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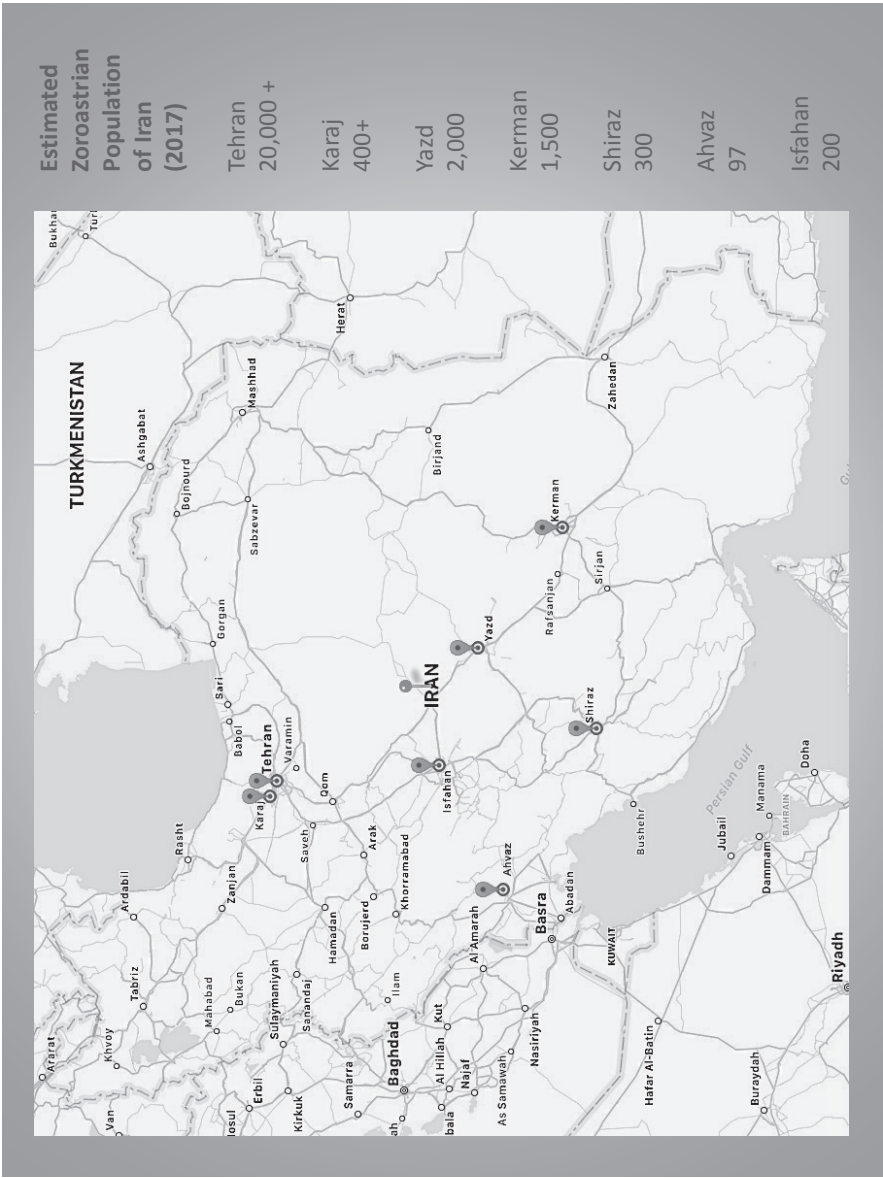
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Dedicated to the memory of

Gohar Pourbahrāmi

Map of Iran



Contents

Map of Iran.....	VII
Preface and Acknowledgements	XIII
Introduction	1
Oral Texts and Their Role in the Zoroastrian Tradition	3
Oral Testimony.....	4
The Interviews.....	5
Chapter 1 Background and Context: Religion	9
1.1 Revelation/Divine Inspiration.....	12
1.2 Doctrine and Teaching	19
1.3 Ritual and the Priesthood.....	21
1.3.1 ‘Inner’ Rituals.....	24
1.3.2 ‘Outer’ Rituals	28
Chapter 2 Devotional Life: Customs and Observances	29
2.1 The Religious Year	32
2.1.1 The Old and New Calendars.....	32
2.1.2 Months.....	32
2.1.3 Days	32
2.1.4 The Five <i>Gāhs</i> , or Watches of the Day.....	33
2.1.5 <i>Nabor</i> Days.....	33
2.2 Annual Festivals	33
2.2.1 Nowruz.....	33
‘New’ Nowruz.....	34
2.2.2 <i>Sizdah be-dar</i> (national holiday)	35
2.2.3 The Six <i>Gāhāmbārs</i>	35
2.2.4 <i>Māhiyāneh</i> Festivals.....	36
<i>Farvardinegān</i>	36
<i>Mehregān</i>	37
<i>Tiregān</i>	37
2.2.5 Other Annual Festivals.....	38
<i>Sadeh</i>	38
<i>Hirombā</i>	38
<i>Havzoru</i>	39
Death of Zarathustra	39
2.2.6 <i>Porseh Hamegāni</i>	39
2.3 Daily Observances	39

2.3.1 Early Morning	39
2.3.2 At Mealtimes	40
2.4 Acts of Worship	40
2.4.1 Visiting the Fire Temple	40
2.4.2 <i>Shāhverahrām Izad</i>	41
2.4.3 Other Shrines/Pilgrimage Sites	43
2.5 Rites of Passage	44
2.5.1 <i>Sedreh-pushī</i>	44
2.5.2 Weddings	44
<i>Nur o Sarv</i>	44
<i>Numzādi</i> (engagement)	45
Wedding Ceremony	45
2.5.3 Death Ceremonies	49
The Funeral Ceremony and the First Day	49
Rituals on the Third, Fourth, Tenth and Thirtieth Day After Death ...	50
<i>Porseh</i>	50
<i>Ruzeh</i> (monthly ceremonies after death)	51
The First Anniversary after Death (<i>Sāl</i>)	51
Later Ceremonies	51
2.6 Popular Customs	51
2.6.1 <i>Sofreh</i>	51
2.6.2 <i>Chāk-o Duleh</i>	51
Chapter 3 Background and Context: Society	53
3.1 Historical Background	53
3.1.1 <i>Jadīd al-Eslām</i>	59
3.2 Internal Governance: Zoroastrian Anjomans and the <i>Tehrān Anjoman-e Mowbedān</i> (T.A.M.)	61
3.2.1 The Zoroastrian Anjomans	62
3.2.2 <i>Kankāsh-e Mowbedān-e Tehrān (Tehrān Anjoman-e Mowbedān)</i>	67
3.3 The Relationship with the State Following the Revolution of 1979	73
3.3.1 The Constitution	75
3.3.2 The Civil Code	78
3.3.3 The Penal Code	79
3.3.4 Zoroastrian Personal Status	80
3.3.5 The Status of Women	81
3.4 Identity Formation: What it Means to be Zoroastrian and Iranian	84
3.4.1 Language	85
3.4.2 Religious Education	85
3.4.3 Literature and Poetry	90
3.4.4 The Iran–Iraq War	94
3.4.5 Conversion, Intermarriage and Emigration	97

The Interviews.....	100
Chapter 4 Kermān	100
4.1 Introduction	100
4.1.1 Anjoman and Other Associations.....	104
4.1.2 Schools	105
4.1.3 Demographics.....	105
4.2 Kermān – Interviews	107
Mr EF.....	107
Mr AZ	122
Ms AK.....	139
Mr HF	150
Mrs ZB, Mr SB & Mr Kh B	157
Chapter 5 Tehrān.....	179
5.1 Introduction	179
5.2 Tehrān – Interviews	185
Mr RY	185
Mr BP.....	194
Mrs PKR	209
Mr PM.....	221
Mrs KK	232
Mr BS.....	240
MMF	263
Mrs PN.....	272
Mr RS.....	281
Chapter 6 Ahvāz, Shirāz and Esfahān	298
6.1 Ahvāz – Introduction.....	298
6.1.1 The Zoroastrian Community.....	299
6.2 Ahvāz – Interviews	302
KP	302
MP	308
Mr BJT	317
6.4 Shirāz – Interviews.....	325
Mr RK.....	325
Mr FJK.....	332
Ms FK	337
6.5 Esfahān – Introduction	340
6.6 Esfahān – Interviews	345
Mr KT	345
Dr SB	349
Conclusions	353

Bibliography	364
Word List	372
Table of Interviewees	386
Appendices.....	395
Appendix A – Articles from the Constitution, the Civil Code and the Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran.....	395
Appendix B – Zoroastrian Personal Status Regulations.....	399
Appendix C – On Cohabitation, <i>tamkin</i>	411
Appendix D – Records from Kermān.....	415
Index.....	423

Preface and Acknowledgements

The inspiration for this book came from fieldwork in Mumbai over 20 years ago. There I met Mrs Shehnaz Neville Munshi, a teacher of Zoroastrianism, who sparked my interest in the idea of orality as a valuable research tool. Together we conducted a number of interviews on the Zoroastrian religion with Parsis from all walks of life. Mrs Munshi went on to work on a number of important projects and we remained friends and colleagues until her untimely death in 2005. It had been her great desire to work on Zoroastrianism in Iran.

I first went to Iran in 2006, under the auspices of the British Institute of Persian Studies (BIPS), to assess the feasibility of undertaking an oral studies project with Iranian Zoroastrians. I stayed at BIPS in Tehrān and worked with Ms Māndānā Moāvenat, a postgraduate student at SOAS. Her family were based in Tehrān but the ancestral home was in the village of Zeinābād on the outskirts of the city of Yazd. As a result of their generous hospitality I was able to visit the towns and villages that would subsequently be the focus of my research and the subject of this book. I returned to Iran in 2007 to begin work on the project. Permission to conduct research was obtained from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance through the Tehrān Zoroastrian Anjoman with the support of its then President, Mr Allahyār Daneshmānd.

The majority of the interviews were carried out over a period of three years by a highly respected member of the Zoroastrian community in Yazd and a teacher of Zoroastrianism, Ms Shahnāz Shahzādi. Ms Shahzādi was assisted by Mr Rashid Shohrat, then a student at the University of Yazd, and by Ms Moāvenat, whose role as the London-based researcher and collaborator involved the translation of interviews and the collection of documentary material. In effect, I had the benefit of a team drawn from within the community, people who spoke Zoroastrian Dari as well as Persian.

I decided to present the interviews included in this book as fully as possible, hence their overall number is small. Those left out are no less valuable so the full, unedited interviews in Dari and Persian have been made available online in digitised format (<https://elar.soas.ac.uk/Collection/MPI1089462>). The marker: [...] in the text indicates where part of an interview has been omitted. The responsibility for any misrepresentation that may have occurred in the translation and editing process is mine alone.

I have adopted a simplified version of the Persian-language system of transliteration used by the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* in which diacritical marks are not used for consonants and only for the long vowel ‘a’. The linking particle *ezafe*, used for proper names in spoken Persian, has been omitted. It has been my intention to maintain consistency in the spelling of names and Zoroastrian terms as much as possible and to distinguish between Persian and Dari words.

I owe my first debt of thanks to all those who gave so generously of their time to talk about their religion and life in Iran. I am especially grateful to Ms Shahnāz Shahzādi for conducting the interviews with sensitivity and humour, and for her dedication to this project.

The Moāvenat family was instrumental in the success of fieldwork in Iran. My thanks are due particularly to Māndānā Moāvenat for making our field trips so rewarding, for her diligence in gathering books, papers and material in Iran and for her patience in continuing to provide information throughout the time it has taken to produce this book. I am grateful to Mr Khodāyār Moāvenat for his willingness to share his extensive knowledge about Zoroastrian institutions as well as the history of the community in Tehrān. The late Mrs Moāvenat, Gohar Pourbahrāmī, was extremely kind whenever I visited Iran and came with us on many of our excursions – a quiet and reassuring presence. This book is dedicated to her.

I owe an immense debt of gratitude to Professor Philip Kreyenbroek, whose support and encouragement enabled me to focus on the book, despite numerous challenges. His close reading of the chapters, as they were written, as well as his scrutiny of all the Persian texts included in the book have proved invaluable. He has also translated into English many of the passages of Persian poetry recited by interviewees.

In the village of Narsiābād, Yazd, I stayed in the family home of Dr Bahman Morādiān, who was to become Māndānā’s husband, and who took part in some of the interviews. I learned a great deal from Mr and Mrs Morādiān and am grateful for the warm welcome they extended to me. I am also grateful to Mr Behnām Morādiān, cousin to Bahman, who was at university at the time and whose research on Zoroastrian schools is included in *Zoroastrian Voices*, Part 2.

Zoroastrian priestly rituals have diminished in Iran over the past 40 years and many have been adapted to suit changed circumstances. My thanks go to Mowbed Merhabān Firouzgary for corresponding with me about the performance of priestly ceremonies today. I am also grateful to Mr Rāmin Shahzādi and his wife, Mrs Parvāneh Namirāniān, for their help in checking information during the final stages of the book. My stay in Kermān was most enjoyable thanks to the hospitality of Mr

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The project included a number of young people in Yazd who were responsible for transcribing the recordings from Dari into Persian. I am grateful to all of them for their work. In addition, my thanks go to those who helped with the translation of documents and interviews into English. I am especially grateful to Ms Mariam Emamy, former Secretary of BIPS, who has devoted much of her own time to working on translations for me. Many delightful hours have been spent at her home in London. I also thank Dr Rastin Mehri, Mr Mohamed Mirbashiri and Mrs Shabnam Mirafzali. Discussions with friends and colleagues have been of great benefit to me at various stages of the project, in particular, Dr Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis, Mrs Firoza Punthakey Mistree, Ms Narguess Farzad – and my niece, Ms Clara Callis Lewis, who accompanied me on my first visit to Iran. I thank Dr Jenny Rose for her careful reading of the final text.

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Thanks are due to the team at the Endangered Languages Archive (ELAR) at SOAS for undertaking the digitisation of the interviews. I am grateful in particular to Dr Alexandra Buhler for formatting and providing summaries of the interviews online. I also thank the Patron’s Fund for sponsoring this part of the project. In due course, all the interviews will be available in Persian and English thus providing an invaluable research tool for further studies as well as a resource for the future of Zoroastrian heritage.

It remains for me to thank my family for their forbearance while this book has been in progress, especially my husband, Andrew Campbell-Tiech.