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Zoroastrianism was once the state religion of the later Achaemenid (550-330 BCE) and Sasanian empires (224-642 CE). Following the Muslim conquest of Persia in the 7th century CE, there was a slow but strong stream of conversion from Zoroastrianism to Islam (see CONVERSION ii. OF IRANIANS TO ISLAM). In the 10th century, a number of Zoroastrians fled to India and established a safe haven there; they came to be known as the Parsis (see PARSI COMMUNITIES i. EARLY HISTORY). But the remainder in Persia faced increasing pressures to convert. By 1250, the population of Zoroastrians had declined to an estimated less than twenty percent of the total population of Persia (Choksy, 1997, p. 93).

The 17th-19th centuries were a difficult period for Zoroastrians with further large population losses. The Safavids (1502-1736) launched a program of conversion to Shiʿite Islam, during which time religion became a weapon of control. The Afghan invasions in the early 18th century fell disproportionately on the Zoroastrians, whose predicament intensified in the following political turmoil for succession to the Safavids. The ascension of the Qajars (1794-1925) brought greater stability, but also increased poverty and intensification of discrimination against religious minorities, at least for the first half of the 19th century. By the mid-19th century, the Zoroastrian community had reached its

nadir. European travelers report no more than 7,000 Zoroastrians remaining, living primarily in the cities of Yazd and Kerman (Ronald F. Thomson, 1868, apud Gilbar, p. 184). By the 1970s, the Zoroastrians had recouped some of their strength, growing to about 25,000 people (Iran Government census, Markaz-e Āmar-e Irān, 1966). These figures reflect a trend of growing desolation and modest revival.

The main focus of this entry is on the nature of pressures exerted on the Zoroastrians of Yazd and Kerman to convert away from their religion, and the Zoroastrian responses of both conversion and persistence during the 19th century. More specifically, it will cover four themes: Muslim treatment of Zoroastrians and pressures to convert, Zoroastrian modes of resistance and submission, the Parsi contribution to Zoroastrian revivalism, and a comparison of Zoroastrian responses to Muslim pressures to convert versus responses to Bahai forms of proselytization.

This sub-article is divided into the following sections: (1) Introduction; (2) Muslim treatment of Zoroastrians; (3) Conversion to Islam; (4) Boundary maintenance; (5) Formal political leadership and Muslim authorities; (6) The impact of Parsis; (7) The impact of Bahaism; (8) The denouement.

(1) INTRODUCTION

Yazd, a city on the southern edge of the Great Desert (Dašt-e Kavir) and Dašt-e Lut, is situated amidst looming sands and built of sand-colored mud bricks. Its relative isolation before highways were built may account for its choice as a refuge for Zoroastrians and as a factor in the famed religious fervor of its Muslim, Jewish, and Zoroastrian populations (Boyce, 1977, pp. 9, 11).

In the second half of the 19th century, Yazd had a sizable population of about 45,000 souls, predominantly Muslim (reported by Keith Edward Abbott and Thomson, apud Gilbar, p. 182) with a small number of Jews (Yeroushalmi, p. 199) and Zoroastrians. Its isolation was periodically broken due to its location along two caravan trade routes, one leading through Yazd to Kerman and Bandar-e ʿAbbās on the Persian Gulf, and the other leading westward through Shiraz. Thus Yazd could support considerable artisanal production, including about 1,300 cotton looms and 300 to 350 silk looms (Abbott, apud Gilbar, p. 197), which required the work of many artisans in dyeing, spinning, and weaving, thus providing good winter work for farmers. The urban Zoroastrians, like the majority of residents of Yazd, were artisans and manual

laborers. Some peddled goods from village to village. By mid-century a few had been able to take advantage of opportunities to export goods such as wool, cotton, and nuts to Europe and Asia (Hataria, subheading "The millenium of misery"), although occupations (like trade) that would require contacts with Muslims were legally forbidden to Zoroastrians at that time (Boyce, 1977, p. 12).

In the villages surrounding Yazd, the Zoroastrian residents, like others, were sharecroppers on the lands of large landowners and in some cases owned some small parcels of land themselves, which were irrigated by underground channels (*qanāt*, *kāriz*) bringing water from the mountains. The farmers were generally poor, ravaged by tax collectors, high rents by landlords, droughts, the famines of 1870-72 and 1891, and raids by nomads (Boyce, 1977 p. 11; Melville, p. 130; Gilbar, p. 190). Thus, economically, the Zoroastrians were not highly distinguished from Muslims or Jews.

Most homes of Yazd were single-story buildings of mud brick construction, reached through narrow, dusty alleys that twisted and wound about to deter attackers. Built above the homes of affluent Muslims, one often could see a wind-tower (*bādgir*), which collected and circulated fresh air, thus cooling the home's interior (Browne, p. 362). However, these were forbidden to Zoroastrians. The houses in the Zoroastrian quarter were built particularly low, sometimes partially below the ground, so that one had to stoop to enter the narrow, low doorways. They were so built in order to prevent attack by mounted intruders, but also to represent their lowly status as required by Muslim customary law. Inside, the houses were dark and cramped (Boyce, 1992, p. 158). Nonetheless, inside, each house had a garden courtyard and a small room, the *pesgam-e mas*, used for ritual purposes, since religious ceremonies were mostly celebrated out of the sight of Muslim eyes (Boyce, 1977, p. 41).

It was estimated by travelers that there were a total of about 1,000 Zoroastrians living on the margins of the city of Yazd with an additional 6,000 in villages, where populations were either purely Zoroastrian or mixtures of Muslims and Zoroastrians (Sykes, p. 423). The scholar A. V. Williams Jackson (p. 366), visiting Iran in the 1905 period, described the fire temple (*ātaškada*) of the Zoroastrians of Yazd as purposively modest structures with no special markings. Upon entrance, one proceeded through winding halls to reach a secluded and protected fire simmering on coals. On one side was a stone floor, upon which the *mōbeds* (also called *dastur*) would sit to chant memorized

prayers from the Avesta, their mouths veiled to keep their breath from polluting the sacred fire. Nearby there was also a dilapidated structure for holding purification rites, the rarely used *barašnomgāh* (Jackson, pp. 366-68, 383; see BARAŠNOM). Although ritual observances had declined along with the population, there were still a fairly large number of *mōbed*s, by one estimate 200, serving the communities (Boyce, 1977, p. 14). The neighborhood was also characterized by cypress trees near the fire temple, as well as pomegranate and date trees, representing the greenery so admired by Zoroastrians. The city of Yazd also housed a small seminary for training *mōbed*s/*dastur*s as well as a quarter, the *Maḥalla-ye dasturān*, inhabited by the head *dastur*, regular *dasturs*, and possibly the various assistant clerics as well (Boyce, 1977, pp. 4-5). In addition each of the more than thirty-one villages with Zoroastrian communities near Yazd had small temples or *ādariān*s (Jackson, p. 366), one of which, in the village of Šarifābād, housed the most sacred, long-lived fire, Ātaš Bahrām, carefully kept in a remote location.

Outside of town, built into the mountain, was a *daḵma* with high walls of mud and clay bricks, in which Zoroastrian corpses were laid, to be exposed to birds and other creatures rather than be buried and defile the earth. Zoroastrians were reviled by Muslims for their unusual death rituals and labeled fire worshippers as *gabr* or *gōr* (unbelievers). Thus their distinction was primarily in their religious identity rather than in a specific occupational or geographic niche (Boyce, 1977, p. 10).

Kerman was the second city in Persia to which Zoroastrians had fled and gathered in the last few centuries. It was a small city of about 30,000 people in the 19th century (Abbott, in 1851-52, apud Gilbar, p. 182), located on the edge of the Lut Desert (Kavir-e Lut) in the southeast of Iran and surrounded by protective walls. The city, located on the Indo-Iranian trade route, had been a significant commercial center since the Safavid era (English, p. 26). Zoroastrians and Jews lived just outside the gates, because, as one Zoroastrian describes it, the Kermani Muslims were more tolerant than the Yazdis (Vafadari, p. 451). In the early 18th century, the Zoroastrian and Jewish quarters, because of their vulnerable location, were decimated by the Afghan invaders and then by the Kermanis when the Zoroastrians sided with the anti-Shiʿite Afghanis in 1720-22 (Yeroushalmi, p. xxxiv; see viii, above). Inhabitants of Kerman also suffered when members of the Zand dynasty took refuge there and were sought out and killed by the Qajar would-be rulers (see ix, above). The total population of Kerman declined significantly, and many villages were

deserted (Sykes, 1958, II, p. 288; English, p. 27).

In the 19th century a small remnant Zoroastrian population of no more than one thousand people (Ringer, p. 145) lived in a location still outside the walls. Their urban quarter was similar to that of Yazdi Zoroastrians, famously clean and orderly, built defensively with high walls, under restrictions, and with limited means (English, p. 45; Eduljee, subheading "Kerman city's Zoroastrian neighborhood, Gabr Maḥalla/Mahale"; see also M. Soroushian, "The Legacy"). A fire temple was located inside the city of Kerman, and a *daḵma* (tower for exposure of the dead) was located outside residential areas. Kerman also had *dastur*s and a head *dastur-e dasturān* (Boyce, 1977, p. 4, n. 12). Inside the Zoroastrian neighborhood (Gabr Maḥalla) were shops and services making the community semi-independent in terms of domestic needs. Each household had secret places to store food items and their own wells to tide them over during times of duress and during winter months. There were also secret passages between homes, including joint roofs in case inhabitants had to flee, and their own water wells as well (M. Soroushian, "The Legacy"). Some Zoroastrians, like Ḵodābaḵš Sorušiān, were peddlers, bringing goods to and from villages (Cereti et al., p. xi), but most domestic trade was in the hands of Muslims.

As in Yazd, the majority of Zoroastrians were poor sharecroppers living in villages. Life was hard with high rent collected by landlords, cholera epidemics, high infant mortality, frequent robberies by nomads, and the administrative burdens of land taxes on everyone (Gilbar, pp. 178, 182, 190). However, the people of Kerman were somewhat insulated from economic difficulties because of the successful production of the famous Kashmiri shawls (English, p. 26) and the location of Kerman on the Indo-Iranian trade route. For both Kerman and Yazd, conditions began improving in the 1850s in the wake of Britiain's industrial revolution and search for markets and as political stability encouraged and facilitated international trade. Shawls, carpets, and cash crops (such as opium) were exported in exchange for tea, cotton, and many goods manufactured in Europe (English, pp. 26-29), but the extent to which Zoroastrians of both Yazd and Kerman were able to enjoy these new opportunities was limited by their marginal status.

(2) MUSLIM TREATMENT OF ZOROASTRIANS IN THE 19TH CENTURY

The theological foundations for Muslim relations to non-Muslims offer conflicting guidance paving the way for varied practices.

Under Qurʾanic law, those who are to be rewarded by God are "those who believe, those who are Jews and the Christians and Sabeans, all who believe in God and the Last Day (of judgement)…" (Qurʾan 2:62). These three latter peoples are recognized as having written scriptures received from God and thus are termed "People of the Book" (*ahl al-ketāb*). In exchange for the status of protected peoples (*ḏemmi*), they are required to pay the poll tax (*jezya*) "… with willing submission, having been brought low" (Qurʾan 9:29).

Although the Zoroastrians are not among those listed, nonetheless, for practical reasons and with some theological justification (e.g., Mālek b. Anas, 7:24, cited in Choksy, 1997 p. 116) the conquering Arabs collected the poll tax from them, thus treating Zoroastrians as People of the Book. Zoroastrians were also to some extent protected by the millet-like system. Following customary law and the Qurʾan, which states that "There is no compulsion in religion" (2:256), non-Muslims had the freedom to practice their own religion and family law as long as it was done quietly and away from Muslim eyes. For example, religious minorities in Persia were allowed to make and drink wine, which is forbidden to Muslims, to obey their own laws of marriage and divorce, and to have some degree of autonomy. However, as Muslim power grew and that of the Zoroastrians diminished further, laws were developed that would limit economic and political achievement by non-believers and demarcate them as second-class citizens.

Over time a combination of Byzantine and Sasanian law codes, as well as Islamic law, for instance the Pact of Umar (ʿAhd ʿOmar b. al-Ḵaṭṭāb, reportedly a treaty made with the Christians of Syria), and the writings of Muslim scholars such as Shaikh Bahāʾ-al-Din ʿĀmeli came to define the legal nature of Muslim relations with non-believers (Yeroushalmi, pp. 3-6). For example, prohibitions of non-believers from holding office, giving testimony in court, and temple building come from Byzantine law. Specific behaviors marking non-believers off as subordinate, for instance dress codes or stepping aside if a Muslim wishes to pass, and especially the view of nonbelievers as polluting derive from Sasanian law (Levy-Rubin, pp. 61-64). It is therefore likely that the greater concern with nonbelievers as sources of pollution in Shiʿite versus Sunni Islam, stems from the greater Sasanian influence in Shiʿite lands.

However, the status of the various minorities was often plagued by ambiguity. On one hand, in Islam the Jews and Christians (People of the Book) are privileged over other nonbelievers. For example, the Qurʾan (5:5), states that Muslims are allowed to marry Jews and Christian women. In the same verse it

says that "The food of those given the Book is also lawful for you." How did the Zoroastrians fit into these rules? Aside from the marriage law (5:5), by and large the Persian Muslims formally and informally choose to lump all unbelievers (*kāfer*) together, especially after Shiʿism became the dominant faith in Persia under the Safavids (Yeroushalmi, p. 4; Choksy, 1997 p. 129). For example, the highly influential 17th-century Shiʿite theologian, Moḥammad-Bāqer Majlesi (d. 1110/1697), stated that Muslims should not greet Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians, pagans, chess players and other gamblers, musicians, and homosexuals (Majlesi, pp, 237-38, apud Sanasarian, p. 23; Choksy, 1997, p. 129). Thus Zoroastrians were at times included as protected people, but this category did not often fare particularly well in Persia.

Treatment varied considerably over time. There were stories of conflict and cruelty, as when, in the 9th century, Ṭāher b. al-Ḥosayn, the founder of the Taherid line of governors of Khorasan (Jackson, pp. 359-60; see TAHERIDS) reportedly ordered all Zoroastrian books to be burned. There were other times when minorities were more welcomed, such as under Shah ʿAbbās I (r. 996-1038/1588-1629), who, according to oral history/legend, rescued the Zoroastrians of Kerman from a massacre (Bāstāni Pārizi; summary in M. Soroushian, "Ganj-Ali Khan"). Andrew Magnuson, documenting cases of substantial and altered history, concludes that the narrative of Muslim-Zoroastrian relations in the medieval period was overall unduly lachrymose (Magnusson, passim).

How were the ambiguities of Zoroastrian status expressed in the 19th century, when many new influences came into play? The reports of travelers from Bombay and the West and letters written by the Zoroastrian Council (Anjoman-e Zardoštiān) of Kerman offer considerable evidence of Muslim mistreatment of Zoroastrians and scant instances of cooperation. Manekji Limji Hataria (1813-1890; see below), a Parsi arriving in Persia in 1854, reported that lives of Zoroastrians had no value. They could be murdered, assaulted, and women were raped with no consequences (Deboo, p. 4). He reports that houses are broken into and burnt down on a whim (Hataria, subheading "The Millenium of Misery"). Western travelers in the late 19th century, when conditions had begun to improve, describe the Zoroastrians of Yazd and Kerman as segregated, denigrated, and marked by an extensive list of burdensome restrictions theoretically stemming from their unclean status (Jackson, pp. 373-75; Browne, pp. 370-71).

Zoroastrians (as well as Jews) had to live in segregated quarters. While

shopping, they were not allowed to touch any food in the market that was moist and could carry pollution, such as meat or fruit; they could not go out in the rain, as this would carry their pollution as well. Thus, they could not use such facilities of Muslims as barbershops, bathhouses, water fountains, and teahouses. In the popular view, Jews were deemed less polluting than Zoroastrians and were sometimes able to serve as intermediaries, doing their shopping for them on rainy days, for example. Zoroastrians described that, even if their garment inadvertently touched that of a Muslim, they could be severely beaten (Jackson, pp. 374-76; Browne, p. 406; English, p. 45; Kestenberg Amighi, p. 85). These rules served to create a vast gulf between Muslim and non-Muslim society.

There were also bans on the use of items or practices that could elevate the status of a non-Muslim, or give them a competitive position vis-à-vie Muslims. Thus they were forbidden to set up shop in the bazaar, travel abroad, engage in trade and commerce, especially linens, which apparently carry pollution more than other types of cloth (and also was a lucrative trade item; Kestenberg Amighi, p. 86). They could not wear eyeglasses, open schools, repair religious structures, wear a watch, carry arms, or ride a horse (Malcolm, pp. 44-48; Jackson, pp. 374-75). These restrictions did not so much concentrate Zoroastrians into an economic niche as exclude them from what at times was a lucrative field.

Non-Muslims could not be in any way physically elevated over Muslims, so that passing a Muslim, even a child, they must dismount from their donkey. Their homes could not be higher than the up-stretched hand of a Muslim (Malcolm, p. 45). The housing restriction meant that homes were often built somewhat below ground and would not accommodate a wind-tower, even if it were not forbidden (see above).

Furthermore, minorities were required to make themselves easily identifiable by wearing, in the case of Zoroastrian men, only yellow, brown, and tan colored clothing, twisting their turbans rather than folding them, wearing tight trousers rather than loose ones, and splashing white paint around their door posts (Malcolm, pp. 44). There were no dress codes regarding Zoroastrian women, perhaps because they already dressed in a distinct manner.

As Hataria described, basic safety was also lacking. Under customary Islamic law in Persia, the Muslim murderer of a non-Muslim could not be executed,

and the *dia* (blood compensation) owed to victims would be one-half of what was owed for the murder of a Muslim. However, it was rare that any punishment would be meted out at all (M. Soroushian, "Manekji Limji Hateria," on the 1855 Hataria report; Browne, pp. 371-72).

Minorities were usually very careful to avoid any infractions of the various restrictions and any behaviors that might provoke an attack. In 1883, for example, a Zoroastrian in Yazd named Rostam Dinyār, believing accurately that the house height rule had been repealed, built a house higher than was usually permitted. Hearing that a group of ruffians was coming to get him, he fled. Another Zoroastrian was arbitrarily killed in his place with no repercussions (Malcolm, pp. 49-50). During times of interregnums and chaos, rebellious people often used pogroms against minorities as a way of expressing their power and dissatisfaction with the government. For example, during the interregnum between Moḥammad Shah Qājār (r 1834-48) and Nāṣr-al-Din Shah (r. 1848-96), many Zoroastrians were robbed, assaulted, and forced to convert (Browne, pp. 370-71). During such times in both Yazd and Kerman, fanatics would fall upon a passing Zoroastrian, burn their books, and on occasion take their lives (Petermann, II, p. 204; cited in Boyce, 1979, p. 209). Unruly crowds were often also incited against the Zoroastrians during holy months (M. Soroushian, "The Legacy"). However, when central authority was strong, often the shah would step in to control disturbances in the name of his authority and incidentally thus protect minorities.

More common than murder, however, were cases of banditry, assault, insults, and the kidnapping and conversion of youths. As entertainment young Muslim ruffians would often insult Zoroastrians calling them *gabr*, *pedar-sag* (unbelievers, son of a dog), slap them around, or attempt to provoke them by violating their sacred objects or places (Boyce, 1977, pp. 8-9; Choksy, 2006, p. 136). Kicking dogs, climbing into the *daḵmas*, saying the Muslim call to prayer in a Zoroastrian fire temple to desecrate it, were all too common (see also Boyce, 1979, p. 158, for similar earlier practices). Elderly Yazdis recalled how even in the early 20th century women would dig a big hole near the stream where they washed their clothing to secure a hiding place for themselves against would-be kidnappers. A particularly beautiful young girl would be kept indoors or her teeth might be blackened; or, if it were feasible, she might be taken to India (Boyce, 1977, p. 12). If girls were kidnapped, they would be bathed, converted, and married off. In Yazd they were then placed in a carriage and paraded around the bazaar to be shown off as new acquisitions

for Islam (Kostenberg Amighi, pp. 86-87).

Conversions of a Zoroastrian to Islam had more extreme ramifications for the community than did the death of a member. Up to the 3rd century after the Muslim invasion, when the Zoroastrian population was much larger and stronger, Zoroastrian families confiscated the wealth and inheritance rights of those Zoroastrians who dared to convert to Islam (Choksy, 1997, p. 89). Afterwards, the tables were turned. Upon the death of a Zoroastrian family member, converts to Islam could legally claim a lion's share of inheritance rights to their property, thus turning new converts into potential enemies (Browne, p. 372). For example, a Muslim man could kidnap a Zoroastrian girl, forcibly convert and marry her, and then be entitled to inheritance rights of the Zoroastrian family members (Deboo, p. 5). This inheritance law was a practical and symbolic expression of Muslim power. Although this law encouraged conversion, it also provoked countermeasures to protect the family's sons and daughters.

However, of all the depredations inflicted with the intention of stemming economic competition, demonstrating the superiority of Muslims, and pressuring Zoroastrians to convert, the most burdensome proved to be the poll tax (*jezya*). As under the Sasanians, it was often imposed collectively on villages and city neighborhoods of nonbelievers. Thus, if their numbers declined or their poverty increased, the tax did not adjust itself proportionately. The royal crown farmed out tax collection to the highest bidders, who in turn attempted to extract as much tax as possible in their designated regions. Minorities also were assessed taxes on their commercial transactions and land holdings, which were double those paid by Muslims (Choksy, 1997, p. 119). Records of the Parsi representative, Hataria, indicate that in the middle part of the 19th century, out of one thousand Zoroastrian families in Kerman two hundred paid the required poll tax without difficulty, two hundred with difficulty, and the remainder did not pay at all. Those who did not pay were forced to convert or to go into hiding (Šahmardān; M. Soroushian, "Hataria").

Having reviewed this catalogue of sufferings, it is impossible to suggest that persecution and discrimination was insignificant. However, highlighting troubles masks the ordinariness of everyday life. Each of the travelers/visitors of the 19th century cited here (Browne, Malcolm, Sykes, Wilson, Jackson) describes a precarious existence for Zoroastrians. However, each of them also describes normal aspects of life, including religious observances, weddings,

funerals, and feasts given by wealthy Zoroastrians. Many Zoroastrians fondly recalled the joyfulness of gathering to celebrate religious festivities in remote Zoroastrian villages (Boyce, 1977, p. 15). It seems that most Zoroastrians were able to sustain a fairly routine life by keeping as segregated as possible from potential attackers. Furthermore, there were many cases of mixed and even positive interactions between Muslims and Zoroastrians. Thomson's 1868 report to the British legation in Tehran surprisingly states that Zoroastrians were well treated by their countrymen (cited in Yeroushalmi, p. 65). In the economic sphere, because of their care of earth, air, water, and greenery, Zoroastrians were valued as gardeners (Browne, p. 387) and were brought to Isfahan and Tehran to tend to the royal gardens (Lady Sheil, Chap. 10, May 25). Zoroastrian sharecroppers who worked the land of Muslim landlords (*arbāb*), cleaning their underground water channels (without apparently polluting the water), were sometimes beaten, but were also protected by their landlords from the greed of exploitative tax collectors. At times Zoroastrians were hired on as apprentices to Muslim artisans, but they too had occasion to complain of mistreatment.

In the social sphere, particularly at the elite level, more consistently cordial relations appeared to be possible. Wealthy Muslims and Zoroastrians apparently socialized together in both Yazd and Kerman, as reported by travelers. Edward G. Browne describes Muslims and Babis regularly being entertained in the Zoroastrian home where he himself stayed in Yazd and in Kerman in 1887-88 (Browne, pp. 376, 437, 442).

Mollā Goštāsb Kermāni, the great-grandfather of the Zoroastrian leader and reformer Kayḵosrow Šāhroḵ (1874-1940; on him, see Ringer, pp. 184-95) was able to be employed as an astrologer in the Qajar court, and Hataria notes that, although prejudice was rife, he was usually well received, especially in Tehran (Hataria, Chap. 4, p. 6, cited in Boyce, 1969, p. 22). Browne describes Zoroastrians and Muslims in Kerman chatting together amiably in the Ganj-ʿAli Khan caravansary (pp. 437, 442, 446). A late 19th-century Christian missionary in northern Iran, Samuel Graham Wilson (1858-1916), notes that more than half of the Muslims (he met) were ashamed of the continued bigotry. Even when they regarded Christian Europeans as polluting (*najes*), they still welcomed them in their homes (Wilson, pp. 226, 228).

Thus, alongside the heavy restrictions, frequent attacks, and heavy poll tax, there were also positive elements in 19th-century Yazd and Kerman for the Zoroastrians. This is not to suggest that the hardships were counterbalanced,

but only to acknowledge the existence of decent people and pleasant times amidst the all too frequent trauma of Zoroastrian life. Much evidence suggests that the ruffians and local religious leaders were those who brought the most misery to the Zoroastrians and that the Muslim elite and central government rulers were those from whom the Zoroastrian received the best treatment.

Indeed, as is often the case with minorities, problems arose for Zoroastrians when the government was weak and clerics and mobs of ruffians (*luṭi*s) stirred up trouble (Kestenberg Amighi, p. 93: Hataria, subheading "When the Parsis intervened"; Stausberg, II, p. 441). The letters of complaint from the Zoroastrian Council of Kerman to governors, kings, and Parsis in Bombay focus on specific unruly individuals as responsible parties (J. Soroushian, 1994, pp. 86-95).

In contrast it was from the central authorities that Zoroastrians were able in some cases to obtain some justice and respite. For instance, when the Zoroastrian, Mollā Rostam, complained to the progressive Prime Minister Amir(-e) Kabir about the robbery and abuse of Zoroastrians in Yazd, the prime minister ordered the governor to have all lost property restored to the victims (Šahmardān, in Kestenberg Amighi p. 90). However, it is revealing that the central government, though at times beneficent, did not attempt to change generally accepted anti-Zoroastrian practices, nor did the local, more liberal Muslim elite attempt to control ruffians and clerics. In fact there were cases when they hired *luṭi*s to torment Zoroastrians and keep them in line (Boyce, 1977, p. 10). Were they afraid to advocate for minorities? Or were the elite satisfied to have Zoroastrians (and other minorities) serve as scapegoats for the discontents of the poor and the Muslim clergy, who were angry with the gradual centralization of royal power and diminishment of their own?

Thus, it was a complex environment which, in order to survive, minorities had to navigate deftly. Often Zoroastrians were unable to do so. Despite counter-examples to this lachrymose narrative, the evidence, overall, suggests an intolerable atmosphere for the majority of Zoroastrians of that period. Even when incidents of murder declined, the ever-present possibility of such events would be traumatizing.

Zoroastrian responses. One of the main Zoroastrian responses to Muslim proselytization efforts was conversion, as attested by the dramatic decline in population size of the Zoroastrian community. From being the religion of an empire, Zoroastrianism became the religion of about 7,000 souls with only 450

left in Kerman by the mid-19th century (Deboo, p. 5, citing Hataria's 1865 account in Gujarati, *Rishaīe Ej Hāre Shiaīe Irān*); Hataria's count given to the Comte de Gobineau and published in 1859 was 825 in Kerman (178 men, 239 women, 189 boys, 219 girls) and 1,379 in Yazd (for these and other counts, see ii, above). Paradoxically, perhaps, the highest level of conversion in the first few centuries after the Arab conquest took place in the regions where relationships between the new Muslims and Zoroastrians were relatively cooperative, such as in Azarbaijan and Khuzestan. In areas with more Zoroastrians, resistance, and inter-communal hostility, conversion proceeded more slowly, such as in Fars, Kerman, and Khorasan (Choksy, 1997, p. 140). Thus, we might presume that, in the 19th century as well, enticements would have played at lease as important a role in conversion to Islam as did attacks, discrimination, and financial burdens.

(3) CONVERSION TO ISLAM

The burden of the poll tax appears to have been the most serious, at least according to Parsi sources. When a family neither could pay their taxes nor could afford to escape to India, the whole family might convert, or just the nuclear family. There was no communal fund to save them (Choksy, 1997, p. 122 [ref. earlier centuries]). Conversion also reportedly occurred on the occasion of the maturation of a young man, the time of weakest family solidarity, especially where resources did not sustain the growing family. There were many cases of young men who left the community and were never heard of again. However, often multiple factors were involved. One young man planned to convert in order to enhance his chances of obtaining an apprenticeship with a Yazdi merchant. He also wanted to escape his abusive father and marry a beautiful Muslim girl. However, at this point his father died. The extensive Zoroastrian death ceremonies began and re-immersed him in his family network. Members of the extended family brought food, aid, and advice, and he remained within the community. Browne, during his stay in Yazd in 1887-88, was told that it sometimes happened that a young Zoroastrian man fell in love with a Muslim girl, and, to win her over, he converted to Islam. Later he might be regretful. Since apostasy from Islam is punishable by death, the family would send him to India, where his wife could convert with him to Zoroastrianism (Browne, pp. 381, 387).

In another reported case, a young man left his home in Kerman under financial pressure. After seven years he returned with a Muslim wife and family. Although his mother visited him secretly, the rest of his family had

little to do with him. He attended the death ceremonies for his mother later but was never permitted to rejoin the family (Kestenberg Amighi, p. 117). There were also occasional instances where a young girl ran away with a lover and converted to Islam. Families complained that they were not given the opportunity to convince the girl to remain with the family. Most often girls, and sometimes even boys, were captured, converted (and in the case of boys, circumcised), and then married off. In a small minority of these cases, girls were recaptured, cleansed, and hidden, but this was a dangerous endeavor (Kestenberg Amighi, p. 117; J. Soroushian, 1994, p. 59).

Finally conversions of whole extended families or communities continued, especially in the Yazd area, though these were rare by the end of the 19th century. The last reported mass conversion to Islam took place in the mid-19th century. Muslims youths invaded the Zoroastrian village of Torkābād near Yazd and began threatening inhabitants with death to their families if they did not convert. By the end of the day, almost everyone had converted to Islam, and no sign of Zoroastrian life remained there (Boyce, 1977, p. 7).

In the somewhat more tolerant Kerman, there was a higher rate of conversion to Islam than in Yazd (observation of the Danish scholar Niels Ludwig Westergaard [1815-1872], "Letter to John Wilson," *Oriental Christian Spectator*, May 1848, cited in Ringer, pp. 145-46). Perhaps it was a combination of the decimation of the Zoroastrian population during the Afghan invasions, 1720-22, and the less religious atmosphere among all groups that made conversion to Islam less daunting and more acceptable. In fact, in Kerman several converts to Islam continued to live in the Zoroastrian quarter outside the city, something that would have been unlikely in Yazd. In sum, the primary causes for conversion were the poll tax, the abuse and harassments, inducements for job advancement and marriage hopes among youth, with the inducements being particularly effective.

Survival strategies. As conversions continued, some predicted the end of the Zoroastrian presence in Iran. At this time of great vulnerability, what strategies and cultural mechanisms could possibly have forestalled further conversions and extinction? Probably the most powerful force separating Zoroastrians from Muslims was fear. Zoroastrians often responded to harassment by withdrawal. Walking down the street, a Zoroastrian subjected to insults would stand down. When harassment was more severe, the most feasible solution was to flee. Following the example of the 10th-century

Zoroastrians, a few families departed for India, Armenia, and Bulgaria in the mid-19th century (Hataria, subheading “Parsis helped Zoroastrians of Iran”). Sometimes escape was more local. Zoroastrians frequently fled mobs or attackers hiding out in mountain caves (Hataria, subheading “When the Parsis intervened”; Westergaard, pp. 21-22, n. 4).

When Zoroastrians of a village fled, their neighborhoods were settled by Muslim villagers. In the Zoroastrian village of Aḥmadābād near Yazd, it began when a few Muslim families moved in. Then a few more came. As long as the Zoroastrians were still in the majority, the situation was amiable, but harassment began once Muslims had gained sufficient numbers. Some Muslim children bullied Zoroastrian children, calling them names; there were also assaults and thefts. Finally, the remaining Zoroastrian families moved away to another Zoroastrian village that was even more arid and undesirable than the one they had left (Boyce, 1977, pp. 7-8). Hardships and mistreatment may have caused many to convert, but they also can harden boundaries between two groups.

(4) BOUNDARY MAINTENANCE MECHANISMS AND OTHER CULTURAL STRATEGIES

The 19th century contains a narrative of suffering, withdrawal, and conversion, but there is also within it a story of survival and persistence. How did the stalwarts of the community endure so long? Mary Boyce marvels at the high degree of conservatism among Zoroastrians that sustained practices such as the use of *nirang* (consecrated bull’s urine) as a purifying agent from ancient Indo-Iranian times (Boyce, 1977, pp. 92-93). Likewise many of the associated purity and pollution concepts that served to separate the Zoroastrians from people of other religions in Sasanian times persisted in similar function up to the 19th century. In fact, Zoroastrians of Iran were viewed as having retained pure Zoroastrianism by their brethren in India. From the 16th to the late 18th century, the Zoroastrian Parsis of India, attempting to revive their own religious knowledge, corresponded with Zoroastrian priests (*mōbed*) of Persia in a series of letters called the *Rewāyats* (Palsetia, p. 24). However, by the 19th century, travelers, such as Hataria, report that Zoroastrians were in a state of great ignorance with many rituals, having been simplified or lost (see also Jackson, p. 378). Hataria stressed the need to preserve and restore them (Boyce, 1969). The nine-night *barašnom* purification ritual appears to have been abandoned by all but the priesthood (Jackson, p. 383; Ringer p. 145). However, the Zoroastrians, particularly in

Yazd and surrounding villages, kept up with an array of the simpler rituals related to purity. For example, people still believed that the forces of evil concentrated in the figure of Ahriman took energy and strength from corpses as well as organic matter that has lost its validity. This would include the cuttings from hair and nails, saliva, and even one's breath, and most emphatically blood from wounds and menstruation. It was still believed vital to keep sources of pollution from touching sacred things, including the elements of water, air, earth, and fire. Since Muslims did not keep to these same laws of purity, they and their food and utensils were polluting, in and of themselves. In particular, since Muslims did not isolate menstruating women, Zoroastrians could not be sure if a Muslim woman was in a ritually dangerous state of bleeding, defiling all things around her or that came within her gaze. Thus, it was of highest importance that she never enter a fire temple, touch the special cloth used for initiation rites, or approach the specially treated bull's urine (*nirang*). In a rite called *puni*, Zoroastrian women themselves were kept segregated in small, windowless huts during their times of menstruation and postpartum bleeding (Boyce, 1979, p. 45; Choksy, 1989, pp. 91, 97).

Anthropologist Frederik Barth described cultural rules that keep ethnic groups distinct despite interaction between them. He called these boundary maintenance mechanisms (Barth, p. 9). They could include fear of pollution stemming from others, food taboos, linguistic differences, and other cultural incompatibilities. These markers and distancing mechanisms can counteract pressures to assimilate or convert to membership in a dominant or economically more successful group. They may encourage cultural persistence, cement solidarity, and activate what may be called weapons of the weak. To what extent did Zoroastrian culture and circumstance support these potential modes of persistence in the face of Muslim pressures to convert?

Zoroastrian women themselves were kept segregated in small windowless huts during their times of menstruation and postpartum bleeding both in the heat of summer and cold of winter (Boyce, 1979, p. 45; Choksy, 1989, pp. 91, 97).

Of course, Muslims share similar fears of pollution emanating from contact with bodily secretions, even that the touch or the breath of one who has become polluted can be spread (Choksy, 1989 p. 60). They even utilize a fairly similar formula for the simple purification rite of *wożu*ʾ (ritual ablution before prayer) in Islam and *pādyāb* in Zoroastrianism (Choksy, 1989, p. 60-61, 88). However, there were still many purity/pollution concepts which differed

between the two faiths, and they still regarded each other as inherently polluting, although this was much more seriously taken by the Muslims than the Zoroastrians by the 19th century.

How much did these purity rules segregate the two communities? In some cases the segregation was complete. Zoroastrians did not use Muslim-owned bathhouses, barbershops, or public water fountains. However powerful the mutually shared fears of pollution were between Muslims and Zoroastrians, however segregated their sacred and private spheres were usually kept, however watchful they were of each other, these rules did not necessarily create full segregation, for there were always means of interacting without risking the hazard of ritual impurity. For example, Zoroastrians might shop for fruit at the bazaar, being careful not to touch anything and spread pollution. A wealthy Muslim visiting the home of a wealthy Zoroastrian might bring his own servant and tea set.

Mary Boyce tells the story of a Muslim woman quilt-maker visiting the home of a Zoroastrian of the orthodox village of Šarifābād near Yazd in the 1960s. The two women were quite amiable, but the Muslim woman, despite remaining in the house of the Zoroastrian for several hours in the heat of the summer, politely refused any refreshments (Boyce, 1977 p. 97). Similarly Janet Kestenerg Amighi (p. 88) tells the story of a *ḥāji* who visited a Zoroastrian friend's home to drink forbidden vodka out of sight of other Muslims. However, before drinking, he washed the surface of the bottle of vodka three times, apparently to erase the polluting touch of his Zoroastrian host. Although from a later era, these stories illustrate how even strict rules of pollution, which create taboos and mark boundaries and often humiliated Zoroastrians, could nonetheless be accommodated or manipulated during social and commercial associations.

In addition to the boundary-marking impact of laws of purity and pollution, there were also other elements of religious rituals, beliefs, and practices which created distance and/or discomfort between Muslims and Zoroastrians and discouraged those voluntarily contemplating conversion to Islam.

Among the most important was the Muslim disregard for the ritual purity of fire, water, air, and earth. In fact, in later times the Zoroastrians of Šarifābād would ask for the embers of the fires of Muslim traders (e.g., blacksmiths, coppersmiths, bakers) so that they could rescue and purify them (Boyce, 1977, p. 187). For most Zoroastrians, it was inconceivable to bury a corpse and

defile the earth. Corpses exposed in the *daḵma*s were eaten by birds and thus kept from sacred elements. New converts to Islam (*jadid*s) in several cases wished to be exposed rather than be buried after death (Boyce, 1977 p. 191, n. 8).

Some differences may have evolved or been emphasized as part of early Muslim opposition to Zoroastrianism and the Zoroastrian response. Thus, while Zoroastrians view the urine of a bull (*gōmēz*) as cleansing, and specially aged and consecrated bull's urine (*nirang*) as purifying, Muslims view all urine as among the most polluting substances. Likewise, in Zoroastrian funerary rituals *mōbed*s brought dogs to view a corpse and chase away demons (the custom of *sagdid*: see DOG ii. IN ZOROASTRIANISM). Zoroastrians believed dogs were moral and loyal creatures. Alley dogs were often given scraps of food after religious ceremonies and at the fire temple (Choksy, 1989, p. 17: Boyce, 1977, p. 162-63). On the other hand, according to Islam, dogs are unclean and even despicable. In one Muslim hadith, among many ordering the killing of dogs, Prophet Moḥammad says: "Angels do not enter a house wherein there is a dog or a picture" (Boḵāri, V, p. 515, bk. 59, no. 128). While Muslims have a positive regard towards cats, orthodox Zoroastrians viewed the cat as a creature of darkness (Boyce, 1977, p. 163, n. 51; see CAT i. IN MYTHOLOGY AND FOLKLORE). Among Muslims, consumption of alcohol and pork is forbidden (*ḥarām*), while Zoroastrians appeared to delight in consumption of wine (Hataria, subheading "Rites of passage: simplicity").

Muslims wear black at funerals, while Zoroastrians wear white. Muslims, at times, drew on some of these religious contrasts to make conversion to Islam more permanent, for example, forcing new Zoroastrian converts to kick a dog, destroy their *kosti* (sacred belt; see KUSTIG), and spit in the fire (Deboo, p. 6). Thus, religious and cultural contrasts, while not prohibiting commercial or social interchanges, nor stopping all conversion, did create a partially effective barrier to voluntary conversion and intimate relationships.

Muslim customary laws regarding minorities were specifically designed to mark off non-Muslims as separate and inferior. The numerous dress restrictions levied on Zoroastrian men, the requirement to splash white paint around the door of a Zoroastrian home, and other public regulations described earlier were meant to humiliate and encourage conversion.

Finally, there were a significant number of cultural differences and incompatibilities, many outside of the religious sphere, which marked ethnic

group boundaries and limited social intercourse. Many Zoroastrians and Muslims had a strong mutual distain for the way women of the other group were treated. Zoroastrianism demands that both men and women choose their own paths by their own free will, hopefully choosing the righteous one. All religious obligations were at least in theory incumbent on women as well as men, except during the time when women were bleeding and said to be *binamāz* (lit. "without prayer"; see Boyce, 1977, pp. 99-107; Jong, pp. 147-48). By medieval times women had become second-class citizens (Jong, p. 151) due to Muslim influence and the difference that always exists between theory and practice. By the 19th century, their status was mixed; they were subordinate to men but, in contrast to Muslim customs, they were not rigidly segregated and, as already mentioned, did not usually veil their faces. Thus, many Zoroastrians deplored Muslim treatment of women.

On the other hand, many Muslims saw the lack of face veil among Zoroastrian women as a sign of promiscuity, inviting kidnapping and rape (Deboo, p. 11). As a result, Zoroastrian women rarely left the Zoroastrian neighborhood, except to wash clothes in a stream or collect water, leaving the few necessary errands to men who also avoided Muslim areas unless it was necessary. According to Hataria, some women adopted the face veil when in the presence of Muslim men (Hataria, subheading "Rites of passage: simplicity").

Many Zoroastrians viewed Muslims as being culturally, behaviorally, and even racially distinct, and in some cases the view was mutual (Kestenberg Amighi, p. 96). These factors may have become more stressed as ritual observances declined. Elderly Zoroastrians in the 20th century, comparing Muslims and Zoroastrians, offered what they saw as unique characteristics of Zoroastrians (vs Muslims):

(1) Cleanliness: the Islamic prescription of frequent washing was similar to that of the Zoroastrians, but even Muslims credited Zoroastrians with cleanliness, women rising each morning and splashing water to clean even their alleys. (This did not impact the common Muslim view of Zoroastrians as ritually polluting.) Zoroastrians, concerned with Muslim hygienic practices, were at certain times reluctant to patronize Muslim bakery shops or laundries even when they were finally permitted to do so.

(2) Honesty: Zoroastrians pointed out that honesty was one of the main precepts of their religion, as part of the moral code's prescription of "good thoughts, good words, and good deeds." Muslims often "…bore reluctant

witness to the moral stature of the otherwise despised *gor* [i.e., *gabr*]" (Boyce, 1977, p. 19); they were often ready to hire Zoroastrians in trusted positions when feasible, even as bankers (Boyce, 1992, pp. 176-77; see also Browne, p. 405).

(3) Reticence: Zoroastrians, especially Yazdis, were typified as being *kamri* (*kam-ru*, quiet and reserved), having a simple and frank nature (Boyce, 1992, p. 177), and being domestically oriented, while Muslims were described as being *pori* (*por-ru*, outgoing, impulsive, assertive) and more likely to frequent public places. Browne (p. 380), while in Yazd, quotes a certain Zoroastrian, Bahman, saying: "Injustice and harshness are best met with submission and patience, for thereby the hearts of enemies are softened, and they are often converted into friends."

(4) Joyfulness: Zoroastrian ceremonies, even funerals, were often accompanied by singing and dancing (Boyce, 1992, pp. 178-80). They often wore bright colors (in private). Their ceremonies were tied to their solar calendar, thus many celebrated the changing of the seasons: Nowruz (New Year) at the start of spring, water splashing (*jašn-e tirandāz*) in early summer, the fall harvest (Mehregān), and the winter solstice (Sada), among many others. In contrast, Shiʿite Muslim rituals followed a lunar calendar disconnected from the seasons. They tended to be solemn affairs, commemorating the deaths of martyrs, notably that of Imam Ḥosayn b. ʿAli. Muslims also acknowledged this difference (Boyce, 1977, p. 21).

(5) Racial purity: Zoroastrians saw themselves as pure Aryans, not having mixed with the Arabs, Mongols, or Afghan invaders (Kestenberg Amighi, p. 97).

Of course this list is a simplification of Zoroastrian attitudes towards Muslims. In practice Zoroastrians often referred to the Muslims that were fair and tolerant as *najib* (noble) and others as *nājajib* (ignoble), as Boyce describes (1977, pp. 9-10).

Finally, language can be a potent force for creating, marking, and strengthening ethnic group boundaries. Zoroastrians spoke an ethnolect, called Dari (to be distinguished from literary Dari, and formal Afghan Persian, called Dari [see AFGHANISTAN v. LANGUAGES, also KABOLI]) or *gap-e vehdinān* (the tongue of those of the Good Religion), which was not intelligible to Muslims. It was derived from a northwestern Iranian language family

(Farudi and Toosarvandani, passim; Browne, p. 388). Dari was the mother tongue of Zoroastrian communities, and the standard New Persian language was learned only by those Zoroastrians who needed it for their work. Women who rarely left their neighborhoods rarely learned standard Persian. Furthermore, when men spoke Persian, they did so with a distinct accent (Kestenberg Amighi, p. 98). Zoroastrians and Muslims were also marked by their names. Zoroastrians used Persian names, while Muslims commonly adopted Arabic names, especially those of the Prophet and his family. Thus, Zoroastrians and Muslims interacting in realms even not directly connected to their respective religions, were nonetheless always perfectly aware of each other's religious identity because of these linguistic labels and markers.

Although isolation clearly promotes survival of cultural differences, as Barth has noted, interaction itself does not necessarily lead to assimilation. There can be stable and persisting interrelations, even changing of group membership, without diminishment of marked boundaries and cultural contrasts. In fact, when colored by boundary maintenance customs, interactions can reinforce differences (Barth, pp. 9-10).

However, this does not mean that some degree of shared heritage did not exist or that there was no cultural assimilation after centuries of occupying shared spaces and histories. Because Zoroastrians did not occupy a distinct occupational niche, they shared with Muslims the everyday concerns experienced by farmers, tenants, peddlers, artisans, and others. Culinary habits, ideals of generosity and hospitality, and preferential cousin marriage were part of shared Persian heritage. They both quoted similar poets such as Ferdowsi, Saʿdi, Rumi and loved tales of the *Šāh-nāma*. Living in a hierarchical society, they both commonly used indirect modes of speech and flowery formalities. Zoroastrian men occasionally took a second wife, following Muslim custom (Hataria, subheading "Bigotry"), and Muslims celebrated the important Nowruz holiday following Zoroastrian custom (Wilson, p. 244). Both cultures retained a dislike of Arabs, as conquerors of Persia (Browne, p. 379). Both engaged in folk practices that were denounced by higher clergy but resonated for them, such as *dakil bastan* (tying shreds of cloth at a holy site to gain favors from angels), *sofra* (spreading a cloth with gifts for a saint or semi-benevolent deity), and use of amulets to protect children from disease and the evil eye. Both Zoroastrians and Muslims at times visited the same shrine (such as Tandorostān in Kerman and Šahrbānu in Yazd, Imam Reżā in Mashad), each recognizing the places as tied to their own saints (Sykes, 1902,

p. 192: Boyce 1977, p. 267, 269).

One could even point to similarities in some tenets of Zoroastrianism and Islam. Both call for the fight of good against evil, warn of the last day when the messiah will come and all souls will be judged (see SAOŠYANT, ESCHATOLOGY i. IN ZOROASTRIANISM); both are concerned with pollution created by things which exit the body (see CLEANSING i and ii); and both ask their followers to pray five times a day, in practice often condensed in both to three daily prayers. These similarities in custom paved the way for social interaction across boundaries and eased the transition for those who were converting to Islam. They also played a supportive role during efforts of nationalists to set up Zoroastrian culture as a representative of Persian heritage.

However, it was the cultural contrasts and incompatibilities that were brought most sharply to the fore in the 19th century by the atmosphere of fear and hatred. Harsh economic times during famines, droughts, plagues, and weakness of authorities during interregnums encouraged scapegoating of Zoroastrians and Muslim emphasis on Zoroastrians as disloyal to the religion of Islam. This incomplete list of differences and incompatibilities makes clear how powerful were material conditions of life to enable conversions to occur and counter the boundary mechanisms which existed.

These factors, linguistic and spatial separation, cultural and ritual differences, mutual concerns with pollution, and Zoroastrian fear, taken together created a powerful counterpart to Muslims pressures for conversion.

In addition to the impact of boundary maintenance mechanisms, internal solidarity and vitality of a community can create centripetal pressures. Were there elements of community structure that helped Zoroastrians withstand pressures to convert?

The destruction of the Zoroastrian state system after the Muslim conquest in the 7th century gradually led to the obliteration of most supra-community-level political and religious linkages. With the final retreat to the desert cities of Yazd and Kerman and population decline, the Zoroastrians gave up most inter-communal connections. Even the annual pilgrimage to Pir-e Sabz, the main shrine of Zoroastrianism in this era (required to be visited once in one's life time) rarely attracted anyone from Kerman, a two-week donkey journey away (for this shrine, see Boyce, 1977, pp. 255-62; Afšār, I, pp. 255-57). Many of

the Zoroastrian inhabited villages that were remotely located around Yazd, in some cases developed their own distinct dialects of the Zoroastrian language Dari, as well as cultural practices (Farudi and Toosarvandani, pp. 1, 11). Even the breed of dogs often varied from one village to another (Boyce, 1977, p. 140). However, they had maintained connections through trade, intermarriage, and the *huḵt* system. Under the *huḵt* system every two years, the *mōbed*s were reassigned districts so that they worked both poor and wealthier areas (Boyce, 1977, pp. 5-6, 22, 27-28). Thus, over thirty villages had a method of communication but were in many cases isolated enough to develop their own personalities.

(5) FORMAL POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND MUSLIM AUTHORITIES

The local official (mayor) in a town was the *kalāntar*, who was in charge of the city administration, while the headman (*kadḵodā*) in a village originally held the position of the landlord's foreman. Where there was a Zoroastrian majority, the landlord would appoint a local Zoroastrian to serve as tax and rent collector over his co-religionists. This Zoroastrian also became responsible for maintaining peace and order and had to be approved by the governor of the province. His authority depended on his personal eminence and his ability to work out the contradictions in his role (Kestenberg Amighi, pp. 103-4). In addition there were a handful of Zoroastrian men of learning or of some modest wealth who formed informal assemblies or gatherings and were influential elders of their communities. A few of these men from the cities gained a degree of influence in the governors' offices in both Yazd and Kerman, but there is no evidence to indicate that they or other leaders developed a fund to assist those who could not afford to pay the poll tax and thus reduce conversions of the indigent. Nor is there evidence that leaders engaged in systematic preventative bribing to reduce harassment of the community as a whole (Kestenberg Amighi, p. 104). Bribes were given at times to clerics to quiet mobs or to relax restrictions, for example, to allow building a seminary for the *mōbed*s or a wind tower for a rich individual (Boyce, 1977, p. 4; Malcolm p. 46). It is likely that there was insufficient wealth in the community to do more. Furthermore, leaders whose positions derived from external authority were themselves in vulnerable positions. Thus, at least up to the mid-19th century, resistance to Muslim pressures to convert was not supported by either the formal or informal community leadership.

The absence of collective resistance may also be in part attributed to the fragmented nature of the population. The surviving Zoroastrians were

descended from a complex hierarchical society, drastically reduced over centuries in numbers and wealth, and in social structure, but still with remnants of those former values. Furthermore, they continued to live in a very hierarchical broader society. The community divisions based on socio-economic differences, differences in levels of ritual purity, and family boundaries were accentuated by the geographic separation of the many small Zoroastrian communities.

Socioeconomic divisions were most clear in villages newly built by the newly wealthy Zoroastrian merchants (see Boyce, 1977, pp. 26-27 on the variety of villages) and in the areas closest to the city of Yazd. In Yazd, even those who owned a small piece of land in addition to sharecropping might be given the title *arbāb* (landowner) and a higher status. In Kerman there were fewer divisions based on wealth at mid-century (Kestenberg Amighi, p. 105).

In addition to a small degree of economic stratification, there was also ritual stratification. The highest level of purity was held by the *mōbed*s. As in Sasanian times, the position of cleric was inherited. The brightest son was usually chosen to succeed his father. The purity of their lines was further maintained by the practice of only accepting daughter-in-laws from other clerical families (Kestenberg Amighi, p. 107; cf. Hataria's report, quoted in Stausberg, p. 502). In Yazd, the two hundred or so *mōbed*s were also segregated residentially in the Maḥalla Dasturān (Boyce, 1977, pp. 5, 14). The boundary was maintained by the laymen as well. Although the latter respected and accepted the higher ritual purity of the *dastur*s, especially of the *dastur-e dasturān*, they did not necessarily accord them favorable status. This may have been due to their association with death ceremonies and their poor level of education. In both Kerman and Yazd, many Zoroastrians referred to *mōbed*s as being *šum* (of bad omen), and their daughters were not readily accepted as brides (Kestenberg Amighi, p. 107). The laymen and the clerics were thus united primarily by services performed and payments made. Even at a *gāhānbār* or other ritual event, the *mōbed*s would hold themselves apart, sitting on a stone, removed from the broader congregation of laity. On the low end of the ritual scale were the hereditary professions of the corpse washers (*pākšu*) and the corpse bearers (*nasā-sālar*). The corpse washers, in particular, held a pariah status. After cleansing a corpse with consecrated urine (*nirang*), they would cleanse themselves with unconsecrated urine (*gōmēz*), but they could never fully purify themselves in the mind of the orthodox. They were never allowed to socialize with the rest of the community. They might appear

at the door of a house that was holding a *gāhānbār* and receive a little bread and soup, but they would not be invited in, much less allowed to marry into other families. Their presence at a wedding outside their own circles was unheard of until the 1970s (Kestenberg Amighi, p. 108; see also Boyce, 1977, pp. 46-47, n. 17; Choksy, 1989, p. 109-10; Jackson p. 392, in regard to corpse bearers).

In addition to these formal segmentations, there were also divisions between the higher-status townspeople (*šahri*), those who lived in villages near the city (*melati*), and peasants (*dehāti*) living in more remote villages. Intermarriage that might have supported greater interaction would rarely take place between an urbanized family and that of a villager, in part due to status and sub-cultural differences as well as high levels of endogamy. In the villages, daughters and sons often married freely without family arrangement, while in the cities, arrangement was standard, and those without the resources delayed marriage sometimes indefinitely (Hataria, subheading "Rites of passage simplicity"). The few cases of city-village intermarriages that did occur were when a townsperson, theoretically with the permission of his wife, took on a second wife, a *čaker-zan*, or servant wife (see *ČAKAR*). She was considered of inferior status and usually recruited from a village (Kestenberg Amighi, pp. 101, 142; cf. Hataria, subheading "Rites of passage simplicity," offering a different definition of the term). Thus there was minimal pressure for cooperation between the rural and urban communities.

There was also a division between Yazdi and Kermani Zoroastrians. A person might decide to move from Yazd to Kerman (rarely in the other direction), but in Kerman, he would still be known as Yazdi and likely socialize with other former Yazdis. Their subcultures and their degree of orthodoxy were different. Kermanis complained that Yazdis were too orthodox and too intimidated by Muslims. Yazdis complained that Kermanis were too lax, too lazy, too Islamized, and too fond of a night out drinking and smoking opium (Kestenberg Amighi, p. 141, n. 12; also personal communication of Rostam Sarfe). Another notable factor was the importance of extended families. Many large families, particularly in the slightly higher economic classes, often developed individual reputations. These kin groups called *teuʾefe* (*ṭāʾefa*, lit. "tribe") often intermarried amongst themselves, with preferential cousin marriages. There were, for example, the traitorous Mahisuris (whose ancestors supposedly betrayed the last Sasanian king), the disreputable Kakmuris, the convivial Šāhvahrāmis, or the talkative Zanburis (Kestenberg

Amighi, p. 115). New family connections could be established across these lines by more exogamous patterns of marriage, such as the popular *dad-o-bestun* (give-and-take) system. This is a system of exchange whereby two families exchange their daughters in marriage. The two families then establish a new network of relationships. However, endogamous marriages were generally preferred. They offered the family the opportunity to keep their small amount of wealth undivided and it was more comfortable for the young girl to live among her own kin. This pattern also added to community segmentation, though it created strongly bonded families.

The segmentations of the Zoroastrian community were ameliorated (though never fully overridden) by the many shared cultural elements, rituals, secret language (Dari), and powerful fear of Muslims. On the positive side, there were many occasions for Zoroastrians to gather locally, such as weddings, funerals, death commemorations, local pilgrimages to shrines, and prayer gatherings for the six yearly *gāhānbār*s. At *gāhānbār*s, invited guests stayed for feasts in honor of the dead or in fulfillment of a vow. Those who just came to the door would be given *lork* (dried fruits, chickpeas, and nuts) and other food items depending on resources (Boyce, 1977, p. 39). For the poor such distributions might amount to a week's worth of food. Many chose to endow a *gāhānbār* for the long term, because religious endowments were recognized by Muslim authorities and protected from the claims of family members who had converted to Islam (Boyce, 1977, p. 33). In small villages, the whole community might gather. At larger ones and in cities, the gatherings were selective. However, communal gatherings and rituals were the main source of entertainment for communities and aided community solidarity. Boyce suggests that beyond ritual life, the community also sustained itself through hope in the coming of a messiah, such as Shah Bahrām (on whom, see Tavadia, 1955; Anklesaria, ed. and tr., 1957, chaps. 7 and 8), in the victory of goodness on earth, and with the many specific values, such as keeping fire, earth, air, and water pure (Boyce, 1992, pp. 168-69, 172, 174).

However, the unifying effect of rituals had some limitations too. Some rituals had become attenuated. Hataria found that the initiation rite, the *sedra–puši*, was not celebrated at all. A young girl or boy would be given the sacred shirt (*sedra*) and belt (*kosti*) to put on in the home, with no guests attending. Most Zoroastrians apparently chose not to wear it on a daily basis, perhaps because of fear of harassment if it were seen under their clothing. Among Hataria's mission was the revival of neglected rituals and purification of rituals adopted

following local Muslim customs.

The unifying effect of shared rituals was also diminished because they were mostly observed domestically outside of the sight of Muslims, and gatherings thus was usually small (Kestenberg Amighi, p. 100; Jackson, pp. 378, 381, 384). Furthermore, Zoroastrianism is not a congregational religion, so there were no regular services at the fire temple. Nonetheless they were a positive contribution to community solidarity and persistence.

Could more have been done to sustain the community? Hataria reported that, out of a population of 6,596 in Yazd in 1854, only 200 could pay the poll tax without difficulty, 300 with great difficulty, and the rest were unable to make any payments (Hataria, cited in Ringer p. 147). Those who could pay had only moderate amounts of wealth and it is doubtful that they could have financed the *jezya* as well as bribes needed to restrict harassment. Thus, community divisions, lack of security, harassment, poverty, and positive opportunities for new converts meant that conversions to Islam continued on throughout the 19th century.

In the 1850s, conditions for Zoroastrians in Persia began to improve slowly. Much of that improvement has been credited to the rescuing efforts of the Parsis. The role of the Parsis in Persia was remarkable and impressive, but does this rescue narrative require some contextualization and amendment? Were there other important contributing factors to be explored?

(6) THE IMPACT OF PARSIS

Based on early 19th-century alliances with the British, the Parsis, the Zoroastrians of India, had grown into wealthy industrialists. Under the British Raj, three out of eight Indians who were raised to baronet status were Parsis (Deboo). The arrival of Zoroastrian refugees from Persia in the late 18th century alerted the Parsis to the often unbearable conditions of their co-religionists in Persia. Among them was Kayḵosrow Yazdyār, whose daughter, Golestān, married a wealthy merchant, Franji Panday. Together they decided to offer aid to the Irani Zoroastrian refugees in Bombay. Their sons were among those who later co-founded the Society for Amelioration of Conditions of Zoroastrians in Iran in 1854 (Eduljee, subheading “Irani Zoroastrian renaissance: The benefactors”; Deboo, p. 4). The Parsi community was also invigorated by reports from Westergaard (see above), who described the Yazdi Zoroastrians as being in rapid decline to 1,000 families and the Kermani

Zoroastrians as converting to Islam in large numbers. In contrast, the Parsis numbered about 100,000 (Ringer, pp. 145-46). In 1854, the Society for Amelioration sent Manekji Limji Hataria (1813-90) as their representative to Persia. Hataria had worked for the British and, like other Parsis, had British citizenship to protect him in Persia. He remained there for almost forty years, working on this mission. Backed by funding provided by wealthy Parsis and a willingness to spend even his own money, Hataria and other Parsi philanthropists defined a number of goals, including ending the *jezya* poll tax and the onerous restrictions on Zoroastrians, building schools and new religious structures, reforming and revitalizing rituals, and developing a positive reputation for Zoroastrians in Iran.

The poll tax had become increasingly onerous growing from 250 to 1,000 tumans despite the decline of the population. Due to Russian pressure, the poll tax on the Armenians had been lifted, which was a helpful precedent. Hataria undertook to pay the *jezya* poll tax directly from Bombay to the royal court, though there was considerable difficulty made by local authorities, who did not wish to forgo their commissions (Deboo, p. 6; Kestenberg Amighi, p. 130). So Hataria's primary strategy was to apply pressure on the central Persian government to lift the tax. He ingratiated himself with the Muslim elite of Tehran, including the ulama and the more enlightened Persians, and at the same time he mobilized his British relationships. To the ulama he spoke of Islamic justice (Ringer, pp. 147-62, passim) and to the British he related horror stories of Zoroastrian suffering. The British had considerable influence in the south of Persia and apparently were ready to aid this project. British diplomats (Sir Henry Rawlinson, Ronald Thompson, and Edward Eastwick) pressured Nāṣer-al-Din Shah (r. 1848-96) to reduce and then to remove the tax. Hataria even secured an audience with the shah, during which he said with true Persian élan, "I am the one who is always willing to sacrifice himself in the bejeweled dust of your majesty's feet" (Deboo, p. 6; Menant and Murzban, pp. 135-36). Hataria and the British envoys assured the shah that improving the lot of the Zoroastrians would reflect the modernizing aims of the nation (Avari, p. 15). They also asked for the revocation of restrictive laws and the twenty percent tax on commerce paid by minorities and given to the ulama (Avari, p. 16).

In 1870, Hataria gained royal permission and began building twelve schools in Yazd and Kerman, supplying teachers from Bombay. Wealthy Parsi philantropists such as Merwanji Panday paid not only the tuition for poor

children, but also compensation to their parents for lost labor (Hataria, subheading "Parsis helped Zoroastrians of Iran"; Boyce, 1969). These schools offered courses in science and the study of English. Their orientation was primarily outward, although the children were trained in Zoroastrian ritual and religion. The students were taught in Persian, not Dari, and were given the general history of Iran without specifically focusing on Zoroastrianism. Unlike the Armenian and Jewish schools, they were not seen as a place primarily to promote ethnic Zoroastrian language and culture. They were meant to promote upward mobility.

The new schools caused considerable resentment among Muslims. One response was the murder of the new headmaster of the Zoroastrian school in the village of Taft. Local authorities refused to prosecute the murderers, but Hataria, who had developed considerable connections in Persia, was able to obtain permission from the government to have the criminals moved to Tehran. There they were bastinadoed before being released (Boyce, 1969). It was clear that the priority of the Parsis had to be lobbying among the Muslim communities. One Zoroastrian recalled hearing that Hataria had asked Muslim religious leaders in Kerman why they prohibited Zoroastrians from riding donkeys. "Are the donkeys such close relatives of yours that you seek to protect them?" he reportedly joked (Kestenberg Amighi, p. 131).

Hataria, though having close relationships with the British, was able to befriend a group of Persian nationalists. They were concerned with the British and Russian exploitation of Persia and the weak responses of the Qajar kings. He steered them towards a revivalist from of nationalism, reaching back to Persia's pre-Islamic period, its Zoroastrian heritage (Ringer, pp. 167-68).

In 1882, after years of being the subject of intense lobbying by Zoroastrians, Parsis of India, Parsis living in London, and British agents, Nāṣer-al-Din Shah issued a firman formally abolishing the *jezya* poll tax and lifting a number of restrictions on Zoroastrians and other minorities. This and later royal commands, however, often lacked enforcement locally, partly due to a power struggle between the regional and central authorities, as well as because of the ulama's resistance to give up what seemed to have the force of the Shariʿa law. Thus, Hataria was forced to continue his campaigns until his death in 1890 (Boyce, 1969).

Using the funds provided by Parsi philantropists, Hataria also made

considerable effort to repair, rebuild, and reform religious structures and practices among the Zoroastrians. He had fire temples secretly rebuilt and commissioned the building of three new *daḵma*s with higher walls to keep ruffians from digging the bodies out and into the town. He had a new fire temple built in Tehran, all based on models used among the Parsis in India (Ringer, p. 149; Hataria, subheading "Parsis helped Zoroastrians of Iran"; Deboo, p. 9). He also attempted to revive customs such as the initiation ceremony and wearing of the *sedra kosti*, the practice of *sagdid* (dog viewing of corpses), learning the Avesta, rather than simply memorizing it, improving the education of *mōbed*s, and increased celebrations of religious festivals and *gāhānbār*s (Ringer, p. 151; Fischer, p. 100; Rose, p. 181).

He also attempted to end practices that, in the reformist Parsi view, were superstitions, accretions from Islam, or in other ways counter to Zoroastrianism, such as polygamy or singing and dancing at funerals (Hataria, subheading "Parsis helped Zoroastrians of Iran"; Boyce 1969). At great expense, Merwanji Panday, a Parsi philanthropist, was able to end the practice of cow sacrifice (cows were regarded as holy).

Finally, in the 1880s, Hataria turned his attention to developing a formal leadership structure for Zoroastrian communities. In 1884 in Yazd, and shortly afterwards in Kerman and Tehran, with royal permission, he established leadership councils (*anjoman*; see also CHARITABLE FOUNDATIONS ii. AMONG ZOROASTRIANS IN ISLAMIC TIMES), modeled after the Indian Pancayats and named Anjoman-e nāṣeri in honor of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah. In Yazd, the *anjoman* was composed of the mayor (*kalāntar*), eighteen wealthy Zoroastrian merchants, the chief *mōbed*, and a school teacher. Hataria himself became the first president of the Anjoman of Kerman. The *anjoman*s would mediate disputes, seek help and protection from authorities, and support religious/philantropic activities (Ringer, p. 149; Boyce, 1977, p. 22, n. 44; cf. Kayḵosrow Šāhroḵ, pp. 17, 28, who writes that it was the second Parsi representative, Keikhosrow Khan Kucheh Biouki, who founded the Zoroastrian anjomans in Iran).

Hataria received much credit for his actions, but he also met with considerable resistance, not only from local Muslims, but within the Zoroastrian community as well. The *dastur*s/*mōbed*s and other traditionalists resented the intrusions of Parsis into their affairs. Mary Boyce describes how villagers became indignant that reform-minded co-religionists from Tehran and Bombay would try to tell them how to observe their rituals and social practices (Boyce, 1977 p.

25, no. 53). *Mōbed*s labeled the schools and new *daḵma* (built of stone rather than mud bricks) as too Western. They were concerned that the new fire temples prominently displayed the fire rather than keeping it carefully hidden away. Hataria viewed them as uneducated *mōbed*s who believed in superstitions (Hataria, subheadings "Reconstruction" and "The best hope for the community's revival lay in the education of the youth"). As Monica Ringer (p. 153) points out, in India, Parsi change developed indigenously in reaction to British influence, while in Iran, change was being imposed by Parsi outsiders. Many of the changes that Hataria promoted have persisted, although many traditional practices of which he disapproved have also persisted.

In sum, Parsi influence on the Zoroastrians of the 19th century was quite profound. The Parsi author, Malcolm Deboo, has called Hataria, the Martin Luther King of Zoroastrians. Hataria himself credited the major Parsi philantropists, such as Merwanji Panday, Seth Bomanji Framji Cama, Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy, Seth Framji Cawasji Banaji, Seth Minocherji Hormusji Kama, Pestonji Marker (Hataria: subheading "The best hope for the community lay in the education of its youth," passim). However, sometimes lost in this admirable story of devotion and rescue is the slow degree of progress made in regards to harassment of Zoroastrians and the significant role played by economic changes, Iranian Zoroastrians themselves, and European and Bahai influences in the late 19th century.

Although Iran's economy and international trade had declined significantly during the political turmoil of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, by the time of Hataria's arrival, the situation had reversed, thanks to greater political stability. The import and export trade increased twelvefold in the second half of the 19th century, leading to the growth of a sizable merchant class (Chaichian, pp. 56-57). Armenians and Jews were both prospering due to their involvement in the international trade to the north. Although European imports flooded and devastated some artisanal markets, Zoroastrians were becoming successfully engaged in trade with the Parsis of India and the British. When Nāṣer-al-Din Shah began selling off crown lands to raise cash, those Zoroastrian merchants who were able to build up large cash reserves in Kerman were able to join the flock of purchasers. The most successful merchants, such as Arbāb Jamšid Jamšidiān, were not only able to buy lands and build up commercial enterprises, but they also began the rudiments of a banking system. Arbāb Jamšid was thus able to give desperately needed loans to the shah and gain much influence at the court. In fact it is suggested that it

was this relationship that most motivated the shah to sign the *farmān* ordering the abatement of poll tax and restrictions (Šahmardān, 1972, pp. 432-45; Mehrfar). Thus, economic changes favorable to the Zoroastrians played a significant role in the improvements for the community.

Others noted improvement of conditions for Zoroastrians under the influence of more tolerant and more effective local rulers towards the end of the 19th century. Nāṣer-al-Din Shah, not a particularly effective ruler, nonetheless had increased centralization of his power enough, so that his commands had some impact. Likewise the authority of governors appears to have increased. For example, Edward Browne, who spent 1887-88 in Yazd, compared a weak governor of earlier years (who claimed to be powerless to stop anti-Zoroastrian attacks) with the contemporary governor, Prince ʿEmād-al-Dawla. On more than one occasion, the prince intervened on behalf of Zoroastrians (Browne, pp. 405-7). When a new convert to Islam claimed the property of his Zoroastrian family, the family appealed to the prince, who ordered the restoration of the property. Browne says that a kinsman, Dastur Tirandaz, was "almost incoherent with exultation (Browne, p. 407). Another European, Napier Malcolm (1870-1921), who spent five years in Persia at the turn of the century as a Christian missionary, credits the progressive views of Jalāl-al-Dawla, son of the governor of Isfahan, for improving conditions for Zoroastrians. He too pointed out that it was not only religious fanaticism, but also a series of weak rulers in Yazd, that had opened the door to miscreants (Malcolm, p. 52). Greater centralization of power has almost always been associated with improved conditions for minorities in Iran. In addition, new influences and more western style education encouraged a new tolerance by governors and other Muslim elite.

Among those influences was that of the Christian missionaries, the Anglicans and American Presbyterian Church in the south of Iran. They were active in both Yazd and Kerman in the 19th century, coming as they often did on the heels of European commerce. They were welcomed by the royal family eager to be pro-Western and modern; thus they could operate with considerable freedom, opening schools, clinics, and promoting reforms (Spellman, p. 158). They also frequently interceded with the government on behalf of the religious minorities (Goldstein, p. 92).

The Zoroastrians of Persia, especially the wealthy merchants, also played a significant role themselves. The Parsis were credited with helping to remove the restriction on Zoroastrian engagement in commerce; it should, however,

be noted that when Hataria came to Iran in 1854, his census found twenty to twenty-five merchants in Yazd, fifty in Tehran, and a handful in Kerman (Karaka, cited in Kestenberg Amighi, p. 120). The period from the latter part of the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century would see a series of outstanding Zoroastrian merchants who used their personal wealth in charitable works, both within the Zoroastrian community and in the wider Muslim society. They established connections among the Muslim elite, developing a reputation for honesty and generosity that spread to their co-religionists.

Among the earliest Zoroastrian merchants to engage in large-scale philanthropy was Arbāb Jamšid. Jamšidiān (1851-1933). In 1872, as a young Yazdi merchant he began trading in cloth, bringing items from port cities in the south to Tehran. Despite discrimination, he expanded his business by building a large network of connections within the Muslim elite. He employed large numbers of Zoroastrians and Muslims in his businesses, engaged in charitable works, hosted a daily luncheon for more than 100 people regardless of religion, and built close relationships with the Persian court (Šahmardān, 1972, p. 432; Mehrfar). According to Malcolm (p. 52), Arbāb Jamšid had more influence in Persia than did the Parsis. Other merchants followed his pattern, such as Kayḵosrow Šāhroḵ, Sohrāb Kayāniān (Yazd), Jamšid Sorušiān (Kerman), and Esfandiār Yagānegi. Building on Parsi support, they created the foundation for a vibrant Zoroastrian community in Tehran, supported community developed in Yazd and Kerman, and improved Zoroastrian status nationwide.

(7) IMPACT OF BAHAISM

The new religion of Bahaism was another potent influence on Zoroastrian community development. Malcolm reports that Zoroastrians themselves credited the spread of progressive views to the Bahais who encouraged tolerance and justice (Malcolm, p. 52; Jackson, p. 375). However, it is also true that Bahaism attracted a considerable number of Zoroastrian converts at a time when conversion to Islam was in decline (see CONVERSION v. TO BABISM AND THE BAHAI FAITH). Bahai influence thus might be seen to have contributed both to Zoroastrian decline and progress. It seems to have been greeted with an appropriate degree of ambivalence.

The impact of the rise of Bahaism in this context is not limited to its contribution to Zoroastrian persistence, since it also involves the question of

how it succeeded in winning so many Zoroastrian converts, in contrast to the pattern of conversion seen in regard to Islam. Bahaism, a religion growing out of the messianic movement of Babism in the 19th century, was founded by Mirzā Ḥosayn-ʿAli Nuri Bahāʾ-Allāh, who considered himself as the new messiah. Saying that all major religions have the same source in God, he preached the equality of all mankind, including women. In addition to his better-known social reforms, he also attempted commercial reforms. It was this and his progressive message which seemed to have attracted upwardly mobile merchants and professionals, among them many Zoroastrians and Jews (Maneck, 1991, p. 2). The Bahai scholar Mirzā Abu'l-Faẓl Golpāyegāni worked as the secretary to Hataria. Through Golpāyegāni and early Zoroastrian converts, Bahai faith spread within the Zoroastrian community, particularly among the merchants and their employees. Dastur Dhalla estimated that nearly 4,000 Zoroastrians converted to Bahaism (Maneck, 1991, pp. 1-2).

What did the Bahais have to offer? There were monetary incentives. The wealthy merchants who had converted to the new religion were generous to fellow Bahais. When a decrease in water supply threatened the survival of Zoroastrians in the village of Ḥasanābād, twenty families immigrated to India and the rest converted to Bahaism and accepted Bahai aid. Bahais even paid the poll tax for their converts. They also had the patronage of the British, which offered them further economic opportunities. Conversion to Islam also had offered economic rewards, but its attractions had faded in the new community (Kestenberg Amighi, p. 121).

Bahais also offered a high level of social unity that neither the Zoroastrians nor the Jews felt in their degraded status. Membership was organized into small, democratically-run cells that gathered to socialize and discuss religious philosophy. These groups were articulated to a central leadership that could organize funds and proselytization efforts (Kestenberg Amighi, p. 122).

What is more, as described above, Bahais espoused an ideology that was very appealing to many who were attracted to the ideals of modernity, such as universalism, equality of all men and women, compulsory education, and abolition of the priesthood. In fact, some Bahais claimed that it was their influence that improved conditions for Zoroastrian women (Kestenberg Amighi, p. 124).

Susan Stiles Maneck (1991, p. 5) suggests that minorities were not dissuaded by

the persecution of Bahais, because they identified with martyrdom, both as minorities and as part of the larger Shiʿite culture. Nor did they seem dissuaded from converting to a religion deemed a heresy in Iran and burdened with numerous disabilities. Since Bahaism was banned by the government, Bahais lacked the semi-protected status that even Zoroastrians had and could not legally obtain government employment. Attacks against them were much more virulent than those experienced by Zoroastrians. Thus, conversion to the new religion had significant costs. However, it was critical that joining this new movement did not trigger the boundary maintenance mechanisms that separated Muslims from Zoroastrians. The Bahais recognized Zoroaster as a prophet (Browne, p. 395) and did not, unlike Muslims, require converts to disavow their religion, spit into the sacred fire, or bury their dead. Bahais offered Zoroastrians equal status, unmarked by any consideration of ritual pollution. For instance, when a young Zoroastrian visited the home of a prominent Babi, namely ʿAbd-al-Ḡani, the host came forward and offered a cup of tea to the visitor with his own hands; then he drank out of the same cup that his visitor had sipped (Maneck, 1991, p. 4), an attitude that made a great impression on Zoroastrians.

Furthermore, it was not necessary to disavow Zoroastrian identity to join the Bahai faith. In fact, converts attended *gāhānbār* feasts and even became members of the new Zoroastrian Anjoman of Yazd (Maneck, 1984, p 78). Thus new converts could continue to reside in the same place and practice many of their accustomed rituals. They could even marry a Zoroastrian who had not yet converted. In this way, most converts kept their former religious identity. They were often known as Zoroastrian Bahais, versus Jewish or Muslim Bahais. They could maintain relatively endogamous practices and close kinship connections. In fact, it was this persistence in residence and Zoroastrian identity that for a while protected Zoroastrian converts from the kind of attacks suffered by Muslim converts to Bahaism.

Nonetheless many of the early converts were individuals separated from their own families, doing business in other towns such as Shiraz or Kashan. As merchants, they already were accustomed to doing business outside the Zoroastrian community. Going out of their closed network and associating with Muslim Bahais was not problematic for them.

However, there were elements of the Zoroastrian communities who were less favorably inclined towards the Bahais, especially as it became clear that conversions were taking place. The *mōbed*s, defending their authority and

ethno-religious boundaries, not surprisingly castigated converts, creating a split between pro-Bahai liberal and conservative factions within the Zoroastrian community. For example, Yazdi *mōbed*s attempted to prevent the Bahai family of Mollā Bahrām from placing the body of his Zoroastrian daughter in the *daḵma*. This prompted three important Zoroastrian merchants, namely Kayḵosow Godarz, his brother, and Dinyār Kalāntar (head of the Yazdi community) to intercede on her behalf. The liberals apparently prevailed, and the level of animosity intensified (Kestenberg Amighi, p. 125). Yet, although the new faith encouraged tolerance, and may have encouraged Zoroastrians to be more assertive about their rights, it did have a negative impact on the Zoroastrian community as well. Instead of being defined as an external threat that would unify the community, or co-existing harmlessly beside it, on the contrary Bahaism turned into another divisive force. It challenged Zoroastrianism at its most vulnerable stage and further undercut the authority of the *mōbed*s. Each in turn, first Islam, and later Bahaism, challenged the survival of the Zoroastrians and brought their numbers precipitously low, but neither managed to convert the last Zoroastrians. Thus, paradoxically, Bahaism, by attracting converts, reduced Zoroastrian numbers, but its very progressivism may have considerably improved conditions for stalwarts and made it easier for them to resist pressure to convert.

The comparison between conversion to Islam and Bahaism also illustrates the power of changing times, as Islam, the dominant religion, exerted less attraction. Both Islam and Bahaism offered some economic incentives. However, Bahais were more successful because they offered a degree of syncretism and continuity to new converts that could overcome the various boundary maintenance mechanisms and cultural incompatibilities that stemmed voluntary conversion to Islam.

(8) THE DENOUEMENT

After some fifty years of Parsi aid and the many other positive contributing factors mentioned above, discriminations, harassments, and other forms of mistreatment of Zoroastrians continued albeit in somewhat diminished fashion. Williams Jackson detailed the formal revocation of various restrictions over the course of the last decades of the 19th century (Jackson, pp. 375-76). The reports by Browne, Jackson, and Sykes, written a few years before or after the turn of the 20th century, suggest that the changed law had little impact. One man who dared to build a new addition to his house escaped, though another Zoroastrian was killed in retribution (Jackson, pp.

374-75). As Jackson pointed out, the problem was not so much the formal law, but lack of enforcement of reforms.

Letters sent by the Anjoman of Kerman between 1901 and 1905 to government officials and the Parsis describe an average of twenty incidents of beatings a day, including attacks on a pregnant woman, a sick old man riding a donkey in town, and young boys. The boys were captured and circumcised (J. Soroushian, 1994, pp. 64-65, 115). The Anjoman complained that the governor ripped up some of their appeals (pp. 86-87), that the post office destroyed their letters, and that they must constantly give out bribes (pp. 69-70). They point out that, after twenty years, the governor has decided to reinstate the poll tax (p. 25). They turned for help to Parsis to send them doctors and teachers of English and thanked the British for setting up their consulate in Kerman and building a Christian hospital (p. 123), but it was not enough. Even bribe payments were not sufficient. Finally they threaten that if the governor did not expel a certain *sayyed* who had been harassing people, they would all pack up and leave for Bombay. They write that it is either death or emigration (p. 110). Some fifty families apparently did leave (p. 133). The population of Kerman and eight surrounding villages had grown to 2,081 as of 1905 (p. 142), but, according to the letters, they survived in despair. Zoroastrians continued to be treated as unclean (*najes*) and as ready subjects for abuse (J. Soroushian, 1994, passim).

Yet, the European travelers and diplomats (e.g., Browne, writing in 1887, p. 370, and Jackson, writing in 1906, pp. 374-75) visiting Iran insist that conditions had improved. The number of murders had declined and protections increased. There was the Anjoman, schools, religious revitalization, repair of religious facilities, and Zoroastrians did begin to take advantage of less restrictions.

With growing popular education, the high reputation of successful Zoroastrian merchants, and growing nationalism, even in the provinces, Zoroastrians were gaining an improved, though still ambivalent, image. Although they were seen as unbelievers and fire worshippers, yet they were also considered the descendants of the great ancient heritage of Persia. Although there were conflicts between their cultures, there were also recognized shared elements as well, especially the widely celebrated Persian Nowruz rituals. They might still be deemed unclean in their very person by many, but they were also widely regarded as honest, trustworthy, and clean (Browne, p. 370), their neighborhoods green and well kept.

Improvements would still be measured in small steps. The concept of Zoraoastrians as being unclean would persist well into the late 20th century in the provinces. However, this general outdated attitude changed dramatically in the urban areas somewhat when the Pahlavi shahs would tie their legitimacy back to ancient Iran, utilizing the Faravahar (Mid. Pers. Frawahr; see FRAVAŠI), a Zoroastrian symbol, as a national emblem.

With the growth of business and employment opportunities in Tehran, individual families began a steady urban migration. Newly educated in Zoroastrian schools, encouraged by religious revitalization and new commercial opportunities, a growing number of Zoroastrians prospered. There was change in the air that turned its focus and hopes to Tehran. However, the growing urbanization and secularization would present the next threat to Zoroastrian persistence in the period before the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

Trends that began in the latter part of the 19th century, Parsi aid, urbanization, education, secularization, nationalism, prosperity, and liberal ideals, gradually began to release Zoroastrians from their harsh existence and offer them vast new opportunities. But much of their impressive retention of their culture and religion had been nourished by isolation and fear of the dominant society. Now these forces were breaking down. Secularization and urbanization was challenging also the indigenously based boundary maintenance mechanisms, such as pollution concerns, that had sustained them. The new leaders were merchants, and the sons of clerics were now becoming doctors and engineers. The new threats of assimilation or conversion to secular modernity would issue forth a powerful challenge to this long surviving community.

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