

ABSTRACTS*

James W. Boyd / Ron G. Williams (Fort Collins)

The Art of Ritual in a Comparative Context

What form (or forms) might an adequate aesthetic approach to ritual take? This essay addresses this question by juxtaposing observations about Zoroastrian and Shinto ritual traditions with an analysis of a recent Western artwork by Christo. After briefly contrasting the two world views that provide contexts for understanding the Zoroastrian and Shinto liturgies, examples are given of how the aesthetic dimensions of the liturgies mirror these two perspectives. Implications of such an approach for the role of aesthetics in ritual theory are noted: it privileges thought over practice and assumes that aesthetic features of the liturgies can be isolated and explored on their own. An analysis of the aesthetic and ritualistic features of Christo's art provides an analogy that hints at a more satisfactory approach to the study of art in ritual. Christo's *Running Fence Project* suggests that a ritual artwork can be understood as a multiplicity of incommensurable dimensions (in Gilles Deleuze's technical sense of "multiplicity"), and demonstrates how a ritual artwork requires a context yet maintains a *sui generis* function. The potential for such an analytic approach to the study of artful rituals is briefly explored by applying it to selected features of the Zoroastrian *Āfrīnagān* and Shinto morning service in order to suggest how each of these rituals, viewed as multiplicities, contains aesthetic and non-aesthetic dimensions that interact to produce transformation.

Carlo G. Cereti (Rome)

Prejudice vs. Reality. Zoroastrians and their Rituals as seen by two 19th Century Italian Travellers

This paper summarizes the accounts on the Zoroastrian community in Bombay written by two Italian scholars, the Indologist Angelo De Gubernatis and the Anthropologist Paolo Mantegazza. Both were active in Florence in the late 19th century. (De Gubernatis later moved to Rome though.) By analysing their accounts, the author attempts to illustrate the representation of the Parsis then current in Italy. Moreover, the author analyses the stereotypes, which were put into, and discusses their possible correspondence with reality. Here, the focus is mainly on ritual. Thus, the paper discusses De Gubernatis' description of a Yasna ceremony that was performed explicitly for him in a Zoroastrian clubhouse and the vivid picture that he gives of the Parsis praying out in the open. Furthermore, the paper outlines Mantegazza's interesting, though unorthodox, description of the funeral customs of the community. Moreover, the paper gives

* The abstracts were kindly provided by the authors, unless indicated otherwise.

a number of passages dealing with the social standing of the community and with the interpretation given by the two scholars to Zoroastrian beliefs. Though at times interesting, their accounts are not always unbiased and reveal a number of prejudices such as the parallel drawn between the Parsis and the Jews.

Marzban Giara / Ramiyar P. Karanjia / Michael Stausberg (Mumbai / Heidelberg)

Manekji on the Religious/Ritual Practices of the Iranian Zoroastrians: An English Translation of a Passage from his Travel Report in Gujarat (1865)

In 1865, Manekji Hoshang Limji Hataria (1813–1890), an Indian Zoroastrian who had spent many years in Iran in order to ameliorate the living-conditions of his Iranian coreligionists, published his *Essay on the Account of a Voyage to Iran*. In this book, Manekji gives a vivid, detailed and in many respect unique description of the Iranian Zoroastrians' way of life, including their marriages and weddings, the women's garments, their festivals, their practices concerning pregnancies, child-birth, infancy, menstruation, and, last but not least, their funerals. At several instances, Manekji comments on what he describes. The paper provides an English translation of the relevant passage.

Burkhard Gladigow (Tübingen)

Sequenzierung von Riten und die Ordnung der Rituale
(Sequencing Rites and the Order of Rituals)

Typical structures of rituals have been a feature of ritual studies since Marcel Mauss. However, a further attempt to sequence rituals has so far never been made. This programmatic essay presents a systematic analysis of a sequential order of ritual elements. As such, it goes beyond the well-known distinctions between different phases in rituals for it is only by sequencing as many rites as possible (on the level of ritual elements) that specific constellations emerge, which hitherto remained largely inconceivable. These constellations pertain to sequences of rites that are 'quoted' in other rituals, a connection between rituals by means of similar ritual sequences ('interrituality'), shortened forms of ritual sequences ('abbreviations'), and, last but not least, incorporations of rites into more extended rituals ('complexity'). A sequencing of rituals according to this scheme may indicate to what extent the composition of rituals is the result of a process of professionalisation. An increasing degree of professionalisation on the one hand results in an increased demand to control the accuracy of the ritual performances and on the other hand to take into account the reactions of participants and audience. Here, it is important that the participants and the audience are transformed and that they 'learn' something in the course of the temporal unfolding of a complex ritual. (Transl. Michael Stausberg)

Almut Hintze (London)

On the Ritual Significance of the Yasna Haptañhāiti

This article examines the role of the “Worship in Seven Chapters”, the Yasna Haptañhāiti (YH) within the three Zoroastrian high liturgies, the Yasna, Visperad and Vendidad ceremonies. It argues that the Younger Avestan eulogistic portions of the Yasna are informed by, or indeed dependent on the YH. It examines the place of the seven-chapter Yasna in the seventy-two chapter Yasna and in the two other Zoroastrian high liturgies, which are based on the Yasna, namely the Visperad and Vendidad ceremonies. The Visperad and Vendidad ceremonies, in which the Yasna Haptañhāiti is recited twice, give prominence to that text by the way the *karde* of the Visperad and the *fargard* of the Vendidad are inserted in between the *hāiti* of the Yasna. The YH constitutes the centre and highpoint of each of the three Zoroastrian high liturgies, a position interpreted as indicating that the YH is *the* focal text of Zoroastrian high ritual. This view derives further support from an examination of the usage of the word *yasna-* in the Avesta, as a result of which emerges that, throughout the time Avestan texts were composed, the Yasna Haptañhāiti was perceived as *the* Worship, or *yasna-*, par excellence and provided the model for the Younger Avestan eulogistic invocations characterized by the verb *yazamaide* ‘we worship’. Moreover, this article argues that the Ritual of the Waters (*āb zōhr*) is also influenced by the worship of the Waters in the YH.

Dietrich Huff (Berlin)

Archaeological Evidence of Zoroastrian Funerary Practices

The Zoroastrian practice of exposure of the dead seems to have become compulsory in Iran during Sasanian times (3rd to 7th centuries). Archaeological evidence for this practice is scarce. Apart from some individual types, most monuments were developed from the royal Achaemenian tombs in Pasargadae and Naqsh-i Rostam. These were obviously designed for the disposal of complete bodies. However, having high substructures of stones or being placed high up in a rocky cliff, they obviously represent an attempt to avoid the pollution of earth and water. The best-known types of bone receptacles are rock-chamber tombs. In the course of history, they diminished in size from the royal rock tombs via the so-called Median rock tombs to the tiny niches in Fars. Pahlavi inscriptions on those niches identify them as *dakhma*, a general term for a tomb. Some inscriptions carry late Sasanian and early Islamic dates. Almost identical inscriptions denote small rock-cut troughs as *dakhmas*. This type of funeral boxes evidently derived from large rock-cut sacrophagi in the royal Achaemenian rock-tombs. Moreover, there are embellished sub-species of the trough *dakhmas*. These are free-standing rock-cut monuments like the twin receptacles at Naqsh-i Rostam and others, wrongly held to be fire-altars. Apart from that, there were other free-standing, constructed monuments of different types such as Tang-i Karam and Nurabad. After the Arab conquest, the formerly open exposure sites had to be surrounded with walls, and finally a central

pit became the common bone receptacle. The whole arrangement was now called *dakhma*. Different buildings nearby served for funeral ceremonies, including a chamber for a *dakhma* fire or lamp. Archaeological traces in front of ancient *dakhmas* indicate that rituals for the souls of the deceased were performed in antiquity as well.

Anders Hultgård (Uppsala)

Ritual Community Meals in ancient Iranian Religion

Ritual community meals in ancient Iranian religion are incompletely known and this paper makes an attempt to elucidate this phenomenon. The concept of (religious) ‘ritual/cultic community meal’ is discussed and a definition is proposed. From a methodological point of view, it is problematic to explain ancient rituals by referring to current practice because rituals and the meaning of terms pertaining to rituals have changed over time. The survey of ancient source-materials starts with rituals that indicate the enactment of community meals such as the *yasna*, *drōn*, *usōfrūt* and *āfrīnagān* ceremonies. Then the different settings in which ritual community meals were or might have been performed are discussed (the *Gāhānbārs* and other periodic festivals, funerary rituals and other settings). It seems that the Middle Iranian term *mēzd*, apart from other connotations, has been used to denote the ritual community meal. The picture of cultic community meals that emerges from passages in the Avesta, the Pahlavi texts, Graeco-Roman literature and Albiruni shows the importance of such rituals as a means of redistributing the sacrificial offerings. Some remarks on the structure and meaning of ritual community meals conclude the paper.

Albert de Jong (Leiden)

Sub Specie Maiestatis: Reflections on Sasanian Court Rituals

The Sasanian Empire (3rd to 7th centuries CE), is generally seen as a “Zoroastrian” state. Most Sasanian kings are therefore represented, in the historical tradition and in modern scholarship, as kings with a profound commitment to their religion. The exact relations between religious and state organisations and ideologies in the Sasanian period, however, are by no means clear. The present article attempts to shed some light on this question by analysing information on court ceremonial, deriving mainly from the Islamic tradition. As was the case in many contemporary cultures, the special position of the king in the state organisation found an expression in a large number of rules for behaviour at court that distinguished the king as much from his subjects as possible. Since these rules seem to have been shared by the contemporary Byzantines and flowed into Islamic court culture, the question of the religious background or sanction of Sasanian court ceremonial becomes very urgent. Several aspects of court ceremonial suggest that neither the concept of “divine kingship” nor the indigenous category of *xwarrah* (“royal glory”) seem to have been very promi-

ment, but that the rituals associated with the king are an expression of the Zoroastrian notion that piety and morality reveal themselves in the life of every individual and, on a very grand scale, in the righteousness and wealth of the king.

Sabine Kalinock (Frankfurt)

Supernatural Intercession to Earthly Problems: *sofreh* Rituals among Shiite Muslims and Zoroastrians in Iran

Despite profound differences in the religious doctrines of Zoroastrians and Shiite Muslims in Iran one can also discover similarities. One religious tradition that the Zoroastrian minority and the Shiite majority have in common is the *sofreh*, a ritual meal dedicated to supernatural beings or a saint. In both communities, it is a marginal ritual performed mainly by women, which is disapproved by the primarily male religious orthodoxy. The article examines the *sofreh*s as an expression of female experiences. The women reproduce their traditional roles as nurturers of their families and use their skills to get into contact with the supernatural in order influence these forces for their own interest. The women's main concern is the making of vows (*nazr*). The reference to a higher reality enables the women to agency. It is argued that the women have created for themselves a space where they can express their thoughts, hopes and feelings and negotiate them with others. Zoroastrian and Muslim women share a lot of common experiences and aspirations as women living in a patriarchal society. The participation of Zoroastrian as well as Muslim women in the official rituals and their access to religious positions is limited. Thus women in both groups have developed their own rituals, which reflect autonomy, creativity and power.

Ramiyar P. Karanjia (Mumbai / Heidelberg)

The Bāj-dharnā (Drōn Yašt) and its Place in Zoroastrian Rituals.

This paper on the Bāj-dharnā (previously, Drōn Yašt), a Zoroastrian ritual, begins with explaining the role of rituals in Zoroastrian tradition. At the outset the term Bāj-dharnā is explained and the different words used to describe the ritual are examined. The ritual is then described in perspective and its important role in the contemporary Parsi life is considered. The paper examines the various purposes for which the ritual is performed and the different divine beings invoked for various performances. Other aspects of the ritual like the duration of performance, the qualifications of the priest, the merit of the ritual, time at which the ritual can be performed and the posture required of the priests while performing the ritual are also discussed. Moreover, the paper gives a brief description of the various requisites needed in order to perform the ritual, and discusses the ritual acts performed during the Bāj-dharnā. The textual structure of the texts recited during the ritual is analysed and the fixed and variable components of the text are identified. The paper then gives a brief history of the Bāj-dharnā-ritual and the various Pahlavi texts in which it is dealt with at

length. Finally, by examining various criteria, an attempt is made to ascertain whether the Bāj-dharnā belongs to the categories of ‘Outer’ or ‘Inner’ rituals into which Zoroastrian priestly rituals are currently divided in India.

Jean Kellens (Paris)

Les précautions rituelles et la triade du comportement
(Ritual precautions and the Triad of Behaviour)

A philological investigation of Y. 1,21–22 comes to the conclusion that this formula does not express a general idea, but rather constitutes a ritual precaution in order to ward off imperfections that may have occurred while reciting chapters 0 and 1 of the Yasna. Y. 0,4 and Y. 11,17—both verses are identical—manifest a similar concern. In all these passages, the triad thought/word/action pertains to rituals rather than to ethics. (Transl. Michael Stausberg)

Firoze M. Kotwal / Jamsheed K. Choksy (Mumbai / Bloomington)

To Praise the Souls of the Deceased and the Immortal Spirits of the Righteous Ones: The Staomi or Stūm Ritual’s History and Functions

This article examines historical, theological, and performative aspects of a ritual of praise still popular among Zoroastrians. The introduction commences by tracing developments in the technical term, *staoma-* or *stūm*, of the ritual. Next, various Avestan or scriptural passages that refer to the ritual are discussed briefly. The ritual’s history and historiography—from Achaemenian times to the present—are outlined in the following section. The theological meanings of the ritual as associated with the concept of order, with the notion of death of the body as a temporary state, with the notion of the immortality of the soul and spirit, with the belief that each soul and spirit should be propitiated by living humans, and with the notion that each act of praise receives reciprocation, are analyzed within textual and doctrinal contexts. Then the five stage ritual process itself—from the dedicatory formula through the rite and recitations to the closing statement—is documented and explained in conjunction with texts, translations, and visual depictions of an actual performance. Thereafter, the occasions on which the ritual is performed and the food offerings that are consecrated on each occasion are scrutinized, as are variations in performance at various locales and at different times. Again, visual documentation from an actual performance is presented. Finally, concluding remarks return to the continued relevance of the *stūm* ritual to the lives of Zoroastrians.

Jens Kreinath (Heidelberg)

Meta-Theoretical Parameters for the Analysis and Comparison of Two Recent Approaches to the Study of the Yasna

This paper discusses the approaches of William R. Darrow and Ron G. Williams & James W. Boyd to the study of the Yasna. In focusing on such

meta-theoretical parameters as methodology, logic of design, and discourse it is possible to analyze and compare these semiotic and aesthetic approaches. As tools for the meta-theoretical analysis and comparison, such terms as ‘empirical data’, ‘analytical concepts’ and ‘discursive contexts’ with their complex and interdependent relationships are introduced. Using these tools, it is shown how these approaches are shaped through the empirical data presented on a videotape, how they are constructed by use of a set of analytical concepts and how they participate in the different discursive contexts of ritual studies. In relating these mutually dependent components, it is argued that although the above-mentioned approaches study the same empirical data they construct different theoretical approaches while using similar analytical concepts. They use these concepts differently, because they address different discursive contexts and are therefore concerned with different theoretical issues. These parameters enable one to see—from a different perspective—how theoretical approaches work within a particular field of research, how they are constructed, and how they are situated within the particular contexts of scholarly discourse.

Philip G. Kreyenbroek (Göttingen)

Ritual and Rituals in the Nērangestān

The *Nērangestān* is a text dealing with questions of ritual, which clearly formed part of the learned tradition of the Zoroastrian priesthood. The core of the text is in the ancient sacred language known as Avestan, with translations into Middle Persian. Furthermore, the text contains lengthy additional comments by scholar-priests. These reflect the realities of contemporary ritual practice, thus affording some insights into the way Zoroastrian priests understood the nature of rituals, and sought to solve any problems that might occur. Moreover, the text suggests that several ceremonies, which are mentioned as separate rituals in the Middle Persian literature, in fact represent variations on a standard sequence of liturgical texts and ritual actions. Another conclusion to be drawn from the evidence of the *Nērangestān* is that the *Yašts* (hymns to various divine beings which are now regarded as independent prayers and do not form part of any ritual), could be recited as part of a short rite on the day of the month when the divinity in question received special worship. This helps to explain the links between the *Yašts* and the ‘calendar divinities’, and also the fact that these texts have been preserved as part of the living tradition.

Robert Langer (Heidelberg)

From Private Shrine to Pilgrimage Centre: The Spectrum of Zoroastrian Shrines in Iran

In Iran one finds numerous Zoroastrian shrines, the so-called *pīr* (pl.: *pīrān*). Most of these shrines are connected with one of the Zoroastrian divine beings (*izedān*) or other mythological characters. In contrast with the Muslim context,

neither the place nor the term refer to 'saintly persons'. Nevertheless, it is proposed that Zoroastrian and Muslim shrines share common roots and a history of mutual influence. Hence, Zoroastrian shrines have to be seen in the larger context of a common 'Iranian' culture of shrine worship and 'folk religious' practice. Historical data on the shrines prior to the 20th Century is rare. Evaluating literary sources and ethnographic approaches (during two fieldtrips to Iran in 2001), the present author attempted to survey all historical and recent Zoroastrian shrines. This data is used to place the *pīrs* in their socio-historical context and to describe the activities ('rituals') which are conducted at and in connection with the shrines. The rituals encompass acts of individual devotion, communal festivities, and collective pilgrimages. The main section of the paper proposes a classification of Zoroastrian shrines along spatio-geographical and architectural criteria, which reflect the different social and religious functions of the *pīrs*. Typical examples of different 'private', 'local', 'trans-local', and 'regional shrines', as well as 'pilgrimage centres' are discussed and illustrated with pictures. In concluding it is argued that the *pīrān* are an important means for establishing contemporary Iranian-Zoroastrian identity.

Dorothea Lüddeckens (Heidelberg)

Bruch und Kontinuität in Todesritualen. Beobachtungen zu westeuropäischen und zoroastrischen Bestattungen
(Break and Continuity in Death Rituals. Some Observations on Western European and Zoroastrian Burial)

Death always confronts the survivors with an experience of both rupture and continuity. The manifold possibilities of communication, which are inherent in the relationship with a physically living human being, are broken off. At the same time however a certain continuity beyond death is provided through memories and the goods which the deceased has left behind. Death rituals offer the opportunity to analyze structures which express both the rupture and the continuity and render both experiences perceptible, though the respective degree of significance accorded to the two modalities for experiencing death can vary greatly. In Western European death rituals, one observes a marked decrease in the construction of rupture upon the death-event during the last century. At the same time, however, the constructions of continuity in the sense of a life-after-death were also on the decline. Recently new and alternative funeral practices are once again showing strong structures of both rupture and continuity. One can observe the same in the death ritual of the Parsees in contemporary Mumbai: On the one hand the disposal of corpses in "Towers of Silence" signifies a banning of the dead from world-space and even more: their "Ent-räumlichung" ('de-spacialisation') – and thus a strong construction of rupture. At the same time, the ritual link between the survivors and the souls of the dead indicates a strong construction of continuity. This would suggest that strong constructions of rupture and continuity are reciprocally conditioned.

*Katayun Mazdapour (Teheran)*Kontinuität und Wandel in den Ritualen der iranischen Zarathustrier
(Continuity and Change in the Rituals of the Iranian Zoroastrians)

A ritual consists of several elements and at the same time it makes up a generic unity that puts the single elements in relation to each other. Hence, ritual change can be located on three levels: changes concerning single elements within rituals, the increase or decrease of elements within rituals, and changes pertaining to the place and function of single elements within overriding ritual units. These changes can be brought about by single actors, but they ultimately depend on social forces and circumstances. In the modern period, when the Iranian Zoroastrian community came to be dominated by persons who affirmed Western ideas and values, the mental order, on which the ancient rituals were based, was destroyed. Other factors leading to a change in rituals were new urban environments and new forms of social interactions and relationships. This process of ritual change, which to a large extent can be seen as an accommodation to new intellectual, social, urban and economic environments, was not fought against but rather embraced by the priesthood. There were two main periods of ritual change: the 1950s and the war against Iraq (1980-1988). The main part of the paper presents a survey comparing current ritual practice with written prescriptions contained in the old normative scriptures, mainly the *šāyest- nēšāyest*. This survey is divided into nine sections: the priests and the 'official rituals'; funeral ceremonies; vows; practices pertaining to menstruation and birth; individual rituals and prayers; the main rituals of purifications; festivals; elements of rituals and smaller ritual acts (microrituals). The conclusion emphasizes the accommodative power of the rituals and its single elements and the open-mindedness of the priesthood warranting the diversity and change of the rituals and thereby guaranteeing their continuity in new forms, environments and roles. [Michael Stausberg]

Antonio Panaino (Bologna/Ravenna)

Aspects of the 'Interiorization' of the Sacrifice in the Zoroastrian Tradition

The first part of this article analyzes different meanings of the Avestan verb *yaz-* ("to worship, consecrate and sacrifice", both in the sense of "immolation" as well as in its "symbolic" results). The paper argues that the speculative dimension of the Zoroastrian ritual (*yasna-*) is to be understood as a meta-temporal dimension where the final liberation from the "mixed status" (*gumēzišn*) of the physical world is anticipated. Thereafter, the paper discusses a number of Old and Later Avestan passages concerning a particular aspect of the *yasna-*. In these passages one finds references to a "self-consecration" of the *uruuan-* ("[inner]-soul" or "breath-soul"), and of other parts of the human being, like the *frauuāši-* ("pre-existing soul" or simply "pre-soul"), the *uštāna-* ("animation"), and the *ast-* ("bone[s]"). These Avestan sources are analyzed in the light of the Indian conception of the "interiorization" of the sacrifice. In

particular, this idea is attested in the Brahmāṇic literature (and has already been studied by Ch. Malamoud and M. Biardeau). This comparison suggests some common patterns with the Zoroastrian ritual tradition. Through the worship offered to his own “soul”, the sacrificer is raised up to the divine dimension, where he can meet Ahura Mazdā and the other gods. The comparison sheds new light on the initiatory, exoteric and speculative dimension of the Indo-Iranian ritual.

Beate Schmerbeck (Heidelberg)

„Oh Herr, erhöre unser Monāḡāt“. Zarathustrische Traditionslinien einer persischen Gebetsgattung zwischen Indien und Iran
(“O Lord, hear our Monāḡāt”. Zarathustrian Traditions of a Persian Genre of Prayer between India and Iran)

In contrast to the classical Zarathustrian literature, which has been the subject of academic research for more than two centuries, scholars have ignored Zarathustrian monāḡāt. These songs of prayers composed either in a rhythmical, rhymed prose or in stanzas, are considered to be the epitome of a confidential nearness to god; they are the faithful’s intimate communication with god. Originally deriving from Islamic traditions, these prayers have been reflected in Zarathustrian religious literature ever since the 13th century and have given rise to a variety of monāḡāt of a more or less Zarathustrian character. Until a few decades ago, these mystically inspired prayers were a constituent part of the Zarathustrian religious everyday culture in Iran as well as in India, passed on as a rule by the female members of a family. This essay follows the ways of tradition of the Zarathustrian monāḡāt, presents the contents of the prayers in two examples, and thus illustrates the Zarathustrians’ ritual everyday life. (Transl. Astrid van Nahl)

Shaul Shaked (Jerusalem)

The Yasna Ritual in Pahlavi

From the Pahlavi texts, it is possible to conclude that the ability to recite the Yasna by heart was one of the accomplishments expected of a courtier. Some women were considered to have the same ability. In the eyes of the Pahlavi commentators and theologians, the power of the Yasna ritual came into expression by the fact that it re-enacted the act of creation and foreshadowed that of eschatology, the two being intimately linked together. At the end of time, the Yasna ritual will no longer be necessary, and will be replaced by songs of praise. For the ritual to be effective, it has to be performed in the fire temple, where its place of performance guarantees that it will not go to the demons; when performed in other places, any failing in its performance causes it to go to the demons. The idea of the Yasna as a sacrifice raises the question of the somewhat paradoxical position of the original sacrifice, on the basis of which

the Yasna was instituted. The bovine, the animal that undergoes immolation in the primordial sacrifice (and in eschatology) undergoes suffering not because of the sacrifice but because of the interference of the evil powers, and it can thus symbolize the suffering of humanity under the oppression of evil.

Prods Oktor Skjærvø (Cambridge, MA)
Smashing Urine: On *Yasna* 48.10

Yasna 48.10, a passage in the Old Avestan *Gāthās*, an ancient Iranian text ascribed to Zarathustra, has frequently been discussed by Western scholars, both philologists and historians of religion. Once the passage was taken as proof that Zarathustra rejected the use of haoma, although haoma played a central and crucial role in the Young Avestan sacrifice, the *yasna*. However, this is not the opinion of all modern scholars. The passage is grammatically straightforward by Old Avestan standards, but opinions have varied about its interpretation. I suggest that the *prima facie* meaning of the words points to the well-known Indo-Iranian myth of the dragon-slaying and the release of the fertilizing heavenly waters upon the earth. In my opinion, the passage contains a disparaging statement about the rival poet-sacrificers' sacrifice of the haoma, which does not have the desired effect of removing the forces of chaos, implying that our poet-sacrificer's sacrifice does have the desired effect. This, in turn, indicates that the haoma sacrifice had the same function in the ritual performed in Old Avestan times as in Young Avestan times.

Jan A.M. Snoek (Heidelberg)
'Initiations' in Theory and in Zoroastrianism

This paper compares the features of the Parsee *Navjote* ritual as described by the Zoroastrian priest and scholar Jivanji Jamshedji Modi (1922/37), with those which are predicted by four theories about transition rituals (*rites de passage*) in general or initiation rituals in particular, viz. those by Arnold van Gennep (1909), Mircea Eliade (1958), Jan Snoek (1987), and Maurice Bloch (1992). These theories are briefly introduced, and it is demonstrated that the different theories focus attention to different features of the same ritual. On the one hand, thus, using different theories when analyzing and describing rituals may lead to a more detailed and more complete description. On the other hand, it is argued that descriptions of a ritual are necessarily influenced by the theory each author has in mind. Therefore, it is necessary for scholars to make themselves aware of the theoretical preconceptions they have in mind. By conscientiously making use of both their own theories and those of others scholars may come to see more aspects of the rituals they study and produce richer descriptions. The paper also demonstrates that the *Navjote* ritual may properly be regarded an initiation ritual, according to the definitions proposed by the authors investigated.

Michal Stausberg (Heidelberg)

Contextualizing the Contexts. On the Study of Zoroastrian Rituals

In this introductory essay, which to a varying degree is based on the single contributions to this volume, the editor of this volume discusses a number of contextual settings for the study of Zoroastrian rituals. To begin with, the author reviews the importance assigned to rituals in the debate on Zarathushtra and the origins of Zoroastrianism. As this debate often argues with explicit and implicit comparisons the author goes on to discuss some methodological and theoretical problems in applying comparative perspectives to the study of the Yasna-ritual. While most of these studies have focused on the Yasna, it is evident that Zoroastrianism possesses a network of interrelated rites and ceremonies. Most rituals are administered by male priests, and the 'ritual system' shows some characteristics of professional religion. At the same time, there is a complex interplay between priestly and lay rituals. Moreover, there are instances of gender-specific division of labour. A particular problem is the (lacking?) 'congregational', or 'communal' dimension of the rituals. Starting from antiquity (Herodotus), Zoroastrian rituals have aroused the curiosity and stimulated the imagination of outsiders. In the modern period, the study of Zoroastrian rituals has increasingly involved the interaction between Zoroastrians and foreign scholars.

Michael Stausberg (Heidelberg)

Monday-Nights at the Banaji, Fridays at the Aslaji: Ritual Efficacy and Transformation in Bombay City

The vast majority of Indian Parsis live in Bombay (Mumbai). This megalopolis is a multi-religious venue. Whereas it is no traditional religious centre, it nevertheless houses some (Muslim, 'Hindu', Christian, and other) sanctuaries that many Bombayites (including Zoroastrians) flock to on certain days of the week. While the week as a temporal unit is of no importance within traditional Zoroastrian ritualistic, currently there are two fire-temples in Bombay that draw comparatively large crowds on specific days of the week. These are the Aslaji Bhikhaji Agiary and the Seth Cowasji Behramji Banaji Atash Behram. Whereas the Aslaji is visited mainly on Fridays and the days linked to Mithra in the Zoroastrian calendar, at the Banaji a communal ritual event (Humbandagi) takes place at the beginnings of the fourth watch of the day (sunset to midnight) on each Monday. A counting of the number of worshippers attending this event conducted in September 2000 and in February 2002 revealed an average of 459 Parsis attended. The present paper is based on interviews that Mrs Zarin Marfatia conducted with worshippers and priests at both places. It discusses the devotees' practices, expectations and experiences with regard to the Aslaji and the Banaji and beyond. Based on oral history and some published documents, the study retraces the historical developments of the phenomena including their ongoing modifications, ramifications, and transformations.

Moreover, it explores some hitherto unperceived religious coherences lying behind what is going on from the perspective of the history of religions.

Sarah Stewart (London)

The Ātaš nu Gīt: A Parsi Lay Ritual

The *Ātaš nu Gīt* or Song of the Fire is a Gujarati text said to have been composed by two brothers in honour of the founding of the second Zoroastrian sacred fire *Ātaš Bahrām* in Navsari in 1765; it appeared in publication in Bombay in 1879. In this paper, I look at the content of the song and the way in which it works both as an oral text and as a ritual performance. I examine its significance as a lay composition and the purpose it serves for the lay community – in terms of its religious content, and in providing a narrative account of certain historical events. These events pertain to the Parsi community as a whole and also refer to the local community in Navsari at the time of the composition of the song. In the latter context, the song works as means by which to re-establish the solidarity of a community divided by internal issues. I also examine the way in which two structures operate within the text. The first of these has been imposed upon the published version by the compiler of that text and gives us an insight into Parsi society in the mid nineteenth century. The second is a thematic structure that expresses certain theological ideas and is reminiscent of a number of older Zoroastrian religious texts. Finally, I look at the way in which contemporary accounts of lay religious life illuminate references in the song to customs that are not described in detail and, in some cases are no longer observed but remain part of living memory.

Werner Sundermann (Berlin)

*Zarathustra der Priester und Prophet in der Lehre der Manichäer
(Zarathustra the Priest and Prophet according to the Manichaean Teaching)*

The aim of this paper is to show that although Manichaeism has much in common with the Zoroastrian doctrine as developed by the third century A.D., but nothing with Zoroastrian ritual practice, the Manichaeans did accept the person of Zoroaster in their own interpretation not only as a teacher of truth, a prophet, authorized, inspired and sent by the World of Light, but also as a priest. Zoroaster is the only forerunner of of Mani's to fulfill his message by the word of gnosis and by ritual acts. In the first part of the paper, Zoroaster's role as a teacher of the divine revelation is exemplified by a Sogdian text published by Yoshida in 1979. The particular Manichaean interpretation of a genuine Zoroastrian piece of doctrine is underscored. In the second part, texts are presented and discussed which testify to a familiarity of Manichaean authors with details of the Zoroastrian ritual, namely the famous Parthian "Zoroaster fragment" and the Middle Persian fragment of the "Speech of/on Living Self" on Zoroaster. The Manichaean authors approve of the Zoroastrian sacrifice and purification

ceremonies as symbolic acts pointing out the redemption of the Living Soul from the bonds of the demonic matter.

Mario Vitalone (Naples)

Fires and the Establishment of *Ātaš Bahrāms* in the Zoroastrian Tradition

Fire occupies a central place in Zoroastrian devotional life. It is probably only in Sasanian period that the Zoroastrian priests gradually developed the differentiation of the temple fires into the three categories, which in the Islamic period were called *Ātaš Bahrām*, *Ādarān* and *Dādgāh*. The first reference to the procedures for the establishment of an *Ātaš Bahrām* is found in the *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, compiled in the post-Sasanian period. For the subsequent centuries, we have no other documentary evidence on the subject, until the taking up again of contact between the two Zoroastrian communities of Iran and India. The Persian *revāyat* of Kāmdin Šāpur dated 1558 fully incorporates the list of the fourteen fires of the *Pahlavi Rivāyat*, with the addition of two more. As for the Parsi tradition, already prior to the arrival in India they were familiar with a procedure for the formation of sacred fire, even if we have no information about the level of their knowledge. The subsequent tradition was certainly influenced by the *revāyat* of Kāmdin Šāpur and it is substantially on the basis of the methods recorded therein that the majority of the *Ātaš Bahrāms* now existing in India were founded.

Gernot Windfuhr (Ann Arbor)

Zoroastrian and Taoist Ritual: Cosmology and Sacred Numerology

The author had previously suggested that the Zoroastrian Yasna ritual is intimately correlated with the cosmos and calendar, and thus Time, in a nontrivial way. In particular, the instruments on the central ritual table correlate with the 12 months of the Zoroastrians calendar, and with other cosmological and metaphysical patterns in Zoroastrian thought. Such patterns reflect the fact that the Yasna ritual, its liturgical texts joined with the chapters of the Visparad, is prominently enacted during the seasonal festivals. So far, these patterns appeared to be unique to Zoroastrianism. This article suggests that the Taoist ritual is closer to the Yasna than any ritual in other traditions, and explores striking similarities between the two. Even though both are the product of two independent ancient traditions, they both enjoyed strong royal support for extended periods at one time or another, and reflect a worldview and approach to ritual that appears to originate in Late Hellenism. The similarities include the arrangement of the ritual area as three mutually embedded worlds; the arrangement in form of a calendar; the arrangement of the eight priests/eight trigrams; positional shifts in forms of a magic square and other numerological patterns, and numerous others. Moreover, in both, the ritual arrangements, acts, and moves, are seen not as entities as such, but as nodes in a world matrix of progressive and regressive cycles. A significant contribution to this investigation is

the dialectic analysis of the ritual in terms of the sequence of acts, rather than of the liturgical texts, in the Yasna ritual.