



Conferences

CONFERENCE ON ZOROASTRIANISM, A REPORT

The Society of Scholars of Zoroastrianism (SSZ) convened the first SSZ Conference on Zoroastrianism, hosted by the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago at the Arbab Rustom Guiv Darbe Mehr, in Chicago, Saturday July 1 to Monday, July 3, 2006. Delegates and guests were invited to Rohinton and Roshan Rivetna's for a Welcome Dinner on Friday evening.

The two-day Conference provided an opportunity for our community members - the practitioners - to hear and dialogue with noted academicians, educationists and theologians of Zoroastrianism.

OPENING

The conference opened with a welcome by ZAC president Hosi Mehta and a message from FEZANA president, Dr. Rustom Kevala. Both expressed their support and commitment to SSZ.

Opening remarks were presented by Dr. Pallan Ichaporia and Rohinton Rivetna. They outlined the vision and mission of the recently founded SSZ - to encourage and promote scholarship both within and outside our community. The mission of SSZ is to promote interaction between and among academicians, theologians, educationists and practitioners of Zoroastrianism, through roundtable discussions, conferences and publications.

SESSION I

Session I was chaired by Jamshed Modi (Chicago). Keki Bhote (Chicago), a pioneer in furthering Zoroastrianism in North America, spoke on Retrogression in Zoroastrianism After the Passing of the Prophet. Zarathushtra's pristine theology, as captured in his immortal Gathas, has suffered a series of retrogressions until it has, by stages, descended into little more than an ethnic tribalism. The paper traced influences of the Magi, Zurvanism, Mithraism, Manichaeism and Mazdakism, starting with the Achaemenids, but accelerated under the Parthians and Sasanians.

Jamsheed Choksy, professor of Central Eurasian Studies, Professor of History, Adjunct Professor of Religious Studies at Indiana University, surveyed social, economic, demographic, and religious situations of Zoroastrians in Iran under the Qajar Dynasty (1779 - 1925).

Pallan Ichaporia's (scholar and author, Mainz University) presentation, Gathas and the Younger Avesta examined the continuity of the teaching and philosophy of the Gathas down

the ages as seen in the Younger Avesta and the Pahlavi Texts. The modern notion that the teachings of the Prophet was changed was shown to have no basis. Various examples illustrated that it is apparent that the Gathas, although the very words of the Prophet, lack some of the fundamentals of Zarathushtra's teaching like "good thoughts, good words and good actions."

William Malandra , (University of Texas-Austin) spoke on Archaism and History in Avestan: laryngeals in Standard Avestan. Jean Kellens has offered what he believes to be decisive arguments in favor of the high antiquity of the language of the Gathas vis-à-vis that of the so-called Younger Avesta. Among these arguments is one that concerns the evidence for laryngeals in Gathic, and by default their absence from Younger Avestan. This paper examined the Younger Avestan evidence in the context of metrical compositions and showed that, like Zarathustra and the Vedic poets, poets composing verse in Standard Avesta were also aware of the residual influence of laryngeals.

The luncheon speaker on Saturday was Suzie Karani, an entering graduate student at the University of Chicago Divinity School, speaking on The Roots of Compassion - Zoroaster and the Lament of the Cow.

During lunch, the participants also enjoyed watching "Persepolis Recreated" a DVD in full color, recreated by Farzin Rezaeian, with commentary by Prof. Richard Frye.

SESSION II

Session II on Saturday afternoon was chaired by Dr. Mehroo Patel (Chicago). Sarosh Maneckshaw, a former Executive of Zoroastrian Association of Houston, and religious education teacher, presented Choice in Zoroastrianism. The role of choice in the Gathas and the later Avestan literature was discussed and the implications of choice - between Good and Evil - examined. Other issues discussed include: Does the fact that we have been given a choice mean that we are free to act as we wish? Or, are there limitations on our freedom? What duties and obligations do we, as citizens living in a free society, have to abide by, that constrain our freedom to choose?

Martin Schwartz, professor of Iranian studies, Department of Near Eastern Languages, University of California, Berkeley, spoke on On the Composition and the Composer of the Gathas.

Helmnut Humbach, Professor of Indo-European Studies, University of Mainz, submitted a paper on Author of the Gatha, read by Prof. Malandra.

SESSION III

Session III, on Sunday morning was chaired by Tinaz Dhunjisha (Chicago). Suzie Karani spoke on Foundations for Rights: The Zoroastrian Law on Women. This paper reviewed Sasanian family and civil law and religious scripture of the Zoroastrians in order to extrapolate the rights of women in Zoroastrianism. This analysis serves to introduce a discourse on rights to scholarly work on Zoroastrianism and to include Zoroastrianism amongst other world religions already engaging in human rights discourses.

Kayomars Mehta, former president of Zoroastrian Association of Chicago and religious education teacher, spoke on Future Life - From Death to Eternity, presenting the Zarathushti concept of Future Life by examining the scriptures and reviewing nature and composition of man with special reference to the doctrine of immortal soul, it's judgment and it's future spiritual life. He traced the concepts of Urvan, Fravashi, Sarosh, Daena, Death, Judgment, Chinvat Bridge, Heaven, Hell, Hamistagaan, Frashokereti and Ristakhez

Ilya Yakobovich, a doctoral candidate in Near Eastern Studies and Linguistics at the University of Chicago, presented the Achaemenid Religion according to the Administrative Documents from Persepolis. The ongoing work of the University of Chicago Oriental Institute has revealed the content of numerous documents composed by the scribes of the Achaemenid chancelleries written in the Elamite language. Some of these documents contain information about the disbursement of goods to various deities and their priests. These documents reveal a coexistence of Zoroastrian religious practices, non-Zoroastrian cults of Elamite and Babylonian origin, and the veneration of local deities, which, taken together, constituted the intriguing amalgam that characterized the Persepolis day-to-day religious life. Earlier, another visiting student at the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, Jan Tavernier, presented his research findings on Achaemenid tablets at the Oriental Institute.

The luncheon speaker on Sunday was Keki Bhote. He presented The State of Zoroastrianism in North America. Considerable progress has been made in Zoroastrian infrastructure in North America in the last 50 years. Highlights include organizations like FEZANA and the Zarathushtrian Assembly. Publications, such as FEZANA Journal, and conferences such as twenty symposia and a World Congress. Yet, we have not achieved cherished goals like the world body and reaching out to the Judeo-Christian populace as, for instance, the Bahais have done. There are some matters beyond our control, but there are others that we can aggressively pursue that were highlighted.

Kersey Antia, high priest of the Zarathushti community in Chicago since 1977, spoke on The Religion of the Achaemenians? An Illustration of How an Interface with Magi can enhance the validity of scholarly findings. As scholarly opinion is often divided as to whether the Achaemenians were Zoroastrians or not, an attempt at resolving this problem and/or securing at least a more valid and reliable conclusion in this regard could be reached by viewing it from the Zoroastrian eye/angle. An attempt is made to delineate how Achaemenian even the present-day Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians are in their religious practices, beliefs and customs and how even those beliefs commonly regarded as essentially Sasanian originated in Achaemenian times.

TOUR OF ORIENTAL INSTITUTE, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

On Sunday afternoon, about 30 participants enjoyed a conducted tour of the Persian Gallery and Galleries of other ancient civilizations at the Oriental Institute and viewed a film on excavations undertaken by that prestigious Institute. The Institute has some rare tablets and inscriptions from Persepolis, that shed light on the Persian Achaemenian Empire. Several Achaemenian Inscriptions invoke “Ahura Mazda”. These are among the collection of invaluable artifacts that have been in the news lately, with lawsuits regarding their return, as restitution for victims of violence in the Middle East.

SSZ ROUNDTABLE SESSION

The Round Table Session on Monday morning was devoted to a discussion of the message/inspiration that the academicians and practitioners, gained from the Conference; and discussion of future directions for the SSZ and planning for the next Conference. Minutes of this discussion are available upon request.

It was an inspiring and elevating weekend, with some interesting discussions and interactions. It is hoped that the SSZ Conference, spawned in Chicago, will become an annual event, to be held either in Chicago or other US/Canadian cities, and will attract greater and greater participation from the community in future years; and that the seeds sewn at this first Conference will flower into a realization of the vision and mission of the SSZ.

Abstract

(Chicago, June 30 - July 3, 2006)

KERSEY H. ANTIA

Dr. Kersey H. Antia is the high priest of the Zarathushti community in Chicago since 1977, and has served as an honorary priest for over half a century. A fully-ordained priest, with the Best Boy medal and the Prefect Medal from the M. F. Cama Athornan Institute in Mumbai, Dr. Antia studied religion and Avesta-Pahlavi under Dasturji Dabu, Mirza and other learned priests, and has won essay prizes from K. R. Cama Oriental Institute and other institutions since 1956, and Avesta-Pahlavi scholarships in college. He has lectured widely and is author of numerous papers on religion and psychology. A clinical and management psychologist in private solo practice in Illinois, he is also affiliated with several hospitals. He is listed in several ,Who's Who and included in Outstanding Religious Personalities and Scholars of the 20th Century, and others.

The Religion of the Achaemenians? An Illustration of How an Interface with Magi can enhance the validity of scholarly findings in This Regard. In line with the worthy objective of this Conference to bring the academic scholars of Zoroastrianism face - to - face with the practising Zoroastrians, this paper tries to point out some areas in which such an exchange of ideas could prove helpful in arriving at more valid conclusions than those arrived at by academic probing alone. As scholarly opinion is often divided as to whether the Achaemenians were Zoroastrians or not, an attempt at resolving this problem and/or securing at least a more valid and reliable conclusion in this regard could be reached by viewing it from the Zoroastrian eye/angle. Limitation of time and space prohibits a detailed presentation of this view, which would require a book format, but an attempt is made here to delineate how Achaemenian even the present-day Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians are in their religious practiced, beliefs and customs and how even those beliefs commonly regarded as essentially Sasanian originated in the Achaemenian times.

KEKI R. BHOTE

- * Life-long student of Zoroastrian theology and history
- * A pioneer in furthering Zoroastrianism in North America
- * A founder and president of the Zoroastrian Association of America, the first in North America
- * A founder and trustee of the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago
- * Chairman of the 2nd Zoroastrian Symposium of North America
- * Speaker at the 3rd World Zoroastrian Congress and 7th World Zoroastrian Congress on Zoroastrianism
- * Speaker at the World Parliament of Religions, 1993 in Chicago and 1999 in Cape Town, South Africa
- * Lecturer on Zoroastrianism and comparative religions, YMCA College
- * Speaker at over 100 church groups and clubs on Zoroastrianism
- * Author of several papers on Zoroastrianism
- * Member of managing committee, Board of Directors, World Zoroastrian Organization and current Vice President
- * Vice President, Center for Ancient Iranian Studies, Boston, MA.
- * Chairman of the Committee on "The Future of Zoroastrianism", Federation of Zoroastrians of North America
- * President, World Zoroastrian Organization, U.S. Region
- * Selected as one of 12 outstanding Zoroastrians of the world by the World Zoroastrian Organization, London.

Retrogression in Zoroastrianism After the Passing of the Prophet. Retrogression in Zoroastrianism after the Passing of the Prophet. Zarathushtra's pristine theology, as captured in his immortal Gathas, has suffered a series of retrogressions until it has, by stages, descended into little more than an ethnic tribalism. The paper traces influences of the Magi, Zurvanism, Mithraism, Manichaeism and Mazdakism, starting with the Achaemenids, but accelerated under the Parthians and Sassanians.

Luncheon presentation will be on The State of Zoroastrianism in North America. Considerable progress has been made in Zoroastrian infrastructure in North America in the last 50 years. Highlights include organizations like FEZANA and the Zarathushtrian Assembly. Publications, such as FEZANA Journal, and conferences such as twenty symposia and a World Congress. Yet, we have not achieved cherished goals like the world body and reaching out to the Judeo-Christian populace as, for instance, the Bahais have done. There are some matters beyond our control, but there are others that we can aggressively pursue that will be highlighted.

JAMSHEED KAIRSHASP CHOKSY

Jamsheed Kairshasp Choksy is Professor of Central Eurasian Studies, Professor of History, Adjunct Professor of Religious Studies at Indiana University. He has served previously as Chairman of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, and as Director of the Middle Eastern Studies Program at Indiana University. Choksy is the author of three books: *Evil, Good, and Gender: Facets of the Feminine in Zoroastrian Religious History* (New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 2002); *Conflict and Cooperation: Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elites in Medieval Iranian Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) with a New Persian (Farsi) translation as *Setiz va Sazesh: Zartoshtiyan-e maqlub va mosalmanan-e qaleb dar jame-ye Iran-e nakhostin-i sadeha-ye Islami* (Tehran: Qoqnus Publications, 2002); and *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism: Triumph over Evil* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989). He is an associate editor of the *Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender* (New York: Macmillan, forthcoming 2007).

Zoroastrians in Iran under the Qajar Dynasty (1779 - 1925) will survey social, economic, demographic, and religious situations.

HELMUT HUMBACH

Prof. Helmut Humbach has studied the classical languages (Greek and Latin), Sanskrit, and Indo-European linguistics. 1951 Dr. phil. in Indo-European linguistics, University of Munich. 1951 Instructor in Greek and Latin, University of Munich. 1954 Lecturer in Indo-European Linguistics. 1956 Professor of Indo-European and Oriental Studies, University of Saarbrücken. 1961 Professor of Indo-European Studies, University of Mainz. In 1969 he was invited to succeed Wolfgang Lentz as professor of Iranian studies at the University of Hamburg, but after two semesters he preferred to stay in Mainz. 1978 Visiting professor at the Research Institute of the Ancient Iranian Culture Foundation, Teheran. 1991 Retired but still professionally active.

Dastur (Ervad at that time) JamaspAsa stayed in Mainz three times and published: (1) Joint edition of the so-called Vaetha Nask, a collection of Avesta fragments, published by Harrassowitz Wiesbaden. (2) Joint edition of the Pursishniha, an Avesta-Pahlavi text, published by Harrassowitz Wiesbaden. (3) Helmut Humbach helped JamaspAsa in edition of the *Aogemadaecha*, published by the Vienna Academy.

The major part of Humbach's earlier works have been published in German but it is planned to republish in English those of them which are of lasting interest. Thus the English, *The Gathas of Zarathushtra*, (2 vols. 1991) is not simply a translation of its German predecessor,

Die Gathas des Zarathustra, (2 vols. 1959) but apart from numerous smaller improvements it is full of new insights. An adequate rendering of the Avesta text remains difficult, all the more as it often refers to ritual details unknown to us and is conceived in a most artistic (but not at all irregular)syntax. A new translation of the Gathas has been undertaken in cooperation with Dr.Pallan Ichaporia in *The Heritage of Zarathushtra*, (1994). Dr Pallan Ichaporia is now assistant to Prof. Humbach since 1996 at Mainz University, and is involved in various works:- *Concordance of the Gathas*, *Dictionary of the Gathas and Pahlavi Version of the Gathas*. Humbach's most recent work which again is published in cooperation with Dr. Pallan Ichaporia is the re-edition of *Zamyad Yasht*, the very history of salvation of the ancient Iranians. In commentary, the authors have discussed numerous philological problems not seen by their predecessors, thus showing that even on the field of the Yashts of the Avesta much has still to be done. Prof. Humbach's paper (to be read by Prof. Malandra) will be on *Author of the Gatha*.

PALLAN R. ICHAPORIA

Pallan Ichaporia has a BA in Avesta and Pahlavi from Bombay University, attended post graduate courses in Ancient Iranian Culture and Languages at Columbia University. He is the associate co-worker of Prof Helmut Humbach at Mainz University and authored two books with him *The Heritage of Zarathushtra*, *A New Translation of His Gathas*, Univeritatverlag C. Winter, Heidelberg, Germany, 1994. and *Zamyad Yasht*, Yasht 19 of the Younger Avesta Text, Translation, Commentary, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, Germany, 1998. He has authored *The Gathas of Asho Zarathushtra*, Translation of Ahunavaiti and Vahistoishti Gathas, The Research and Preservation Committee, FEZANA, USA, 1993. He is involved in works under progress: *The Concordance of the Gathas*. He is the elected Fellow of The Royal Asiatic Society of Gt. Britain and Ireland. As the Govt. of India Research Scholar delivered three lectures at KRCOI which are published in KRCOI Journal. His numerous articles are published in various Journals including many issues of FEZANA Journal, several Proceedings of Conferences and Festschrifts. His Article on *Zamyad Yasht* is forthcoming in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. His work on *The Gathas in Pahlavi and Sanskrit* is under progress.

Dr. Ichaporia's presentation, *Gathas and the Younger Avesta* will examine the continuity of the teaching and philosophy of the Gathas down the ages as seen in the Younger Avesta and the Pahlavi Texts. The modern notion that the teachings of the Prophet was changed will be shown to have no basis. Various examples illustrate that it is apparent that the Gathas, although the very words of the Prophet, lack some of the fundamentals of Zarathushtra's teaching like "good thoughts, good words and good actions (humata, huxta and huuareshta)."

SUSAN KARANI

Susan Karani is an entering graduate student at the University of Chicago Divinity School, focusing on the History of Religions and Zoroastrianism. From 2003 to 2004, she worked as an Editorial Assistant at the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. Susan is an active member of the FEZANA-UN delegation, and also attended the 2004 Parliament of the World's Religions in Barcelona. She has been involved in various human rights efforts in the US, India and France. Susan holds a BA with Honors from the University of Chicago, and an MA from Columbia University.

Foundations for Rights: The Zoroastrian Law on Women. This paper reviews Sasanian family and civil law and religious scripture of the Zoroastrians in order to extrapolate the rights of women in Zoroastrianism. Investigating the rights of women in this period of Persian history allows us to uncover women's roles as legal persons in antiquity and to understand how their legal and social personalities have evolved from antiquity to modernity. More importantly, this analysis serves to introduce a discourse on rights to scholarly work on

Zoroastrianism and to include Zoroastrianism amongst other world religions already engaging in human rights discourses.

Susan's luncheon talk will be on The Roots of Compassion - Zoroaster and the Lament of the Cow.

WILLIAM MALANDRA

William Malandra earned his PhD in Indo-Iranian Studies at the University of Pennsylvania in 1971 with his dissertation on the Frawa_i Yasht. He taught at the University of Minnesota from 1973 until his retirement in 2003 and is now Archaism and History in Avestan: laryngeals in Standard Avestan, teaching part-time at the University of Texas-Austin courses on ancient Iran and India. He has published on Indo-Iranian subjects and is a regular contributor to the Encyclopaedia Iranica; a number of his articles have been published in FEZANA Journal as well.

Archaism and History in Avestan: laryngeals in Standard Avestan. In his most recent book, *La quatrième Naissance de Zarathushtra*, Jean Kellens has offered what he believes to be decisive arguments in favor of the high antiquity of the language of the Gathas vis-à-vis that of the so-called Younger Avesta. Among these arguments is one that concerns the evidence for laryngeals in Gathic, and by default (though he does not discuss the matter) their absence from Younger Avestan. My paper examines the Younger Avestan (which I follow Gershevitch in calling Standard Avestan) evidence in the context of metrical compositions and shows that, like Zarathustra and the Vedic poets, poets composing verse in StAv were also aware of the residual influence of laryngeals.

SAROSH J. H. MANEKSHAW

Sarosh Manekshaw has been a member of the Zoroastrian Association of Houston (ZAH) since 1978. He served for 4 years, on the Executive Committee of the ZAH, as the Secretary. In addition, Sarosh has been active in teaching Sunday School classes to the Zarathushtrian youth in Houston. He also participated as a session leader in the Gatha Studies Group for the adults. He is currently an active member of the Library Group of the ZAH, which is working on opening a leading research library on Zarathushtrian issues, in Houston. Sarosh was the co-chair of the Second International Gatha Conference held in Houston in 1996. He was also the Editor of the Journal of the Research and Historical Preservation Committee, Volume II, published by FEZANA in 1996, in which the proceedings from that Conference were published. Sarosh served as the co-vice chair of the Seventh World Zoroastrian Congress in Houston in 2000, and was actively involved in coordinating and developing the program for that Congress. Sarosh has served as a Guest Editor of the FEZANA Journal, which covered the topic of the Date and Place of Zarathushtra. He was also Guest Editor of the Summer 2003 issue of the FEZANA Journal, on the topic of Treasures of the Avesta: Our Daily Prayers". Sarosh has actively participated in many other Zarathushtrian and inter-faith activities in Houston. He has spoken to numerous church groups on Zoroastrianism, has presented papers at several conferences, and published numerous articles in the FEZANA Journal.

Choice in Zoroastrianism. The role of choice in the Gathas and the later Avestan literature will be discussed. In addition, the implications of choice - between Good and Evil - will be examined. Other issues that will be discussed include: Does the fact that we have been given a choice mean that we are free to act as we wish? Or, are there limitations on our freedom? What duties and obligations do we, as citizens living in a free society, have to abide by, that constrain our freedom to choose?

KAYOMARSH P. MEHTA

Kayomارش P. Mehta has devoted over 30 years as an active and energetic member of the Zarathushti community in Chicago, making significant contributions in leadership, religion education, social and cultural aspects. He has supported and encouraged youth, worked towards strengthening the role of mobeds, worked to ameliorate the lives of the elderly and those in need of assistance. Kayomارش has promoted awareness of our religion in Colleges and Universities and regularly hosts interested group visits to the Darbe Mehr. Kayomارش was the past President of Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago and continues to serve the community as an active member of its Board of Directors and as the Trustee of ZAC. He is the Chair of the Religion Education for FEZANA as well as of ZAC. He has successfully formulated a Universal Zarathushti Religion Education Curriculum and an informative religion education program for young and adults in N.A. Kayomارش was awarded the Rohinton Rivetna Outstanding Zarathushti Award at the FEZANA Congress in 2002. He is currently working on plans to establish and manage a North American Zarathushti Learning Center. He is seeking cooperation of independent donor/s to support this much needed cause. Kayomارش has his own Financial Services Business. He helps individuals, families and small businesses to formulate a financial roadmap, a holistic wealth management plan and assists them to implement strategies to successfully achieve their long term goals and dreams.

Future Life - From Death to Eternity, will present the Zarathushti concept of Future Life by examining the Scriptures and reviewing Nature and Composition of man with special reference to the doctrine of immortal Soul, it's Judgment and it's future Spiritual life. He will trace the concepts of Urvan, Fravashi, Sarosh, Daena, Death, Judgment, Chinvat Bridge, Heaven, Hell, Hamistagaan, Frashokereti and Ristakhez.

PROF. MARTIN SCHWARTZ

Prof. Martin Schwartz is professor of Iranian studies, in the Department of Near Eastern Languages, University of California, Berkeley. A graduate of Berkeley, he has been on the faculty since 1970. Prof. Schwartz is a specialist in pre-Islamic Iranian language, culture and society; Middle Persian and Iranian philology; Zoroastrianism; Manichaeism, Indo-European, poetics and Semitics. He is noted for his work on Zarathushtra and the Avesta, as well as for his study of soma.

Prof. Schwartz will speak on On the Composition and the Composer of the Gathas.

JAN TAVERNIER

Jan Tavernier is a visiting student at the Oriental Institute. He will give a short talk on his research on the Aramaic documents from Persepolis, and he will also dwell on the significance of Iranian onomastics attested in the Achaemenid administrative documents for the study of Achaemenid religion.

ILYA YAKUBOVICH

Ilya Yakubovich is a doctoral candidate in Near Eastern Studies and Linguistics at the University of Chicago. He is an author of some fifty scholarly articles and reviews, most of which deal with languages and cultures of pre-Islamic Middle East.

Achaemenid Religion according to the Administrative Documents from Persepolis. The ongoing work of the University of Chicago Oriental Institute has revealed the content of numerous administrative documents composed by the scribes of the Achaemenid chancelleries and written in the Elamite language. Some of these documents contain information about the disbursement of goods to various deities and their priests. These documents reveal a coexistence of Zoroastrian religious practices, non-Zoroastrian cults of Elamite and Babylonian origin, and the veneration of local deities, which, taken together, constituted the intriguing amalgam that characterized the Persepolis day-to-day religious life..