

OPTION B

4. The Citadel of Irbil (Modern Day Kurdistan)

Unlike the fortress of Bam, built in the 3rd Century BC by the Sassanians and destroyed by a massive earthquake in 2002, the Citadel in Irbil has withstood 8,000 years of pounding. Its slopes are eroding and its streets and buildings are collapsing. Yet the Citadel still stands as one of the longest, continuously inhabited urban areas on Earth.

(It is fair to ask why the Citadel, located in Kurdistan, should be included in a list of archaeological discoveries in Iran. But the whole area of Mesopotamia, including Iraq and Kurdistan, were all part of ancient Iran* for millennia.)

The Citadel sits atop a 100-foot tall mound formed by layers of successive settlements, including those of the Persians, Assyrians, Akkadians, Babylonians and Greeks. The Citadel is close to where Alexander defeated the Persian King Darius III in the epic battle of Gaugamela in 331 BC.

Irbil's plans for restoration of the Citadel go beyond UNESCO's ~~modest efforts~~. The ambitious authorities hope to turn the Citadel and its vast archaeological wealth buried within the mound into a world-renowned tourist site, complete with hotels and art galleries and a vibrant, permanent living community. ~~It is a tall order, but the~~ authorities are using digital imagery and satellite photography to map the site. If successful, the Citadel would not only be a crowning archaeological voice in the midst of a cultural genocide that is archaeological Iraq today, but also a beacon of hope for the independence of Kurdistan from Arab Iraq.

5. The 2,000-Year-Old Zoroastrian Temple in Ray

One other historic gem of great importance to the world Zoroastrians is the 2000-year-old fire temple in Ray, close to Tehran. Ray is not only reputed to be the birthplace of Zarathushtra, but it has the distinction of being mentioned as the only city in his Gathas. The Ray

*Throughout this book, the term "Ancient Iran," or "Greater Iran," refers not only to present-day Iran (or Persia) but to all of central Asia.

vibrant residential

those of UNESCO.

hotels,

temple is the oldest in Iran and houses the original sacred fire, which then made its way to Yazd; and from there to the Zoroastrian fire temples in India.

The fire temple dates back to the Parthian-Sassanian era and is considered to be the oldest in Iran. It is a brick-and-mortar structure, and the main hall has two rooms of square-based columns. It has four arches 70 feet high and visitors can only imagine the beauty of the original design. It has attracted the largest number – 800 – visitors daily. It is not known whether the Zoroastrian community in Iran is engaged in restoration work.

I visited Ray, where our leader, from the famous Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, explained how seven settlements had been built on top of one another. The bottom one dated back to 5000 BC.

Aryan Settlements In Central Asia

Close to Zarathushtra's Time

Having completed the saga of the major Aryan civilizations that dipped into pre-history and with most of them having implications of Zarathushtra's birth or his presence there, let us trace the next stage of migrations into central Asia between 3000 BC to 1000 BC. They span the pre-Zoroastrian, Zoroastrian and post-Zoroastrian eras. The Aryans established four important settlements/kingdoms: Sogdia, Bactria, Saka (Scythia) Khwarazm, and Turan.

1. Sogdia (now in Tajikistan-Uzbekistan)

Sogdia is in the region of the Steppes, ringed by the majestic Pamir range of mountains, called the Pamir Knot (the focal point of the great Himalayas ranging to the southeast, the Hindu Kush Mountains to the southwest, and the Tian Shan Mountains to the northeast). Sogdia was the home of the Spitama clan – the forefathers of Zarathushtra – who ruled as nobles and chieftains – possibly even kingmakers. Zarathushtra was reputedly born in Dardar, near Chintargha in the province of Badakhshan (in Tajikistan).

(Parenthetical names are those used

(Modern research has determined that both groups were wrong and that a third faction, with the “Faslis” observing March 21, the day of the spring equinox, is faithful to the true Iranian calendar.) But the controversy became so acrimonious that the two camps came to blows, formed separate temples and stopped social interchanges. Today, the duel is forgotten, but the appellations remain.

Zoroastrianism’s Great Debt to Western Scholars for its Theological Renaissance

“The inexorable decree of providence had ruled that a new light from the West should dispel the darkness that had surrounded the pages of Avestan scriptures and add to their better understanding and elucidation.” In chapter 3, I referred to the “giant” Western scholars – Thomas Hyde, an Oxford Orientalist, Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-DuPerron of France, and Martin Haug, the brilliant German philologist who discovered the Rosetta Stone of the Gathas, through their similarity with ancient Sanskrit.

Haug’s discovery in the 19th Century became a continental divide between the Western and Zoroastrian scholars and reformers on the one hand versus the orthodox Parsis and priests on the other. The former readily accepted Haug’s contention “that Zarathushtra was a towering monotheist and that he neither believed in rituals nor considered them part of his religion.” The orthodox who believed that the Avesta scriptures were, for the most part, attributable to the Prophet did not accept this separation. Today, the worldwide Zoroastrian community is split on the centrality of the Gathas. The liberals, many intellectuals and scholars among them, uphold the Gathas as the only true religion of Zoroastrianism and that all other Avestan texts can be discarded as an aberration, at best, and corruption, at worst. The orthodox in the general priesthood, traditionalists and laymen, argue that it was the whole corpus of Zoroastrian texts that saved the religion from extinction for many a century, and that these texts contain pearls of theological wisdom, not just the Gathas alone. As an example, they cite the Zoroastrian monthly calendar and the theological insignificance of each day of the month as an affirmation of Zarathushtra’s teachings.

Hormuzd is a later Pahlavi term for Ahura Mazda, and it

The Zoroastrian Calendar – A 30-Day Capsule of Zarathushtra’s Pure Theology

The Zoroastrian calendar of 30 days is not just a routine sequence to identify each day of the month – similar to the worldview of each day of the week with no religious significance. The 30 days of the Zoroastrian calendar are a gentle reminder of the theological meaning of each day, inspired by Zarathushtra’s own teachings. In that sense the 30-day calendar does not have the theological adulteration of later Zoroastrianism. Each day represents an illuminating concept derived directly from Gathic thought. Each day is called a “Roj” and there are 30 days each month. ~~The words in brackets are usages in later Zoroastrian texts.~~ The 12 months account for 360 days in the year. The remaining five days are devoted to each of the five days of Zarathushtra’s Gathas.

Roj 1: Hormuzd ~~(a later Pahlavi term for Ahura Mazda)~~

It is altogether fitting that a month began with homage to Ahura Mazda, the creator of the universe. The recitation of the 101 names (attributes) of God are involved as a mantra. Roj 1, therefore, unfolds for the prayerful the panorama of the supreme being.

Roj 2: Vohu Manah (Beh-man)

We described in chapter 4 Vohu Manah as the good mind, or wisdom, as one of the six abstract attributes of God. The mind can make heaven out of hell or hell out of heaven. In Roj 2, the prayerful focuses on being granted a good mind with independent thinking, peace of mind, compassion and mercy.

Roj 3: Asha Vahishta (Ardi Behest or Asha)

As the second of God’s abstract attributes, Asha is the physical order in the universe and spiritual order (or ethics, truth, righteousness) in the human sphere. (Vohu Manah appears 130 times in the Gathas, and Asha 157 times.) The worshiper in Roj 3 prays that he can be guided by the immutable Law of Asha and not deviate from it as his free mind may tempt him to do.

Roj 4: Kshathra (Shahrevar)

This is the moral power that purifies life, forgives foibles and protects the good person who is harassed by the false, with their negative values. Kshathra is another abstract attribute of God.

Roj 5: Spenta Armaiti (Spandarnad)

In chapter 4, we've seen Armaiti – another of God's abstract attributes – as benevolent action. In the context of the 30-day calendar, Armaiti represents the holy bent of mind that helps man to solve problems in life.

Roj 6: Haurvatat (Khordad)

In the Gathas, Haurvatat is the fifth of the abstract attributes of God, meaning well-being of society. In Roj 6, the prayer is for a resulting happy and healthful society, resulting from other attributes of God injected into the human spirit.

Roj 7: Ameretat (Amurdad)

The sixth of the Amesha Spentas, Ameretat is the result that the worshiper prays for – a continual life of bliss. It is significant that the Zoroastrian monthly calendar devotes this first week of each month to Ahura Mazda and his six abstract attributes that formed the structure of Zarathushtra's theology (see chapter 4)

add period

Roj 8: Dae-Pa-Adar

This is the start of the second week of the Zoroastrian monthly calendar. The second week is devoted to light – the universal energy.

Roj 9: Athra (Adar)

Energy in the universe – physical, mental and spiritual – is maintained by Asha, the immutable law. Athra is symbolically called "Ahura Mazda's son."

Roj 10: Aban (Avan)

Aban is the passive form of light (energy) as Athra is considered to be its active form. Aban represents currents of goodness. She is also known as Anahita – noble, bright and pure. The "Aban Nyaish" in the Zoroastrian prayer book – the Kordeh Avesta – gives Aban the

description of a river flowing from the mountain of good deeds and emptying into the ocean of universal magnetism.

Roj 11: Havare-Kshaeta (Khorshed)

This is a symbol of Ahura Mazda's brightest creation – the sun. Along with fire, the sun is an object of veneration for its light, warmth and health.

Roj 12: Maongha (Mohr)

This heavenly body, the moon, has its origin in our earth. The moon shines with the borrowed light of the sun, but makes "the loan" romantically worthwhile.

Roj 13: Tishtra (Tir)

One of the brightest stars in the firmament, Tishtra and its trajectory were followed with great precision by the ancient Aryans. It is supposed to have symbolic connections with rain and prosperity.

Roj 14: Goush (Gosh)

This term is associated with the creator of the Earth. As creator, he has also created the animal kingdom. Man is given the responsibility to protect and preserve these innocent beings.

Roj 15: Dae-Pa-Meher

Called the day before Meher in Ahura Mazda's creation, Dae-Pa-Meher begins the third week of the monthly calendar. It stresses moral equities and ethical principles.

Roj 16: Mithra (Meher)

Meher stands for justice, ethics, love. This triangle of ethics is derived from Asha. Meher is called the cementing principle of the entire universe. If Khorshed is physical light, Meher is moral light dispelling darkness caused by injustice, immorality and selfishness. The long Meher Yasht in the Khordeh Avesta recounts the nature and function of Ahura Mazda's vigilance in maintaining order (Asha) in this world.

Roj 17: Sraosha (Srosh)

We came across the equivalent of "Sraosha" in chapter 4 in the Gathic term "Daena." Sraosha, like Daena, has several interpretations: man's