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THE ZOROASTRIAN PRIESTHOOD AFTER THE FALL
OF
THE SASANIAN EMPIRE

After the fall of the Sasanian empire the Zoroastrian clergy, which had devoted itself to a varied number of tasks both within the fire-temples and in society at large and had evolved a correspondingly differentiated hierarchy, saw the scope of its activities narrow to a predominant concern with matters of observance and ritual. Accordingly, in the course of time, this elaborate system of ranks and titles no longer corresponded with any real division of tasks and collapsed, to be transformed eventually into the simple hierarchy we know today.

The purpose of the present paper is to discuss some of the changes in conditions which the Zoroastrian clergy had to face during the centuries following the Islamic conquest, and the ways in which it gradually adapted its functions, and ultimately its titles, to the exigencies of contemporary reality.

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The Sasanian priesthood, it seems, could be divided roughly into two categories. First, there were the «administrative»¹ priests, who held public appointments and who clearly played a prominent part in public life; it was probably to these that Agathias² chiefly referred when he said that «public affairs are arranged according to their counsels and their predictions, and in particular they direct the affairs of those involved in litigation, watching carefully what is being done

¹ For this term see Ph. Gignoux, «Die religiöse Administration in sasanidischer Zeit: ein Ueberblick», *Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte der Achämenidenzeit und ihr Fortleben* (Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran, Ergänzungsband 10, ed. H. Koch and D.N. MacKenzie), Berlin 1983, pp. 253-66. I am indebted to Professor Gignoux for providing me with copies of this and other articles before they appeared in print.

² Agathias II.26, *apud* A. Christensen, *l'Iran sous les Sassanides*, Copenhagen 1944, repr. Osnabrück 1971, p. 117.

and giving their decision, and nothing among the Persians appears to be legitimate and justified unless it has been confirmed by a Magian». During the Sasanian era, an elaborate hierarchy of higher administrative priests developed, ranging from the Supreme Pontiff (*Mōbedān Mōbed*) and, probably, a Grand *Mōbed*³, via the *Mōy Handarzbed* and the *Rad*, high dignitaries about whose precise functions relatively little is known, to the *Mōbed*, the ecclesiastical head of a province or town⁴, and the *dādwarān*, or judges, of different grades⁵. In the Zoroastrian tradition these dignitaries (with the exception of the Grand *Mōbed*), are mentioned together in the *Pahlavi Yasna*⁶, and also in the writings of Zādspram (XXIII.5⁷): «... to appoint in each village a reliable witness, in each district a judge who knows the law, in each province a *Mōbed* of pure intentions, and in each region a pure *Rad*; and to set a *Mōy(ān) Handarzbed* and a *Mōbedān Mōbed* over all (of them)» (... *dēh dēh gugāy ī wābar, ud rōstāg rōstāg dādwar ī *dād-āgāh, ud awestām (*awestām) mōbed ī rāst-kāmag, ud kustag kustag rad ī abēzag gumārdan; azabar ī hamāg mōyān handarzbed-ē ud mōbedān mōbed-ē paydāgēnīdan*).

The second category of priests, those who did not hold public office, included most of the scholar-priests and priestly teachers, who studied and taught the extensive religious and scholarly tradition embodied in the Sasanian Avesta with its commentary (*Zand*), and those who were chiefly concerned with matters of ritual and observance. Of the latter group, those without special distinctions or qualifications were probably referred to by the general term *mōy* (which was also used, it seems, for the lower administrative clergy); according to Gignoux⁸, the title *mōymard* was slightly higher, and was used particularly for the priests serving on *Āteš Bahrām*, a Sacred Fire of the highest category.

The significance of the term *hērbed*, a title borne by the high-priest Kirdēr under King Šābuhr I in the 3rd century⁹, is less clear. The word derives from Avestan *aēθrapaiti-*, which unequivocally means

³ On the Grand *Mōbed* see Gignoux, *art. cit.*, and «Titres et fonctions religieuses sasanides d'après les sources syriaques hagiographiques», *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 28, 1983, pp. 191-203.

⁴ Cf. e.g. Gignoux, *art. cit.* (n. 1), p. 258.

⁵ On these see M. Macuch, *Das sasanidische Rechtsbuch «Mātakdān ī Hazār Dātistān» (Teil II)* (Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes XLV, 1), Wiesbaden 1981, p. 14; Ph. Gignoux, «Éléments de prosopographie de quelques *Mōbeds* sasanides», *Journal Asiatique* 1982, p. 261.

⁶ E.g. *Phl. Y.* 1.3-7, 2.3-6, 3.5-9, 4.9-12, 6.3-6, 7.5-9.

⁷ See B.T. Anklesaria, *Vichitakiha-i Zatsparam*, Bombay 1964, pp. 87-8.

⁸ *Art. cit.* (n. 1), p. 263.

⁹ In his inscription on the *Ka'ba-ye Zardušt*, (KKZ.3).

«priestly teacher»¹⁰. The Pahlavi term *hērbed* is used in the same sense in a number of passages of the *Dēnkard*, particularly in those which describe the contents of the Avesta¹¹ (where it may be a direct translation of the Avestan original), but also elsewhere¹². In Book VI of the *Dēnkard*¹³, however, we find three anecdotes which show the *hērbed* in a rather different light: there the *hērbeds*, who apparently work in pairs and recite Avesta and *Zand* to one another, are depicted as extremely virtuous but practically destitute men, whose activities, such as tilling the soil and gathering firewood, have no obvious connection with teaching. The stories, it seems, emphasize the virtue of these impecunious priests in contrast to the more worldly outlook of a *Mōbedān Mōbed*.

The difficulty in interpreting these data is that, although the anecdotes may well be based on an old oral tradition (reflecting an element of antagonism between the officially appointed clergy and their less fortunate brethren), they were written down in their present form in the 10th century, so that it is impossible to tell whether their terminology reflects Sasanian or post-Sasanian usage, i.e. whether such priests would indeed have been called *hērbed* in Sasanian times¹⁴.

When dealing with early Arabic sources (dating from the late 9th century onwards), most of which describe the *hērbed* as a cult-priest¹⁵, one is faced with a similar problem: since the authors of these texts must have been dependent, in most cases, on information from their Zoroastrian contemporaries, whose use of titles may have differed from that of their Sasanian forebears, these sources cannot be regarded as evidence for the use of the term *hērbed* in Sasanian times¹⁶.

¹⁰ For references see Chr. Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, Strassburg 1904, repr. Berlin 1961, pp. 20-1.

¹¹ See D.M. Madan, *The Complete Text of the Pahlavi Dinkard*, 2 vols., Bombay 1911, e.g. 734.11ff., 752.11-2, 754.7.

¹² E.g. *DkM*, 45.20, 46.5.

¹³ See S. Shaked, *The Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages, (Dēnkard VI)* (Persian Heritage Series 34), Boulder, Colorado 1979, nos. D2, D3, D5, pp. 176-83.

¹⁴ That those who wrote down these anecdotes did not always bear in mind the original significance of priestly titles is shown by another story (Shaked, *op. cit.*, no. D10, pp. 184-5), where three priests are said to have been *Mōbedān Mōbed* at the same time.

¹⁵ For a survey of data on the *hērbed* from Arabic sources see M.-L. Chaumont, «Recherches sur le clergé zoroastrien: Le *hērbed*», *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* CLVIII, 1960, pp. 163ff.

¹⁶ The fact that Kirdēr was a *hērbed* (cf. above), and perhaps al-Tabari's statement (*Annales*, ed. de Goeje *et al.*, vol. V, Leiden 1983, p. 2696) that a *hērbed* negotiated with the Arabs on behalf of the population at the siege of Istakhr (which is unlikely to be based on information from a Zoroastrian source, but may still reflect later Arabic or Persian usage), show that the responsibilities of some individual *hērbeds* considerably exceeded those of a priestly teacher in Sasanian times, but no firm conclusions can be drawn from this regarding the *hērbeds* as a group.

All one can say, therefore, is that the combined evidence of the *Dēnkard* and the Arabic sources proves that, at least from the 9th century onwards, the title *hērbēd* was no longer used exclusively to denote a priestly teacher or scholar-priest, but could also refer to other priests. This is corroborated by the early 9th century *Rivāyat* of Ādurfarnbag (*RivAd.XXXVII*¹⁷), where it is asked if a *hērbēd* who takes a piece of unclean matter out of the water, can still perform the ritual (*mar-d-ē ī hērbēd kē nasā-ē az āb bē āwarēd, yazišn pādixšāy kardan ...*), which suggests that a ritual priest could also be called *hērbēd*.

If one compares this Sasanian hierarchy with its modern counterpart — consisting of *dastūr* («high priest»), *mōbad* («fully qualified practising priest») and *hērbad* or *ērvad* («priest in minor orders») — it is clear that the changes in significance and connotations which some of these titles have undergone are considerable. It seems probable, for example, that the term *dastwar* could originally be used as a general term for a priest who had authority in matters of religion¹⁸; the characteristic functions of a Sasanian *Mōbed* appear to have been of an administrative rather than a ritual nature, whereas the modern title of *ērvad* has lost all connotations of scholarship or teaching and has, it seems, completely replaced the older term *mōy*. So far, however, little research has been done to show how and when these changes took place. As will be shown below, the suggestion that, since the present nomenclature is shared by the Indian and Iranian communities, it may have been generally established before the Parsis left Iran in the early 10th century¹⁹, is not borne out in detail by a study of the sources.

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The first Zoroastrian books to offer detailed information about the priesthood of post-Sasanian times, are the works of Manušcihr. A member of what appears to have been the leading priestly family of the 9th century Zoroastrians, Manušcihr was «leader of the faithful» and high priest (*rad*) of Fars and Kerman during the latter half of that century²⁰. At that time, Fars was still a centre of Zoroastrian culture

The implications of al-Jawāliqī's assertion (*apud* Chaumont, *art. cit.*, p. 163), that the word *hērbēd* was already known to Imru' al-Qais and other pre-Islamic Arab poets are equally obscure.

¹⁷ See B.T. Anklesaria, *The Pahlavi Rivāyat of Āturfarnbag and Farnbag-Srōš*, 2 vols., Bombay 1969, vol. I, pp. 21-2, 112.

¹⁸ Cf. G. Kreyenbroek, *Sraoša in the Zoroastrian Tradition*, Leiden 1985, pp. 121ff.

¹⁹ See M. Boyce, *Zoroastrians, Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, London etc. 1979, p. 157.

²⁰ See E.W. West, *Pahlavi Texts*, Part II (Sacred Books of the East XVIII), Oxford 1882, repr. Delhi etc. 1970, p. XIII; Boyce, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

and religious activity; Kerman became deeply Islamicized, it seems, under the Šaffārids (869-903), i.e. presumably during Manušcihr's lifetime²¹. In his works, Manušcihr shows himself to be a conservative leader, stressing the vital importance of adhering to the ancient traditions of the faith. This feature of his leadership is particularly evident in his *Epistles* (*Nāmagihā*)²², written about 881 A.C. to condemn and repudiate a decree of his brother Zādspram, by which — prompted it seems, by the scarcity of priests who could perform the traditional ceremony — the latter sought to substitute a simpler ritual for the major purification rite (*barešnum*). In the *Epistles* (*EM.I.ii.13f.*) Manušcihr complains of the harsh outside pressures which threatened the future of the priesthood:

*ōh-iz ka āwām ōwōn *asāzīg und druz ōwōn was-kōxšišn ud staft-zōr ud ārāstār ī ōwōn *gōwišnīhā-ē, ka-z hambāst mōyān ud wehān pad winnārdan ud pattāyēnidan ī im frārōn pēšag tūxšēm; (14) ēg-iz nōg nōg az frahist šahrān ōwōn pad *hanjābišn estēd ī-mān pad-iš cimīgihā garān bēš ud bīm...*

«And thus, while the times are so untoward, and the Fiend is so full of strife and has such tyrannical force, and (he, the Fiend, is) the one who induces (one to make) such pronouncements (viz. those of Zādspram), although all priests (*mōyān*) and laymen (*wehān*), all of us, strive to organize this righteous profession (viz. the priesthood) and to preserve it, (14) even so, latterly, it is in such decline²³ in most of the lands, that we have great pain and fear thereof, with good reason...»

In another passage, Manušcihr speaks of his own difficulties as a leader of the community in times of adversity (*EM.I.iii.10f.*):

*cahārom ēn kū man, wāspuhragānīhā-tar abar xīr ī pēšag awizīrīšnīg was-kārīh ōwōn ī hān-iz hufraward ud meh-frazānag hudēnān pēšōbāy Gōšnjam ī Šābuhrān abāg cand pus ud ham-dūdag ī *nāfīg mōymard hamē rāyēnid, (11) hān-am ēwtāgihā ud kem-hayyārīhā pad rāyēnidārīh andar bun; kemīh ī artēštārān ud wasīh ī hamēmālān ud zūd zūd rasišnīh ī petyārag, ud cārag-xwāstārīh ī pad abāz dāštan ī wizend ud awištāb, ud adādīhā dārīšn ī ātaxšān masjidān rāy-am hamēšag ranjagīh ōwōn ī-m az im dar frahist hangām guft,*

«the fourth is this, that for me, an unavoidably great work-load, more particularly for the things of the (priestly) profession, such as even the late, very wise Leader of the Faithful, Gōšnjam son of Šābuhr, managed together with a number of sons and relatives, priests (*mōymard*) of (our) family, (11) that (work) it is my responsibility to manage alone and with few helpmates; because of the scarcity of soldiers and the abundance of opponents, the very swift advent of the Antagonist and the seeking of

²¹ See B. Spuler, *Iran in früh-islamischer Zeit*, Wiesbaden 1952, pp. 191-2; Boyce, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-3.

²² See B.N. Dhabhar, *The Epistles of Mānūschihar*, Bombay 1912.

²³ So Anklesaria, *Zadspr.*, p. xxx. The word **hanjābišn* also occurs in *DkM.* 600.13; in *DkM.* 649.12-3, in the same context, the verb *hanjāstan* «to be finished» is used.

remedies to keep back hurt and oppression, and because of the unlawful keeping of fire-temples as mosques, my troubles are always such as I have stated very many times about this subject.»

It was not only the direct pressures from the Muslim authorities, however, that threatened the stability of the Zoroastrian Church and its priesthood. Manušcihr's other work, the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, which contains his answers to the questions of a Zoroastrian congregation, shows that the clergy was affected at least as deeply by the increasing poverty of its followers.

Thus the 43rd question of the *DD.*²⁴ describes the case of a priest who has held high office (*dastwarīh ud mōbedīh*) and is well-versed in religious learning (*zand ud šāyist-nē-šāyist*), who comes to a city such as Isfahan, where — presumably because there were no competent priests in the city itself — the laymen commission priests from other towns to perform the *hamāg-dēn*²⁵ and other ceremonies for them. The arrival of a highly qualified priest apparently causes great embarrassment to the local population, who turn to Manušcihr to inquire whether they are obliged to let him have a share to the work, or if they should say, «until you came, we did not have to order (rituals) except from one who was your inferior» (*tā hān kū tō mad estēh ēg-mān bē ō ōy ī azēr ī tō nē *abāyist framūdan*, *DD.*43, 159v.5-6), implying no doubt that the remuneration to which such an eminent priest would be entitled, would prove too great a strain on the community's resources.

The *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* also refers repeatedly to a tendency on the part of the laymen to lower the fees they were prepared to pay to the priests for organizing and performing rituals on their behalf. While formerly a fee ranging from 350 up to 450 dirhams²⁶ was customary for the *hamāg-dēn*, in Manušcihr's time, it seems, people could no longer afford such sums. Manušcihr warns of the dangers of such a development for the future of the priesthood, for if «they do not

²⁴ *DD.*43, K 35, 159r.2ff. For the latter part of the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, references are given here to the number of the question, and to page-numbers and lines as found in *The Pahlavi Codex K 35*, First Part, facs. ed., Copenhagen 1934, repr. Shiraz n.d. It is intended to give a more detailed analysis of the data from Manušcihr's works concerning the priesthood, and to publish the relevant passages in full, in a forthcoming article.

²⁵ For an explanation of the term *hamāg-dēn* see F.M.P. Kotwal, *The Supplementary Texts to the Šāyest Nē-Šāyest*, Copenhagen 1969, p. 109 (Ch. XVII, n. 3), who identifies the *hamāg-dēn* with the ceremonies of the three days after death. There is no obvious connection in Manušcihr's works, however, between the *hamāg-dēn* and the funerary ritual (no mention is made of the *hamāg-dēn*, for example, in *DD.*27, which deals with such rites, cf. T.D. Anklesaria, *The Datistan-ī Dinik*, Part I, Pursishn I-XL, Bombay n.d., pp. 55f.; West, *op. cit.*, pp. 58ff.), and it seems possible therefore that the *hamāg-dēn* could also be performed on other occasions.

²⁶ *DD.*87, 194v.11-3; *DD.*65, 179v.9.

obtain as great an income from accepting (a commission) and delegating (the ritual to the officiating priests) far away, as (they would) from buying and selling linen in their own cities» (*az padīrīftan ud abāz framūdan pad dūr rāh and bahr nē ayābēnd ciyōn az karbāš xrīdan ud abāz frōxtan andar xwēš šahr*, *DD.*85, 194r.4f.), priests are likely to become disenchanted with their demanding profession and their children, instead of learning to recite the sacred texts, will turn to selling linen and other easy and profitable occupations²⁷.

In Manušcihr's own time, however, the eager competition for work and the readiness of some priests to lower their fees, suggest that there were in fact more ordinary practising priests (as opposed to more specialized priests such as the *yōjdāhrgar* or «purifier» (cf. above) than the community could support, (*DD.*87, 195v.17ff.):

*ud nūn-iz pad 150 drahm, pad-iz 120 drahm hān ī nē pad zōhr, hamē rāyēnēnd, u-š cim niyāzōmandīh ī hāwištān kē hān niyāz rāy pad emēd ī kār ī wēš āyast hamē kāhēnēnd ud kem-mizdīhā niyāzōmand-tar ud acār-tar ud pad *kamist-mizdīh wīdwar-tar hamē bawēnd,*

«and now they arrange it for 150 dirhams and that (*hamāg-dēn*) without *zōhr* even for 120 dirhams, and the reason for this is the indigence of the disciples (*hāwištān*), and because of that need they steadily let the gift be diminished in the hope of more work; and because of their low rewards, they become poorer and more helpless and more readily content with the lowest rewards.»

Two groups who are regularly depicted as rivals in the competition for income and prestige from the ritual, are the scholar-priests and the officiating priests. The former, who have studied the sacred texts with their Middle Persian commentary (*Zand*), claim that their status is higher, and that they are therefore entitled to accept commissions for the ritual and to organize and direct it. Some of these priests, however, perhaps because they can no longer recite Avestan fluently without *Zand* (cf. below), are said to be incapable of actually performing the ritual (*ud pad *zōtīh ī xwad ēc nask yaštan nē tuwān*, *DD.*65, 178v.12-3)²⁸. The second group, who know no Pahlavi but have each memorized large sections of the Avestan liturgy of the rituals, point out that they can not only organize the ritual, but are also capable of performing it (*cē amāh pad zōtīh ī xwēš harw mard-ē cand nask tuwān yaštan*, *DD.*46, 163r.8-9). The latter group are regularly referred to as *hāwištān* «disciples»²⁹, for the scholar-priest Manušcihr uses *hērbed*³⁰,

²⁷ *DD.*85, 194r.9ff.

²⁸ Cf. also *DD.*46, 162v.9ff.

²⁹ E.g. *DD.*65, 178v.6.

³⁰ E.g. *DD.*65, 180r.5.

or «a *hērbēd* (who) goes (to do) the work of a *mōymard*» (*hērbēd-ē* (*kē*) *pad mōymardīh hamē rawēd*)³¹, or simply *mōymard*³².

In response to a question on this subject, Manušcihr points out³³ that the functions of *hērbēds* and *hāwišts* are interdependent, and says that «it is more reasonable if the *hāwišt* is the performer, and the *hērbēd* the one who directs and seeks (to achieve) a proper performance» (*ēdōn cimīg-tar ka hāwišt yaštār, ud hērbēd framūdār ud xūb-kārīh xwāstār bawēd, DD.65, 181r.17ff.*). The fact that the question is asked at all, however, suggests that such a division of tasks was not generally adhered to in practice, and the ultimate fate of the scholar-priest can perhaps be glimpsed from *DD.45*³⁴, where it is asked whether a *hērbēd* who cannot make a daily living from his functions as a *hērbēd*, may leave his profession and do other work, or not (*hān hērbēd ka-š az <zīwišn ī> hērbēdīh zīwišn ī rōzgārīg nēst, hērbēdīh bē pādixšāy hištan ud any kār kardan ayāb nē, DD.45, 162r.4-6*). That Manušcihr takes the question to refer to a scholar-priest or priestly teacher, is clear from his answer, viz. that such a priest may not give up his calling unless the faithful, and even his own relatives, fail to provide for him; he must then «seek to make a living from such works as celebrating rituals, which brings rewards, and organizing the *hamāg-dēn*, and other occupations of the priest and the *hāwišt*» (*ud az mīzdīg yazišngarīh ud hamāg-dēn rāyēnīdārīh ud abārīg *āsrōnīh ud hāwištīh, pad-iš zīwišn-ē xwāstan, DD.45, 162r.16ff.*). From this one might infer that, according to Manušcihr, even the task of organizing the *hamāg-dēn* ritual was not part of the proper or original functions of the *hērbēd*, whence perhaps the reference to «a *hērbēd* (who) goes (to do) the work of a *mōymard*» (cf. above).

If some scholar-priests were thus forced to stoop to the work of *hāwišts*, while both groups vied with one another for commissions to direct the rituals, it is hardly surprising to find that the Zoroastrian laymen were confused as to the difference between the two: «as regards the status of *hērbēd* or *hāwišt*, which is the *hērbēd* and which the disciple?» (*hērbēdīh ayāb hāwištīh, kadām hērbēd bawēd ud kadām hāwišt, DD.44, 161r.14ff.*). In his answer, Manušcihr says (*ibid.*, 17ff.):

*hērbēdīh ud hāwištīh hamband mādayānīhā; hērbēdān hammōzēnd ud hāwištān hammōzēnd dānišn ī dēn ī ast abestāg ud zand. hērbēdān hāwištān būd hēnd pad hammōxtan ī az xwēš hērbēd, hāwišt-iz ī hammōxt *dānišn hērbēd bawēnd (161v.12ff.) hērbēd abar zand *āgāhān ud hāwišt abar *abestāg; awēšān *āšnāg-tar, hērbēd frāz az yašt ud wisparad hād ud*

³¹ *DD.65, 178v.2-4.*

³² E.g. *DD.65, 179r.2, 179v.15.*

³³ *DD.46, 163v.14ff.*

³⁴ 162r.3ff.

*nērang abzār, ud abzār ī pad zand, hāwišt frāz az nērang ī yazišn ud pādīyābīh ud apādīyābīh ud *pākīh ud rēmanīh ud wināh pad *dlštīk' bē šnāxt(an), ud abzār ī pad abestāg,*

«essentially, the functions of the *hērbēd* and the *hāwišt* are connected; the *hērbēds* teach (or 'learn'), and the *hāwišts* learn, the knowledge of the religion, which is the Avesta and Zand. The *hērbēds* have been *hāwišts*, as they have learned from their own *hērbēd*, and the *hāwišts* who have learned knowledge will be *hērbēds*. The *hērbēd* has knowledge of the Zand, the *hāwišt* of the Avesta; in particular they are known, the *hērbēd* by his mastery of the texts and ritual directions of the *Yasna* and *Vīspereḍ*, and by his mastery of the Zand, the *hāwišt* by the fact that he knows (. . . , *pad dlštīk'?*) the directions of the rituals, and the (rules of) cleanness and uncleanness, and purity and impurity, and sin, and by his mastery of the Avesta.»

While it is stated here that a *hērbēd* knows the texts and ritual directions of the *Yasna* and *Vīspereḍ*, we know from the passages cited earlier that some *hērbēds* were unable to perform the ritual. The reason for this may have been that all priests received the same initial training, and learned to recite and perform the *Yasna* and *Vīspereḍ* (i.e. the rituals one must know, in later times at least, for the *Nāvar*, the first initiation ceremony of a priest); as they went on to study and memorize the Zand, however, some *hērbēds* would presumably have lost the fluency in reciting Avesta which is demanded of an officiating priest.

Manušcihr thus uses the title *hērbēd* for one who is qualified to act as a priestly teacher, who has undergone the initial priestly training and has studied the Zand. Those who concentrated on performing the rituals and, presumably, guided the faithful in everyday matters concerning purity and proper conduct³⁵ were, theoretically, still regarded as «students» (*hāwišt*).

In practice, however, it seems that, as the community grew poorer and could no longer support a number of priests for their scholarship alone, the tasks of *hērbēds* and *hāwišts* came to be very similar. The confusion of the laymen as to the difference between the two groups, combined with the testimony of the other sources cited above, show that the distinctions drawn by Manušcihr were no longer clear in the minds of many of his contemporaries and were, in fact, in the process of disappearing altogether.

As it seems probable, in view of the above, that Manušcihr's conservatism extended to his use of priestly titles, the frequent occurrence in his works of the words *mōy* and *mōymard*³⁶ as general terms

³⁵ Those who decided more important questions would presumably be referred to as *dastwar* rather than *hāwišt*, cf. e.g. *EM.II.v.4.*

³⁶ E.g. *EM.I.ii.13, I.iii.10*, quoted above.

for «priest» cannot be claimed as evidence that these were still generally used in the 9th century. Since Manušcihr presumably wrote in a way that was intelligible to his correspondents, however, it can be assumed that they had not passed from living memory.

Given the radically altered position of the Zoroastrian Church in post-Sasanian Iran, it is hardly surprising to find signs of change and decay in the later use of administrative titles. Thus the title *mōbedān mōbed* had been replaced by *hudēnān pēšōbāy*, «leader of the faithful»³⁷ (a title reminiscent of the Islamic *amīr al-mu'minīn*), and we do not hear of the *Mōy Handarzbed* as a dignitary actually existing in post-Sasanian times. Manušcihr states, however, that «even now, (there are) *Rads* and *Mōbeds* and *Dastwars* and judges...» (*nūn-iz radān mōbedān dastwarān dādwarān*)³⁸ to lead the faithful.

Of these, the *Mōbed* appears only a few times in passages referring to current conditions, e.g. in the text cited above, and in *DD.44* (161v.9-10), where Manušcihr mentions «the commander of the profession of priests in Fars, the head of the *Mōbeds* of the province of Fars» (*Pārs āsrōnān pēšag framādār ī abar *awestām*³⁹ *mōbedān ī Pārs sālār*).

The term *rad* occurs sparsely in Manušcihr's works. In *EM.III.1*, where he calls himself «Manušcihr, son of Gōšnjam, *Rad* of Fars and Kerman» (*Manušcihr ī Gōšnjam ī Pārs ud Kērmān rad*), the word clearly retains its «administrative» associations. Elsewhere⁴⁰, it seems to be used in the more general sense of «master, one in authority», and thus to be practically synonymous with *dastwar*. In one passage, the two words almost seem to form a single title, (*DD.43*, 160r.11): *agar hān mard rad (ud) dastwar ī dānāg*, «if that man (is) a wise *Rad*-(and)-*Dastwar*».

When it occurs independently, the word *dastwar* is generally used in the same sense, viz. for a past or present religious dignitary who had the authority to give judgements in matters of religion⁴¹. From *DD.88*, however, it appears that the terms *dastwarān* (196r.15) and *dastwarīh* (196r.11) could also be used to denote the authorities who were responsible for the maintenance of fire-temples, i.e. of priests whose duties included the more practical aspects of religious leadership.

Manušcihr's work thus suggests that, as the community could no longer support a body of priests who devoted much of their time to

³⁷ Cf. Boyce, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

³⁸ *DD.0.8*, see T.D. Anklesaria, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

³⁹ MS. 'wst'n, cf. New Persian *ostān*.

⁴⁰ E.g. *DD.O.20* (Anklesaria, *op. cit.*, p. 6): *axw ud rad ud dastwar* «lord and *rad* and *dastwar*»; *EM.I.vi.1*: *pid ud rad ud sālār* «father and *rad* and leader».

⁴¹ Cf. e.g. *DD.0.20*, *EM.I.iii.7*, iv.10.

study and teaching, the distinctions between scholars and other priests gradually became blurred. It is also clear that, while the terms *mōy* and *mōymard* were still understood, a number of administrative titles had become obsolete, or acquired a more general meaning. Furthermore, the term *dastwar* appears to have had stronger connotations of practical leadership in the 9th century than may have been the case in earlier times.

* * *

The few passages of the *DD.* and *EM.* which contain references to contemporary *Mōbeds* do not allow us to draw any conclusions regarding the functions of these priests in the late 9th century. Two later sources, however, dating from a time when the Parsis had already left for India, suggest that, in Iran, the *Mōbed* was still the head of the clerical organization of a city. The first of these is an Arabic inscription in Persepolis⁴², stating that in 955 A.C., «Mārasfand, *Mōbed* of (the city of) Kazerun» had read the the Pahlavi inscriptions to the Buyid ruler 'Adad al-Daula. The second is a passage from the *Rivāyat* of Farnbag-Srōš (fl. 1008 A.D.)⁴³:

ka hudēnān pēšōbāy-ē mōymard-ē rāy mōbedīh ī šahr-ē dahēd, pad passand ud hamdādestānīh ī wehdēnān, pas az hān pad ēw-cand radīh ī kustag-ē dahēd ud gumārd ī sazāg ī pad ēwēn nibēsēd...

«When a *Hudēnān Pēšōbāy* confers the rank of *Mōbed* of a city on a *mōymard* ('priest'), to the satisfaction and with the agreement of the faithful, and some time after that, he confers on him the rank of *Rad* of a district, and writes a fitting deed of appointment in accordance with custom...»

While in the above passage the function of a *Rad* is combined with that of a *Mōbed* (a practice, incidentally, already attested for the Sasanian period)⁴⁴, the close association between the terms *rad* and *dastwar* is illustrated by a mid-10th century source, the *Rivāyat ī Ēmēd ī Ašwahištān*⁴⁵, where the priesthood appears to be divided into those «with authority», viz. the *Rads* and *Dastwars*, and those «under authority», who are called «*hērbeds* and purifiers (*yōjdāhrgarān*)», e.g. in *RivEA.IX.1-4*⁴⁶:

⁴² See Boyce, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

⁴³ *RivFSr.*(I).ii, see B.T. Anklesaria, *op. cit.* (n. 17), vol. I, pp. 84-5. For the date see *ibid.*, vol II, p. 2.

⁴⁴ See Gignoux, *art. cit.* (n. 1), p. 263.

⁴⁵ Cf. M. Boyce, «Middle Persian Literature», *Handbuch der Orientalistik* 1.4.2, ed. B. Spuler, Leiden/Cologne 1968, p. 46.

⁴⁶ See B.T. Anklesaria, *Rivāyat-ī Hēmū-ī Ašwahištān*, Vol. I, Pahlavi Text, Bombay 1962, pp. 31-2.

*mard-ē ī hērbēd kē pad druzīh ī wināhgārīh kē-š xwad pad-iš *awestwār⁴⁷
*bawēd, radān ud dastwarān wizīr ī pad tōzišn pad-iš kard, u-š tōzišn nē
kard ud az im wināh bē nē wašt, pad yōjdāhrgārīh ud hērbēdīh šāyēd ayāb
nē?*

«A *hērbēd* who persists in the fiendish state of sin in which he finds himself — the *Rads* and *Dastwars* have given judgement that he must atone for it, and he has not atoned for it, and has not turned away from this sin — is he fitting for the tasks of a purifier and a *hērbēd*, or not?»

The *Rads* and *Dastwars* thus give judgements in religious matters, on the basis of the accepted teachings (*cāštag*) of the ancient authorities⁴⁸; when the head of a family (*dūdāg-sālār*) dies, they must officially appoint his successor⁴⁹, and the believers must obey their authority⁵⁰. In one *RivEA* passage⁵¹, the words *rad*, *mōbed* and *dastwar* are used to denote religious authorities; elsewhere, only the terms *rad* and *dastwar* occur, apparently as synonyms⁵².

The tasks of the *hērbēds*, it seems, consisted of the performance of the ritual (*yazišn ī yazdān kardan*, *RivEA*.XII.12), and, if they were *yōjdāhrgars*, of administering the rites of purification. As in the time of Zādspram, there appears to have been a shortage of competent purifiers in the 10th century: in *RivEA*.XIII, the question is asked what a person should do if he has become ritually unclean (*rēman*) and there is no purifier either in his own town or at a reasonable distance from it; *RivEA*.XII deals with a *hērbēd* who claims to be a purifier, but does not carry out the purification correctly. Elsewhere (*RivEA*.XIV), the question concerns two *hērbēds*, one of whom is a purifier, who have the *Vendīdād* by heart (*u-šān harw dō Wendīdād warm*). According to modern custom, knowledge of the *Vendīdād* is required of those who intend to undergo the *marātib* ceremony⁵³, and is thus a characteristic qualification of the *mōbad*; the *RivEA* passage, however, shows that no such connection between *Vendīdād* and *mōbed*hood existed in the 10th century.

* * *

Before the *RivEA* was written, however, — probably around 917 A.C. — the Parsis had left Iran, and eventually settled in Gujarat. In

⁴⁷ MS. 'wstw B'YXWNyt, for *'wstwb'l *YXWWNyt.

⁴⁸ *RivEA*.XXI.6.

⁴⁹ *RivEA*.V.1ff.

⁵⁰ *RivEA*.XVII.32.

⁵¹ *RivEA*.V.10-1.

⁵² E.g. *RivEA*.V.30, VI.1, XXI.1.

⁵³ See J.J. Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees*, Bombay 1922, pp. 207ff.

the centuries that followed, the Iranians suffered considerable hardship, and the leadership of the community sought refuge in the remote oases of Yazd and Kerman. The Parsis, on the other hand, appear to have been relatively prosperous. In the course of time, the numbers of their priests increased and, in the 13th century, they divided themselves into five separate groups (*panth*), each originally working in its own territory and having its own priestly council⁵⁴.

During the first centuries after the Parsis' departure, communications between the two communities appear to have been sparse. From the 15th century onward, however, Parsi messengers occasionally visited their Iranian co-religionists to inquire about points of ritual. Their questions, and the answers of the Iranian priests, are laid down in a series of letters, the «new *Rivāyats*», which yield valuable information about the conditions of both communities from the 15th to the 18th centuries.

We learn from the *Rivāyats*, for example, that the Zoroastrian population of Iran had dwindled to some 6000 souls, or a slightly higher number⁵⁵, and that the Indian priests could no longer read Pahlavi, whereas the number of Iranis who could do so did not exceed four of five⁵⁶. Another part of the religious tradition that was in danger of becoming extinct in India, was the *Vendīdād*. This ritual, which appears to have originated in Fars some time after the fall of the Sasanian empire⁵⁷, was nevertheless regarded in Iran as an essential rite to defeat the powers of evil and pollution⁵⁸. (It is mentioned by the conservative Manušcihr as an accepted part of Zoroastrian observance in *EM*.I.vii.10.) The Parsis, however, had not brought a manuscript of the text of the *Vendīdād* (i.e. part of the liturgy of the rite of the same name) with them to India and, although a copy was made for them in Sistan as early as 1205 A.C.⁵⁹, we hear that the Iranis were shocked to learn that the Indian priests could no longer celebrate this ritual in the 16th century, and urged them to learn it⁶⁰. (Eventually, the *Vendīdād* became an integral part of Parsi observance.)

As far as priestly titles are concerned, we know that the high priests

⁵⁴ Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, p. 167.

⁵⁵ See the *Rivāyat* of 880 A.Y. (1511 A.C.), in B.N. Dhabar (transl.), *The Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz*, Bombay 1932, pp. 609-10, where the Zoroastrian population of Khorasan is said to number 1700, and the (slightly later) *Rivāyat* of Kāmdīn Šāpūr (*ibid.*, p. 620), where the figure of 3000 is given.

⁵⁶ Dhabhar, *op. cit.*, p. 603.

⁵⁷ Boyce, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

⁵⁸ See Kreyenbroek, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-5.

⁵⁹ Boyce, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

⁶⁰ *Riv.* of Jāsā, in Dhabar, *op. cit.*, p. 327; cf. *ibid.*, p. XLI.

of Kerman and of the Yazd area both used the title *dastūrān dastūr*⁶¹. The *Rivāyats* generally speak of *dastūrs* and *hērbads*, which titles seem to have been used rather loosely: the same persons are all called «*hērbad*» in one letter, and «*dastūr*» in another⁶², and in some places the word *dastūr* is evidently used in the general sense of «priest»⁶³.

The word *mōbad* occurs a few times in propositions of a general nature (e.g. «let it be known to the Dastūrs, Hērbads and Mōbads»⁶⁴), but is not used as a title⁶⁵, it seems, by those who signed the *Rivāyats* either on the Iranian or on the Indian side.

In a 15th century *Rivāyat* passage⁶⁶, however, a description is given of the functions and qualifications of the priestly ranks, including those of the *mōbad*: the *hērbad* is said to be a priest who knows the Avesta and has undergone the *Nāvar* ceremony (on which see above), the *mōbad* is one «from whose tongue the Zand-Avesta is never at a distance», and who performs the *Yasna*, whereas the *dastūr* is one who knows Avesta and Zand, understands the meaning of the scriptures, including the Pahlavi books, and at whose orders (i.e. on whose authority) religious works must be performed.

From this it is clear that, although the word *mōbad* was not yet used as the title of a well-defined priestly rank, and no special initiation ceremony existed to qualify a priest as a *mōbad* (those who could celebrate the *Vendīdād* still being called *dastūr* or *hērbad*⁶⁷), the word seems to have lost all connotations of administrative power, and the *mōbad* does not differ from the *hērbad* in anything but piety and, perhaps, learning. (The performance of the *Yasna* can hardly, at this time, have been a prerogative of the *mōbad*, as it is repeatedly said to be carried out by *hērbads*⁶⁸.)

If the significance of the term *mōbad*, then, appears to have been rather ill-defined at the time of the (earlier)⁶⁹ *Rivāyats*, the qualifications required for the performance of the different rituals and observances, as laid down in the *Rivāyats* by the priests of Iran, are

⁶¹ Boyce, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-5.

⁶² See Dhabhar, *op. cit.*, pp. 603 and 607; M.R. Unvala, *Dārāb Hormazyār's Rivāyat*, 2 vols, Bombay 1922, vol. II, 383.4, 391.4-5. For further references to Unvala's text see Dhabhar, *op. cit.*

⁶³ Dhabhar, *op. cit.*, p. 196, 398 with n. 4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 594.

⁶⁵ In such names as Hērbad Mōbed Māhyār (Dhabhar, *op. cit.*, p. LIII), and Hērbad Narsang Mōbed (*ibid.*, p. LIV), which occur in a series of names consisting of two proper nouns preceded by the title *hērbad*, the word Mōbed appears to be part of the proper names of these *hērbads*.

⁶⁶ *Riv. of Nariman Hōšang*, in Dhabhar, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 327, 403.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 325, 397, 403.

⁶⁹ Dhabhar's work (*op. cit.*) contains *Rivāyat* material from late 15th to 17th century sources, cf. *ibid.*, pp. V, LI-LXV.

largely the same as those we know from later Zoroastrianism: for the lower ceremonies, such as the marriage service, the priest must have gone through the *Nāvar*-ceremony⁷⁰, whereas for some higher offices, such as the *Nīrangdīn* and the *Barešnum*, he must have celebrated the *Vendīdād*⁷¹. (There appears to be no evidence in the *Rivāyats*⁷², however, that such a qualification was necessary for the *Yasna*, *Vispered* or *Bāj*.)

It seems likely, therefore, that when the *Vendīdād* was (re)introduced in India as a regular part of priestly studies, three distinct categories of priests began to emerge there⁷³: those who had undergone the *Nāvar*, and could probably celebrate the *Yasna* and *Vispered* as well as the lower ceremonies, those who, in addition, had performed the *Vendīdād* and were thus qualified to officiate at the higher rituals⁷⁴ and, lastly, the very eminent priests whose understanding of the faith and the scriptures was such that they were regarded as leaders of the priesthood. Since, as the *Rivāyat* passage shows, the title *mōbad* was considered to be superior to that of *hērbad*, but not as eminent as that of *dastūr*, it seems natural that it came to be used eventually for the intermediate category. There are good grounds, therefore, for the assumption that the modern use of the term *mōbad* originated in India some time after the 15th century, and was later adopted by the Iranis.

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Thus, the 9th and 10th century sources cited above suggest that in the centuries after the fall of the Sasanian empire, the Zoroastrian community could no longer support a separate body of priestly teachers and scholar-priests, so that the word *hērbad* became synonymous with other general terms for «priest». Similarly, a development can be traced there by which the specific «administrative» titles of Sasanian times were gradually replaced by the general term *dastwar*. A 10th century source thus seems to distinguish two categories of priests: «authorities» (*rad*, *dastwar*) and «practising priests» (*hērbad*, *yōjdāh-*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁷¹ For the *Nīrangdīn* see *ibid.*, pp. 348, 362; for the *Barešnum* see *ibid.*, p. 398.

⁷² Except for one MS. variant of doubtful authenticity (quoted by Dhabhar, *op. cit.*, p. 398 n. 6).

⁷³ Such a development is less likely to have originated in Iran, where no major changes in priestly practice appear to have taken place at this time, and where the priesthood, serving a very small community, can have had little reason for adopting a more differentiated hierarchy of its own accord.

⁷⁴ The subsequent adoption of the *marātib* as a necessary qualification for performing the «inner» rituals (cf. Modi, *op. cit.*, pp. 260-1), probably did much to strengthen the identification of such «fully qualified priests» as a separate group.

rgar). The title *mōbed*, however, though sparsely used for contemporary prelates, clearly retained its connotation of administrative power in Iran at this time, and it was not until after the 15th century that it came to be used specifically for a priest who could celebrate the *Vendīdād*, and thus acquired its place in the hierarchy of later Zoroastrianism.

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LE JUDÉO-PERSAN ANCIEN
ENTRE LE PEHLEVI ET LE PERSAN

1. Par judéo-persan ancien nous entendons la langue des textes persans en écriture hébraïque qui sont préclassiques par leur date et/ou leurs caractères internes. Si on laisse de côté les inscriptions, toutes très brèves et peu instructives pour le linguiste, on peut classer les textes judéo-persans anciens en plusieurs groupes selon la nuance dialectale qu'ils représentent (le tableau suivant résume et met à jour celui qui a été donné dans Lazard 1968):

- le fragment de lettre de Dandān-Uiliq (VIII^e siècle?), étudié en dernier lieu par Utas (1969) et Lazard (s.p. a).
- le Pentateuque de Londres, conservé par un manuscrit daté de 1319 ap. J.-C. et édité par Paper (1972);
- un ensemble important comprenant les textes bibliques de la Bibliothèque nationale à Paris, dont des morceaux ont été publiés par Zotenberg (1869), Lagarde (1884), Asmussen (1975, 1977), Paper (1975), Asmussen et Paper (1977), Mainz (1970, 1973, 1974, 1976, 1980, 1982), Carlsen (1977), ainsi que le Pentateuque du Vatican, publié par Paper (1965-68); ces textes s'échelonnent peut-être du XII^e au XIV^e siècle; nous désignerons ce groupe de textes et la variété dialectale qu'il représente par le sigle PV (= P[aris]-V[atican]);
- un autre groupe, qui n'a longtemps été connu que par le document juridique établi à Ahvâz en 1020, publié par Margoliouth (1899), puis étudié et de mieux en mieux interprété par Asmussen (1965), MacKenzie (1966), Shaked (1971a); à ce premier texte sont venus s'ajouter un très intéressant morceau d'apologétique publié par MacKenzie (1968) sous le titre «An early Jewish-Persian argument», puis un second document juridique du même type que le premier, explicitement karaïte et daté de 951, qui a été publié par Shaked (1971b), et des fragments de deux commentaires karaïtes de Daniel, également publiés par Shaked (1982): nous appellerons ce groupe et la nuance dialectale de sa langue AA (= A[hvâz]-A[rgument]);
- le commentaire d'Ezéchiel conservé à Leningrad, qui fut signalé par Salemann (1900) et dont Shaked prépare l'édition.