Patet Pashemani, Vendidad*

In the Patet Pashemani(g), the prayers for repentance from sins, the category of mortal sins in Karta 3 includes whoever is "polluted with dead matter, cooks dead matter on a fire, throws dead matter into water and conceals dead matter under the earth" (cf. Vendidad 8.73 & Pahlavi Vendidad gloss to 7.52).

B. Orthodox Zoroastrian Calendars in Zoroastrian Texts

(i) Dinkard⁸¹

(a) Title

Dk 3.419.1 (Tr. Kohiyar) "Exposition in the good religion as to which (of the two years) the solar and the lunar is (connected with) the important ceremonies of the faith."

(b) Zoroastrian Solar Calendar of Two Type

Dk 3.419.2 (Tr. Kohiyar) "Be it known that the solar year is of two kinds. Of these (two solar years) one is made up by the addition of days, the other by the addition of hours."

(c) Composition of the First Type of Solar Calendar

Dk 3.419.3 (Tr. Kohiyar) "The one that is made up by the addition of days consists of twelve months, each month of which is of thirty days."

⁸¹ Ed. Sanjana Bk 3, V. 9 (Bombay, 1900) p. 562; (corresponding to Bk. 3, ed. Madan, I, pp. 402-05; ed. Dresden, pp. 519-16; tr. Menasce, pp. 374-79).

(d) Five Additional Days at Year-End

Dk 3.419.4 (Tr. Kohiyar, ed. Eduljee) “(When to these three hundred and sixty days) the five additional days, required for the course of the sun through the constellations during twelve months, are added the year becomes one of three hundred and sixty-five days. The five days which are over and above (the thirty days) of each month are placed at the end of the last month of the year. These five days are made up by the increase (in time of the solar year over the year of 360 days) and they are fixed after many calculations. According to such calculations these days are named (in the daily prayers recited on the last five days of the year).”

Our note: Here, we are introduced to the sidereal aspect of the Zoroastrian with the statement, “course of the sun through the constellations during twelve months....” This sidereal aspect is not mentioned in the *Bundahishns'* descriptions of the Zoroastrian calendar.

(e) Intercalation Required & Options

Dk 3.419.5 (Tr. Kohiyar, ed. Eduljee) “Besides the sum-total of three hundred and sixty-five days there are six additional hours (to be taken into consideration). These hours have to be added every year. These additional (six) hours (for every year) make up one day for four years, ten days for forty years, one month for a hundred and twenty years, five months for six hundred years and one year for one thousand, four hundred and forty years. The time of six hours should be kept apart from (i.e. not to be added to) the last days of the year for many years, till (the hours) amount to (a definite period of time). This additional (intercalary) period is fixed by calculations. And it is necessary for (the right performance of) Noruz, Mihragan, and other time-honored Jashans.”

(f) Start of the Year with Nowruz

Dk 3.419.6 (Tr. Kohiyar, ed. Eduljee) “Again the commencement of the year has been fixed by great kings from the first day of the year from the beginning of creation. Hence innumerable men adhere to the Noruz or New Year’s Day (i.e. observe it as a holiday) and perform good deeds (on the day). And on this glorious day (of the New Year) the people of all countries from the times of the old Peshdadians downwards have been rendered happy and full of joy by their kings.

Our note: Here, the celebration of Nowruz was instituted by the Pishdadian kings (perhaps Jamsheed) and that consequently its institution preceded the establishment of Zoroastrianism.

(g) Nowruz Customs & Celebrations

Dk 3.419.7 (Tr. Kohiyar, ed. Eduljee) “On the occasion of this Jashan,

men who work (for their living) hope for rest (i.e. observe it a day of rest) enjoy happiness and find comfort. Again when the solemn time arrives, down-trodden nations derive strength from just kings and innumerable men find happiness and comfort. On that occasion work and labor which wear away (mind and body) become (a good deal) less and by the ceremony fixed from of old the state is reformed anew. The good of many things is (closely) united to this period. Weak and diseased men find relief from laborious work and a new gift is conferred on the world."

(h) How the Year is denoted by the Reign Length of Sovereigns

Dk 3.419.8 (Tr. Kohiyar, ed. Eduljee) [The ascertainment of] "years, months, and days depends on the course of the starry orbs. From the beginning of the world men have fixed the year by adding up the past years of the (preceding) sovereigns."

(i) Nowruz Customs & Celebrations (contd.)

Dk 3.419.9 (Tr. Kohiyar, ed. Eduljee) "During the glorious and immortal period, large quantities of food are exchanged among men. According to the precepts of the faith the year should be kept up and should not be allowed to pass by, Men should not harm animals which should be cared for."

(j) Intercalation Necessary

Dk 3.419.10 (Tr. Kohiyar, ed. Eduljee) "When the calculated year arrives, the intercalary [our note: day, week or month according to the chosen method] should be added. People of the world should be made to add the intercalary (period). The additional hours of each year get accumulated in the course of years. Exalted work (eg. ceremonies) is fixed (or connected) with the four seasons of the year."

Our note: Religious ceremonies are connected to the seasons.

(k) First Season of the Year is Spring

Dk 3.419.11 (Tr. Kohiyar, ed. Eduljee) "Spring is the season of the commencement of the year. It is from (the time) when the sun enters the first portion (or degree*) of Varak (the lamb/ram or Aries) which (degree) is called the Halo of the sky. And its three months are those (during which) the sun travels through the constellations of Varak (the lamb or Aries), Tora (the bull or Taurus), and Dopatkar (the two figures or Gemini)."

Our note: *1 degree of an arc=sush (MP); 1 minute of an arc = lipi (MP). This is a sidereal system

(l) Second Season of the Year is Summer

Dk 3.419.12 (Tr. Kohiyar, ed. Eduljee) "The second season of the year is

summer which is regarded as the season of light. And it lasts three months from when the sun enters the first degree of the constellation Kalakang/Kalachang (the crab or Cancer) till it continues its course through the constellations of Kalakang (the crab or Cancer), Ser (the lion or Leo) and Khusak (Virgo)."

(m) Third Season of the Year is Autumn

Dk 3.419.13 (Tr. Kohiyar, ed. Eduljee) "The third season is autumn and it lasts from when the Sun arrives at the first degree of Tarazuk (the balance or Libra), which (degree) is known as Star, till it (i.e. the sun) completes its course through of Tarazuk (the balance or Libra), Gazdum (the scorpion or Scorpio), and Nimasp (the centaur or Sagittarius)."

(n) Fourth Season of the Year is Winter

Dk 3.419.14 (Tr. Kohiyar, ed. Eduljee) "The fourth that is to say the last season is winter and it lasts from when the sun enters the limit [first degree] of Vahik (Capricorn), [which degree is] called Ductora until (the end of) the three months which are for the sun to travel through (the constellations of) Vahik (Capricorn), Dul (the water spout or Aquarius), and Mahik (the fish or Pisces)."

(o) Overview & Reaffirmation of the Need for Intercalary Adjustments

Dk 3.419.15 (Tr. Kohiyar, ed. Eduljee) "[To summarize and reaffirm] the proper arrangement of the four seasons of the year is connected with the motion of the sun through the constellations. And through the many delays in the course additional (six) hours are accumulated, (by the proper addition of which) days remain with days, months with months, and years with years (i.e. occur at regular intervals). And from this (i.e. the regular observance of intercalary periods) each season and the festivals connected with each season are known by the (close) connection of the festivals with the seasons and the nature of the seasons."

(p) Benefit of an Intercalated Calendar for Worshippers & Farmers

Dk 3.419.16 (Tr. Kohiyar, ed. Eduljee) "The certainty (which men have) of the (proper time of offering certain) prayers of the faith and (the certainty) of the ripening of corn and the growth of plants is through men taking the intercalary period into calculation."

(q) Benefit of an Intercalated Calendar for Kings Conducting Wars & Sailors

Dk 3.419.17 (Tr. Kohiyar, ed. Eduljee) "The recognition of the difference between the seasons of summer and winter by warlike kings and the reasoning on the blowing of gales and the commencement of breeze on the

sea are fixed on this (intercalary calculation).”

(r) Additional Benefits of an Intercalated Calendar

Dk 3.419.18 (Tr. Kohiyar, ed. Eduljee) “The custom of the faith and each work (i.e. ceremony) of the faith are fixed as (religious) duties at (their proper) seasons. Again the period for intercalation is made up by the calculation of many additional periods (of six hours). And by the order of the king, those who work (for the addition of the intercalary period) have done so to make the four seasons fall in at the proper time. And through this (observance of the intercalation) a religion glorifying sentiment is felt clearly by men and plants.”

Dk 3.419.19 (Tr. Kohiyar, ed. Eduljee) “And it is the admonition of the good faith that the rectification (of the calendar) should not be made until a month is completed. An accumulation of more than a period of five months should not be allowed.”

Our note: It appears that the writer of the Dinkard prefers adding an intercalary month after 120 years rather than, say, an intercalary day after four years. This is a personal bias rather than a choice based on analysis of the options or the stipulations of the Din. The last sentence seeks to prevent the Rapithwan summer being represented by a winter in the calendar.

(s) Defect of the Lunar Calendar & its Variance with the Solar Year

Dk 3.419.20 (Tr. Kohiyar, ed. Eduljee) “The lunar year is (derived) from the motion of the moon along with the sun. The defect of every lunar month (as compared with a month of 30 days) is ten hours which at the end of a year, when the moon recommences its revolution, amount to 120 hours. The lunar year is (derived) from the motion of the moon along with the sun. The defect of every lunar month (as compared with a month of 30 days) is ten hours which at the end of a year, when the moon recommences its revolution, amount to 120 hours. The five days of these 120 hours together with the five Gathic days amount to ten days (at the end of a year. i.e. the lunar is ten days short of the year of 365 days). And on this calculation the days came to a month at the end of three years and to one intercalary year at the end of thirty-six (lunar) years. This (lunar) year (which makes the festivals fall behind or after their proper time) should not be used for great works (i.e. important ceremonies like Jashans, Gahambars etc.). In the business of the world smaller gifts are to be had in the lunar year. And this fact is made known in the chapter (containing) the details of years (dependent on) the law of intercalation.”

(ii) Greater Bundahishn & Lesser Bundahishn

Chapter 25 in both Greater Bundahishn = GB; Lesser Bundahishn = LB

(a) Title

GB 25.0. (Tr. Anklesaria) “As regards the religious year.”

LB 25.1. (Tr. West) “On matters of religion it says in revelation thus:”

(b) Creation in 365 Days = 6 Gahambars

GB.25.1. (Tr. Anklesaria) “One says in the Scripture, “I created the material creatures complete [in] three hundred and sixty-five days,” that is, the six periods of the Gahambars, which are arranged in a year.”

LB 25.1. (Tr. West) ““The creatures of the world were created by me complete in three hundred and sixty-five days,’ that is, the six periods of the Gahambars which are completed in a year.”

GB.25.1. & LB 25.1. (Tr. Eduljee) “It is said in the Religion that, “I completely created/promulgated the physical creation and creatures of the world in three hundred and sixty-five days”, that is, between the six periods of the gahanbars within a complete year.”

See VII.2.B.i for GB 1a.14-22 on Creation during the Gahambars.

(c) Zoroastrian Day Starts with the Day & Ends with the Night

GB 25.2. (Tr. Anklesaria) “One ought always to reckon the day first, then the night. For first the day goes off, and then the night [follows the day, and] comes [in.]”

LB 25.2. (Tr. West) “It is always necessary first to count the day and afterwards the night, for first the day goes off, and then the night comes on.”

(d) Gahambars Periods & Day Lengths. Vehizaki Months

GB 25.3. (Tr. Anklesaria) “And from the season (gas) of Maidyoshahem, that is, the ‘vehizaki’⁸² month Tir [Tishtar] and day Khvar [Khwarshed] up to

⁸² ‘vehizaki’ is also written as ‘wihezag’ or ‘wihezagig’. Mackenzie’s Pahlavi Dictionary gives the meaning as ‘moveable’ and ‘intercalary’. In this passage, the implication is that the statements hold true as long as the calendar (and thereby its months) are intercalated and thereby kept in phase with the seasons. Mary Boyce in ‘Calendar of Zoroastrian Feasts’ at *British Institute of Persian Studies’ Iran*, Vol. 43 (London, 2005), pp. 1-38, “Wihizag comes, it is accepted, from a verbal root hiz or xiz, meaning “rise, move”.⁸³ This yielded a number of derivatives, with or without various verbal prefixes, in several Iranian languages, of which one of the groups with the fewest representatives is that with wi-. There appear in fact to be so far only four examples recorded, other than wihezag itself, and all are from Western Middle Iranian. The earliest is in a Manichaean MP text of the third century A.D., in which it is said: “And then the sun rises up from that second threshold to that first threshold” (ud dudiz xwarx& d az han i dudig astdnag o han astdnag i naxostin ... ul wihezid).⁸⁴ This is unambiguous with regard to the meaning of wihez-, thanks to the use of ul “up”; and

in the light of this passage it is reasonable to understand in the same way a reference in the sixth-century Phl. Mjnog I Khrad, Ch XLIX, to the “rising of the sun and moon” (wihizag I xwarx?9d ud mdh),⁸⁵ even though ul is not used here. The other occurrences of the word are in the Pth. Version of the third-century inscription of Sabuhr I on the Ka’ba- yi Zardust (what would have been the parallel MP lines are missing). In these the verb is in the past tense, formed with the past participle wihift, and in both instances it is used with a phrase introduced by the preposition abar, which itself has various meanings; and the translations offered are “rose up against ...” or “set out/started towards”.⁸⁶ In the first passage (SKZ, Pth. 1.4) the King states that the Roman emperor had acted wrongly in Armenia. “And we rose up against the Roman empire and slew 60,000 of the Roman force” (ud amdh abar frdmin xsahr wihivt dhim ud fromin zdwar 60,000 ... JMad). In the second passage (1. 9), which refers to an event some time later, S~buhhr presents himself as the aggressor, saying “We set out towards/against Carrhae and Edessa and laid siege to Carrhae and Edessa” (amdh abar harrdn ud urhdi wihift dhim ud harrdn ud urhai pywdywt [transcription uncertain]). The then Roman emperor arrived only belatedly, Sabuhr says, with an immense army, to be defeated in his turn.

The renderings of wihift in these two passages are plainly open to criticism. Since the grammatical construction is the same in both, it is hard to justify a different translation for each. In the case of the first, the motive had plainly been to link wihez- here with its use in the Man. MP text, but the result is not very happy, for it would scarcely be natural for a sovereign king to speak of “rising up” against an invader. In the second, the rendering “set out, start” is apparently inspired by the meaning “moving” generally attributed to the noun wihizag; but this is itself unsatisfactory as the translation of an expression designed to distinguish the devotional year from the State calendar, since it would in fact be more appropriate to the latter. For it was the moving backwards of the vague State calendar through the seasons which was the reason for the reform, by which it was intended that the new devotional year should be stable, being intercalated. Further, to “move” is a meaning attributed to the root verb, and this rendering assigns no modifying force to the preverb wi-. If the little group of words is considered afresh, uninfluenced by later interpretations of wihizag, the conclusion seems inescapable that wihiz- had two meanings, easily distinguished no doubt by native speakers, either by different constructions or simply by context. One was “rise up, ascend”, and the other conveyed motion on the level; and to judge from the contexts in which the latter occurs, this motion was swift. It would be natural for a king, hearing of an invasion of his land, to hasten to confront the invader, or, if planning an invasion himself, to move rapidly in order to gain the advantage of surprise. Although less obviously, the meaning of “hastening” can also be seen as fitting the devotional year at its introduction, for there was then the wholly unfamiliar hastening of a second celebration of No Riiz after only eight months instead of twelve. Those indefatigable commentators, the gasans/gdsdns, must have made up many songs about this major event, and a celebrated practitioner of their craft may have composed witty verses set to a charming tune about the “Year of Hastening” which became popular and were sung everywhere, among learned and simple. The jest would have had meaning only for the first two or three years of the reform, but the song may have been sung long enough for Wihizag to become common currency as the accepted term for the devotional year, and as such it would presumably have come to be used as casually as English speakers use the term “leap year”. The underlying plan for reform was, however, frustrated through intercalation never in fact taking place, the political situation towards the end of the Sasanian period being wholly unfavourable. One hundred and twenty years on from the introduction of the Wihezag year Khosrow Parvez was nearing the end of his reign, during which he had been much occupied

the (gas*) season of Maidyarem, that is, the 'vehizaki' month Day and day Warharan, the day decreases and the night increases. And from the (gah) season of Maidyarem up to the (gah) season of Maidyoshahem, the night decreases and the day increases."

GB 25.3. (Tr. Eduljee) "From Maidyoshem gah on Tishtar month's Khursheed day up to Maidyarem gah on Dae month's Bahram day, the day

with winning battles; and after him the dynasty was torn by destructive rivalries for the throne, with several short, unhappy reigns before the young Yazdegird III was crowned in time to encounter the Arabs.

Well before this, most probably at the time when reform was being prepared for and there would have been much thought about calendar matters, another development in terminology took place. In Middle Persian the Av. word *gatha/gathd* had come to be pronounced *gah/gdh* and was identical with the word *gah/gdh* for "time" - indeed the two may have the same origin;⁸⁷ and it must now have entered the thought of some influential priest that the expression "Panj Gah" had long been misunderstood, and that it really meant not the "Five (Day) Times" but the "Five Gatha/Gdtha (Times)". Thinking intensely about this, he probably experienced it also as being told him by a divine messenger in a dream, and this would have given it authority.⁸⁸ It came to be accepted by what must have been a sizeable number of his co-religionists, as is attested by the recorded expression *panj gah/gdh gdhanig*, the "Five Gathic Times", and the one which was to become standard, *gahanbar/gdhanbar* "Time of the Gathas/Gdthds" (the suffix *-bar* also signifying "time"). This was thus the new designation of the second pentad of Fravardigan, also called the "Good/Better Pentad", *panjag i weh*.⁸⁹ But the expression the "Five Stolen Days" (*panj roz i truftag*) was still known, and there was evidently scepticism to overcome before *gahanbar* was generally accepted.⁹⁰ But then it was adopted with, it seems, religious fervour, and was applied to the whole chain of Year Times, of which *Hamaspathmaedaya* was by far the most important. For a while longer it, and they, remained six-day observances, as established by *Kirder*; but finally all six were reduced to five-day ones, each losing its first day (which had been the original calendar day of the *ratu-* in the YAv. period), and the word *rad* itself disappeared. But although the Year Times were thus harmonised, observances which give ritual expression to the concept of the *Gatha/Gathd* days remained special to *Hamaspathmaedaya*, namely the devotion of each one of the five days to the *Mainyu* of one of the Gathas, with recitation on that day of the *Gatha* concerned, in homage to Zoroaster.⁹¹

Notes: 83 De Blois, 1996, p. 43a with n. 49, gives references to the studies by Henning and Gershevitch which established this.

84 Andreas and Henning, 1932, pp. 188-89 (b II R I 17-25).

85 Cited by de Blois, 1996, p. 43a with n. 50, from the old Phl. text ed. by B.T. Anklesaria.

86 Back, 1978, pp. 294-95 ("erhoben gegen"), 306-7 ("gezogen gegen"); Gignoux, *Glossaire*, p. 67, s.v. *wy~ht*, "mis en route" for both passages.

87 Cf. *Elr. X*, pp. 253-54, under "Gah. ii".

88 A number of revelatory dreams are recorded among Armenian, Irani and Parsi Zoroastrians (as among many other peoples), which were regarded as divinely sent.

89 This expression was probably older than the linking with the Gathas, having been given on analogy with the general usage for duplicated feasts, by which the second was always the "greater", that is, the more estimable, because valid.

90 For references for all this see *Elr. X*, p. 255 under "Gah~bar".

91 This is deduced from known later usage."

and the night. From Maidyarem gah up to Maidyoshem gah, the night shortens and the day lengthens.”

LB 25.3. (Tr. West) “And from the (gas*) season of Maidyoshahem, which is the auspicious day Khwarshed of the month Tishtar, to the (gah) season of Maidyarem, which is the auspicious day Warharan of the month Din [Dae] -- the shortest day -- the night increases; and from the (gah) season of Maidyarem to the (gah) season of Maidyoshahem the night decreases and the day increases.”

[This translation by West with the insertion of “shortest day” is dubious]

Our notes:

*‘gas’ may not mean “season”. It is likely another form of ‘gah’ and part of the compound word ‘gasanbar’ i.e., ‘gahambar’. ‘Period’ is closer to the meaning of ‘gas’. ‘Gahan’ also means ‘Gatha’ and ‘Gahan-bar’ could mean ‘time for the Gathas’. Even today, Parsees call the last five days of the year ‘Gatha days’. (‘Hambar’ also means ‘store’. ‘Hambar’ became ‘anbar’ in New Persian.)

The ‘vehizaki’/intercalation qualification of month names is significant. First, it signifies that intercalation is a necessary part of maintaining a Zoroastrian calendar that is in phase with the seasons. Second, that description will not apply – and the calendar will no longer relate to the seasons – if the calendar is not intercalated, thereby defeating the efficacy of a solar calendar over a lunar calendar. The result of neglecting intercalation would be to make the calendar as seasonally irrelevant and therefore as useless as a lunar calendar.

(e) Summer & Winter Day Lengths in Multiples

GB 25.4. (Tr. Anklesaria) “The [longest] summer day is as much as two of the shortest winter days. The longest winter night is as much as two of the shortest summer nights.”

LB 25.4. (Tr. West) “The summer day is as much as two of the shortest winter days, and the winter night is as much as two of the shortest summer nights.”

LB 25.4. (Tr. Eduljee) “A summer day is as much as two of the shortest winter days, and a winter night is as much as two of the shortest summer nights.”

(f) Summer & Winter Day Lengths in Hasars

GB 25.5. (Tr. Anklesaria) “And the summer day is of twelve hasar (hathras), and a night of six hathras. And the winter night is of twelve hasar (hathras, and the day of six [hasar (hathras. And] a (hasar) hathra of time

[and a (hasar) hathra too] of land are of the same proportion.”

LB 25.5. (Tr. West) “The summer day is twelve Hasars, the night six Hasars; the winter night is twelve Hasars, the day six; a Hasar being a measure of time and, in like manner, of land.”

[Hasar = 1.33 damans/hours.]

(g) Equinox During the Hamaspathmaidyem Period

GB 25.6. (Tr. Anklesaria) “In the season of Hamaspathmaidyem, that is, in the panja (pentad) at the end of the month Spandarmad, day and night again become equal.”*

LB 25.6. (Tr. West) “In the season of Hamaspathmaidyem, that is, the five supplementary days at the end of the month Spandarmad, the day and night are again equal.”

Our note: *The day and night are equal during the five-day Hamaspathmaidyem period, and therefore, not on Nowruz. An allowance is being made here for the equinox to fall anytime during the five days of the Gahambar and not just on one specific day.

(h) Rapithwan Summer (Hamin; Warm) & Winter (Zamestan; Cool) Months

GB.25.7. (Tr. Anklesaria) “As, from the 'vehizaki' month Frawardin and day Ohrmazd, up to the 'vehizaki' month Mihr and day Anagran, [which] become seven months, [is] summer (Hamin). From the 'vehizaki' month Aban and day Ohrmazd, up to the 'vehizaki' month Spandarmad and the pentad at the end, which become five months, is winter (Zamestan).”

LB 25.7. (Tr. West) “As from the auspicious day Ohrmazd of the month Frawardin to the auspicious day Anagran of the month Mihr is the summer of seven months, so from the auspicious day Ohrmazd of the month Aban to the auspicious month Spandarmad, on to the end of the five supplementary days, is the winter of five months.”

Our note: It is important to note that this description of ‘summer’ and ‘winter’ is based on the relative temperature of ground and surface waters (Rapithwan) rather than the four (temperate region) seasons described later in 25.25. The Rapithwan ‘summer’ and ‘winter’ are not to be confused with a seasonal summer and winter. To mitigate against the confusion that arises using the words ‘summer’ and ‘winter’ to name to different phenomena, in this context, hamin (summer) should more correctly be called the Rapithwan period and the remainder of months (winter), the non-Rapithwan period. In other words, here, summer and winter are not so much seasons as much as they are hot/warm Rapithwan and cold/cool non-

Rapithwan months. The relatively rapid change from cold/cool months to hot/warm months is reminiscent of the climate in Iran's Tehran region. The true four-season assignment of the months are found below in 25.25.

(i) Decisions Related to Hot & Cold Climate Conditions

GB.25.8. (Tr. Anklesaria) "The Aerpats make decision in respect of dead bodies and other matters in summer and winter from this reckoning."

GB.25.8. (Tr. Eduljee) "Herbads make decisions related to summer and winter regarding dead bodies and other matters from this reckoning."

LB 25.8. (Tr. West) "The priest fulfills the regulation (vachar) about a corpse and other things, by this calculation as to summer and winter."

Our note: Since the decisions regarding the disposal of dead bodies is dependant on whether the climate is hot or cold, a calendar that accurately reflects the seasons is critical for sound decision-making. The Vendidad at 5.10-13 allows for the placement of a dead body in a morgue-like building during winter until "the birds begin to fly, the plants begin to grow, the waters begin to flow and the dry winds can dry up surface waters.

(j) Five Gahs in Summer Months

GB.25.9. (Tr. Anklesaria) "In those seven months of summer, the periods of the days and nights are five. For they do invoke the Rapithwin. As the morning is the period of Hawan, the midday (nim-ruz = half-day) is the period of Rapithwin, the evening is the period of Uzerin, from the time when the stars (setara) have come to appearance up to midnight (nim-shab = half-night) is the period of Aiwisruthrem, and from midnight up to the time when the stars become invisible is the period of Ushahin."

LB 25.9. (Tr. West) "In those seven months of summer the periods (gas) of the days and nights are five since one celebrates [observes] the Rapithwin namely, the period of day-break is Hawan, the period of midday is Rapithwin, the period of afternoon is Uzerin, when the appearance of the stars has come into the sky until midnight is the period of Aiwisruthrem, from midnight until the stars become imperceptible is the period of Ushahin."

Our note: During Hamin, i.e. Rapithwan period, the Rapithwan Gah lasts from 12 noon to 3 p.m. During Zamestan, i.e. the non-Rapithwan period, the day has only four Gahs with the Rapithwan Gah excluded. Here, the Hawan Gah continues from early morning (dawn – when the stars are no longer visible) to 3 p.m. in the afternoon.

(k) Four Gahs in Winter Months

GB.25.10. (Tr. Anklesaria) "In winter there are four [day] periods

[divisions of the day]; for from the morning up to [the period of] Uzerin is the whole [period of] Hawan, and the rest as I have said.”

LB 25.10a. (Tr. West) “In winter are four periods, for from daybreak till Uzerin is all Hawan, and the rest as I have said;”

(l) Regional Directions

GB.25.11. (Tr. Anklesaria) “Its reason is this that the progress of winter is from the direction of the north, where the regions Wourubareshti and Wourujareshti are. And the original home of summer too is in the south, where the regions Fradadhafshu and Widadhafshu are.”

LB 25.10b. (Tr. West) “...and the reason of it is this, that the appearance of winter is in the direction of the north, where the regions Wourubareshti and Wourujareshti are; the original dwelling of summer, too, is in the south, where the regions Fradadhafshu and Widadhafshu are.”

Our note: In other instances, the four regions are described as it they were continents. Airan-vej/Iran-shahr was located in Khvaniras/ Khwaniratha. According to LB 11 translated by West, to Khvaniras’ east and west lay Savah/Sawahi and Arzah/Arzahi respectively. According to GB 8 translated by Anklesaria, it was the other way around – to Khwaniratha’s west and east lay Savah/Sawahi and Arzah/Arzahi respectively. Khvaniras was as large as the other six portions together.

At one time the six surrounding regions were joined to Khvaniras but they separated and now “one part of the wide-formed ocean wound about around it.” In other words, the region of Khvaniras was now separated from the others by a “wide-formed ocean”. Further, in “Vorubarsh and Vorujarsht a lofty mountain (range) rose up.” As such, “it was no longer possible for people to go from one region to another”. [GB adds, “save by the guidance and radiance of the Yazads.”] Further, “the good religion of the Mazdayasnians was created in Khvaniras, and afterwards conveyed to the other regions (when travel to them was possible).”

The concept of oceans forming, mountains rising and land masses once joined separating is astonishing.

(m) Rapithwan & Relative Ground Water Temperature

GB.25.12. (Tr. Anklesaria) “In the 'vehizaki' month Aban and day Ohrmazd, winter acquires strength and enters into the world. The spirit of Rapithwin (minuy-i Rapithwin) goes underneath the earth from above the earth, that is, the warmth and humidity of the springs of waters goes into the [below ground] water, so that the roots of trees may not wither through cold and drought.”

LB 25.10c. (Tr. West) “On the day Ohrmazd of the auspicious month Aban the winter acquires strength and enters into the world, and the spirit of Rapithwin goes from above-ground to below-ground, where the spring (khani) of waters is, and diffuses warmth and moisture in the water, and so many roots of trees do not wither with cold and drought.”

[Our note: Warm (summer) months are Rapithwan above ground months, i.e., the below ground waters are cooler than surface waters e.g. deep well waters are cooler than pond waters. Cool (winter) months are Rapithwan below ground months, i.e., the below ground waters are warmer than surface waters e.g. deep well waters are warmer than pond waters.]

(n) Winter Arrival in Airan-vej/Eranvej

GB.25.13. (Tr. Anklesaria) “And in the 'vehizaki' Day month and Adar day, the winter approaches [Airan-vej] Eranvej with severe cold. And at [to] the end of the 'vehizaki' month Spandarmad, it comes over the whole world.”

LB 25.11a. (Tr. West) “And on the auspicious day Adar of the month Din the winter arrives, with much cold, at Eranvej; and until the end, in the auspicious month Spandarmad, winter advances through the whole world.”

(o) Festival of Fire Lighting on Adar-Day, Dey-Month (Jashne Daegan)

GB.25.14. (Tr. Anklesaria) “Therefore on the day Adar of the month Day [Jashne Daegan now on December 16th, is a day before Adar-Dey], they kindle the fire everywhere, and make a sign that winter has come.”

LB 25.11b. (Tr. West) “On this account they kindle a fire everywhere on the day Adar of the month Din, and it forms an indication that winter has come.”

[Adar-Dey (or the previous day, Jashne Daegan now on December 16 in the synchronized Gregorian calendar) is here the day of the start of winter. The festival of fire-lighting in the Bundahishn does not coincide with the winter solstice which earlier was described as the Maidyarem Gahambar, 15 days later. Nowadays, it is on Jashne Sadeh that fires are lit celebrating the discovery of fire by King Hushang. Jashne Sadeh is not mentioned in Zoroastrian texts but is noted by the poet Ferdowsi in the Shahnameh.]

(p) Cold Months: Below Ground/Spring Waters Warm. Rapithwan below Ground

GB.25.15. (Tr. Anklesaria) “In those five months, the water of the springs [waters from below the earth surface] is all warm. For Rapithwin preserves warmth and humidity there, and they do not invoke the period of Rapithwin.”

LB 25.12. (Tr. West) “In those five months the water of springs and conduits is all warm, for Rapithwin keeps warmth and moisture there, and one does not celebrate the period of Rapithwin.”

(q) Rapithwan Re-emerges on Hormozd-Day, Farvardin-Month

GB.25.16. (Tr. Anklesaria) “As the month Frawardin and day Ohrmazd turns up, the strength and preponderance of winter decreases, and summer enters from its original home, and receives strength and preponderance. And Rapithwin comes above [the earth] from underneath the earth, and ripens the fruit of trees.”

LB 25.13. (Tr. West) “As the day Ohrmazd of the month Frawardin advances it diminishes the strength which winter possesses, and summer comes in from its own original dwelling, and receives strength and dominion. (14) Rapithwin comes up from below-ground, and ripens the fruit of the trees”

(r) Spring Waters Cool in Summer

GB.25.17. (Tr. Anklesaria) “Therefore the water of springs is cold in summer; for Rapithwin is not there, and they do invoke the Rapithwin during those seven months, and summer comes over the whole earth.”

LB 25.14. (Tr. West) “On this account the water of springs is cold in summer, for Rapithwin is not there; and those seven months one celebrates the Rapithwin, and summer advances through the whole earth.”

(s) Climate of Hindustan (Tropical Climes)

GB.25.18. (Tr. Anklesaria) “And still in the direction of Hindustan, that place being nearer [to] the original home of summer, it is always neither cold nor hot. For at the time when there is the preponderance of summer, the rain always dispels the immense heat, and it does not become perceptible. In winter it does not rain, and immense cold does not become perceptible.”

LB 25.15. (Tr. West) “And yet in the direction of Hindustan, there where the original dwelling of summer is nearer, it is always neither cold nor hot; for in the season which is the dominion of summer, the rain always dispels most of the heat, and it does not become perceptible; in the winter rain does not fall, and the cold does not become very perceptible.”

(t) Climate in the North (Arctic Climes)

GB.25.19. (Tr. Anklesaria) “In the direction of the north, whence is the progress of winter, it is always cold; for in summer, owing to the utmost severity of winter there, one cannot so dispel cold as one might make himself warm.”

LB 25.16. (Tr. West) “In the northern direction, where the preparation of winter is, it is always cold; for in the summer mostly, on account of the more oppressive winter there, it is not possible so to dispel the cold that one might make it quite warm.”

Our note: This passage confirms that Iran-shahr was not in the Arctic region as some contend.

(u) *Climate in Mid-Latitude Regions Like Airan-Vej*

GB.25.20. (Tr. Anklesaria) “And in places of mean latitude, the cold of winter and heat of summer come on [with strength] vehemently.”

LB 25.17. (Tr. West) “In the middle localities the cold of winter and heat of summer both come on vehemently.”

Our note: This passage confirms the Iran-shahr occupied the mid latitudes (miyana jak) regions of the earth. This passage not only confirms knowledge of the concept of latitude, but also that Iran-shahr was located in the mid-latitudes i.e., the temperate zone that witnessed a marked change in seasons with cold winters and hot summers.

(v) *Lunar Year not in Accord*

GB.25.21. *Dut, sal i pa vartishn-i mah, awa sal-i hushmorti ne rast.*

(Tr. Anklesaria) “Again, the year dependent on the revolution of the moon is not equal to the computed [hushmorti] year.”

(Tr. Eduljee) “Again, the year (based) on the moon’s orbit, is not true/correct compared with the hushmorti(?) [Intelligent...(?)] year.”

LB 25.18a. (Tr. West) “Again, the year dependent on the revolving moon is not equal to the computed year...”

(w) *Reason for a Lunar Year’s Discordance with the Solar Year*

GB.25.22. (Tr. Anklesaria) “For this reason, because the moon returns at one time in twenty-nine days, and at one time in thirty days, the lunar year has that one period of four hours in excess.”

LB 25.18b. (Tr. West) “...on this account, for the moon returns one time in twenty-nine, and one time in thirty days, and there are four hours (zaman) more than such a one of its years.”

(x) *Lunar Year’s Proponent Confound Everything*

GB.25.23. (Tr. Anklesaria) “As one says, ‘Those who speak by the moon confound everything, unless they say that it comes twice in sixty days.’”

LB 25.18c. (Tr. West) “As it says, that every one deceives where they speak

about the moon (or month), except when they say that it comes twice in sixty days.”

Our note: The lunar calendar is here condemned as either confounding or deceptive.

(y) Lunar Year Mingles Summer with Winter

GB.25.24. (Tr. Anklesaria) “He who arranges the year from the revolution of the moon mingles summer with winter and winter with summer.”

LB 25.19. (Tr. West) “Whoever keeps the year by the revolution of the moon mingles summer with winter and winter with summer.”

Our note: This is the reason for a calendar based on an intercalated solar year – sal-e vehizaki o khursheedi o fasli that is in concordance with the seasons. It also indirectly emphasizes the importance of intercalation without which an unadjusted solar year moves out of phase with the season just as much as a lunar year.

(z) Four (Temperate Region) Seasons of Spring, Summer, Autumn & Winter

GB.25.25. (Tr. Anklesaria) “Note this: the (intercalated) ‘vehizaki’ month Frawardin, the month Ardwhisht, and the month Hordad compose the season of spring (vahar). The month Tir, the month Amurdad, and the month Shahrewar are of summer (hamin). The month Mihr, the month Aban, and the month Adar are of autumn (patiz; Per. pa’eez); and the month Day, the month Vohuman, and the month Spandarmad are of winter (zamestan).”

LB 25.20. (Tr. West) “This, too, it says, that the auspicious month Frawardin, the month Ardwhisht, and the month Hordad are spring; the month Tishtar, the month Amurdad, and the month Shahrewar are summer; the month Mihr, the month Aban, and the month Adar are autumn; the month Din, the month Vohuman, and the month Spandarmad are winter.”

Our note: Here we have the four temperate region seasons delineated systematically. It is clear that the first calendar month starts with the start of spring and ends with the end of summer. Using this method, the first day of winter is the first day, Hormazd, of Dey month, while using the Rapithwan divisions, it was Adar day Dey month.

(za) Sidereal Determination of the Calendar & New Year

GB.25.26. (Tr. Anklesaria) “And the sun returns to that point, that degree (khurta) of Aries (Varak) from which it had started in the beginning, in three hundred and sixty-five days, and five hours (daman), and a fraction (khurta), which are one year. As every three months it comes to three constellations,

more or less.”

LB 25.21. (Tr. West) “And the sun comes from the sign (khurdak) of Aries, into which it proceeded in the beginning, back to that same place in three hundred and sixty-five days and six short times (hours), which are one year.”

Our note: Here, the first day of spring is heralded by the Sun entering the first degree of Aries (Varak the ram) – our first introduction to the sidereal-zodiac calendar. This event has long since shifted indicating the age of the Zoroastrian calendar. The Sun’s entry into a constellation has now regressed towards the end of the house of Pisces (entering Aquarius by some estimations). The Sun nowadays enters the house of Aries at dawn around the 18th of April.

In these passages, the time of day is measured in hasars (Av. hathra) (18 hasars in a day; 1 hasar = 1.33 hrs.) and a daman/zaman, an hour.

A year roughly consists of 365.25 days or 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, 45 seconds.

VIII. Appendices



Sun within the House of Pisces (Mahik) on the real horizon at Khorog, Tajikistan at 5:18 am on March 21, 2016.



Sun within the House of Pisces (Mahik) below the landscape horizon at dawn when the stars fade, i.e., the start of Havan Gah – the start of the Zoroastrian day at Khorog Tajikistan at 4:43 am on March 21, 2016.

VIII. Appendices



Sun within the House of Pisces (Mahik) on the landscape horizon at Khorog, Tajikistan at sunrise 6:01 am on March 21, 2016.

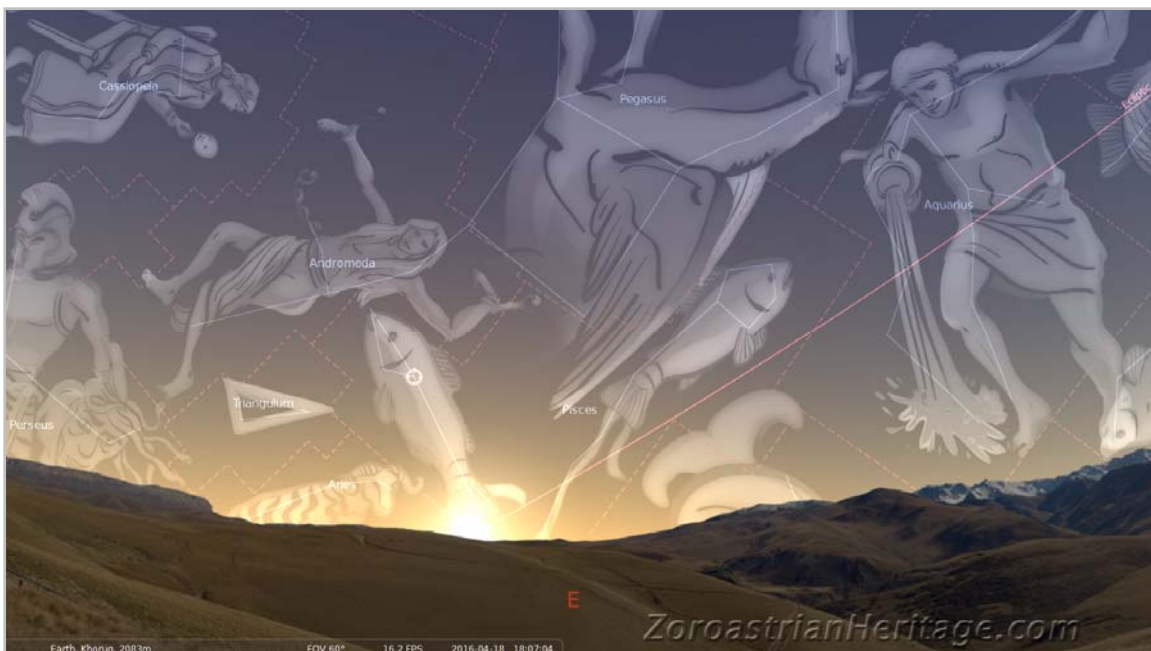


Sun entering the House of Aries (Varak) on the real horizon at Khorog, Tajikistan at 4:38 am on April 18, 2016.

VIII. Appendices



Sun entering the House of Aries (Varak) below the landscape horizon at dawn when the stars fade, i.e., the start of Havan Gah – the start of the Zoroastrian day at Khorog Tajikistan at 4:09 am on April 18, 2016.



Sun entering the House of Aries (Varak) on the landscape horizon at Khorog, Tajikistan at sunrise 6:07 am on April 18, 2016.

(zb) Duration of the Moon's Orbit

GB.25.27. (Tr. Anklesaria) "And the moon returns to the point from whence it had started in the beginning, in a hundred and eighty days."

LB 25.22. (Tr. West) "As every three months it (the sun) advances through three constellations, more or less, the moon comes, in a hundred and eighty days, back to the place out of which it traveled in the beginning."

C. Creation of Stars and all Creation during the Gahambars

By stating that Ohrmazd created the constellations and their stars, we may perhaps infer that the concept of constellations as well as their designations is an original creation of the Aryans.

(i) Creation of the Stars (also Stars of Constellations), Sun & Moon

GB 2.1. (Tr. Anklesaria) "Ohrmazd created [forth] the Luminaries, between the Sky and the Earth; the stars of the constellations and also those which were not of the constellations [were stationed], then the Moon, and then the Sun."

LB 2.1. (Tr. West) "Ohrmazd produced illumination between the sky and the earth, the constellation stars and those also not of the constellations, then the moon, and afterwards the sun, as I shall relate."

GB 2.2. (Tr. Anklesaria) "Ohrmazd first created the firmament; the stars of the constellations were fixed thereon, especially these twelve, whose names are: the Ram, the Cow, the Twins, the Crab, the Lion, the Husk of Corn, the Balance, the Scorpion, the Centaur, the Goat, the Pot, and the Fishes, which are subdivided into twenty-eight asterisms of reckoning"

LB 2.2. (Tr. West) "First Ohrmazd produced the celestial sphere, and the constellation stars are assigned to it by him; especially these twelve whose names are Varak (the Lamb), Tora (the Bull), Do-patkar (the Two-figures or Gemini), Kalachang (the Crab), Sher (the Lion), Khushak (Virgo), Tarazhuk (the Balance), Gazdum (the Scorpion), Nimasp (the Centaur or Sagittarius), Vahik (Capricorn), Dul (the Water-pot), and Mahik (the Fish)"

(ii) Creation during the Gahambars

GB 1a.16. (Tr. Anklesaria) "First, Ohrmazd created the Sky, in forty days: as, from the day of Ohrmazd of the month Frawardin up to the day of Aban of the month Ardwhisht; Ohrmazd rested for five days: up to the day of Day-pa-Mihr; they are the five days of the 'Gahambar': its name is Maidyozarem; its explanation is this: the abode of the Sun and the Moon, and verdure [fresh air(?)], came into manifestation."

Our note: This phase of creation would have included the cosmos and the stars.

GB 1a.17. (Tr. Anklesaria) “Secondly, Ohrmazd produced the Water, in fifty-five days: as, from the day of Mihr of the month Ardwahisht up to the day of Aban of the month of Tir; Ohrmazd rested for five days: up to the day of Day-pa-Mihr; they are the five days of the 'Gahambar': its name is Maidyoshahem, the explanation of which is this: Ohrmazd made the Water shining, for, at first it was dark.”

GB 1a.18. (Tr. Anklesaria) “Thirdly, Ohrmazd produced the Earth, in seventy days: as from the day of Mihr of the month of Tir, up to the day of Ard of the month of Shahrewar; Ohrmazd rested for the five days: up to the day of Anagran; they are the five days of the Gahambar: its name is Paitishahem; its explanation is this: Ohrmazd made the basis and the progress of the creations manifest on Earth.”

GB 1a.19. (Tr. Anklesaria) “Fourthly, Ohrmazd produced the Tree, in twenty-five days: as from the day of Ohrmazd of the month of Mihr, up to the day of Ard; Ohrmazd rested for five days: up to the day of Anagran; they are the five days of the 'Gahambar': its name is Ayathrem, the explanation of which is this: the leaf, fragrance, colour, and verdure became manifest.”

GB 1a.20. (Tr. Anklesaria) “Fifthly, Ohrmazd produced the Beneficent Animal, in seventy-five days: as from the day of Ohrmazd of the month of Aban, up to the day of Day-pa-Mihr of the month of Day; Ohrmazd rested for five days: up to the day of Warharan; they are the five days of the 'Gahambar': its name is Maidyarem, the explanation of which is this: Ohrmazd made the provision of winter manifest, for his own creations.”

GB 1a.21. (Tr. Anklesaria) “Sixthly, Ohrmazd produced Man, that is, Gayomard, in seventy days: as from the day of Ram of the month of Day, up to the day of Anagran of the month of Spandarmad; Ohrmazd rested for five days: up to the five Gathic periods; they are the five days of the 'Gahambar'; there is someone who calls them the five pilfered days, there is someone who calls them stolen: its name is Hamaspathmaidyem, the explanation of which is this: the military congress became manifest on Earth; because, the Farohars of men advanced together in battle array.”

GB 1a.22. (Tr. Anklesaria) “The names of the five pilfered days, there is someone who calls them the five Gathic periods, there is someone who calls them the good pentad, are these in the Scripture: Ahunawad Gah, Ushtawad Gah, Spentomad Gah, Wohukhshathra Gah, and Wahistoisht Gah.”

D. Farvardigan Days at End of Winter

Dinkard Bk. 8. Nask 6. Pazag

(i) Contents – Calendar & Seasonal Festivals

Dk 8.1-3. (Tr. West) “The Pazag contains particulars about... a season festival [gahambar]; where the appointed place is, when one celebrates it,

and when it has fully elapsed; the assembly of the season festival, and the donation for the feast; where and when the celebration is possible, in what proportion the provisions are to be given out, and when to be prepared and divided; where its advantage is, and what benefit there is from it to the good creations both spiritually and materially.”

Dk 8.10. (Tr. West) “About the rotation of the day-watches (gahs), days, months, and seasons of the year -- which are when it is summer and winter - - and the appearances (sahishno) therein which are owing to the motion of the constellations.”

(ii) Farvardigan Days at the End of Winter

Dk 8.11. (Tr. West) “Where the coming of the righteous guardian spirits (farohar) into the worldly existence occurs, in those ten days which are the end of the winter and termination of the year [*rasishn i ahlav fravahr o getig andar an 10 ruz i zemestan, i sal sar*], because the five Gathic days, among them, are for that purpose; the cessation of that same, as well as its continuance.”

(iii) Need to Welcome & Honour Fravashis

Dk 8.12. (Tr. West) “The great needfulness of the guardian spirits of the righteous in the ceremonial and obeisance of those ten days, and their abundant gratification therefrom; their vexation from want of welcome and want of obeisance; and their ascent from the worldly existences.”

(iv) Need to be Charitable to the Poor

Dk 8.13. (Tr. West) “The extreme importance (frevoanikih) of liberality and bounty at that season; and the proper duty of the priestly authority of a district (shatro) in assisting and interceding for the poor, for the sake of teaching, from the days devoted to the guardian spirits, proper actions among those having guardian spirits.”

(v) Patet(?)

Dk 8.14-16. (Tr. West) “About the period for taking medicinal plants, and whatever is on the same subject. 15. About where there is a household, village, communal, or provincial petitioning for the royal chastisement of sins affecting the soul, each separately; and for whom is the atonement. 16. About the advantage owing to disposal of sin and infliction of chastisement, and the harm owing to not disposing of sin and neglecting the chastisement inflicted.”

(vi) Miscellaneous

Dk 8.21-23. (Tr. West) “About this, namely, when summer comes on, where does winter run to; and when winter comes on, where does summer go to? 22. About the amount of disaster that has passed by in one century, and the duration of its passing; everything which is connected with the

VIII. Appendices

disaster, and whatever is on the same subject. 23. Where and how many months are of such a kind, and how many of such a kind; as well as the religious names of the twelve months, and the reason of the name of each one of them, that is, to which of the sacred beings, in the ceremonial, each one of these twelve months is predominantly appertaining; so also of the thirty days which are in every month, and so also of the five Gathas in every – year that is, the five Gathic days at the end of the year – all the sacred beings to whom they are appertaining, and when the righteous guardian spirits (asho farohars) are revered.”



Glossary

- Achaemenian - See Achaemenid.
- Achaemenid - The dynasty of Persian kings who became the king-of-kings, the overlords, of Aryana and then established the largest empire the world had known until then, the Persian Empire. The Achaemenids ruled Persia from sometime in the 7th century BCE to the 4th century BCE when they were defeated and overthrown by Alexander. The dynasty is named after its founder Achaemenes – a Greek-based westernized version of his actual name Hakhamanishiya. The dynasty is more authentically called Hakhmanish.
- Ahriman - The devil incarnate (for the purposes of these texts). Otherwise, the devil or an evil person.
- Ahura Mazda - God in the language of the Zoroastrian scriptures, the *Avesta*. The two words are used together or individually. Over the centuries, the name evolved to Ahurmazd, Hormozd and eventually Ormozd. Also see Khoda.
- Aryana - Ancient Iran. Also spelt Airyana or Ariana.
- Aryan - Person/people from Aryana. Person claiming Aryan descent. Also spelt Arian.
- atash - Fire.
- Avesta* - Zoroastrian scriptures. At one time, the *Avesta* consisted of 21 nasks or books dealing with philosophy, theology, rituals, prayers, hygiene, medicine and the medicinal properties of a thousand plants and herbs, history, astronomy, geography and other forms of knowledge. Today only five books and some fragments survive.
- Avestan - Language of the *Avesta*, the Zoroastrian scriptures. The language consists of dialects, the oldest being the language of the Gathas, the hymns of Zarathushtra. Also the script used in the *Avesta*.

- Bundahishn* - A Middle Persian (Pahlavi) Zoroastrian text based on older works that discusses creation, geography, history, astrology and mythology. It is also called the Zand-Akash meaning knowledge of the Zand (see below). The surviving *Bundahishn* texts are frequently referred as the *Greater Bundahishn* (based on the older 16th century compilation) and the *Lesser Bundahishn* (based on a later 18th century compilation).
- Denkard/Dinkart/Dinkard* - A 9th century CE text written by Zoroastrian priests after the Arab invasion of Aryana. The name means 'Acts of Religion'.
- div/deev/dev - Evil incarnations, individuals and demons. Devils.
- Farsi - The Arabic version of Parsi (see below).
- Ferdowsi - 10th-11th century Persian poet who wrote a shah-nameh (chronicle of kings, the popular history of Aryana) today called the *Shahnameh*.
- gav - Bovine, beast of burden. Also life (cf. jiv/jun in modern Hindi/Persian).
- gaya - Life. Related to jaya/gav/jivya, modern jiv meaning life.
- Gaya Maretan - Mortal life (gaya = life, mare-tan = mortal/body which can die).
- geush - Kine/bovine, earthly life, creation.
- Geush Urvan - Soul of the kine/bovine, earthly life, creation.
- gospand* - (Called gosfand in Farsi). Beneficent animals. This author proposes that Middle Persian '*gospand*' is derived from the Avestan 'gao-spenta' – 'gao' meaning 'cow', and 'spenta' meaning 'beneficent' in this context. While in New Persian 'gosfand' means 'sheep', in the Middle Persian context of our references, '*gospand*' appears to mean all useful/beneficent animals that could be domesticated as livestock – those that provided food as milk and cheese, fiber, transportation, labour as beasts of burden and for tilling, threshing and other such tasks. The category may have included fowl as well.

[*The New Persian replacement of ‘p’ with an ‘f’ in ‘*gospand*’ is likely part of the Arabization of the Persian language as in the transformation of ‘Parsi’ to ‘Farsi’.]

- Greater Bundahishn* - See *Bundahishn*.
- haoma - Avestan word for the chief of the medicinal plants in Zoroastrian-Aryan healing practice. The ephedra and ephedra-like family of plants (Also see hom).
- Hapta-Hindu - The land of the seven Indus rivers in the *Avesta*, i.e. today’s Northern Pakistan and Punjab (from Panj-ab, meaning the five rivers – the five eastern Indus tributaries).
- Haurvatat - An Amesha Spenta and Avestan word (later Khordad) meaning wholeness, holist and healthy living, excellence.
- Hind/Hindu - Ancient India in Zoroastrian-Aryan texts. More precisely, the Indus River and the lands surrounding the Indus River, namely present-day Pakistan and Punjab. The name ‘India’ is derived from Hind i.e. Ind. Ironically, today’s Pakistan has better claim to the modern name India than does India. The Vedic equivalents of Hind and Hindu are Sindh and Sindhu respectively.
- hom - Modern word derived from haoma and currently used to mean the ephedra and ephedra-like family of plants.
- Hormozd - Evolved version of Ahura Mazda (see Ahura Mazda).
- Iran - Modern nation and name derived from Airan and Airyana (Aryana).
- Khoda, Khodai - Common Aryan word for God (see Ahura Mazda) derived from an attribute of God, Khvada/khvadai (cf. khvadata, self-governed, sovereign or lord). The word has been used in the past to also mean a temporal lord. Sasanian King Shapur I’s (who reigned from 241 to 272 CE) inscription at Naqsh-e Rostam states in Parthian, “*Aryan-khshatra khvatwy khvyem*,” in

- reconstructed Sasanian, "*Iran-shahr khvadai ahem*" and in Greek, "*tou Aryanon-ethnous despotes eimi*" meaning "I am lord of the nation of the Aryans."
- Khwaday-nameh* - See *Khodai-nameh* below.
- Khodai-nameh* - New Persian version of the Middle Persian name *Khwaday-nameh*. *Khoda* (New Persian) or *Khwada* (Middle Persian) means lord either divine or temporal. Some authors feel the name *Khwaday-nameh* is synonymous with *Shah-nameh*, both meaning book of lords or kings.
- Lesser Bundahishn* - See *Bundahishn*.
- Magus/Magi - Magi, and its singular Magus, are Greek-based Western terms for Aryan-Zoroastrian priests, the *maga*, more recently known as the *mobeds*.
- Mazda - Zoroastrian word for God. See *Ahura Mazda* and *Khoda*.
- Media - First Aryan nation to enter Western history. Its native name was *Mada*. Its kings were overlords of *Aryana* from around the eight(?) to the 6th century BCE when they were displaced by the Persians led by *Cyrus the Great*.
- Middle Persian - The Persian-Aryan language as it emerged after the end of Macedonian rule in the 2nd century BCE, first as *Parthian* and then from the third to the 7th centuries CE, as *Sasanian*. There are therefore three versions of Middle Persian: *Parthian*, *early Sasanian* and *late Sasanian*. While some authors make distinctions between the three versions, others use this terms *Middle Persian* and *Pahlavi* to include all three. Evolving Eastern Aryan dialects such as *Sogdian*, *Khwarezmian* and *Saka/Khotanese* were also current during this time. Arabic writers used the names *Farisiya* (*Farsi/Arabic* for *Persian*) and *Fahlawiya* (*Pahlavi*) to mean all the Middle Persian dialects. Since Middle Persian was commonly written using the *Parthian* or *Pahlavi* script, it is also called *Pahlavi* (see below).

VIII. Glossary

Mithra	- Friend, friendship, bond, loyalty. Also in Zoroastrianism, the guardian angel of these qualities and related virtues, and a pre-Zoroastrian Aryan deity or god Mitra as found in the Hindu scriptures, the <i>Rig Veda</i> . Also a woman's name in Iran. Mithra is the Avestan / Old Iranian form of the name.
Mithras	- The Romanized form of the name Mithra.
Mithraeum	- A Roman temple devoted to Mithras.
Mitra	- The Sanskrit and Old Persian form of the name Mithra.
Mobed	- Zoroastrian hereditary priest called maga in the more ancient language of the <i>Avesta</i> . They were called magoi by the Greek. Magus (singular) and Magi (plural) are Latin derivatives.
nameh	- Persian word meaning account, chronicles, letters, book. Derived from the Middle Persian (also called Pahlavi) word namak or namag. Also spelt nama.
New Persian	- Modern Persian language as revived by the poet Ferdowsi, properly called Parsi though currently called Farsi, the Arabic version of the name. Also see Persian.
Old Persian	- Language of the Achaemenid Persia era (700-300 BCE). A member of the Indo-Iranian language family.
Ormozd	- Evolved version of Ahura Mazda (see Ahura Mazda).
Pahlavi	- From Pahlav earlier known as Parthav (see below), one of the Aryan nations (as was Persia/Pars/Parsa). The name is also loosely used to mean the Middle Persian languages written in the Pahlavi/Parthian script – languages which range from the older language of Parthian times (Arsacid Pahlavi) to the language of Sasanian times (Sasanian Pahlavi also called Parsik). Some authors advocate that the term 'Pahlavi' should only be used for the script and not the language. In Iran, the Pahlavi script was displaced by the Arabic script after the Arab invasion in the 7 th century CE, while the spoken Middle Persian

- language evolved into New Persian.
- Pars - An Aryan kingdom in the southwest of Greater Aryana, today called the province of Fars in Iran. Fars is the Arabic version of Pars.
- Parsi - Persian. Belonging to, of, or from Pars. The Zoroastrians who fled from Arab rule to India in the 8th and 9th centuries CE called themselves Parsees (Parsis). Farsi is the Arabic version of Parsi and is commonly used as the name of the modern Persian-Aryan language, New Persian, otherwise the language of Iran. Parsi is the more authentic name (than Farsi) of the Persian language.
- Parthia - The Aryan kingdom whose native name is Parthav and which lay in and around the mountains called the Kopet Dag (bordering Iran and Turkmenistan) today.
- Parthian - Belonging to Parthia, the westernized version of the native name Parthava.
- Parthav, Parthava - See Parthia, Parthian, Pahlavan.
- Persia - Western/English version of Pars (see above). A name given by the classical Greeks writers to Aryana since Pars was at one time the dominant kingdom of Aryana. Pars was earlier known as 'Parsa' and Arabized to 'Fars' since Arabic does not have the letter 'p'.
- Persian - Persian mean 'from Persia' such as its people and language. However, 'Persian' is commonly used to mean 'belonging to all of Aryana'. Persian was known locally as 'Parsi' and Arabized as 'Farsi' since Arabic does not have the letter 'p'.
- Rig Veda* - Oldest *Veda* (see below) written in a language similar to the language of the *Avesta*.
- Rivayet* - A collection of epistles (formal instructive letters or dispatches) documenting correspondence about a wide variety of topics related to orthodox Zoroastrian customs and practice. Changa Asa (1450 to 1512 CE),

a community leader of the Parsi-Zoroastrians of Navsari, Gujarat, India, organized the sending of a representative to the Zoroastrian High Priest in Yazd, Iran with a set of questions on orthodox religious practice. The first representative was Nariman Hoshang who returned to India with answers to the community's questions in 1478 CE. A series of missions followed for the next two hundred years, and the answers brought have been collected and named the *Rivayats*. Some of the representatives who travelled to Iran were Kama Bohra (1528 CE), Shapur Bharuchi (1570 CE), Kaus Kama (1594 CE), and Kamdin Shapur (?). Persecution of Zoroastrians forced a pause in the visits until the mid 1700s when Mulla Kaus made the last such visit to Yazd and Kerman, only to be trapped in Kerman by the Qajars.

- Sasanian, Sasanid - The Persian dynasty that displaced the Parthian Arsacids as the king-of-kings, the overlords, of Aryana in the 3rd century CE. They were named after the eponymous founder of the dynastic line, Sasan. Author Tabari claims they were descendants of the Achaemenids. The Sasanians were the last Zoroastrian kings of Aryana and were deposed when Aryana was conquered by the Islamic Arabs in the mid-7th century CE. The last Sasanian king was Yezdegird III. Also spelt Sasanian.
- shah-nameh - General meaning in Persian: 'chronicle of kings'. Specifically: the 10th-11th century CE Persian poet Ferdowsi's work in verse titled the *Shahnameh*. The poet Daqiqi's shah-nameh is one of many that preceded Ferdowsi's work. Most of the earlier shah-nameh were in prose.
- Vedas* - Hindu scriptures of which the *Rig Veda*, the oldest, is written in a language similar to the language of the *Avesta*. nations of Old Aryana as well as an account of the deeds of King Jamsheed including his expansion of Aryan lands.
- Vendidad* - A book of the Zoroastrian scriptures, the *Avesta*. The

name *Vendidad* is a later form of Videvdat, which is in turn a contraction of Vi-Daevo-Data, the law against devas or evil. The *Vendidad's* verses are used by priests in purification ceremonies. The *Vendidad* is also a store of Zoroastrian history. It contains the list of the

- Yasht* - A book of the Zoroastrian scriptures, the *Avesta*. It is said to contain pre-Zoroastrian-information. Each Yasht (commonly translated as worship) is a hymn dedicated to Zoroastrian-ideals together with the related angel (such as the ideals of friendship, the word as bond, and kindness, and the guardian of these ideals – the angel Mithra). Originally, there were thirty Yashts, one dedicated to each named day of the month. Today only twenty-one survive.
- Yasna* - A book of the Zoroastrian scriptures, the *Avesta*, which contains the liturgy for the preparation of the ab-zohr/haoma extract, as well as the Gathas or hymns of Zarathushtra. Yasna (also spelt izeshne in later texts) means service, prayers and dedications – i.e. words of worship (cf. Sanskrit yajna and yana). Priests recite the *Yasna* as part of the liturgy when performing their priestly duties and functions.
- Zand - Classical (primarily Middle Persian) translations, explanations, interpretations and commentaries of the scriptures, the *Avesta*, are called the Zand or Zend. The *Avesta* accompanied by the Zand is called the *Zand-Avesta*. For our purposes, we use the term Zand to include all the Middle Persian religious texts that seek to complement the *Avesta* in its full extent of 21 books. Well-known works of the Zand are the *Bundahishn* and *Denkard*.
- Zartosht - Middle Persian version of Zarathushtra.
- Zartoshti - Middle Persian version of Zarathushtrian.
- Zarathushtra - Founder of the Zoroastrian/Zarathushtrian creed/faith/religion and its core philosophy. Zarathushtra is the English transliteration of the original name in the Avestan language and is also

VIII. Glossary

- spelt Zarathustra.
- Zarathushtri - Name for a Zoroastrian, that some feel is more authentic since it is based on the original *Avesta* name Zarathushtra and not on the Greek-based corruption Zoroaster.
- Zarathushtrian - See Zarathushtri.
- Zoroaster - Western version of the name Zarathushtra.
- Zoroastrianism - Western name for the religion, faith and philosophy based on the teachings of Zoroaster/Zarathushtra. Authentically called Mazdayasni (Worship of God) and Behdin (Good-Religion).



© K. E. Eduljee
First published August 2015. This edition published November 2016
West Vancouver, BC, Canada
eduljee@heritageinstitute.com