



FRAWARDĪGĀN

FRAWARDĪGĀN (New Pers. *farvardagān*), name of the ten-day Zoroastrian festival (*gāhānbār*) at year's end in honor of the spirits of the dead. The name itself is elliptic for (*rōzān ī*) *frawardīgān* (ten days dedicated to) the *frawards*. The festival is divided into two five-day halves. The first half is known as the lesser five (*panj-e keh*, *ḵardag* or *kasōg*), the second half, forming the five intercalary days, is known variously as the greater five (*panj-e meh* or *vazrog*) and Gathic (*gāhānīg*). Among Persian Zoroastrians the entire festival may be referred to as *panjī*, while among Parsis the term *moktād* is also used. Among the Parsis many observe an extended duration of eighteen days. Originally the festival fell on the last five days of the last month of the year, Esfand, and on the five intercalary days between Esfand and the first month, Farvardīn. Thus, it was an "all-souls" festival that immediately preceded the New Year's festival (*Nōg-rōz*). However, owing to calendar problems occasioned by the Persian 365-day year, it appears that discrepancies arose already in Sassanian times between civil and religious calendars. This is witnessed, for example, in the contradictory testimony of the *Dēnkard* (Madan, 683.4 ff.), where the traditional placement at the end of the winter and of the year is mentioned and that of the *Pahlavi Rivāyat* (ed. Dhabhar, p. 1) where the ten *rōz frawardīgān* are placed in the month of Ādur. Even in modern times Farvardagān will fall at different times of the year depending on which of the Parsi calendars (Shenshai, Kadmi, or Fasli) is used.

There can be no doubt that an All-Souls festival at the end of the year immediately preceding the celebration of Nowrūz is extremely ancient. It is



possible to speculate about the original duration of the festival (Boyce, 1970, pp. 513 ff.), yet our earliest source (*Yt.* 13.49), already recognizes it as lasting ten nights. There it is identified by its ancient name of uncertain meaning *Hamaspaθmaēdaya*. The passage itself proclaims the worship of the *fravašis* of the righteous who come to the dwelling places of the living for the dual purpose of enjoying worship and receiving gifts of food and clothing. While the Pahlavi books and the *Rivāyats* give little information about specific practices they do not deviate appreciably from the description of *Yašt*. Modern studies (Boyce, 1977; Modi) show that Farvardagān is, and was, a festival rich in detail, in which local variations embellish the basic purpose of welcoming into the home and treating with rites of hospitality the souls of the departed ancestors.

See also [FESTIVALS i](#).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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