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Zoroastrian Attitudes toward Animals

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Abstract

The ancient religion of Zoroastrianism devotes considerable attention to relations between human and nonhuman animals. All animal species are seen as being in one of two categories—either beneficent or malevolent, aligned either with the forces of good or with the forces of evil in an ongoing cosmic battle. Humans should treat each species accordingly, zealously protecting “beneficent” species while ruthlessly exterminating “malevolent” ones. Zoroastrian attitudes toward nonhuman animals have likely had a range of influences, both positive and negative, on those found in other traditions, especially Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Keywords

animal sacrifice, cattle, cosmic dualism, dogs, Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism is one of the world’s oldest surviving religions, and it is often claimed to be the world’s first monotheistic tradition. Though it has few practitioners today, its historical influence on Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is quite significant.¹ Thus, for those concerned with how religions inform or support human attitudes toward nonhuman animals, Zoroastrianism provides an interesting case study in two respects: first, for comparison and contrast with attitudes found in neighboring traditions where Zoroastrians live—particularly Islam and Hinduism—and second, as a possible source for attitudes present in religions that were historically influenced by Zoroastrianism.

The historian of religions faces numerous challenges in reconstructing the developmental trajectory of any religious tradition, whether in terms of origins, interpretation of texts, biographical information about founding figures, or cultural adaptations accruing over time. Zoroastrianism presents all these challenges, perhaps even to a greater degree than other religions. There is no general consensus on when or where its founding prophetic figure, Zarathushtra—more commonly known in the West as Zoroaster—lived,

or even if he existed at all.² The hymns attributed to him, known as the Gathas, which form the core of the Zoroastrian sacred text, the Avesta, are in an ancient East Iranian language that has been poorly understood even by Zoroastrians themselves for more than two and a half millennia. Most Zoroastrian texts are much later, written in Middle Persian and dating to the early Islamic period; these incorporate much material that is not found in the Gathas and is often difficult to reconcile with them. On the other hand, many Zoroastrians today reject the later tradition and claim to base their faith on the Gathas alone, despite the enormous difficulty of knowing for certain what this ancient text actually says (Kellens, 2000; Humbach, 1991). When all these factors are taken into consideration, it is clear that any kind of normative Zoroastrian attitude toward nonhuman animals will prove to be elusive at best. Nevertheless, over the vast course of Zoroastrian history, some significant themes regarding nonhuman animals emerge, some of which appear to have positively or negatively influenced attitudes in other religions.

Animals in the Gathas

The Gathas, a set of seventeen hymns that likely date to sometime in the second millennium BCE, are the oldest Zoroastrian text and one of the oldest religious texts of any kind. The language and structure of the Gathas, as well as the pantheon of deities and the type of society they evoke, are very close to that found in the Rig Veda, so much so that it is not unhelpful to consider the two texts as rival interpretations of a common original worldview. Both come from the common prehistoric oral tradition of the Indo-Aryans, a subgroup of the Indo-European family whose languages and mythologies incorporate the Greek, Latin, and Germanic as well as the Indic and Iranian. Both the Gathas and the Rig Veda reflect a patriarchal, warlike, pastoral-nomadic society that probably originated on the steppelands north of the Caspian Sea sometime around the fifth millennium BCE. What most distinguishes the Gathas from the Rig Veda is the approach to their common pantheon of supernatural beings. In the Gathas, the deity of wisdom (Mazda) from the divine class known as *ahuras* (Sanskrit *asura*) is elevated to the status of supreme being, with the other *ahuras* as his adjuncts in the cause of good, while the *daevas* (Sanskrit *deva*), praised in the Vedas, are demoted to the status of demons in league with the evil deity Angra Mainyu (Ahriman). The two sides—originally order versus disorder but interpreted in later texts as Truth versus the lie—are engaged in an ongoing cosmic battle, in which every human being must choose a side.

Perhaps not surprisingly for an ancient pastoral culture, by far the most prominent and highly revered animal in the Gathas is the cow, who is seen as a primary nourisher of humankind:

We address You (as) the waters, and (as) the fertile (cows), and (as) the mother (cow)s, who are not to be killed because they nurse the poor (and) provide drink for all beings, best and most beautiful. (Yasna 38.5; Humbach translation)

Indeed, cows are seen as being worthy of worship, and along with other animal species, they are said to possess souls:

Herewith we now worship the soul (*uruuān*) of the cow and her fashioner. And (we worship) our own souls and those of the domestic animals (*pasu-kanam*) which seek refuge with us, (both with us) to whom they (may belong), and (with us) who may belong to them. And we worship the souls of (those) wild animals (*daiti-kanam*) that (are) harmless. (Yasna 39.1-2)

Cattle are described repeatedly as a source of human joy (44.6, 47.3, 50.2). Treatment of cattle is a basic measure of human morality: bad people don't herd cattle properly (49.1) or don't breed them at all (49.4). Pasturing cattle is presented as an aspect of Truth (understood as cosmic order, *aša*):

Let the best insight, which purifies birth also for mankind, be applied to the cow. Thou breedest her for food for us. For the (cow) provides us good dwelling, she (provides us) stability (and) might(iness). (48.5-6)

Conversely, those who steal and abuse cattle (e.g., the Karapan and Usij) are in league with the demons (*daēvas*), since "They do not foster (the cow) to promote (herds in) the pasture with Truth" (44.20; cf. 51.14). Thus, cattle herds ought rightly to belong to upholders of Truth (*ašavān*), who will increase them and who should by the same right gain possession of the herds of liars (*drugvant*), who don't deserve them (50.2; 51.5).

In sum, while the Gatha texts are in many ways difficult to decipher, the extraordinary importance they accord to cattle is clear. This is perhaps natural, given what we suppose to be the pastoral, nomadic social economy of the prehistoric Iranians, who were almost totally dependent upon their livestock for their own survival. Even more significant, perhaps, is that animals in general are described as having souls, and there is no clear hierarchy that places them on a level below that of humans. This would place Zoroastrianism, in its earliest form at least, closer to the worldview of primal religions than those of later religious traditions.

Nonhuman Animals in Later Zoroastrian Texts

The Gathas are only a small part of the Avesta (most of which has been lost in its original form), the remainder being in a slightly different dialect and often devoted to a range of deities other than Ahura Mazda (Ohrmazd), who is the focus of Zoroaster's hymns. Moreover, the section known as the *Vidēvdād* ("Laws Keeping away the Demons," often transcribed as *Vendīdād*), which contains much material pertaining to the treatment of nonhuman animals, comes to us in a form that probably reflects the views of priestly editors who lived centuries after Zoroaster.³

Thus, there is a considerable gap between the time, place, and social context of the earliest Zoroastrian texts and the bulk that were compiled in subsequent centuries. One should be careful not to project onto the early texts meanings gleaned from later ones, as many scholars of Zoroastrianism have done.⁴ Notable in the later texts is a richly (re)populated pantheon of deities alongside Ahura Mazda/Ohrmazd, and an increasingly polarized picture of the world as battleground between the forces of good and evil. According to the creation stories in the Zoroastrian texts, all beneficent animals were created by Ahura Mazda, and all evil species by Ahriman.

Classical Zoroastrianism (i.e., from the Sasanian period, 224-751 CE), therefore, divides nonhuman animals into "good" and "evil" species. Good species must be protected at all costs by humans, who are subject to extremely harsh penalties if they abuse them. On the other hand, it is the sacred duty of believers to kill "evil" species (collectively called *khrafstar*) at every opportunity, since by doing so they are reducing the foot soldiers available to Ahriman in his campaign for advancing evil in the world.⁵ This dualistic attitude toward the ensemble of animal species renders problematic recent arguments that Zoroastrianism is the "original environmentalist religion" (Foltz & Saadi-nejad, 2007).

The Zoroastrian creation myth in the *Bundahišn* has the bull as the primordial animal, from which all other beneficent species are descended (Bn. 10).⁶ In other late Zoroastrian texts, however, the dog appears more prominently than the cow, ranking next to humans in the "good" creation. Indeed, according to later tradition, if only one human is present for a religious ritual requiring two persons, a dog may substitute for the second person! (Boyce, 1977, p. 142)⁷ Some rituals actually require the presence of a dog. For example, when a Zoroastrian dies, a dog must be brought in to see the corpse before the death can be considered verified. This ritual is called *sag-did*—literally, "dog-seeing." (Dogs are considered to be able to see into the next world. A more contemporary interpretation is that, in the absence of

a qualified medical professional, a dog is better able than a human to sense whether a person is truly deceased.) A dog also accompanies the priest in the funeral procession. Moreover, dogs themselves are given funerals like those of humans.

Traditionally it was held that every Zoroastrian household should give food to a dog at least once a day, before feeding humans. The same was true for rituals that included food. This portion, called *chom-e shwa* (“meal for the dog”) in Zoroastrian Persian and *kuṭrā-no būk* (“share for the dog”) in Gujarati, is seen as being destined for departed souls. In other words, the dog is an intermediary between this world and the next (Boyce, 1977, pp. 144-5). This belief is also reflected in the *Vidēvdād*, which states that when the soul crosses the *Chinvat* bridge to the afterlife it is met by an emanation of its own spiritual self (*daēna*) in the company of two dogs (Vd. 13.2.9, 19.5.30).⁸

Mary Boyce has emphasized the likelihood that the ancient Iranians’ deeply rooted veneration for cows and dogs had economic origins:

In distant days the remote forebears of the Iranians must have had a close working partnership with dogs when they lived as nomads on the Asian steppes; for the custom of riding horses was then unknown, and they must have herded their cattle on foot, and so have depended greatly on dogs to drive and guard them. These two animals, the cow and the dog, were presumably the chief ones with whom the proto-Iranians had sustained contact; and they both came, not only to share their ordinary lives, but also to have part in their religious beliefs and practices—beliefs and practices which in due course became part of the heritage of Zoroastrianism. (Boyce, 1977, p. 139)

The same may be true of negative attitudes that developed toward species that came to be considered as “evil,” which Mahnaz Moazami characterizes as follows:

In the Young Avesta and Middle Persian texts the term *xrafstar* is used specifically for reptiles and amphibians such as frogs, scorpions, lizards, and snakes, and insects such as ants, beetles, and locusts. In general, any animal that crept, crawled, pricked, bit, or stung, and seemed hideous and repulsive to human beings, was a *xrafstar*. Predators such as felines and wolves were also creatures of the Evil Spirit, but in the same texts they are referred to as *dadān*, “wild animals, beasts.” (Moazami, 2005, p. 302)

The *Vidēvdād*, a later part of the Avesta that was apparently meant as a sort of priestly guidebook for fighting against demonic forces, provides a systematic list of these creatures, along with the imperative that they be killed whenever possible (Vd. 14.5-6).

The systematic killing of undesirable animal species by Persians is first recorded by Herodotus in the fifth century BCE (*Histories* 1:140). A millennium or more later, Middle Persian texts such as the *Shāyest nē-shāyest* describe the practice as a sacred obligation (SNS 20.4). The Bundahišn states that every Zoroastrian should possess an implement for killing snakes (Bn. 28.22). The Zoroastrian aversion to snakes mirrors that in the Book of Genesis, in an apparent departure from earlier mythologies where snakes had a more positive role. Interestingly, in more recent times some Iranians have used a work called the *Mār-nāmeḥ* (Book of Snakes) to tell fortunes (Modi, 1912).

Until the nineteenth century, Zoroastrians in Iran engaged in the ritual killing of *khrafstars* in an annual event during the feast honoring the earth spirit Spenta Armaiti, since, in the words of Mary Boyce, “it is the earth she protects and it is the crops it produces which suffer the most from the ravages of *khrafstars*” (Boyce, 1975, p. 299). In more recent times, however, Iranian Zoroastrians have adopted more of a live-and-let-live policy. As Boyce reports from fieldwork conducted in the central Iranian village of Sharifabad during the 1960s:

[A] dog while alive was held to be the cleanest of all creatures, after a righteous human being, and small insects were regarded with indifference. Otherwise life in a Persian village would be impossible. Flies settled thickly in summer even on consecrated food, and nothing could be done to prevent them... If, however, a *dead* fly should drop on the food, this polluted it. (Boyce, 1977, p. 109)

Boyce notes that “Larger insects, such as big-bodied beetles, tarantulas, or the huge local wasps, were regarded as unclean in themselves, and it was a virtue to kill them, using Ahriman’s own weapon of death to reduce his legions” (Boyce, 1977, p. 110). Even so, she reports that Sharifabad Zoroastrians, unlike their Muslim neighbours, abstained from killing corn-stealing ants, saying they could spare small quantities of food for the sake of such “hard-working” creatures (Boyce, 1977, p. 266).

Zoroastrian attitudes toward domestic cats were traditionally negative, perhaps because in the Avestan period Iranians had not yet domesticated the species (Macuch, 2003, p. 167, note 4). This puts the tradition in direct opposition to Islam, where cats are viewed favorably (many *hadiths* indicate that the prophet Muhammad was a “cat person”) and dogs shunned as unclean. As Iran became increasingly Muslim, Iranian Muslims would often taunt their Zoroastrian neighbors by torturing dogs, a practice that has persisted up to the present.⁹

Punishments for Mistreatment of Nonhuman Animals

Zoroastrian legal texts such as the *Vidēvdād* prescribe almost unbelievably harsh punishments for humans who mistreat “benevolent” animals. This is particularly true of the dog, the protection of whom is the subject of an entire chapter (Vd. 13).¹⁰ A similar attitude is found in the *Arda Virāz Nāmak* (the *Book of Righteous Viraz*), which describes the journey of a virtuous man through the levels of heaven and hell. (This Sasanian-era text likely served as a model for the Islamic *miʿrāj* story and Dante’s *Divina Commedia*.)

The *Laws Keeping away the Demons* text mentioned above spells out the kind of severe punishment that was to be inflicted upon those who mistreated beneficent animals. For example, a person who beats a shepherd dog to death is subject to 800 lashes each with two different kinds of whip (Vd. 13.2.12). Moreover, the Zoroastrian legal texts state that it is a sin to 1) deprive animals of food; 2) fail to care for pregnant female dogs or for ones who have recently given birth; 3) beat or harm any trainable dog; 4) harm or kill cattle (except during ritual sacrifice); 5) harm any beast of burden; or 6) kill any beneficent animal (Macuch, 2003, pp. 183-186). The punishment prescribed for such acts is generally whipping, up to 1,000 lashes in some cases. These physical punishments could, however, be replaced by good deeds and/or the payment of fines, at the discretion of a judge (Macuch, 2003, p. 186).

In the *Book of Righteous Viraz*, dead humans who have mistreated beneficent animals are depicted as suffering terrible punishments in hell. For example, Viraz sees a dog abuser being perpetually torn apart by demons (Vahman, 1986, p. 207) and cattle killers strung up by one foot with a knife in their belly (Vahman, 1986, p. 213). He also sees a couple eating their own feces because they had eaten the flesh of animals who had not been ritually killed and also “killed the beaver in the water, and smote and killed other creatures of Ohrmazd” (Vahman, 1986, p. 217).

Conversely, paradise is full of people who have “propitiated cows and sheep, and the other good creatures of Ohrmazd” (along with fire, the Earth, and plants), who “reared and bred quadrupeds and sheep and protected them against wolves and thieves and tyrannical people” and who have “killed many reptiles” (Vahman, 1986, p. 199). Interestingly, Viraz sees one poor soul being cooked in a copper pot, but with his foot sticking out. It turns out the person is being punished for adultery, except for his foot, which is spared because he had used it to kill “frogs, ants, snakes, scorpions and other reptiles” (Vahman, 1986, p. 210).

Animal Sacrifice in Zoroastrianism

Rituals that included animal sacrifice were practiced by Zoroastrians in India (Parsis) until the nineteenth century and until the contemporary period by Zoroastrians in Iran. Such practices have been seen to be at odds with the deeply-entrenched Zoroastrian aversion to death and killing, but early twentieth-century interpretations that saw the Gathas as preaching against the animal sacrifice rituals current in Zoroaster's society have now been challenged (de Jong, 2002, pp. 129-130). Still, death being seen as the work of the evil deity Ahriman, the killing of animals was apparently a source of tension, and from early times was said to be acceptable only in the context of religious ritual (de Jong, 2002, p. 146). The Zoroastrian creation myth contained in the Bundahišn seems to show meat-eating as a degeneration from an original ideal, since humans at first consumed only water, then plants, then milk, then finally meat. At the end of time, when "good" is restored, humans will no longer eat meat (Bn. 30.1-3).

The earliest unambiguous references to animal sacrifice among the Persians are found in Herodotus (*Histories* 1.132) and Strabo (*Geography* 15.3.13-15). Later texts from the Sasanian period, when Zoroastrianism was the state religion, contain detailed instructions for animal sacrifice. Excluded are "evil" animals (*khrafstar*), as well as some species considered too "good" to be sacrificed or eaten, notably the rooster, the dog, the beaver, and the hedgehog. It would seem that the ideal candidates were fully grown domestic species such as cows, sheep, and goats. The status of the pig is unclear; in the *Nērangestān* section of the Avesta, pigs are among the animals listed for sacrifice, while some later texts proscribe this, perhaps reflecting the encroaching influence of Semitic cultures. Interestingly, Sasanian-era texts in Middle Persian, Armenian, and Syriac all mention the practice of stunning the sacrificial victim with a blow to the head prior to slitting its throat, a practice that was seen as distinguishing Zoroastrianism from neighboring religions. In the cosmopolitan context of Sasanian Babylonia, religious leaders of all faiths constantly forbade their followers to eat meat sacrificed by members of other religions (de Jong, 2002, pp. 139-41).

In rural Iran, animal sacrifice (usually of sheep, goats, or chickens) has traditionally accompanied pilgrimages to holy shrines (*pīrs*), often (as is the case with Muslims) as a way of fulfilling a vow. Mary Boyce describes the ritual as she observed it in the early 1960s: before noon (under watch of the sun god, Mehr), the sacrificial victim is dressed with a colored kerchief and led in a procession up to the shrine, being sprinkled along the way with marjoram, then back down again. It is then consecrated by a reading from the Avesta, kissed on the cheek, and slaughtered (Boyce, 1977, p. 245). Iran's Association

of Zoroastrian Priests (*Anjoman-e mobedān*) banned this practice around the time of Boyce's observation of it, though it continued in private homes. Zoroastrian leaders in Iran today, seemingly unaware of evidence that animal sacrifice was performed in Achaemenid and Sasanian times, claim that animal sacrifice within their community is due to the pernicious influence of their Muslim neighbors.¹¹

Parsis in India, conversely, seem to have abandoned animal sacrifice due to the influence of their Hindu and Jaina neighbors. During a visit to Iran in the late nineteenth century, a Parsi philanthropist, Manckji Limji Hataria, persuaded the Zoroastrians of Yazd to cease cow sacrifice at the shrine known as Pir-e Banu Pars but was unable to have them desist from sacrificing sheep and goats (Boyce, 1977, p. 254). At another shrine, Pir-e Sabz, a "living offering" was made of white roosters, who were not killed because of their association with the demon-killing messenger deity Soroush/Sraoša (Boyce, 1977, p. 257). Zoroastrians in Iran today maintain the traditional practice of abstaining from meat on four holy days every month (Bahman, Mah, Geosh, and Ram).

Animals in Zoroastrian Mythology

It is well understood by students of ancient cultures that when animals appear in myths they are not necessarily "real" animals, but rather symbolic stand-ins either for human traits or for some abstract value or concept. Nevertheless, the use of animal figures in myths tells us something about how the peoples concerned conceptualized those animal species.

As is the case for most ancient cultures, Zoroastrian myths prominently feature animals in a variety of roles. Animals were created prior to humans in the original creation, the first animal being a cow, "white and shining like the moon" (Greater Bundahishn 2.12). Ahura Mazda then created the first man, Gayumars, alongside the cow, out of the Earth, air, and fire, "so that the complete propagation of men and animals arose therefrom." For a period of three thousand years the forces of evil slept, before finally awakening in jealousy and launching an attack on the Good Creation. Angra Mainyu then "let loose noxious creatures over the Earth; biting and venomous [noxious creatures,] such as [the dragon,] serpent, scorpion, [venomous lizard, tortoise,] and frog, [so crawled and thereby polluted the Earth] that he did not leave [any part of the Earth] even as much as the point of a needle free from noxious creatures" (Gt. Bn. 4.15). Angra Mainyu then killed both the cow and the man, their sacrifice serving to generate all subsequent animal and human life.

One of the most prominent animals in Zoroastrian mythology is one that never existed, a magical dragon-bird called the *Saēna* (MP, *Senmurv*, New Persian, *Simorgh*). She sits atop the Tree of All Seeds, from which she scatters the grains that will generate all plant life. The tree is situated in the middle of the Vourukasha Sea, inhabited by a fish called Kara, who protects it from evil creatures, especially a frog who tries to gnaw its roots (Curtis, 1993, p. 22). The *Sīmorgh* appears in the Iranian national epic, the *Shāhnāmeḥ* (*Book of Kings*), as the savior of the baby prince Zal (who goes on to become a great king), and in the thirteenth-century Sufi tale *Manteq al-Tayr* (*Conference of the Birds*) as the personification of ultimate reality. The main hero of the *Shāhnāmeḥ*, Rostam, would be helpless without the aid of his faithful steed, Rakhsh. Into the Islamic period and up to the present, Persian literature is infused throughout with good animals such as horses and birds, who help heroes in their constant battle against evil, as well as with “harmful” creatures such as snakes and scorpions, who bring death, destruction, and decay.

Conclusions

What perhaps most distinguishes Zoroastrianism from other ancient worldviews is its absolutism: things are either good or evil, black or white. In English one often speaks of a “Manichaean” worldview when referring to opposite extremes; this is no coincidence, since Manichaeism arose in part out of Zoroastrianism. While such dualism is often expressed, if less dramatically, in later religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, its presence in those traditions is likely a reflection of Zoroastrian influence. Other ancient cultures typically take a more relativistic view, in which good and bad are contextual rather than absolute. (This is true even for the Hebraic texts of the preexilic period, i.e., prior to contact with Iran.)

The Zoroastrian concept of “malevolent” creatures may underlie the notion still prevalent in many societies that some species can be considered vermin, deserving to be exterminated. This may be contrasted with views such as that found in Jainism, where no creature should be harmed, whatever its relationship to humans. On the positive side, the Zoroastrian belief that nonhuman animals have souls contrasts markedly with their soulless, subservient status in mainstream Christianity. The Zoroastrian reverence for dogs stands opposite the impure status accorded them by most Muslims, and indeed this difference in attitudes toward dogs has long been an identity marker differentiating Zoroastrians from Muslims in Iran. On the other hand, the Zoroastrian belief that nonhuman animals possess souls, but not the faculty of

moral choice, is strikingly similar to a belief found in Islam, which it may have influenced in this respect.

In terms of meat-eating, Zoroastrianism stands somewhere between the Semitic and Indic religious traditions. Zoroastrians have historically performed animal sacrifices and eaten meat, but the texts imply that killing benevolent animals for food is a regrettable concession to the fact of evil in the world, and they severely circumscribe it by insisting that only animals killed as part of religious rituals can be eaten. Zoroastrian cosmology hints, moreover, at an ideal food hierarchy in which it is better not to eat meat, though claims regarding an original Zoroastrian vegetarian ethic by Zoroastrians in India are most likely a reflection of recent Hindu-Jaina influence.

In sum, while Zoroastrianism today is a little-known faith with a very small number of practitioners, its historical relationship with other religions is far-reaching and should not be ignored. Some of the most basic elements of some widely held worldviews have likely been marked by it, and this includes attitudes toward nonhuman animals.

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Notes

1. For an overview of these, see Hultgård, 2008.
2. The dates posited range from ca. 1700 BCE to the sixth century BCE, and the locations, from Iranian Azerbaijan to modern Afghanistan. Based on linguistic and archaeological evidence, a date of around 1200 BCE and a location somewhere in southern Central Asia would seem reasonable.
3. The Vidēvdād characterizes a highly legalistic form of Zoroastrianism that became prominent in the Sasanian period and that likely influenced the Jewish Pharisees ("Persianizers"?), as well as later Talmudic and Islamic legal approaches.
4. Mary Boyce is a well-known example of one who reads Zoroastrianism as a continuous and consistent tradition, as Zoroastrians themselves tend to do. Helmut Humbach, Jean Kellens, Michael Stausberg, and others, however, have criticized this approach.
5. The earlier Avestan term, *khrafstra* (Yasna 28.5, 34.5), appears to refer to animals that were to be excluded from places of worship (Humbach, 1991, Vol. 1, pp. 118, 140). The original sense was likely "flying creeping things."
6. The number of species is given as 282, later spelled out in Bn. 14.14-27 and in chapter 9 of the *Selections of Zadspram*.
7. The dog should be attached to the wrist of the ritual celebrant by a sacred cord, called a *kusti*, establishing a formal ritual connection (*payvand*).
8. This *daēna* is conceptualized in Zoroastrian myth as either a beautiful young woman (if one is good) or a stinking old hag (if one is evil). Originally signifying one's own inner spirituality, *daēna* is later reconceptualized in Islam as religion itself, *dīn*.

9. On Muslim attitudes toward dogs, see Foltz, 2006, pp. 129-143.
10. The chapter begins with mention of “the dog with the prickly back,” i.e., the hedgehog; the following chapter is devoted to the “water-dog,” i.e., the otter.
11. I have heard this from the chief *mobed* of Tehran, Mehraban Firouzgary, among others of my acquaintance.

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