

**ESSAYS ON THE SACRED
LANGUAGE,
WRITINGS, AND
RELIGION OF PARSEES**

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Essays on the Sacred Language, Writings, and Religion of Parsees by Martin Haug

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ON THE

SACRED LANGUAGE, WRITINGS, AND RELIGION OF THE PARSEES.

BY

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P R E F A C E.

THE four Essays which I here lay before the public, contain the ripest results of my laborious researches into the Sacred Writings and Religion of the Zoroastrians. Their principal aim is to present in a readable form, all the materials for judging impartially of the character of the Scripture and Religion of the Parsees. The Scripture being written in a language very little explored hitherto, I have thought it necessary to supply an outline of its grammar; a principal use of which I trust may be to enable the Parsees to learn their Sacred language, and make researches of their own into their Zend Avesta. The Roman Alphabet has been employed throughout; and my system of transliteration may be learnt from the alphabet of Zend characters with their Roman equivalents, which is added at the end.

My best thanks are due to my subscribers, who have enabled me to bring out the work.

MARTIN HAUG.

Poona, 2nd February 1862.

TO

EDWARD L. HOWARD, ESQUIRE, M. A.,

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION BOMBAY
PRESIDENCY,

THIS Work is inscribed as a token of gratitude and respect,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

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I.

HISTORY

OF THE

RESEARCHES INTO THE SACRED WRITINGS
AND RELIGION OF THE PARSEES

FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES DOWN TO THE PRESENT.

1.—THE REPORTS OF THE GREEKS, ROMANS,
ARMENIANS, AND MOHAMMEDANS.

In this chapter I intend to give a brief outline of the gradual acquaintance of the western nations with the Zoroastrian religion, (now professed only by the small Parsee community in India, and by a very insignificant portion which remained in the ancient fatherland in Persia,) and principally to trace the history of the scientific researches attempted in Europe into the original records of this ancient creed, where the true doctrine of the great Zoroaster and his successors, buried for thousands of years, is to be found.

To the whole ancient world Zoroaster's lore was better known by the name of the doctrine of the Magi, which denomination was commonly applied to the priests of India, Persia, and Babylonia.

The earliest mention of them is made in the Prophet Jeremiah (39, 3), who enumerated among the retinue of king Nebuchadnezzar at his entry into Jerusalem, the "Chief of the Magi" (*rab mag* in Hebrew), from which statement we may distinctly gather, that the Magi exercised a great influence at the court of Babylonia 600 years B. C. They were, however, foreigners, and are not to be confounded with the indigenous priests. In the Old

Testament no account of this religion is given; only once (Ezekiel VIII., 16, 17) it is hinted at.* The Persians, whose only priests the Magi appear to have been, however, are never spoken of as adherents to idolatry. The Persian kings, chiefly Cyrus, (called *Koresh* in Hebrew, *Kurush* in the cuneiform inscriptions) favored the Jews. In Isaiah this great king is called "the anointed of the Lord (*mashiakh* in Hebrew 45, 1.), the shepherd who carries out the Lord's decrees (44, 28); he is the eagle† called from the orient, the man appointed by the Lord's counsel (46, 11); he is strengthened by the Lord to subdue the heathens (45, 1.)‡ From these high terms, in which king Cyrus, who professed the religion of the Magi, is spoken of, we are entitled to infer that this religion was not so diametrically opposed to the Mosaic as the other ancient religions were; that Cyrus, at all events, was no idolworshipper,—a supposition, we shall find confirmed by Herodotus, and by the sacred books of the Parsees themselves. The Zoroastrian religion exhibits even a very close affinity to, or rather identity with several important doctrines of the Mosaic religion and Christianity, such as the personality and attributes of the devil, and the resurrection of the dead, which are both ascribed to the religion of the Magi, and are really to be found in the present scripture of the Parsees. It is not to be ascertained whether these doctrines were borrowed by the Parsees from the Jews, or by the Jews from the Parsees; very likely neither is the case, and in both these religions they seem to have sprung up independently.

* The religious custom alluded to in Ezekiel, undoubtedly refers to the religion of the Magi. The prophet complains that some of the Jews worship the sun, holding towards their face certain twigs. Exactly the same custom as being observed by the Magi of holding a bundle of twigs in the hands, when engaged in praying, is reported by Strabo (XV., p. 733, edition of Casaubon). It is the so-called Barsom (*Bereçma* in Zend) used up to this time by the Parsee priests when engaged in worship.

† In *Aeschylus's* celebrated play "the Persians," the eagle is the symbol of the Persian empire (verses 295-10). The eagle was, as Xenophon reports, (*Cyropædia* VII., I. 2.) the ensign of the ancient Persians.

‡ The Hebrew word *goyim*, (literary 'people') used in the plural as it is here, denotes the heathenish nations, the idol worshippers, in their strictest opposition to the Israelites.