Published: January 1, 2000
Last Updated: July 13, 2016

NOWRUZ I. IN THE PRE-ISLAMIC PERIOD

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i. In the Pre-Islamic Period

Nowruz, “New Day”, is the holiest and most joyful festival of the Zoroastrian year. It is also its focal point, to which all other high holy days relate. Its celebration has two strands, the religious and the secular, both of which have plainly evolved considerably over many centuries, the one with extension of observances, the other with accumulation of charming and poetic customs, most of them special to it.

Nowruz is not, however, referred to in the small corpus of Old Avestan texts attributed to Zoroaster, nor does its name occur in the Young Avesta. Its earliest appearance is in Pahlavi texts, as *nōg rōz (nwk rwc,* *navaka- raocah-).

As far back as records go, Nowruz has been, either in fact or by intention, a celebration of early spring, when the sun begins to regain strength and overcome winter’s cold and darkness and when there is a renewal of growth and vigour in nature. Zoroastar’s people were demonstrably animatists (M. Boyce, 1992, pp. 53-5), that is, they apprehended a cognitive spirit, *mainyu* (M. Schwartz, p. 641), in all things, tangible or intangible. So for them this return of spring would have represented an annual victory for the Spirit of the sun; and Zoroaster saw in it also, it appears, the symbol of a still more glorious

victory to come. This was the especial hope which he offered his followers (see FRAŠŌ.KƎRƎTI), that the present struggle between good and evil on all planes, physical, moral and spiritual, will end in total victory for the good. Our "limited time" will then be succeeded by the "Time of Long Dominion" (virtually eternity), with the world and all that is in it restored to the perfect state in which it was created by Ahura Mazdā. A traditional spring festival, ushering in the loveliest season of the year with joyous festivities, could thus, be renamed the "(festival of the) New Day" and celebrated with religious rites, be a recurrent reminder of the unique "New Day" which will eventually bring everlasting bliss; and so this observance could aid faith and deepen understanding of doctrine. This is likely to have been a way of teaching to which Zoroaster naturally resorted, preaching as he did to an ancient, non-literate, pastoral people (see AVESTAN SOCIETY), who used no images to sustain belief, but venerated divinity in and through what they saw and experienced in the world around them.

Nowruz and Rapiθwin. There is another clear example of an animastic perception of a natural phenomenon being used to illumine doctrine, which is closely associated with Nowruz and almost certainly also belongs to the teachings of the prophet. According to tradition he live long, and so had time to develop the devotional life of his young community; and one powerful disciplinary tool which he is likely himself to have forged was duty to pray five times in the twenty-four hours, using each time the same short utterance, put together from his own compositions (Boyce, 1992, pp. 84-85). The Zoroastrian 24-hour day begins at sunrise, with three prayers being said during the daylight hours, and two during those of darkness, at midnight and at approaching dawn. It is likely that the two latter were added by Zoroaster as a rigorous new spiritual exercise, the other three, at sunrise, noon and sunset, having been offered by generations of Iranians before him. The word for "noon" is by origin mundane, though its literal meaning had doubtless long been forgotten by Zoroaster's time. It appears in YAv. as *rapiθwā-,* "noon", arəmpiθwā- by etymology "(the time) for meat, i.e., food"; and this yields the YAv. Adjective *rapiθwina-,* "of noon" (*Air. Wb.,* cols. 189, 1509). Noon had an especial importance for Zoroastrians, since in their creation myth, when Ahura Mazdā had completed the acts of creation the sun stood still at noon, as it will do again at Frašgird. Meantime, during the present struggle between good and evil, the Spirit of noon, Rapiθwina, retreats each year at the onslaught of the Spirit of winter, departing beneath the earth to keep the roots of trees and springs of water warm, so that his victory is never complete; and

in acknowledgment of this retreat, Rapiθwina is not invoked by Zoroastrians at the noon prayers during winter. But at noon on Nowruz he returns, and is welcomed back in a service of blessing and thanksgiving, in recorded usage a *yasna* (the main Zoroastrian liturgy) dedicated to him and an *Āfrīnagān ī Rapiθwin* (for its text see Geldner, Avesta, ii, pp. 275-277).

Rapiθwin gained futher prominence in two groups of texts composed after the Sasanian calendar reform of the early sixth century CE (see below), which brought it about that the Zoroastrians celebrated Nowruz officially twice, once as a religious and once as a secular observance. The rites of Rapiθwin belonged exclusively to the former, and plainly in order to refer unambiguously to it priests in certain contexts used these rites as a synonym for Nowruz. Thus in Pahlavi and Zoroastrian Persian texts which give lists of observances which it is the duty of every believer to keep, among the holy days mentioned Rapiθwin always appears (in a variety of late spellings); and in all the *patēt* (confessional formularies) it is the sin of not keeping Rapiθwin which is acknowledged, leaving in both groups Nowruz apparently (and inconceivably) ignored. (For references to those texts see Boyce, 1969, p. 202, no 8). The substitution which has clearly taken place here of Rapiθwin for Nowruz, could only have been made because the symbolism of Rapiθwin was powerful in itself and closely linked, most particularly by the prophet, with that of the great festival.

Nowruz in the Young Avesta: Although Nowruz is not mentioned in the surviving Young Avestan texts (that is, those composed by Zoroaster's followers over an ill defined period, mainly, it seems, between about 1000 to 800 BCE), its dominant place in the devotional calendar is indicated by one particular development found in them. This is the creation of six annual one-day festivals called literally "Year-Times" *yāirya ratavō* (*Air.Wb.* cols. 1497-1498 s.v. *ratu-*), but which may be termed "Seasonal Feasts". These, to judge from their individual names and their irregular scattering through the year, were old pastoral and farming feats that were now consecrated on the model of Nowruz to strengthen through observance the understanding of doctrine. The doctrine in their case was the fundamental one of the Heptad and the links of each of its divine members with one of the seven creations (see under AMƎŠA SPƎNTA). The six feasts are assigned to a creation and its divinity in the order given in the Zoroastrian creation myth (see BUNDAHIŠN), the sixth being that of mankind, which was under the especial care, through his Holy Spirit, of Ahura Mazdā; and only its name, *Hamaspaθmaedaya*, has

yet to be satisfactorily explained. The seventh, that of fire, which quickens all the others, was under the guardianship of Aša (q.v.), one of whose helpers is Rapiθwina, the Spirit of fiery noon; and its feast is Nowruz itself. Nowruz is never treated as one of the Seasonal Feasts, but the chain of six leads up to it; and it is likely that its assignment to great Aša was inspired by its earlier links with Rapiθwina, Aša's natural fellow worker and that this then led to the creation of the six Seasonal Feasts.

It has to be deduced from later texts and usage that the priests who devised this devotional calendar were skilled astronomers, able (perhaps following their Oav. Predecessors in this) to fix the celebration of Nowruz (though not necessarily with absolute precision) at the spring equinox; and the celebration of the last Seasonal Feasts just before it shows that it was indeed regarded as the first day of the new year, with the chain of these feasts beginning afresh thereafter.

Another festival kept by this calendar began after the sun set on Hamaspaθmaedaya, and lasted until just before sunrise of the following day. It was the only observance which took place at night, and was probably called in Zoroaster's day something like the "Night of Souls (*urvan-*)". Each family then welcomed back their departed kindred to their old home, to be received with ritual blessings and gifts of consecrated food and clothing, the essence of which, through this consecration, was believed to reach them. (See further under FARVARDĪGĀN). To judge from the existence of similar nocturnal observances among other Indo-European peoples, this was a very ancient rite. But quite early in the YAv. period, it appears, as the religion spread, gaining more converts, pressure from them (Boyce, 1995) led to its absorbing the hugely popular cult of spirits of the heroic dead, the Fravašis, who were the family protectors, and it was presumably renamed «Night of the Fravašis» (though the *urvan-* were still believed all to come). Since Zoroastrianism seeks to further joy against sorrow, it was (as later usage shows), a happy celebration, with the hosts seeking to gladden their invisible guests with choice foods (of which they themselves partook in communion with them) and with the brigthness cast by fires fragrant with incense. There was thus a continuity of observances from the sunrise of Hamaspaθmaedaya to the sunset of Nowruz, forming the holiest and happiest time of the year.

By another pious development of the YAv. period a distinctive Zoroastrian calendar was created by devoting each of the 30 days of the month to one of the beneficent divine beings, who was named thereafter at all acts of worship

on that day, and was looked to them for special care and protection. What probably began as a mnemonic list of these dedications, as "[the day] of so-and-so", came to form the essential part of Y.16, and shows clearly the divergences between them and the dedications of the Seasonal Feasts and Nowruz. This is because the first 7 month days are also devoted to the members of the Heptad, but in a different order. So Ahura Mazdā receives the first month day (which in the first month of the year is Nowruz) but the sixth Seasonal Feast, and Aša receives the third month day. There is no indication that these overlappings (accommodated in the liturgies) troubled the faithful, and millennia later Rapiθwina was being honored on both the first and third days of the first month, a happy duplication which may have a long history.

No month names appear in *Y.*16, and this accords with indications that those of the known Zoroastrian calendar were not given until the later Achaemenian period. Only one set of Old Iranian month names exists, that in the Perso-Babylonian calendar of the Bisotun inscription (see CALENDAR: i), and its months appear to be named for seasonal activities or phenomena. This is a widespread custom in ancient calendars, and it seems probable that when it was evolved the YAv. devotional one simply kept whatever month names of this kind was then in use among the Avestan peoples. The list of 30 YAv. day dedications indicates a calendar of the most advanced ancient type, attested among peoples gifted in such matters across the world (Nilsson, Chaps. 3 and 9); that is, it was calculated by the sun and had 12 months and 360 days, and was kept in harmony with the longer natural year by intermittent intercalating of a 13th month. Ideally this would have taken place every 6 years, but probably it was carried out irregularly, whenever the festivals were felt to be falling unacceptably behind due season. This, though a clumsy seeming device, was practical, and would have ensured that Nowruz would always have been kept at or near the spring equinox.

Nowruz in the 365-day calendar of the Achaemenians: The prevailing scholarly opinion is now that the early Achaemenians, at least from the time of Cyrus the Great, were Zoroastrians. Yet in his Bisotun inscription Darius (522-486 BCE) used not the Zoroastrian calendar but a Perso-Babylonian one, with OP month names (see under CALENDARS, p. 659) and days that were simply numbered. Apart from the month names this was the Babylonian lunar calendar familiar to the Achaemenians' Elamite scribes, whose 12 months were kept in harmony with the natural year by the regular intercalation of 3 extra months every 8 years. But during Darius' reign Babylonian astronomers

replaced this system by a more accurate one of a 19-year cycle, with intercalation of 7 months at a time; and numerous dated cuneiform tablets show that this system was adopted by the Persian King's Elamite scribes in 503.

These facts have strengthened a fairly general and well-established assumption that when one of Darius' successors introduced a 365-day Zoroastrian calendar this was an entirely new creation, and that the YAv. list of day names was a backformation. This assumption leaves unexplained, however, many problems (of which most of its supporters have plainly been unaware), and these problems do not exist if one adopts an alternate hypothesis: that when the Persians embraced Zoroastrianism they accepted the YAv. calendar as a devotional one, guiding their religious lives, but kept the Perso-Babylonian one for secular purposes, reckoning by it such things as the regnal years of their kings, important political events, and tax years. The use of two different calendars in such ways is a well known phenomenon, occurring again in Iran itself in Islamic times.

One then has, on this hypothesis, to make the further assumption that when in due course the YAv. calendar, modified by the addition of 5 days, became the Achaemenians' state calendar, since it kept its religious character it was not used by unbelievers among their subjects, even if they were in the Great King's employ. This assumption is supported by the fact that this was the usage under the Arsacids (see below).

It has long been recognized that the Persians adopted a 365-day calendar on the model of the Egyptian one, which became known to them after Cambyses' conquest of Egypt in 525 BCE. The Egyptians had brought their own 360-day solar calendar into as close a correspondence with the natural year in possible while reckoning only in whole days by adding 5 days as an extra "Little Month" at the end year's end; and some influential Persians, most probably Treasury officials sent to work in the conquered land, must have been attracted by this method of time-reckoning, as better suited to administrative purposes than the Babylonian lunar one. But years appear to have passed before it occurred to some pioneering spirit that the Persians could follow the Egyptians' example by modifying in the same way a 360-day solar calendar of their own, namely the Zoroastrian devotional one. Much diligent persuasion would surely have then been needed to win support for so bold a measure, which was adopted, it is calculated, in the reign of Xerxes, Darius' son (486-465); but presumably high dignitaries in the powerful order of scribes

would have been fairly readily convinced of its advantages, and leading Persian priests must also have been won over, seeing it perhaps as an enhancement of the dignity of the religion. But explaining what was proposed to intelligent men through direct discussions would have been a very different matter from explaining it generally to the diverse Zoroastrian communities of the vast Persian empire, non-literate as most of Xerxes' subjects would naturally have been, and with a number of them perhaps not greatly trusting their Persian ruler in matters of religion; and the results show that attempts to gain willing acceptance of the measure failed to a marked degree, with most people not only bewildered to resist any change that would prevent them offering due veneration to the divine beings at the property appointed times.

What mattered, however, for the introduction of any new measure was the approval of the Great King. As his *Daiva* inscription shows, Xerxes was a devout Zoroastrian and capable of ruthless action over what he thought right for the religion; and in the case of the proposed calendar reform he was also doubtless interested in a development that promised more efficient administration of his immense possessions, and could command enough obedience from those in authority among his subjects — the Persian satraps and their priests and nobles, the judges and ministers of state, and above all the army — to impose his will. It was proposed to follow the Egyptian model by introducing the 5 extra days at the end of the year, which for Zoroastrians was just before Nowruz (with Rapiθwina not yet returned and winter still theoretically reigning); and a year for this would naturally have been chosen when by the 360-day religious calendar Nowruz was to be kept 5 days before the spring equinox. This, it has been calculated, would have been the case in the years 481 to 479 BCE. The discrepancy would up till then have been adjusted in due course when an extra month was intercalated. Instead it must now have been decreed that 5 days were to pass after the last day of the old year before the great festival was celebrated, with heavy penalties doubtless for any who disobeyed. As with the days of the Egyptian "Little Month", these 5 days were evidently simply numbered. (There is no indication of dedications being assigned to them before the later Sasanian period, see under *gāhānbār*.) Various Persian terms are recorded for them as a group in post-Achaemenian times, and the one which most probably represents their original official designation is Phl. *Andar Gāh,* the "Between Time", cf. the Av. adj. *antara-* (*Air. Wb.*, col. 132) and MP *gāh* ii, used also for "days of the) Between Time."

An also well attested MP term for these days is, however, the abusive "Stolen Days", *Rōz ī duzīdag/truftag;* and plainly most people remained utterly perplexed about how they had seemingly been conjured into existence, _"stolen" from where, and why? The concept of days without religious dedications would have long been alien to Zoroastrians, and some courageous individuals may have felt impelled openly to defy the royal decree, and so almost certainly to suffer martyrdom. (Men have died resisting calendar change in other societies.) But the reformists and those submitting fully to the imperial decree, would have celebrated Hamaspaθmaedaya and the Fravašis' Night as usual, on XII. 30 bidding their unseen visitants farewell as dawn brightened, and when have entered the unfamiliar limbo of the "Between Time", all religious activity suspended. Most people, however, the evidence shows, in their incomprehension ignored the 5 extra days and celebrated Nowruz, as usual, but with perforce diminished observances, in the privacy of their own homes, and then continued counting the days normally, so that when the time came for the official celebration of Nowruz with religious rites and public banquets, it was by their reckoning not 1.1. but 1.6.

There is no reason to doubt that then almost all would have joined in the public observations, both out of prudence and because these would have been familiar and both deeply felt and much enjoyed; and as long as the proper holy day had already been kept, there could be no harm in keeping it again. And so it must have gone on throughout the first year of the reform, with every major festival being celebrated twice by the traditionalists, once privately and five days later publicly. But by doing this they had to confront the reality of the new calendar: however inexplicable it origins, and however wrong its workings, it now existed, side by side with their own, and, having the weight of royal authority, to be accepted.

When, however, they reached the end of their own old calendar year, because at the introduction of the 5 extra days they had ignored them, they were now 10 days in advance of the reformed calendar: their XII.30 was its XII.25, with the second "Between Time" still to come. They were faced thus with a dilemma for which there was no simple solution; but they evidently decided (which suggests consultation among their leaders) that the best way of not failing in their religious duty was to maintain the tradition of a ritual farewell to the Fravašis just before sunrise of Nowruz. This then meant entertaining these honored guests for all the 10 days which now intervened between their apprehended coming after sunset of XII.25 by the old calendar and departing

before sunrise of 1.1 by the new. All 10 days came accordingly to be called the " "Fravašis Days", (MP *Rōzān Fravardīgān*, reduced in later usage to *Frōrdīgān*).

Thereafter, through this acceptance of the new calendar, there should have been a return to the single observance of festivals. But what marked the traditionalists was good memories, and they did not forget that in the previous year Nowruz had been officially celebrated on what was for them I.6; and so they now celebrated it again, privately, on that day, which is the month day dedicated to Haurvatāt (MP Hordād/Khordād). All other major festivals were evidently then repeated similarly through the second year of the reform; and it indicates the utter perplexity produced for the majority by that reform, and the confusions in their struggles to cope with it, that whereas in its first year they had celebrated the major festivals privately 5 days *before* they were officially kept, now in the second year they did so days *afterwards.*

The one exception to this pattern of duplication which developed in the second year of reform is *Hamaspaθmaedaya*, the greatest of the 6 Seasonal Feasts, and evidently indissolubly linked to the "Fravašis' Night". The two were now celebrated, one after the other, during the 24 hours of XII.25, but not again until the 5th "Between Day", in order that the "Fravašis' Night" should immediately precede Nowruz. So in their case the duplication took place after 10, not 5, days (with a third celebration of the "Fravašis' Night" alone to judge from later usage, on the eve of I.6).

Given the obvious scale of the traditionalists' private non-compliance, it is unthinkable that the authorities would not have been aware of it from the outset; but, because of its scale, it would have been impossible for them to suppress it, and they were presumably content with enforcing public acceptance of the 365-day calendar, and expected the private duplication of observances soon to wither away. But on the contrary the traditionalists, secure in numbers, evidently grew bold and began to celebrate their duplicated feasts openly, and to claim that these were "greater" than those kept by the reformed calendar, being the truly valid ones. Further, a number of people who had accepted the reformed calendar half-heartedly, or under duress, probably came now to share this conviction and to swell the ranks of those celebrating the duplicated feasts; and so strong did this movement become that before the end of the Achaemenian epoch the Great Kings evidently accepted it and themselves kept these feasts. (The evidence for this is that "greater" feast days appear in the Zoroastrian calendars of post-

Achaemenian times (see below), which must descend from the state calendar which was in use before the fall of the Persian empire. At some point, accordingly, a leading priest or priests felt justified in altering a vital phrase in *Yt.* 13.49, so that as this hymn has been transmitted it declares that the Fravašis, returning to their old homes "at the time (*ratu-*) of Hamaspaθmaedaya, are present there "for 10 nights", *dasa pairi xšafnō,* in place of "for the night" of the like. There is a paradox in this, in that the traditionalists, striving to be faithful in every respect, found themselves impelled to alter words in what should have been the immutable authority of a sacred Avestan text.

At some stage also a few manuscripts of the Av. *Āfrīnagān ī Gāhānbār,* that is, the *Āfrīnagān* for the "Seasonal Feasts", give as the days for celebrating these feasts the second or "great" ones; but the Av. phrases involved are short and very simple, and the insertions, which were plainly not generally accepted, could have been made even as late as Sasanian times. (Geldner, *Avesta* ii, pp. 272-74, marks them off from the rest of the text, and in his tr. Darmesteter, *Zend-Avesta* ii, pp. 732-34, distinguishes them as 7a, 8a, etc.)

Another development, consequent on celebrating Great Nowruz on 1.6, is likely to have come about simply through the persistence of popular usage. This was the custom of sprinkling each other then with water in honour plainly of Haurvatāt (Hordād) whose day it is, and whose creation is water.

There was one further irony in that, as a consequence of each second duplicated feast being considered the greater, the second celebration of Hamaspaθmaedaya, held on the fifth "Between Day", came to be regarded as greater than the first on XII.25; and the whole set of "Between Days", which from the second pentad of the *Rōzān Fravardīgān,* as greater than the first pentad. So the "Stolen Days", so bitterly suspect, were nevertheless incorporated in the devotional year.

The development thus brought about unintentionally by the calendar reform in the holiest time of the year proved to be not only large-scale but lasting, with an observance till then of 36 hours extended to one of 18 days: from sunrise on XII.25 (the 1st Hamaspaθmaedaya), through that night (the 1st "Fravašis' Night"), to XII.26-30 (the first pentad of the *Rōzān Fravardīgān*); then the 5 "Between Days" (their 2nd pentad, ending on the 5th day with the 2nd celebration of Hamaspaθmaedaya, and after sunset the 2nd one of the "Fravašis Night"); then I.1 (Lesser Nowruz) and I.2-5 (which, with I.1, was a

2nd celebration of the 2nd pentad of the *Rōzān Fravardīgān,* followed by the 3rd one of the "Fravašis' Night") to I.6 (Greater Nowruz), 17 days in all; and then, since Great Nowruz was filled with observances and festivities at places of worship and in the home, an 18th day was added which preserved the essential symbolism of the "New Day" feast, for it was spent out of doors, in garden, orchard or field, with carefree enjoyment and delight in the resurgence of spring. (The adding of this one day may well predate the calendar reform.)

This account of developments consequent on the Achaemenian calendar reform is based necessarily on evidence from later times, for the Achaemenian period is in many respects ill-documented, and there is no trace from then even of the existence of a Zoroastrian calendar. But that the YAv. calendar was in use then, modified by the extra 5 days, can be inferred from a number of local calendars (all but one Iranian) which survive, in complete or fragmentary state, from post-Achaemenian times (see CALENDARS: i). Those by now known are Middle Persian, Parthian, Sogdian, Ḵwarezmian, Bactrian, Cappadocian and Old Armenian. The last was recorded by a Christian Armenian scholar in the eighth century C.E., the others survive through literary sources and actual use into the early Christian/Islamic periods, and all belong to regions which had been Achaemenian satrapies, and which after the downfall of the Persian empire were never again ruled by a single, unifying power. So what they have in common —and that, allowing for differences in language, is almost everything — can safely be held to derive from an Achaemenian state calendar brought into use by the Persian early enough in their epoch to become established as the accepted means of time-reckoning for all their Zoroastrian subjects. These calendars have day names descended from those given in the YAv., with indications of the existence of the 5 extra days and the 10-day Fravardīgān. The MP calendar is fully known and is that which (with developed forms of its names) is still in use by Zoroastrians today; and it is reasonable to suppose that it represents almost without change the OP one of the Achaemenians. One new feature init which can be attributed to the late Sasanian period is the giving of individual dedications to the 5 "Between Time" days; but the older treatment of them as a featureless group is clearly attested in the Old Arm. calendar, where this time is simply called that "of the added (days)," *Aveleats´* (*Aweleats´*), gen. pl. of *aveli* (*aweli*), cf. Gk *epagomenai.*

It and the other calendars all have month names, which, according to various

small indications, were introduced in the Achaemenian period sometime after the main calendar reform. This was presumably a purely devotional measure, by which the month names of the YAv. calendar (which, as we have seen, were probably mundane) were replaced by religious ones. These (keeping innovation to a minimum) were chosen from among the day names: but since there was no Avestan authority to follow in this case, some latitude seems to have been given to regional priesthoods. One variation occurs in the naming of the first month, which in the MP and Pth. calendars is devoted to the Fravašis (with use of the gen. pl. *Fravardīn,* "[month] of the F."), but in the Sogd., Ḵvar and Arm. Ones is given to the "[spirit] of the New Year (*Navasard*)", while in the Arm. Alone it is the twelfth month (otherwise assigned to Spənta Ārmaiti / Spendarmad) which is dedicated to the Fravašis (also with a gen. pl., *Hrotits / Hrotic*). In this case the Persians and others appear to have been influenced by the duplication of observances which had brought it about that the Fravšis were thought to remain at their old homes till I.5, and so, by naming the first month for them, they may have been stressing this, and with it the paramount importance of the Great Nowruz; whereas the Armenians plainly chose rather to honour the Fravašis with thought of their coming on the night of XII.25. In so doing they appear truer to an age-old tradition that the feast of souls belongs to the old year and winter with its darkness.

The giving of month names resulted in the inauguration of a new series of feasts of a type previously unknown in Zoroastriansim but common in Near Eastern religions — festivities dedicated simply to a single divinity; for whenever a month and day name were the same, that day was declared to be the feast of the divinity concerned. (The term for these feasts, MP *jašn* yasna-, indicates their essentially religious intention.) So for the Armenians XII.19 would have become the "*jašn* of the Fravašis", whereas for others this *jašn* was on I.19. This feast, as later Zoroastrian usage attests (see below), was sharply distinguished from the ancient night-time observance, which even when extended into the *Rōzān Fravardīgān,* was celebrated within the home. But at this day-time once people went out to the *daḵma*s, and there, after a religious service (essentially an *Āfrīnagān* dedicated to the Fravašis), they used to feast joyously, inviting the souls of the family departed to attend and partake in communion of the consecrated food with them, drinking toasts in their honour, remembering them in story and sometimes in verse, and seeking to share with them to the full the delights of family happiness and of music and laughter.

The Achaemenian calendar reform, initiated, it seems, for what was perceived to be a practical advantage, can be considered to have damaged the Zoroastrian religious year through causing such complex duplications of holy days; but in time these duplications, and above all the 18-day observance culminating at the Greater Nowruz, came to be a joy to the devout as the protraction of times rich in worship, and to others a welcome additional holidays (although necessary work still had to be done, and only priests and the rich could have kept the full period without any secular activities). The real and lasting harm developed from replacing the old 360-day calendar, kept stable in relation to the seasons by intercalation, with a 365-day one used without intercalation, as has by now been established (see most recently de Blois, 1996). At its introduction, pinpointed as being in a year between 481 and 478, 1 Fravardīn would have coincided with the spring equinox; but almost at once the calendar year began to recede by a day every four years against the natural year — a movement barely perceptible to individuals in their own lifetimes, but which by the end of the Achaemenian period would have let to dislocation of the 365-day calendar by over a month. This was especially damaging for the celebration of Nowruz, since the symbolism of spring is so deeply significant for the “New Day” feast.

Nowruz under the Arsacids: The earliest evidence for state use of the Zoroastrian calendar comes from under the Arsacids, and is provided by some of the many ostraca excavated at their royal fortress of Old Nisa. These, from the first century BCE, are dated by the year according to the Arsacid era, with the months and days of the Zoroastrian calendar (I.M. Diakonoff and V.A. Livshits, ed. D.N. MacKenzie). Two inscriptions and a legal document survive from later Arsacid reigns dated in the same way; but the dynasty’s non-Zoroastrian subjects (Hellene, Babylonian and Syrian) dated still by the Macedonian calendar made current by the Seleucids, with use of either the Arsacid or the Seleucid era, or both side by side.

The Arsacid period also provides the earliest description of Nowruz festivities. This comes from the romantic epic *Vis u Ramin,* which was identified by V. M. Minorsky (1946, 1947, 1954 and 1962, with all these articles collected and revised by him in 1964, pp. 151-99) as by origin a Parthian oral work, which has passed through an MP version and exists in the classical Persian rendering of Gorgāni (ed. M. A. Todua and A.A. Gwakharia. French tr. by H. Mass é. Eng. tr. by G. Morrison, in which the episodes are numbered as in the earlier editions by M. Minovi and M. J. Mahjub. For further bibliography see de Blois,

1992, pp. 165-67). The poem has plainly undergone revisions and extensions in the course of its long transmission, but much has been shown to belong to the Parthian original. This includes the royal banquet with which the poem begins. Not only is such a banquet a characteristic way to launch an epic, but what happens at this one is essential to the story. The host is Mobad, lord of Marv, that is, a vassal king of the Arsacids; but in the epic his concept often blurs, as here, with that of a Parthian Great King. So he is termed lord of the earth and greatest of all kings, and his guests are vassal kings and nobles, with their ladies, from all parts of Iran, including Pārs. The banquet is held in the open, under blossoming trees, and wine flows freely to the sound of minstrelsy and birdsong. Meantime the King's humbler subjects are also celebrating out of doors, in field and garden, likewise with wine and music, some racing their horses, others dancing or picking flowers; and in the days that follow the King rides out, magnificently attended, and distributes largess lavishly. (Ed. Todua and Gwakharia, pp. 34-35. tr. Morrison, pp. 19-21.).

A difficulty for accepting this straightforwardly as a Parthian account of Nowruz festivities is that during the Arsacid period the month Fravardīn continued to recede slowly against the natural year, passing through winter into autumn, while in the poem this joyous celebration is called the *Bahārjašn,* the "Spring Festival". This expression is recorded by Biruni (*Qānūn,* Vol. I, 1954, pp. 260, 264, see de Blois, 1996, p. 47) for the Greater Nowruz of 6Ādar, which belongs to the Sasanian calendar reform of the sixth century C.E. There are two passages in *Vis u Ramin* where the text has obviously been adjusted to that calendar change, but this can hardly be a third one, for this spring festival, being an essential part of the story, should belong to the epic's Parthian core. It seems likely therefore that this is the earliest known attempt by Zoroastrians to solve the problems with regard to Nowruz produced by the Achaemenian calendar reform. Till that reform, Nowruz would have been kept always in at least approximate relationship to the natural seasons by the intercalation of a month at fairly frequent intervals, and so would always have been celebrated in the spring. A celebration at that time of year is not only doctrinally appropriate but also natural and delightful, and so, it seems, there came to be a third Nowruz in addition to the "Lesser" and the "Great" ones, held at the spring equinox. This Nowruz appears then to have acquired in due course its own distinctive legend: that it had been founded through the action of the Pišdādiān hero-king, Av. Yima [Ḵšaēta], Pth. Yim, MP Jam, Jamšēd, who figures largely in the Iranian "national" epic, the older parts of which took shape in the Arsacid period; and the association through him of the "Spring

Festival" with the holy Avesta gave it still a religious tincture.

Nowruz in Pahlavi literature and under the Sasanians: Materials in Pahlavi literature are often impossible to date. It is written in the Middle Persian of the later Sasanian period, which had become the literary *koine* of the Iranian lands ruled by Persia, and had absorbed many non-Persian words, mainly Parthian. Somewhat similarly its contents were often drawn from various Iranian oral traditions, including Parthian, with generations of anonymous transmitters adding to them. So as small text glorifying the day Hordād of the month Fravardīn, that is, the Great Nowruz, may well have its origins in priestly schools of the Achaemenian period, passed down and developed in Parthian times. (Ed. by J. M. Jamasp Asana, pp. 102-08. Eng. tr. by K.J. Jamasp Asana, pp. 122-29. German tr. by J. Markwart, with reproduction of the text and notes, 1930, pp. 742-65B.) It has the simplest of structures, being no more than a list of all the great events that are declared either to have happened on that auspicious day or been set in motion then. This begins with creation by Ohrmazd and proceeds through achievements by Pišdādiān kings, down to the golden age of Jam, to whom three memorable deeds are assigned. The first, that he "made this world immortal and undecaying" derives from the Avestan legend of Yima, but the origin of other two is less obvious. The third being "the making of ossuaries (*astōdānīhā*) and ordering people to make them." And when they saw what was ordered by Jam, they "made the day 'New Day' and called it 'New Day'" (*rōz pad nōg rōz kerd ud nōg rōz nām nihād*), ed. J. M. Jamasp Asana, paragraph 11). This last statement has little logical justification in what has gone before, and appears to have been inserted irrelevantly by a copyist familiar with the connection of Jam with the spring Nowruz.

There follows a relatively long section on acts performed on that day by kings and heroes of the Kayanian epic, with next the birth of Zoroaster and the conversion of Vištasp, after which, by what appears to be another arbitrary insertion, comes the only claim put forward for a manifestation of the day's glory in Sasanian times, that on it "18 events in 18 years" came to Ḵusrow II (593-628 CE). This is the only reference to a datable figure in the text, which then passes on to prophecy, foretelling what will happen on this day as time draws to a close, and culminating in Frašegird, which will be brought about on this day by Ohrmazd. This text presumably began as propaganda for the superiority of the Great Nowruz over the "lesser" feast when this was a burning issue, that is in the Achaemenian period, just after the calendar reform, and its core had probably been handed down in priestly schools to

Sasanian times, when this controversy no longer raged. From the outset, however, the "Lesser Nowruz" had enjoyed its own incontrovertible claim to superiority.

There is a Phalavi passage referring to both the Great and the Lesser Nowruz in the difficult text, the *Nērangestān*, which cannot be at all closely dated. In the passage concerned (ed. F.M. Kotwal and P.G. Kreyenbroek, vol. III, p. 120) the anonymous priestly authors give the *xšnūman* (dedication) for services celebrated on "The day Hordād... which (is) the Day of the year" (*Hordād rōz ...ī rōzī sāl*), and the Avestan is "(by the grace) of the yearly Haurvatāt" (*haurvatātō ...yāiryayā*). What the meaning is here of *yāirya-* is not certain. Does it signify uniquely as is usually supposed , of the (New) year", or does it indicate the one important day Hordād of the 12 such month days in every year? Whatever the precise sense, later usage attests that "Ḵordād-Sāl" became one of the regular terms used for the Great Nowruz. The *Nērangestān* authors then cite a named authority for the use of a particular expression in the longer term cf. the *xšnūman* for this day, but also another, nameless one who rejects this, suggesting that it was for "[Day] One – for Nowruz" (*ēk – pad nōg rōz*). So at the time when this text was composed, the Lesser Nowruz, on the first day of Fravardīn, was called the "New Day", and the Greater Nowruz was known by this other expression.

The earliest text of unquestionably Sasanian date with a bearing on Nowruz is the statement by the prophet Mani, made in or before the year 244 CE, that in the Iranian calendar there were 5 days "which are reckoned as the *Panz Gāh*", that is, the "Five (Day) Times", a variant on *Andar Gāh*. (F.C. Andreas and W. B. Henning, p. 190. Henning, 1934, pp. 32-35 = his *Selected Works,* 1977, I, pp. 346-49, with further discussion by W. Sundermann, 1979, pp. 109-11. Cf The Pazand *Mēnōg ī Ḵrad*, Ch. 57.13: *panj gāh ī fravardyān* "the 5 [Day] Times of F.") Not so long after this Biruni records, (*Āṯār*, p. 218), "Hōrmizd b. Šāpur", that is, Hōrmizd I, is said to have connected the two Nowruz (Lesser and Great) together, raising to feast days all the days between. All these days thus became officially holy days of obligation, when only necessary work should be done. Hōrmizd reigned only briefly (272-273), but his high priest was Kirdēr, to whom this measure can be attributed. It also affected the chain of 6 Seasonal Feasts, to which in his inscriptions Kirdēr still referred as *rad* (Av. *ratu-*); and in one of them (KZ, I.15) he claimed to have had performed at his own expense 6798 *radpassāg*, that is, religious services for these feasts (D.N. MacKenzie, 1970, pp. 264-66, with further 1989, pp. 65-66, 71, and Boyce under

GĀHĀNBĀRS). The special service for all 6 festivals (as for Nowruz) is the *Visperad* (see under *Avesta*) to which possibly he alluded by this name. The only Seasonal Feast which could not be made to conform to this general pattern was Hamaspaθmaedaya, since 8, not 4, days intervened between its celebrations on XII.25 and the last of the "Between Days"; and the solution found for it appears to have been to keep XII.25 as the day of its first celebration, and then, after a 5-day gap (the first pentad of the *Rōzān Fravardīgān*) to treat all the 5 "Between Days" as belonging to the *rad*, making six days in all. There was thus a further sanctification of the "stolen days" as part of the devotional year.

A number of other notices concerning Nowruz were composed or modified after the Sasanian calendar reform of the early sixth century CE; and so it is necessary to go at once to it, leaving a considerable gap in time. It is possible to guess, however, at some of the preparatory activity that must have gone on in the intervening years. The reform was clearly inspired by the adoption in the Roman empire in 46 BCE of the Julian calendar of 3651/4 days, the quarter days being added as a whole one every 4 years. This calendar had been introduced to halt the regression against the natural year of the one till then in use by the Romans, and provided the Zoroastrians with a model for checking the similar regression of their own calendar. But the introduction of a single day in this manner would have presented difficulties for them, not least the repeated dislocation of the established pattern of observances on the eve of Nowruz. There were probably therefore years of intermittent deliberations before the suggestion gathered support that instead a whole month should be inserted every 120 years, which would prevent the regression of the calendar year ever becoming so seriously damaging again. There was, however, still a problem, for it was evidently believed (presumably after propaganda of the Achaemenian period) that the 365-day calendar had been created by Ohrmazd himself. (*Iranian Bundahišn,* ed. P. D. Anklesaria, fol. 12.15-13.2) Now, therefore, it was declared (apparently as a simple assertion) that it became needful thereafter for Zoroaster to "intercalate the years with months", whereby "time returned to its original condition. There he ordered people in all future times to do so" (Bīrūnī, *Āṯār,* p. 55). So since nevertheless the calendar which they were using was defective, their ancestors must have been at fault in failing to carry out the prophet's command. This interpretation of the facts allowed its supporters to argue for reform not as something new, still less as of foreign inspiration, but as a return to due obedience to the prophet's wishes and so thoroughly meritorious.

It appears that by no means all were easily convinced, since discussions seem to have been long drawn out before at last the King called a great council to consider the matter. Biruni (*Āṯār,* p. 44) refers to such councils as if they had occurred repeatedly, but it is virtually certain that the description he gives is of this one particular meaning. The council was made up, he says, of "mathematicians, literary celebrities, historiographers and chronicles, priests and judges"; but what decision was reached would have rested, formally at least, with the King. The priests' case must have carried weight with regard to restoring the doctrinal link between natural seasons, for Nowruz especially, but some councilors (most probably ministers of state and other leading figures among the influential order of scribes) must have argued persuasively for the advantages of keeping the calendar as it was, for among them also there were doubtless faithful traditionalists, and 1 Farvardīn had been by now New Year's day — and Nowruz— from time immemorial.

The solution reached, through an awkward compromise, was to work for several centuries (until long after it had in fact passed its usefulness). By what may be termed the Royal Reckoning 1 Fravardīn remained New Year's day, to be used as such for secular purposes, such as taxation and the counting of regnal years; but there was also to be a Priestly Reckoning for the priests were to be allowed to move the official religious observance of Nowruz to the first day of whatever month, at the time the reform was enacted, coincided with the spring equinox. The intention was obviously to intercalate thereafter a month every 120 years, so that this holiest of festivals would never again be further than a month away from its rightful season. With Nowruz (the Lesser and the Great) were moved the 6 Seasonal Feasts, with which were the essential communal observances of the devotional year and some other important feasts also. But loyalty to tradition meant, it seems, that a probably predominantly secular Nowruz was also still kept on 1 Fravardīn, and this was very likely observed by priests among themselves, as well as by the laity generally. Indeed one may assume that from the outset almost the whole community would have kept both festivals, for there is no reason to doubt that most scribes were devout, as well as that most priests enjoyed festive occasions; and in time the observance in Fravardīn Māh seems to have attracted the legends associating a secular Nowruz with Jamšēd, a development originating probably (according to the hypothesis proposed above) in connection with the Bahār Jašn of the Arsacid period.

The year chosen for implementing the reform was one when 1 Ādar, the ninth

calendar month, coincided with the spring equinox. This occurred in 507-511 CE (S.H. Taqizadeh apud V. Minorsky, 1947, p. 35), when Kavād 1 (488-531 CE) was on the throne; but the great council for deciding on the reform may well have been held in the time of his father Pērōz (459-484, see Bīrūnī, *Āṯār*, pp. 45, 118-19. Otherwise idem, *Qānūn*, I, pp. 91, 132). The way it was carried out (cf. de Blois, 1996, p. 47) was presumably that before the beginning of the chosen year people were ordered to ignore the 5 "Between Days" and to proceed directly from XII.30 to 1.1 (as their ancestors would have done in the distant times of the 360-day calendar). They would then have carried on through the following eight months, with every family observance, and every communal one which remained in the Royal Reckoning, coming 5 days early. The Fravašis would then have been welcomed on 25 Ābān and entertained through 26-30 Ābān and the "Between Days"; and on 1 Ādar the lesser Nowruz would have been celebrated.

The confusion attending this reform must have been less than at the Achaemenian one. There was apparently agreement on it, so confrontations should not have existed. It was led by the priests, which must have been reassuring in matters affecting the religion; and they could give the reason for it, which was relatively easy to understand, and if not understood could nevertheless be provided in firm dogmatic terms, with the compelling argument that the religious Nowruz should be held in the spring; and the calendar remained unchanged in length, with no inexplicable "stolen days" appearing. Yet the reform must have caused considerable distress in its first year and for some little time afterwards. The earliest reference for it having taken place comes from a Syrian Christian martyrology, where it is stated that in the thirtieth year of King Kavād, that is in 518 CE (when 1 Fravardīn was a summer month), the Persians celebrated "Frōrdīgān" in a month equivalent to the English spring month of March (G. Hoffmann, p. 79).

Another development brought about by the calendar reform affected Hamaspaθmaedaya, and so indirectly Nowruz. In its case (it has been deduced, see above) when Kirdēr made the "Seasonal Feasts" 6-day festivals, Hamaspaθmaedaya had been awkwardly split, with 25 Spendarmad as its first day and (after a 5-day gap) the *Panj Gāh*, the 5 "Between Days", as the remainder of the observance. But now by the Priest's Reckoning the link was broken between 25 Spendarmad and this *rad*, which had existed since the time of the Achaemenian reform; and it evidently occurred to some priest that *Panj Gāh* could – or perhaps even should – be understood to mean, not the "(Time

of) the 5 Days" but the "(Time of) the 5 *Gāθā*s", that is, the 5 groups of Zoroaster's hymns. (The Avestan word *gāθā-* had developed into *gāh* in MP usage, and so was identical in form with MP *gāh* "time, day"). So the celebration of the first day of Hamaspaθmaedaya was abandoned, and this *rad* was reduced to the 5 "Between Days", with each day being dedicated to the Spirit of one of the *Gāθā*s, and the whole festival being known as the *Gāhānbār*, "Time of the *Gāθā*s". This development appears to have been treated by some with reserve, to judge from the (un-datable) reference in the *Iranian Bundahišn* (Ch. Ia.22) to "those 5 stolen days – some call them the 5 Gathic Times, some the Good Pentad" (*ān panj rōz ī truftag, ast kē panjag ī weh gōwēd*). But the usage became widely accepted, and in time the term *gāhānbār* was applied to the other Seasonal Feasts also. The old one, *rad*, was dropped, and all six were reduced to the same pattern of 5-day feasts, the 5th day being in each case the "great" one. (See further under *gāhānbār*, p.255 and Boyce, 1970, pp. 535-36). Only Nowruz remained a 6-day observance.

There is no trace of the term *gāhānbār*, or of one like it, in any of the calendars inherited from Achaemenian times by Zoroastrian communities outside the Sasanian empire, nor of the moving of the 5 "Between Days" to before Ādar Māh.

Nowruz in early post-Sasanian times: The effects and the local failures of the sixth-century calendar reform can be traced, but in a way that sometimes leaves problems, in the literature of the early centuries after the Arab conquest. Because of the huge losses of Zoroastrian books, then and thereafter, most of the information comes from the writings of Moslem scholars. These sometimes contain materials from earlier Moslem works that have also been lost, so that dating can be problematic.

To take first the connection claimed between the Panj Gāh and the *Gāθā*s: Biruni (*Āṯār*, p. 43) cites three books which he had consulted, in all of which these 5 days were called individually by badly garbled forms of the *Gāθā*s' Avestan names, but then, by an unwitting confusion, he cites from a fourth book 5 terms for them as group, each of which refers to them simply as the *Panje*, "Pentad". The 5 adjectives which are given for the *Panje* (elucidated by Henning, 1952, p. 203 n.1) are the traditionally abusive "stolen" (*trufte* and *duzīde*); a laudatory "fortunate" (*hujaste*); and the neutral "of Fravardigan" (*Varvardiyān*) and "of the Between Days" (*andargāhān*). Bīrūnī's contemporary, the astronomer and mathematician Kušyar, says simply that the 5 additional days "are called the stolen days", the only term apparently

known to him.

This statement appears in his *Zīju-l jāmi‘* (in a passage cited here from de Blois, 1996, pp. 41-42), in which he gives the only direct information there is about when the 5 days were moved back to the end of Isfandārmad month (which meant abandonment of the Priests' Reckoning and return of the religious Nowruz to 1 Fravardīn). Kušyar writes that "after the Arab conquest the five (days) remained at the end of Ābān-māh up until the year 375 of Yazdegird, and the sun took up residence in Aries on the first day of Farwardīn-māh, and the five (days) were moved to the end of isfandarmad-māh". The year 375 Yazdegirdī corresponds to 1006 CE, and 1 Fravardīn to March 15th in that year by the Julian calendar.

There exists a small and difficult Pahlavi text (ed. and elucidated by de Blois, 2003, pp. 139-43) which is dated 377 Yazdegirdī, just two years later and this sheds, uniquely, a diret light on the perplexities that must also have attended the two earlier calendar changes. It represents a letter written by the priests of Abaršahr (northern Khorasan) apparently to brethren in Pars (Fars), saying that they have accepted the *wihēzag* ("movement"), and have "performed worship" (*yazišn*) according to that "ritual regulation". But (they continue) one student-priest (*hāwišt*) says: 'Untile such time as it is clear to me why they carried out this *wihēzagi* it will have no validity for me, for I met Mōbad Farrah-Srōš, and he wrote an explanation and he made many considerations, but still I do not know why he has carried out this *wihēzag.'* Then a letter arrived from the land of Baghdad from Ustād Abū Miswar Yazdān-pās, son of Marzbān... saying: 'We have looked in the books of the religion and have accepted the *wihēzag* of the leader of the people of the Good Religion'", undoubtedly the Mōbadān Mōbad of Pars. But still the student-priest was unconvinced, saying that the Ustād was "a man of the government" (that is, presumably, a respected Zoroastrian scribe employed by the Buyid ruler of that time), and "does not know about the religion". There was no longer a Zoroastrian great king to enforce the reform, and so the priests of Khorasan (who had, it seems, been shaken by their student's doubts on this matter) ask for a further ruling. The evidence provided by this letter is corroborated by Bīrūnī, who, writing in 1030 CE (*Qānūn*, I, p. 76; commented on by de Blois, 1996, p. 42), says that in the days of the Daylamites (Buyids) the 5 days had been moved to the end of Isfandarmad Māh – after, he explains, the neglect of four intercalations of one month, so that the calendar was four months in arrears. He accepted the Zoroastrian priests' claim that such intercalation had

frequently been practised from the time of Zoroaster (*Āṭār,* p. 45); and he also explains, evidently on similar authority (*Āṭār,* p. 44), why it had been thought impossible by the Zoroastrians to insert quarter-days instead of months, because it would disturb the order of the days of prayer "according to the laws". But in the *Qānūn* he says that the moving of the 5 days back to the end of Isfandarmad was not widely recognized beyond those parts of Iran where the Buyids ruled – that is, in the west – and that "many of the Magians of Khurasan have rejected it". It is further known that Nāser-e Ḵosrow, writing in 1045 and 1052, gives a number of dates in both Yazdegirdī and Hijrī years, and the synchronisms are only accurate if the 5 days then still followed Ābān Māh (though de Blois, 1966, p. 42, indicates the possibility that he was using "some old handbook of astronomy or astrology").

What Biruni writes in the *Āṭār* in his chapter on the festivals of the Persians is of particular value as portraying the actual practice of the Zoroastrian community in about 1000 CE. This was just before the 5 days were moved, and he records the celebration of "Farwardijān" at the end of Ābān month, giving details of the entertainment of the Fravašis for ten days, from 25 Ābān to the last day of the Andargāh (*Āṭār,* p. 224). There is then a lacuna affecting the end of Ābān Māh, where the lost text may have covered the departure of those visitants. As it is, his account of the beginning of Ādar Māh is also defective, and in the little that survives concerning the Nowruz of the Priests' Reckoning there are only a few lines of any real interest. These tell (p. 225) of a day called *Bahārčašān,* which used to be "the beginning of spring" at the time of the Kings of Persia. In those days a "thin-bearded man used to ride about, fanning himself... to express his rejoicing at the end of the cold season and the coming of the warm season" Biruni adds, was being kept up only for fun. Other notices of it tell how if the old man were still to be seen after noon he was chased and beaten, for clearly he represented the Spirit of winter, due to depart before Rapiθwin's return at midday of Nowruz. The reason why the mime no longer had this significance is explained by Biruni: Ādar Māh, having receded against the natural year by three to four months, had become a winter month, and so was inappropriate for the celebration of spring. Since this recession had brought 1 Fravardīn back from summer to spring, it was reasonable to move the "Between Days" back to before Fravardīn, and thus to unite the Nowruz of the Priests' and the Royal Reckonings; and this appear to have been a calendar reform based on a natural development and probably led by popular sentiment.

It is possibly for this reason that the Parsis of Gujarat, the founders of whose community cannot have left Iran later than the early ninth century CE, came to adopt this reform (which is one of the indications of effective communication existing between them and their co-religionists in the motherland for some time after their migration). It is, however, an interesting fact, since the seasons in Gujarat are quite different from those in Iran, and so the natural compulsion towards this reform seems lacking in their case. Another interesting fact is that sometime, it is thought, between 1125 and 1250 CE the Parsis were sufficiently well organized and disciplined to carry out the only intercalation of a month known ever to have taken place. To do this they repeated the 12th month, Spendarmad, so that in the year of reform 6 Spendarmad II = the previous 1 Fravardīn; and in consequence still in the twentieth century, nearly a thousand years later, Parsis kept 6 Spendarmad as a holy day, called the "Abandoned New Day", *Sōdī Nahrōj* (M. P. Kharegat, pp. 118-30), and celebrated 19 Spendarmad, that is, Ruz Fravardīn, as a special *jašn* of the Fravašis (Modi, pp. 423-34).

A number of accounts survive by Moslem writers of the celebration of Nowruz in Fravardīn month, and several of these were either composed before the Sasanian calendar reform or demonstrably use sources which were (see de Blois, 1996, pp. 39-41; selections from these writings were made by J. Markwart, pp. 724-38 and A. Christensen, 1934, pp. 145-54). The principal accounts are by Tha'alebi, Ya'qubi, Biruni and Ferdowsi, with that by Biruni in his *Āṯār* (pp. 215-19) being by far the longest and most comprehensive, while that by Tha'alebi is sometimes more vivid.

Biruni begins (p. 215) by dealing briefly with the underlying religious character of the feast on 1 Fravardīn, saying that it was an auspicious day because "it is called Hormuz, which is the name of God, who has ... created the world"; and he then says of 6 Fravardīn that this was the "Great Nowruz, for the Persians a feast of great importance. On this day –the say– God finished the creation, for it is the last of the 6 days"; and he lists some of the great past events that have taken place on it, including Zoroaster's holding on that day "communion with God". Either out of prudence or courtesy the Zoroastrians evidently did not tell him or any other Moslem scholar of their hopes for Frašegird, with the ultimate triumph everywhere of their religion.

These indications of the basic religious significance of the festival are in any case quite overshadowed by an abundance of material attributing its founding, through popular acclaim, to Jam (Jamšēd). One well-known legend

told by Biruni (*Āṯār,* p. 216) is that Jam was drawn through the air in a chariot by *dēv*s, traveling in one day from Demāvand to Babylon. "And people made this day a feast day on account of the wonder which they had seen during it and they amused themselves with swinging in order to imitate Jamšīd". Tha'alibi's fuller version (ed. Zotenberg, pp. 13-14) runs: "It was the day of Ohrmazd of the month of Fravardīn, the first day of spring which is the beginning of the year, the renewal when the earth revives from its torpor. People said: 'It is a new day, a happy festival, a true power, a wondrous King!' And they made this day, which they called Nowruz, their chief festival, honouring God for having raised their king to such a degree of grandeur and power, and thanking Him for all the ease, well-being, security and wealth which had been granted them through the good fortune of this king and beneath the shadow of his government. They celebrated the fortunate festival by eating and drinking, playing musical instruments and giving themselves over entirely to amusement and pleasures".

Another story (Biruni, *Āṯār,* p. 216) has a different explanation of the feast's origin: Jamšīd was making a progress through Iran and had himself carried into Azarbaijan on a golden throne borne on the necks of men. Rays of the sun fell on him and when people saw him "they were full of joy and made that day a feast day". Yet another legend also has the motif of Jam's sun-like brightness, which goes back to Yima's Avestan epithet, *x̌šaēta*, which can mean "shining, radiant"; and this story has an ethical and religious component. It tells how Iblīs destroyed the world, but how at the command of God Jam came and defeated him. Justice and prosperity returned, and Jam "rose on that day like the sun", light beaming from him. All dried-up wood became green, so people said "New Day" (*rōz ī naw*).

These attempts to explain the origin of Nowruz, the products probably of speculation in priestly schools and remembered by minstrels, are far removed from what seem the much more archaic reference to Jam's three great deeds at Nowruz given in the Pahlavi text of the wonders of that day, none of which associates him with the founding of the festival.

Biruni does not have much to say about special customs at the festival, but he does record (p. 216) that people gave each other sugar then, and says that according to Ādurbād, Mōbad of Baghdad, this was because the sugar-cane was first discovered during the reign of Jam on the day of Nowruz (that is, on 1 Fravardīn), having before been unknown. "Jam on seeing a juicy cane which dropped some of its juice, tasted it and found that it had an agreeable

sweetness. Then he ordered the juice of the sugarcane to be pressed out and sugar to be made thereof. It was ready on the fifth day and then they made each other presents of sugar".

Biruni also says (p. 217) that it was the custom at the Great Nowruz to sow seven kinds of grain around a plate, "and from their growth they drew conclusions regarding the corn of that year, whether it will be good or bad". This is one of the indications that he depended for his information about the festival on books and the results of verbal inquiries, and never actually attended its celebration, or he would have seen that the seeds had been sown earlier, to be ready for the growth to be studied on the great day itself.

Some of his informants were, however, placing both intelligent and precise. Thus he received a clear explanation (p.224) of the origin of the 10-day Fravardīgān observance, almost 1500 years after it had come into existence; and with regard to various customs with water at the Great Nowruz, he gives a series of anecdotal explanations for them, connecting them with Jam, but also says finally (p.218) that "according to another view" it was simply because the month day of its celebration was sacred to "Harūδā, the angel of water".

Two striking characteristics of Nowruz customs – emphasis, at this 7th feast, on the number seven, and on newness to match the newness of spring – are only just touched on in Biruni's account, but are prominent in that given by Pseudo-Jāḥiz, *Ketāb al-maḥāsen wa'l-az˙dād* (ed. G. van Vloten). This collection of mixed materials, assigned to perhaps as late as the twelfth century CE, contains two sections about Nowruz as it was celebrated at the Sasanian court (brought together and tr. by R. Ehrlich, pp. 95-101). Because the author is unknown, as are his sources, and because it appears in some respects fanciful, this account has been latterly disregarded; but the descriptions are basically in harmony with the spirit of the festival and with its usages (as known from later practice), and this points to the existence at some stage of a genuine Zoroastrian source that has been embroidered on. There is moreover a characteristic Zoroastrian stress on white as the colour of purity, and therefore appropriate to the New Day of unsullied beginnings. So, it is said, there was placed before the King after his rising a table on which were twigs of 7 kinds of trees which were brought auspicious, and 7 white earthenware plates, and 7 white *dirham*s of the year's coinage. There was brought to him a vessel containing white sugar, with freshly pared nuts; and all the Kings of Persia thought it was propitious to begin the day with a mouthful of pure fresh milk. Well before Nowruz different kinds of seeds were sown in separate

containers, and on the 6th day of Nowruz what had grown was cut with songs and music and mirth. The second Zoroastrian section of the *Ketāb al-maḥāsen* describes the presents given at Nowruz to the King, from magnificent ones from foreign rulers down to humble gifts from lowly subjects, all of which were listed by a scribe, with the present given to each in return (cf. Biruni, *Āṯār*, p. 219).

There is also mention by Pseudo-Jāḥiz of what is better stated by Biruni, (*Āṯār*, p. 218) in the following words: "After the time of Jam, the Kings made this whole month, i.e., Farvardīn Māh, one festival, distributed over its six parts. The first five days were feast days for the princes, the second for the nobility, the third for the servants of the princes, the fourth for their clients, the fifth for the people, and the sixth for the herdsmen". This appears to be one of the schematizations produced by scholastics, which have little or no relation to reality; but it is very possible that the King with his nobles may have chosen to prolong the festivities for this length of time. The religious Nowruz was 18 days long, beginning as it did on the 25th of the 12th month and lasting till the day after the Great Nowruz began only on 1 Fravardīn so temptation to extend it must have existed.

Nowruz in modern times: There are some brief notices about Nowruz from the following centuries, but it is not until modern times – that is, from fairly late in the nineteenth century – that its observations have been fully described, in the case of the Parsis mostly by themselves. By then, and roughly for the next one hundred years, the festival was being kept with some marked differences by three broad groupings: traditionalists, strongly represented in the old centres of Zoroastrianism in Iran (mostly in the Yazdi region) and in Gujarat; a majority of moderate progressives, yielding gradually to the pressures of city life and increase in scientific knowledge, but still retaining many old beliefs and observances; and the radical reformists, sweeping most of these away. For trying to trace the history of Nowruz the data provided by the traditionalists is vital, especially since what the Parsi and Irani traditionalists have in common – which is a surprising amount – is likely to go back in general at least to the Sasanian period, and is demonstrated in details much older. It needs to be noted, however, that although the Iranis and Parsis used what was essentially the same calendars, the 365-day one of the Achaemenian reform, there was the difference of a month between their reckonings because of the solitary Parsi intercalatic of a month in the 12th or 13th century CE. Priests of both communities knew of this discrepancy and accepted it; but in

the 15th century a group of pious Parsi laymen, thinking that the usage of the motherland must be older and more valid than their own, adopted the Irani version of the calendar, calling it the Qadimi, "Old", modified by Gujarati speakers into Kadmi. This movement roused furious indignation among most Parsis, as slur on their own devotedly cherished tradition, and they sprang to the defence of their own version of the calendar, which came to be called, objectively, Šenšāī, a term developed from the dignified Šāhānšāhī, "Royal". At its height the dispute was very bitter, with some bloodshed. This is long past, but religious Parsis, other than reformists, remain divided into the large body of Šāhānšāhīs, and the small one of the Kadmis.

The Parsi reform movement was initiated fairly early in the 19th century, but in Iran for nearly another hundred years there was only the one kind of Zoroastrians, who may be named collectively simply Traditionalists; and the most conservative of these held out against the reformists there down to the 1960's. They were then still keeping 3 Nowruzes: a secular one at the spring equinox, in their calendar month of Ābān, and the two religious ones in their month of Fravardīn. What is at first sight remarkable is that it was the secular one which they called Nowruz, giving other names to the religious festivals; but this was perhaps because "New Day" is so fitting a name for a spring celebration.

Names are, however, among the few identifiably innovative things about the observance of the religious feasts, then being celebrated in summer. (The detailed description of them given by Boyce, *Stronghold*, pp. 214-35, and summarized below, is of the practices of one of the Yazdi villages in the year 1965, which may have differed in some small respects from those of other villages in the region.) The first was preceded by the ten days of Fravardīgān, termed the "Lesser and Greater Pentad" (*Panjī kasōg, Panjī mas*), for which every house had been scrupulously cleaned, and during which the Fravašis were entertained by night and day. By at the latest the third day of Panjī kasōg seven kinds of seeds were sown in little cotton bags or wooden boxes, or in clay container on house walls, all carefully washed with pure water and filled with clean earth, and watered daily thereafter with pure water. On the fifth day of Panjī kasōg many women and some men went to the village priest to receive *nīrang* (consecrated bull's urine) to cleanse away pollution from the old year, this being what was in times long past the last day of that year, with the "Between Days" ahead. (This rite was regarded as of especial importance for women, because of what were thought of as the inevitable pollution of

childbirth and menstruation.) Also on that day the "pure room", *ganza pāk*, kept always free from ritual pollution, was cleaned with extra care and whitewashed anew in preparation for the greater holy days to come.

Panjī was ended with the rite of farewell to the Fravašis, enacted from before dawn till nearly sunrise on every Zoroastrian roof; and with the sun came the new year. A festive meal was eaten by the family in the sunshine, at which wine used to be drunk, and visitors came to exchange greetings. But then preparations began to be made to go out to the *daḵma*s, always referred to as the *Dādgāh,* "appointed place", and this is what gave this "Lesser Nowruz" its current name, "[the Day of] the Dādgāh-e Panjī". The observance followed the traditional pattern for communal rites at the *daḵma*s, with related families forming groups; and those women whose children had died and been carried there took for them some of the little cotton bags with sprouting seeds to place among the usual offerings. *Āfrīnagān* services were celebrated for individual souls, recently departed and there was a communal one for all Fravašis; and an evening meal, which began with consecrated food, was eaten by all, seated in a great horseshoe on the desert shingle, the families in an established order. The festival was thus annexed as it were to the Fravašis days, a confusion that would seem to have arisen in the distant past, because of the duplicated celebration of Nowruz on 6 Fravardin.

Formerly, when there were many priests, the rites of Rapiθwin would have been performed in the fire temple on Ruz Ardibehešt, the third month-day, but these had to be neglected by then. Nevertheless, and though it was wholly inappropriate to the summer heat, the return of "Rapatven" at noon on 1 Fravardin was joyfully recognized, and his name restored in noonday prayers (Boyce, *Stronghold,* p. 50 with pp 175-76).

Otherwise 2-5 Fravardin were quiet days, with a partial return to normal work, but with thoughts gilded by expectation of the great day to come – the holiest and most joyful of the year; and this pause had the effect of somewhat isolating it, so that it was almost again the observance of a single momentous day; but the name now given it was entirely prosaic, simply the "Seventeenth Day", Havzōru, a dialect contraction, with metathesis of *hevdah ruz* (cf. Kermani "Arvedāru", J. Sorushian, p. 5); for it was the seventeenth day after the coming of the Fravašis on 25 Spendarmad, as it had become after the Achaemenian reform.

Inevitably in some ways the observances of the eve of Havzōru repeated those

of the Dādgāh-e Panji, since they were by origin one feast, so there was again sweeping and tidying, and setting out in the *ganza-pāk* of pots of greenery, a mirror and a brazier. A lamp was lit there at dusk, and festive food was placed there for the Fravašis; but this time there was no repetition of the farewell to them at the following dawn. But again new clothes were worn on the new day, when all rose with (or before) the sun, eager to exchange the greeting "May your Havzōru feat be auspicious!" *jašn-e Havzōru-t mobārak*, with some then exchanging sprays of greenery. The village was full of visiting relatives, mostly from Tehran, who had returned for the occasion, and it was to be a day of visiting and hospitality, goodwill and kindliness, and feasting, dance and song. But central to it were the religious rites, with blessed communion through them. At other times the village priest might be able to call on the help of colleagues, but at Havzōru every priest was fully engaged with his own community; so here the priest had to compromise. This was the only occasion in the year when he solemnized the long service of the *Visperad* (see under *Avesta*), created probably for Nowruz and the *gāhānbār*s, and strictly an "inner" ritual, to be performed in a sacred precinct; but he now carried it out alone as an "outer" one, in an empty house set aside for religious use and kept ritually clean. There he spread a pure white cloth in a corner of one of the two open porticos, where he began the service at about 8 o'clock; and for hours to come he concentrated completely on the words and ritual, oblivious to the bustle which filled the rest of the building. There was a huge baking of bread in its ritually clean kitchen, and women came with offerings to be blessed, fruits of all kinds and an egg, the symbol of life, until the floor and sills of the portico where he sat were covered with copper bowls. Each woman also handed to his daughter a list of all those over 9 years old who were in her house, with the words "May they live!" (*zande bāšand*). These were uttered only on this one occasion, the sole festival devoted entirely to the living and to life; and the lists were eventually laid near the priest. It was nearly noon by the time he had prepared the first *parahōm* (the sacred liquid made from pounded ephedra, *haoma*), and the offerings had become consecrated. Two lay helpers (*dahmōbed*s) then cut the eggs and fruits in half, and one half was put back in the family bowl, the other half went into big basins to be carried later to the fire temple. A big new round of freshly baked bread was added to each family bowl, and when the women returned to collect theirs each of them received from the priest's daughter a spoonful of the *parahōm* infused in consecrated water, which would give renewed strength and vitality for the new year, and some took a spoonful away for their husbands. All carried home the bowls of consecrated offerings to be

shared by their families, but the priest, after he had completed the *Visperad,* had still to solemnize a *Drōn* and *Āfrīnagān* service in honour of Rapiθwin, and to pray by name for the well-being of every person on the lists supplied him. So it was past 3 o'clock before he finished, having been reciting for many hours with barely a pause in the August heat. Then after a brief rest, and a little of the consecrated food, he went to the fire temple, which was packed with men and boys, to solemnize an *Āfrīnagān* service for the whole community after which their share of the consecrated *Visperad* offerings was distributed and eaten there. After this last element in the Havzōru village communion the evening revelry began in the homes, and the priest could rest.

Havzōru being over, the "seven seeds" were no longer watered, and their greenness quickly turned brown in the heat. But not only was the next day, Amordād, still a holiday, purely for pleasure, but the holiday season was held to last not for 18 but 21 days from 25 Spendarmad. This seems to have developed under the influence of the third, spring Nowruz. One consequence was that any household which had not been visited by the priest during Panjī could still properly be visited.

The secular festival, called simply Nowruz, was held at the spring equinox, on a day corresponding to 21 March by the Gregorian calendar. (It is thus kept at the same time as the Moslem holiday. For a description of its observance in 1964 at the same Yazdi village as the two religious festivals see Boyce, *Stronghold*, pp. 164-76.) It was preceded by the usual scrupulous cleaning of houses and their contents, and everyone tried to put on at least one new item of clothing on its first day. Meantime two places in the house had been prepared for welcoming the new year. In one small store-room, from which everything black (such as smoke-darkened cooking pots) had been removed, a square of wood (a *viju*, used ordinarily as a hanging larder) was suspended by ropes from the smoke-hole in the domed roof, and a number of things were set out, in rigidly prescribed order, on the floor beneath, *šiw-e viju* (which yields a name for the observance): a mirror with a lamp before it, a green-wrapped sugarcane, a pitcher full of curds and a vase holding sprays of evergreen (cypress or pine): a bowl of water containing a pomegranate stuck full of silver coins, and a pitcher of water in which dried fruits had been steeped for three days. There was a glass full of *pāluda*, a sweet drink, white in colour, and a new earthenware pitcher with pure water, its mouth closed by a green-painted egg; and a little woven basket full of fresh green stuff (such as coriander, parsley or lettuce); and in front was placed a platter with a special

sweet dish, *čangāl* or *komāč-e Nowruz*, cooked for this festival. The predominant colours were thus green and white, and the objects represented growth, life, purity, prosperity and sweetness. The tall sugarcane was put in place last, and the door of the room closed; and it was believed that at the moment of the beginning of the new year the *viju* would turn a full circle overhead, symbolizing presumably the movement of the sun, which according to the Zoroastrian creation myth began at that moment. There is, notably, no allusion in the observance to the number seven, which belongs exclusively to Havzōru. (The Persian Moslem *Haft Sīn*, has been shown to be of recent origin.)

In the main room a table had been set out more simply, with a silver standing mirror, a *Ḵorda Avesta* wrapped in green silk, a little picture of Zoroaster (brought from Bombay), and two silver vases with sprays of pine and the purple-flowering Judas tree. In previous times the New Day would have been welcomed at sunrise with the unseen turning then of the *vijū*, but now it was announced at sunset by Tehran radio, and the master of the house went round the family, sprinkling each with rose-water and wishing them a happy New Day. Sweets were distributed, and a convivial supper followed with its main dish, as always, fish, a rarity in the Yazdi region.

The next morning, soon after a festive breakfast the first Nowruz visitors appeared. The main groups came then and throughout the firs week of the festival. First, there were those (mainly Moslems) who had worked for the family in any way during the year. They were given new-year greetings, with two to four painted eggs, a handful of *ājīl* (dried melon and sunflower seeds with pistachio nuts), and sometimes money. Then there were Zoroastrian children of up to the age of twelve or so. Those from the better-off families went only to relatives or close friends, but poorer children made their rounds more widely, receiving painted eggs, *ājīl* and little presents – a coin or two, pencils, writing books and the like. Finally there came friends, relatives and acquaintances to pay formal calls and to exchange greetings and token gifts, typically sprays of cypress and pine, or pomegranates. In the evenings there were often big gatherings of family and friends; and this was also a favoured time for weddings. The festival lasted for 21 days, a little longer than the 18 days of the religious one; but it seems natural to have sought an extension of the secular Nowruz roughly to match this, and twenty-one, a multiple of two sacred numbers –three and seven – would have been an auspicious number of days to choose. There may well have been influence also from the Semitic

week, become a familiar measure. But spring also brought urgent farmwork that had to be done. Even this, however, was reduced as much as possible on the *Sīzda bedar,* "the Thirteenth [Day] out of doors", which everyone sought to spend in the open, in orchard, field or garden, purely in pursuit of pleasure (picnicking, playing games, making music and the like, or just contentedly resting). The explanation of the origin of this much-loved festival is a little complex, but it seems to be as follows. When thus in the mid twentieth century the Zoroastrians celebrated their secular Nowruz by the spring equinox, they did so when their calendar month was Āzar (Ādur), and by it the thirteenth day of the festival has in itself no particular significance. But when Nowruz is fixed according to the Zoroastrian calendar, then the thirteenth day after 6 Fravardin, the Great Nowruz, is 19 Fravardin; and that is Ruz Fravardin of Māh Fravardin, the yearly *jašn* of the Fravašis. This had been established in Achaemenian times and was much beloved by the community, it being considered one of the high holy days. (See Modi, p. 431 with n. 2, for how it was kept in the early twentieth century by Parsis.) Its celebration appears to have been enjoined in deliberate contrast with that of the *Rōzān Fravardīgān,* since people left their houses and went out to funerary places, where they would invite the spirits of their family departed to take pleasure as their guests in feasting and merry making. This observance was outside the period of the religious holy days (18 days from 25 Spendarmad to 8 Fravardin) and was never a part of them; but it was well within the 21 days of the secular Nowruz. So sometime when a secular Nowruz, celebrated in the spring, was being observed in addition to the religious one, this beloved thirteenth days feast must have been made a part of it; and since it had then lost its connection with 19 Fravardin, the merry-making was carried on out of doors just for itself, and more generally, without any devout intention. The fact that the *Sizdabedar* is celebrated by both Zoroastrians and Shi'i Moslems suggests that it had been incorporated in the 21-day secular Nowruz before Islam gained many converts in Iran.

The Parsis have, historically, no secular observance of Nowruz presumably because the climate of Gujarat did not demand a spring celebration so insistently, and there would have been no local tradition to support one. A "Jamšedi Nowruz", celebrated on the Gregorian March 21st, has become popular but cannot be traced to earlier than the nineteenth century (Anquetil du Perron, seeking knowledge in the 18th century of Parsi feasts, did not hear of this one, see his *Zend-Avesta,* Tome II, p. 574); and it appears to have evolved from the secular Iranian festival after Parsis had learnt at school

about their community's links with Cyrus and Darius, had visited Iran and seen the ruined glories of Persepolis, the "Taḵt-e Jamšid", and had read in the Gujarati translation of Ferdowsi's *Šāhnāme* of Jamšid's association with Nowruz. The festival, which lasts one day and has no special observances, is much enjoyed, and new-year greetings cards are increasingly exchanged in Western fashion; but it is still ignored by a few strict traditionalists.

As individuals such traditionalists probably exist throughout the community; but the stronghold of Parsi traditonalism is recognized to be Navsari, the centre of the Bhagaria priesthood, and down to the first part of the twentieth century a quiet little country town whose religious practices provide valuable parallels to (and some differences from) those of the Yazdi villages. The Parsis use the term Moktād, mukta atman, "released soul" (by origin a rendering of *fravaši*), as a general term for the whole period leading up to and including 6 Fravardīn. They welcome the Fravašis, that is, on 25 Spendarmad, the day of Ahrišwang (Ard) (see Unvala, *Rivayats,* I, p. 506 1.13. tr. Dhabhar, p. 337); and perform a ritual of farewell to them (briefer than that of the Iranis) on the 5th "Gāthā day, and again on 5 Fravardīn, a day which they call the *valāna-nī rāt* "eve of farewell" (F.M. Kotwal apud M. Boyce, 1970, p. 521). They thus maintain, with a fidelity equaling that of the Iranis, the repetitions that followed the Achaemenian calendar reform, with the Lesser Nowruz embedded within the extended Fravaši days. The name given this festival by all Parsis is Patētī "[Day] of Confession", and of it a lay Parsi wrote in 1884 (D.F. Karala, pp. 144-45): "Of all the Zoroastrian festivals the so-called Patētī holiday is observed with more or less religious fervour by Parsis of every rank and condition. It ... should properly be called Naoroz.... The name Pateti ... denotes the day on which one prays to God for absolution from sins committed in the past year. On this day the Zoroastrian rises earlier than usual, makes ablutions ... dresses himself in new clothes and offers prayers imploring the mercy of Ahura Mazda ... He ... asks forgiveness for his bad actions during the past year, and finally with offerings of sandal-wood he attends the Atash Behram and again prays ... His prayers over, he offers alms to the poor priests and indigent people. The rest of the day is spent in enjoyment with other members of his family. On this day visits of New Year's congratulations are paid and received". He was plainly untroubled by what may seem the curious mixture here of contrition with rejoicing, but two other Parsi laymen, writing at about the same time (Kh. N. Seervai and B.B. Patel, p. 218) state as if it were fact that the last of the 5 "Gāθā days" was formerly called Pateti or "Day of Penitence", and the first of the new year 'Nowruz' or New Year's Day. By some

misunderstanding the names have been reversed, and the last day is now called Naoroz and the new day Pateti". This is reasonable but purely speculative, since there is no evidence to support it; and there is the Irani practice of going to the *daḵma* on the "Dādgāh-e Panji", that is, 1 Fravardīn, Nowruz having dropped out of the feast's name with them also. So it seems that the embedding of the Lesser Nowruz in the prolonged Fravaši days has affected its observance and naming in ways similar but not the same in these two branches of the Zoroastrian community.

Their practice is again similar but not the same with regard to the name each gives to 6 Fravardīn, since both are practical and seek simply to fix it by a calendar indication: Havzōrū, the "Seventeenth Day" among the Iranis, Ḵordād Sāl among the Parsis. According to the *Nērangestān* passage this name orginiated in translation; and there is also a passage in one of the *Persian Rivayats,* (Unvala, I, p. 317 II. 4-7. tr. Dhabhar, p. 302) where the Persian priests refer to the day as "day Ḵordād of the month Farvardīn, Jašn-e Sālīn". This festival (according to Seerval and Patel, p. 218) "is believed to be the birthday of Zoroaster" (not one of the wonders claimed for it in the old Pahlavi text on Roz Hordād) and "is kept with as much pomp and rejoicing as Pateti". But the Parsi festival lacks Havzōrū's unique emphasis on life and the living, and the lists of relatives which Parsis give their priests are handed in for the "Gāθā" days, and are of the family departed, so that their souls may be prayed for. It seems probable, in this case, that the Iranis have preserved a genuine old tradition of Nowruz, the festival celebrating the coming "New Day" of eternal life, which among the Parsis has been assimilated to the dominant cult of care for souls.

Among elder Parsis in Navsari there was a fading memory of the next day, Rōz Amordād, being celebrated out of doors, in garden or orchard (verbal communication from F. M. Kotwal), but although this custom has been abandoned, the conviction remains firm among Parsi traditionalists that this day belongs to Moktād (Ceremony to remember the departed souls). More often, however, when a custom is observed by one community but not by the other it is not possible to tell whether it has been added or dropped. Thus traditionalist Parsis do not imbibe *nīrang* on the eve of Pateti or *parahōm* at Nowruz, and Iranis do not exchange the *hamāzōr* at any Nowruz, whereas this is – or was – a feature of Parsi observance at Pateti (Modi, pp. 382-83; Seevai and Patel, p. 219).

The return of the Rapiθwin, so important a part of Nowruz, was joyfully

acknowledged by both communities, but his rites were earlier reduced in Iran, because of the rapidly dwindling in the number of priests fairly there early in the twentieth century. Before then, in both communities, because most priests were heavily engaged with other duties on 1 Fravardīn it was left to those of the Ātaš Bahrāms to perform the rituals of welcome to Rapiθwin at noon that day. (Cf. Darmesteter, *Zend-Avesta*, II 736-37. Information about Irani practice was received verbally by the writer, in 1964, from Mobed Khodadad Neryosangi and Mobed Rostam Khodabakhshi, both of Yazd.) It was the third day of the month, dedicated to Ardibehešt, which was kept as the *jašn* of Rapiθwin, and in Mumbai gatherings of laity attended "an imposing ceremony" at a chief Ātaš Bahrām (Karaka, I, p. 145. For the priestly observances see briefly Modi, p. 429 with p. 431, and in detail for Navsari, where the *jašn* is greatly beloved, F. M. Kotwal apud Boyce, 1969, pp. 205-09. Rapiθwin rituals are treated with technical precision in the *Persian Rivayats*, ed. Unvala, I, pp. 316-25. tr. Dhabhar, pp. 300-03.)

Another point on which the Iranis and the Parsi traditionalists were in accord was in the shared participation by priests and laity, in their different roles, in the labours and fulfillments of these high holy days. In Navsari still, devout families keep a room, or at least an alcove, ritually clean, like the Irani *ganza pāk,* and they too whitewash it afresh each year for Moktād. They set out vases of flowers there for the departed family souls, and the women prepare ritually pure food in their own scrupulously clean kitchens, and portions of particular dishes are carried to the Wadi Dar-e Mehr to be consecrated there at an "inner" religious service. All but the priest's prescribed share is brought back for the family to divide among themselves in communion, as in Iran; and at some point there too the family priest comes to each house to solemnize an *Āfrīnagān* service for departed souls, thus blessing the Moktād flower and food offerings. The flowers are renewed at a minimum of five-day intervals, that is, three times between 25 Spendarmad and 5 Fravardīn. (Greenery was necessitated in the Yazdi area of Iran within living experience, because there are no flowers in the villages in the heat of summer.)

The tendency among many Parsis to simplify these ancient observances can be traced from early in the nineteenth century, when a large number had already become city dwellers, chiefly in Mumbai, and so were meeting inevitable difficulties in maintaining them strictly. Not all lived any longer within walking distance of a fire temple, and even for those who did it was not easy to carry pure objects through busy streets without coming into physical contact

with unbelievers; and the private of the laity became even busier, with increasing financial pressures and manifold activities. So it was a natural development that the responsibility for preparing Moktād food for consecration was transferred to priests, with the work being carried out under their supervision in temple kitchens; and that the Moktād flowers were likewise procured by priests and set out on family tables in temple precincts, the laity's contribution being to give instructions, to pay, and to attend in order to say their own prayers for the departed. These were thus said in halls fragrant with the scented flowers and filled at times with murmured Avesta. A movement to reduce the 18-day Moktād to 10 days also began early, with ample authority for this being cited from the Avesta (*Yt.* 13:49) and Pahlavi and Persian books; but there was a confusion here in terminology, for all these passages refer to the *Rōzān Fravardīgān* (26 Spendarmad to the 5th "Between Day"), whereas Parsi "Moktād" applies to the period from 25 Spendarmad to 5 Farvardīn, and the Irani parallel proves this to reflect long-established usage.

This was no longer, however, accepted by all as a decisive defence, and a movement to sweep away all observance of Patētī and Ḵordād-Sāl came into being with the founding in 1906 of the *Zartoshti Faslī Sāl Mandal*, the "Zoroastrian Seasonal Year Society". This was the work of the distinguished layman K.R. Cama, who was troubled by the calendar problems dividing the community, and saw the solution to them in adopting the Gregorian year with a fixed Jamšīdī Nowruz on 21 March; and since he thought, like the priests of the Sasanian calendar reform, that the calendar supposed have been used by Zoroaster must have been in harmony with the seasons, he became convinced that it had been in fact the Gregorian one, with the intercalation of an extra leap day approximately every four years having simply become neglected. His society attracted members, who called themselves Faslīs; but the overwhelming majority of Parsis was as firm as their Sasanian predecessors in rejecting this calendar, with the rogue leap-day, so that the immediate effect of his proposal was to add a third element to the Parsi calendar conflict.

The Iranis were meantime sending bright boys from lay and priestly families to be educated in Mumbai, among whom was Kay Khosrow Shahrokh, a remarkable man from a traditionally learned Kermani lay family. He became an ardent reformist of his ancient faith, and among much else a champion of the Faṣlī calendar. He convinced Tehranis of its validity, and also the lay leaders of the Zoroastrians of Yazd and Kerman, and in 1939, after years of reasoning and exhorting, the reformers persuaded the whole Irani community

to adopt the Faṣlī calendar. This they renamed Bāstāni, “ancient” (convinced, like K. R. Cama, that it went back to Zoroaster himself), and called the old one – Qadīmī to the Parsis – Nā-dorost, “Incorrect”, while the traditionalists named the Faṣlī calendar Jadīd, “new” and used the term Qadīm for their own. The greatest achievement had been to win over Yazd, but many Zoroastrians there remained troubled by the thought that they were doing wrong in using this alien form of reckoning for calculating their holy days; and almost at once, led by their priests, they reverted to the Qadīmī one. So for the next few decades the small Irani community was split, with most Yazdis celebrating three Nowruzes as before, Dādgāh-e panjī and Havzōrū in the summer, Nowruz in the spring, while the Tehranis and Kermanis now kept only the last. (See Boyce, *Stronghold*, index s.v. “calendar”. Idem, 1979, pp. 212-13, 221.)

In the 1970’s the reformists in Tehran made a concerted effort to win over the Yazdis by targeting their young people, to whom, in holiday camps, they offered instruction in various secular callings as well as a fundamentally reformed religious teaching, with many old doctrines as well as observances swept away, and the merits and claimed antiquity of the Faṣlī calendar vigorously urged. This time they were lastingly successful, and thereafter the Irani community has used only the one, Faṣlī calendar, with Nowruz celebrated on March 21st. Efforts have continued among the Parsis to win greater acceptance of the Faṣlī calendar, but these have so far been resisted, and both the Šāhānšāhis and the Kadmis still celebrate the two religious Nowruzes, though mostly with reduced rites. Supporters by family tradition of all there groups are to be found in the Parsi Diaspora communities.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Given in the text.