



ĀTAŠ

ĀTAŠ (Book Pahlavi and New Persian) “fire,” Book Pahlavi also *ātaxš*, both from the Avestan nominative singular *ātarš*; the regular Middle Persian and Parthian form is *ādur* (also Book Pahlavi), whence New Persian *ādar*. The etymology of Avestan *ātar-* is unknown. For examples of usage see S. Wikander, *Feuerpriester in Kleinasien und Iran*, Lund, 1946, pp. 104-12.

Zoroastrian veneration of fire plainly has its origin in an Indo-Iranian cult of the hearth fire, going back in all probability to Indo-European times. The hearth fire, providing warmth, light and comfort, was regarded by the ancient Iranians as the visible embodiment of the divinity Ātar, who lived among men as their servant and master; and in return for his constant help they made him regular offerings (see *ātaš-zōhr*). Fire was also present at their religious ceremonies, and the ancient *Yasna Haptañhāiti* seems to have its origins in a pre-Zoroastrian liturgy accompanying priestly offerings to fire and water (Plate I).

Fire was also used judicially in ancient Iran. Those accused of lying or breach of contract (*miθra-*) might be required as an ultimate test to establish their innocence by submitting to a solemnly administered ordeal by fire. In one such ordeal the accused had to pass through fire, in another molten metal was poured on his bare breast; and there are said to have been some 30 kinds of fiery tests in all. (For the literature see M. Boyce, “On Mithra, Lord of Fire,” *Monumentum H. S. Nyberg I*, Acta Iranica 4, 1975, pp. 70-72; *Vd.* 4.46; *Zātspram* 22.11.12; *Pahl. Rivāyat*, 18.d.4; Faḡr-al-dīn Gorgānī, *Vīs o Rāmīn*, tr. G. Morrison, *Vis and Ramin*, New York and London, 1972, pp. 132-39.) In each



case if the accused died, he was held to have been guilty; if he survived, he was innocent, having been protected by Mithra and the other divine beings. The mildest form of such ordeals required the accused to take a solemn oath, and as he did so to drink a potion containing sulphur (Av. *saokant*, Mid. Pers. *sōgand*, NPers. *sowgand*), a fiery substance which, it was thought, would burn him inwardly if he committed perjury. Fire thus acquired an association with truth, and hence with *aša*. The ancient Iranian cosmogonists regarded fire moreover as the seventh “creation,” forming the life-force, as it were, within the other six, and so animating the world (see *Bundahišn*, tr., chaps, 3.7-8; 6g. 1; *Zātspram*, chap. 3.77-83). Fire was thus of great theoretical, ethical, ritual, and practical importance in ancient Iranian life and thought.

Zoroaster developed this cultural inheritance yet further when he apprehended fire as the creation of *Aša Vahišta*, and when he saw fire as the instrument of God’s judgment at the Last Day. Then a fiery flood of molten metal will cover the earth, and men will undergo thereby a last judicial ordeal (see *Frašegird*). The cult of fire thus became for the prophet one of profound moral and spiritual significance. As he says in *Yasna* 43.9: “At the offering made in reverence (to fire) I shall think of truth (*aša*) to the utmost of my power;” and it was enjoined on his followers that they should always pray in the presence of fire—either a terrestrial fire, or sun or moon on high (*Mēnōg ī xrad*, chap. 53.3-5.)

The terrestrial fire could be hearth or ritual fire. Traditionally each man established his own hearth fire when he set up house independently, and this was not allowed to go out as long as he lived. To this extent the cult of domestic fire was one of ever-burning fire. The Greeks too had a cult of the hearth fire, and although Herodotus (3.16) mentions the great veneration in which the Persians held fire, he does not single them out as being in any remarkable way “fire-worshippers,” nor does he know of temples of any kind among them (1.131). A Zoroastrian temple cult of fire seems to have been first instituted in the later Achaemenid period, being probably established by the orthodox as a counter-move to the innovation of a temple-cult, with statues of “*Anāhīt*.” (See *Anaitis* and *Arədvī Sūrā Anāhītā*; for details about fire temples see *ātaškada*.) The temple cult of fire was essentially an extension of that of the hearth fire: the sacred fire, “enthroned” (*nišāst*; cf. the expression *takt-nešīnī* “enthronement” used of the fire) on an altar-like stand (see *ātašdān*), was still a wood fire, and still received the traditional offerings, five times a day. These offerings were made to it by a priest, its purity being most strictly



guarded. There is no information from the Achaemenid period itself about categories of sacred fires, or how such fires were constituted; but it seems probable that the temple cult was instituted with as much pomp and dignity as possible, to rival the magnificent image-cult Anāhīt, and, accordingly, that the most exalted type of sacred fire is probably also the oldest. By a tradition which is first recorded in post-Sasanian times such a fire is created from embers taken from many fires, including lightning fire, which are purified over and over again before being combined and consecrated. (See Modi, *Ceremonies*, pp. 200ff.) The sacred fire is then carried in procession to be installed in its sanctuary *pad wahrāmīh* “victoriously” (see Boyce, “On the Sacred Fires of the Zoroastrians,” *BSOAS* 31, 1968, pp. 52-68 and pp. 287-88.) The priests escorting it carry swords and maces; and after the ceremony some of these weapons are hung on the sanctuary walls, to symbolize the warrior nature of the fire, and its ceaseless fight against all that is opposed to aša “truth.” This martial symbolism is admirably expressive of a spirit of Zoroastrianism, which is a courageous and active faith, but it has no antecedent in the domestic cult of fire. It seems likely therefore that it was deliberately developed in connection with the temple fires in rivalry to the Anāhīt cult, since Anāhīt was worshipped as a goddess of war, and had probably been regularly invoked by the Achaemenids for victory in battle. The original name for a great temple fire was presumably *ātar- vərəθrayan* “victorious fire;” and already in the late Achaemenid period the custom (continued by the Sasanians) had developed of carrying embers from a sacred fire as a palladium before the Persian army (see Curtius Rufus, *History of Alexander*, 3.8ff.). In Middle Persian, however, the adjective *vərəθrayan-* fell together with the substantive *vərəθrayan-* “victory,” and the name of these fires was then understood to mean “fire of Wahrām/Bahrām,” i.e., was interpreted as fire belonging to the immensely popular *yazata* of victory (see Boyce, *Zoroastrianism* II, pp. 222ff.)

Remains of so-called “fire altars,” i.e., raised fire-holders of characteristic Zoroastrian type, are known from Pasargadae at the time of Cyrus the Great; and it is possible that one of these held the Great King’s hearth fire, which, thus exalted, was regarded as his dynastic fire, burning as long as he himself reigned. (For these and other fire-holders see further under *ātašdān*.) No certain traces have yet been found of any fire temple from Achaemenid times (see *ātaškada*). Literary and linguistic evidence, however, shows that by the end of that epoch fire temples had been established all across Iranian territories from Asia Minor to the Indian satrapies. Many of these appear to



have survived Alexander's conquest, and the subsequent alien domination. Diodorus Siculus (17.114) records that when Alexander performed the funerary ceremonies for his friend Hephaistion, he ordered that "all the inhabitants of Asia should carefully extinguish the fire that the Persians call sacred," this being their custom at the death of one of their own kings. This statement is usually taken to refer to temple fires, but it seems more probably that individual hearth fires were meant, all unpolluted fire being sacred to Zoroastrians.

A literary reference from the third century A.D. (*Letter of Tansar*, ed. M. Mīnovī, Tehran, 1936, p. 22, tr. M. Boyce, Rome, 1968, p. 47) establishes that the Parthians allowed their vassal kings to found dynastic fires; and it seems possible that the Arsacids' own dynastic fire was the one mentioned by Isidore of Charax (*Parthian Stations* 11) as burning at Asaak in northeastern Iran, "where Arsaces was first proclaimed king." A general term attested for a fire temple in the Parthian language was **atarōšan* (preserved in Armenian as *atrušan*), interpreted as meaning "place of burning fire" (see Wikander, *Feuerpriester*, pp. 98, 219; E. Benveniste, *JA*, 1964, p. 57); and in the Parthian version of an inscription of the Sasanian king Šāpūr (Šābuhr) I the term for a great sacred fire is given as *ādur warahrān* (see his inscription on the Ka'ba-ye Zardošt, Parthian 1.22; M. Back, *Die sassanidischen Staatsinschriften*, Acta Iranica 18, Tehran and Liège, 1978, p. 330). Descriptions exist of temple fires maintained by Persian congregations under alien rule in Asia Minor during the Parthian period. Strabo (*Geography* 15.3.15) writes of two kinds of "temples of the magi" in Cappadocia in his day (around the beginning of the Christian era). Some were "temples of the Persian gods" (containing presumably cult images), others were "pyraetheia," i.e., fire temples, "noteworthy enclosures; and in the midst of these there is an altar, on which there is a large quantity of ashes and where the magi keep the fire ever burning. And there, entering daily, they make incantations for about an hour, holding before the fire their bundle of rods [= the *barsom*]." Pausanias, writing in the second century A.D., states (*Description of Greece* 5.27.3) that Persian communities maintained temples in two cities in Lydia. "In each of these temples there is an inner chamber, and in this an altar upon which are some ashes of a color unlike that of ordinary ashes. A magus enters the chamber, bringing dry wood which he places on the altar. After this he . . . intones an invocation... in a barbarian tongue . . . This . . . inevitably causes the wood to catch fire and break out into a bright flame." Both these accounts seem to be of lesser fires, which unlike the "victorious fires" (kept always burning bright) are often allowed "to sleep"



(*xuft*) under a cover of hot ash between the times appointed for prayer and offerings. Dry wood placed on these hot ashes will in the course of nature catch fire after a little time. Although their temple fires are always wood fires, Zoroastrians also offered reverence to the naphtha fires which burnt in various parts of Iran. In the Jewish II Maccabees 1:18-36 there is an account of a naphtha well being enclosed as sacred by a Parthian king; and at the end of a chapter on fires in the *Bundahišn* (p. 128, tr. pp. 162f., chap. 18.23-24) mention is made of two venerated fires which burned without fuel. In the same chapter there is also reference to the three oldest sacred fires known by name in Zoroastrian history. These are Ādur Burzēn-Mihr, Ādur Farnbāg and Ādur Gušnasp. All three are held to be invoked indirectly in a late section (5-6) of the Ātaš Niyayišn (see under Ādur Gušnasp); and they must have been established not later than the Parthian period, since in Sasanian times they had become invested with an aura of immense antiquity. The temples of all three were set on hills, whereby the tradition of worship in high places (Herodotus, 1.131) was maintained; and in Sasanian times they were established respectively in Parthia, Persia, and Media. A fourth fire which was much venerated was that of karkūy in Sīstān (see K. Schippmann, *Die iranischen Feuerheiligtümer*, Berlin, 1971, pp. 37ff.), each quarter of Iran having thus its own great fire. This fire too appears to have been set on a hill; and archeologists have uncovered the remains of an impressive Parthian fire temple on the Kūh-e K̄vāja, a hill rising out of the shallows of the Hāmūn lake (see *ibid.*, pp. 57ff.). These are at present the oldest known remains of an undisputed Zoroastrian fire temple.

It was perhaps in the Parthian period that Zoroastrian priestly scholars evolved a fivefold theoretical classification of fires. The five categories are invoked, in ascending order of dignity, in Y. 17.11 (a late section of the *Yasna* liturgy). First is the fire called *bərəzi.savah* “of high benefit,” identified in the Pahlavi commentary as present in Ātaš Bahrāms; second, *vohu fryāna* probably “loving the good,” the fire or life-force in men; third, *urvāzišta* “the most joyful,” that which is in plants; fourth, *vazišta* “the swiftest (?)” which is lightning fire; and lastly *spāništa* “the holiest,” which burns in the presence of Ohrmazd himself. This classification is evidently purely scholastic. The names of the last three types of fire are common Avestan adjectives, two of which occur as cult-epithets of fire in *Yasna Haptaŋhāiti*. Of these *urvāzišta* has presumably been associated with plants, *urvara*, because of the identity of the first syllables of the words. The epithets *bərəzi.savah* and *vohu.fryāna* are known only from Y. 17. The identifications of the five fires are the same in *Zātspram*, pp. 40-41, chap. 3.77-82, but in the *Bundahišn*, pp. 123-24; tr. pp.



156-59, chap. 18.2-7, *bərəzi.savah* is held to be the fire which burns before Ohrmazd, and *spəništa* that which is present in Ātaš Bahrāms, and other earthly fires.

In Zoroastrian worship the use of cult-images, instituted under the later Achaemenids, was evidently encouraged by Greek influences in Hellenistic times; but an iconoclastic movement, linked with the founding of more and more sacred fires, appears to have been in existence at least by the late Parthian period. (See M. Boyce, "Iconoclasm Among the Zoroastrians," *Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman Cults, Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, ed. J. Neusner, IV, Leiden, 1975, pp. 93-111.) A Parthian king, Valaxš/Vologeses I (ca. A.D. 51-80) set a fire-holder on the reverse of bronze coin-issues, rather than the statue of a *yazata* (G. F. Hill, *Catalogue of Greek Coins* 28, London, 1922, pp. 29.11-12); and the evidence of the proper name Ādur-Ahāhīd "Anāhīd of the fire," borne by a granddaughter of Ardašīr I (Šāpūr I on the *Ka'ba-ye Zardošt*, Mid. Pers. 1.25, Parth, 1.20, Greek 1.47; see A. Maricq, *Syria* 35, 1958, pp. 318-19, 333 = *Classica et Orientalia*, Paris, 1965, pp. 60-61, 75), suggests that at least by the outset of the Sasanian era a sacred fire had replaced the cult-image in the temple of Anāhīt at Staxr (Eštākr), of which the Sasanian family had been the hereditary guardians. The Sasanian kings in their turn regularly set a fire-holder on the reverse of their coins. The beginning of each king's reign was associated with the lighting of his regnal fire (cf. R. Ghirshman, "Inscription du monument de Chapour I^{er}," *RAA* 10, 1937, pp. 123-29); and in the representations on coins a royal diadem is sometimes shown tied round the shaft of the fireholder, to indicate that the fire thus displayed was the king's personal one.

In early Sasanian inscriptions there are references to the founding of many fires, the nomenclature still, it seems, reflecting the period of Parthian domination. Thus mention is made of "victorious fires" as *ādur ī wahrām* (e.g., Kirdēr, *Ka'ba-ye Zardošt*, line 2; Back, *Die sassanidischen Staatsinschriften*, p. 388); and of lesser temple fires simply as *ādurān* (ibid., line 2, Back, op. cit., p. 389). Šāpūr I records founding *ādurān* for the benefit of his own soul, and for the souls of his queen of queens and three of his sons. (Šāpūr's inscription on the *Ka'ba-ye Zardošt*, Mid. Pers. ll. 22-23; Back, op. cit., pp. 331-35); and this custom is attested again later in the Sasanian period, and indeed down into the twentieth century. The founder of a fire endowed it, usually with lands (see the account of Šāpūr's foundations, and those of the great Sasanian prime minister, Mihr-Narseh, Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, pp. 111-12; and for



other similar foundations, Boyce, “On the Sacred Fires,” pp. 56ff.). The founders of such fire temples usually retained the patronage of them in their own families, with the right to manage their incomes, whether from endowments or offerings, and to appoint their priests, and litigation sometimes arose over these matters, which is recorded as case-history in the Sasanian law-book, the *Mādayān ī Hazār Dādestān* (see J. P. de Menasce, *Les feux et fondations pieuses sous les Sassanides*, Paris, 1966; Boyce, art. cit.) From these case-histories it becomes clear that the Sasanians recognized a third category of temple fire, namely the *Ādurōg ī pad dādgāh* or “minor fire in an appointed place,” called in modern usage *Ātaš-e dādgāh*, or just *Dādgāh*. Such a fire can be formed simply from embers taken from an unsullied Zoroastrian hearth fire, and may be tended at need by a lay person, provided that he or she is in a state of purity. The *Ādurōg* sometimes figures in the law-books as an element in the iconoclastic campaign, waged, it seems, throughout the Sasanian epoch; for when a cult-statue was removed from a shrine, then a sacred fire was, it seems, regularly installed in its place—an *Ātaš ī wahrām* in the case of a great temple such as that of *Anāhīd* at *Staxr*, an *Ādurōg* at some small local one, when no great new costs could be imposed on the patron or community (see Boyce, “Iconoclasm,” pp. 63-64). It is recorded of one of the sons of *Šāpūr I*, *Hormizd-Ardašīr*, that in Armenia he set a sacred fire (presumably in place of a statue) in the temple of *Ohrmazd* at *Pakaran* (*Movsēs Xorenac’i*, II, p. 77; V. Langlois, *Collection des historiens . . . de l’Arménie* II, Paris, 1869, p. 119); and *Kirdēr* records that by him “images were overthrown and the dens of demons [i.e. image shrines] were destroyed, and the places and abodes of *yazads* [i.e. fire temples] were established” (*Kāba-ye Zardošt*, 1.10; Back, op. cit., pp. 415-16). But as late as the reign of *Ḳosrow II* (591-628) a case is recorded where “in accordance with the order and injunction of the *mōbads*” an image was removed from a privately endowed shrine and an *Ādurōg* was installed there at the expense of the *Dīwān ī Kardagān* (ministry of sacred works); ultimately the patrons of the shrine voluntarily themselves took over the maintenance of the *Ādurōg*, with due endowments (T. D. Anklesaria, ed., *The Social Code of the Parsees in Sasanian Times*, pt. 2, Bombay, 1912, p. 37.2-8). It has been suggested that Zoroastrian sacred fires were sometimes also set in image shrines taken over from other religions, cf. the Buddhist shrine at *Kara Tepe* at *Termez* in ancient Bactria, where a hastily constructed mud-brick fire-holder has been found in a niche in which a Buddhist statue once stood (see B. Y. Staviskiĭ, *Kushanskaya Baktriya*, Moscow, 1977, p. 176).



During the Sasanian epoch temple fires were still maintained beyond Iran's borders by groups of Zoroastrians descended from colonists of Achaemenid times. Kirdēr records the existence of sacred fires tended by Zoroastrian priests in regions overrun by Šāpūr I in his Roman campaigns, namely Syria, Cilicia, Cappadocia, Armenia, Georgia and Albania (*Ka'ba-ye Zardošt*, ll. 11-13; Back, op. cit., pp. 422-29). In the following century, when most of these scattered congregations were living under Christian rule, St. Basil (*Collected Letters*, no. 258) wrote of their tenacity in holding to their own beliefs and ways; but they were to suffer thereafter from Christian persecution, and in the fifth century king Pērēz complained that the Byzantines harassed their Zoroastrian subjects and would not permit them to maintain sacred fires (see J. Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, Paris, 1904, p. 129 n. 5).

The founding of sacred fires within Iran itself continued throughout the Sasanian period; and in later sources it is said that in the last great reign, that of Kōsrow II, the king himself both built fire temples and appointed 12,000 priests to pray at such temples throughout his realm (Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, p. 353). It seems probable, from later evidence, that the main concentration of fire temples was in western Iran, and perhaps in the province of Pārs itself. It is there that Muslim geographers chiefly noted the existence of "fire houses;" and Abū Zayd Balkī, writing in the ninth century stated that then there was still one in nearly every town and village in the province (*Bibliotheca geographorum arabicorum* I, pp. 100, 118-19; cited by H. S. Nyberg, *Journal of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute* 39, 1958, p. 9). It is also there that archeologists in the present century have found the most remains of fire temples (see under *ātaškada*). Details of the observances which had evolved to link the ancient cult of the hearth fire to that of temple fires are first recorded in Islamic times, but must go back at least to the Sasanian period. The three categories of temple fires were in Islamic times called Ātaš Bahrām, Ādor-e Ādorān (or simply Ādorān) and Dādgāh. The doctrine behind the observances has been admirably formulated by J. Darmesteter (SBE IV, p. 115 n. 2): "As the earthly representative of the heavenly fire (the Bahrām fire) is the sacred center to which every earthly fire longs to return, in order to be united again, as much as possible, with its native abode. The more it has been defiled by worldly uses, the greater is the merit acquired by freeing it from defilement." Despite all care, the priests held, a hearth fire could not wholly escape impurity; so at intervals, varying according to different authorities from every third day to after every baking of bread, embers from it should be carried to the local fire temple, there to grow cold in the presence of the sacred fire.



Embers from all fires used in ritual observances, and also from the great Sada fire, were likewise taken into the presence of the temple fire. (For the literature, and details of actual observances, see Boyce, *Stronghold*, pp. 72ff., 182-83). Once a year embers from a Dādgāh fire should be taken into the presence of an Ādorān, and those from an Ādorān into the presence of an Ātaš Bahrām, thus completing the links of the chain (see Boyce, *Acta Orientalia* 30, 1966, pp. 63-64.) There was further the general ritual of rescuing embers from fires which had been actually polluted (in smiths' shops and the like), purifying them by lighting nine successive fires from these embers, each intermediate one being allowed to go out, and then taking the ninth fire, consecrated by prayer, to a temple fire. This ritual is still regularly carried out as an act of merit by Zoroastrians in Fārs, especially in Āḍar Māh, the month dedicated to fire (see Boyce, *Stronghold*, pp. 175, 186-90). Its technical name is the rite of "exalting the fire," *ātaš bozorg kardan*; and it was probably performed even before temple fires were founded (cf. *Vd.* 8.73ff.). Another way in which the temple fires were made of central importance was that priests insisted that ash from an Ātaš Bahrām was needed for the major rites of purification, whereas formerly ash from a hearth fire (*ātaxš ī kadagīg*) could have been used (cf. the Pahl. commentary to *Vd.* 5.51).

This last usage is common to the Zoroastrians of Iran and India; and the Parsis duly established an Ātaš Bahrām (the Sanjana Ātaš Bahrām or "Īrānšāh," which now burns at Uḍwada) as soon as possible after their settlement at Sanjan in A.D. 936. This remained their only temple fire for some 500 years (see F. M. Kotwal, "Some observations on the history of the Parsi *Dar-i Mihr*," *BSOAS* 37, 1974, pp. 664-69); and so for most Parsis the hearth fire was necessarily the focus of their observances. The founding fathers of their community had come from Khorasan, i.e., ancient Parthian territory; and it seems possible that fewer sacred fires had been founded there than in Pārs, and that the need for more than one was not felt. Prosperity, and closer connections again with the Iranian Zoroastrians, led the Parsis to found many more sacred fires, of all three categories, from the seventeenth century onwards; but in spite of instructions from Persia they did not adopt any of the chain observances just described. Even the rite of "exalting the fire" is not recorded among them; but this may have been one of the ancient observances which seem to have been lost by the migrant community.

In Iran the spread of Islam after the Arab conquest led to the extinction of most sacred fires during the next 600 years, their temples being razed or



turned into mosques. Eventually (perhaps in the late thirteenth century A.D.) the Dastūr Dastūrān, head of the dwindling community of Zoroastrians, sought haven in the village of Torkābād, at the northern end of the Yazdī plain; and probably at the same time two Ātaš Bahrāms were established in the neighboring village of Šarīfābād, where they still burn, though now conjoined. It is highly probable that these represent the two greatest fires of Persia proper, namely Ādur-Anāhīd from Staḵr and Ādur Farnbāg taken from their former sanctuaries and preserved in hiding by their priests. Like all the sacred fires which survive, these were kept during the centuries of oppression in small mud-brick buildings, looking outwardly like any poor man's house. Moreover, for safety's sake the Iranian Zoroastrians abandoned the custom (maintained by the Parsis) of enthroning a sacred fire conspicuously in a central sanctuary, with open grills, and instead hid it away in a small side-room, entered by a tiny cupboard-like door. Priests crept through this door to serve the fire, but the laity gave up entirely the joy of seeing it, for the better chance of its survival. If Muslims broke into the temple, all that they saw in its main hall was an empty fireholder, so that it seemed as if the sacred fire were already extinguished. In this holder (resembling a pillar-altar) fire would be set on occasion for public or private worship, embers being brought from the sacred fire for the purpose, and carried back afterwards to grow cold in its presence. Down the centuries both Šarīfābād and Kermān managed to preserve Ātaš Bahrāms, and there were Ādorāns or Dādḡāh fires in Yazd and most Zoroastrian villages. Later, after the Dastūr Dastūrān had moved to Yazd, a new Ātaš Bahrām was established there also, with Parsi help; and in the twentieth century, with the shift of the majority of Zoroastrians to Tehran, an Ātaš Bahrām was installed there also, with embers carried by priests on foot across the Central Desert (Dašt-e Kavīr) from the Ātaš Bahrām of Yazd (although this method of creating a new sacred fire would have been frowned on by the orthopraxy of an earlier age, see B. N. Dhabhar, *The Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz and others*, Bombay, 1932, p. 72). By the end of the nineteenth century the Parsis had eight Ātaš Bahrāms (each individually consecrated), which are still maintained, and nearly 150 lesser fires, although with the fading away of their village communities in the present century some of these have been brought to burn in one temple (though always in separate rooms). Only in India and in Tehran is it still possible to have four priests serving each Ātaš Bahrām, as is ritually desirable. Almost all village fires, in both communities, are Dādḡāh fires, often tended by the laity. It is still the general custom to maintain a Dādḡāh fire in a small building near every funerary tower, for the benefit of the departed souls, but a lamp may be



substituted.

Probably ever since the establishment of the temple cult of fire Zoroastrians have been known to those of other faiths as “fire worshippers,” a title which they themselves have as regularly repudiated, on the grounds that fire is for them simply an icon, helping them to fix their thoughts on God and truth, as enjoined by their prophet. Nevertheless fire, so seemingly alive, perhaps attracts veneration even more readily than the static icons of other faiths; and undoubtedly over the millennia the cherishing of fire has contributed a special element to Zoroastrian worship.

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