



The Zoroastrian Provenance of Some Islamic Eschatological Doctrines

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Abstract: Zoroastrianism, as the major Iranian religion before the fall of the Sasanian Empire in the seventh century, exercised a deep influence on other religious traditions of the region around it. In particular, it has exercised a strong influence on the development of eschatological ideas in the Arabic and Islamic literature. This article explores some of the main features of the transmission of ideas from Zoroastrian sources to Islamic literature, focusing on doctrines regarding the judgment of souls after death. It argues that the Islamic literature that emerged in the first centuries of Islamic history borrowed several eschatological themes covered in Zoroastrian sources, and incorporated them into an Islamic theological system.

Résumé : Le zoroastrisme, principale religion iranienne avant la chute de l'empire sassanide au 7^{ème} siècle, a exercé une profonde influence sur les autres traditions religieuses de la région. En particulier, il a exercé une forte influence sur le développement des idées eschatologiques dans la littérature islamique et arabe. Cet article explore quelques-unes des principales caractéristiques de la transmission des idées des sources zoroastriennes à la littérature islamique, en se concentrant sur les doctrines concernant le jugement des âmes après la mort. Il soutient que la littérature islamique qui a émergé aux premiers siècles de l'histoire musulmane a emprunté plusieurs thèmes eschatologiques couverts dans les sources zoroastriennes et les a intégrés dans le système théologique islamique.

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Mots clés

Eschatologie, Zoroastrisme, Gatahs, Avesta, textes pahlavis, islam, Coran, Hadith

The search to discover the roots of Islamic eschatological doctrines has been undertaken by some scholars of religious studies. A number of scholars in the twentieth century argued that most of the doctrines related to Islamic eschatology, including themes of resurrection, paradise and hell, were inherited from the Judeo-Christian tradition, or the writings produced by Syriac Christian writers such as Ephrem (see Bell, 1926: 102–107; Rosenthal, 1961: 17–18; Andrae, 1936: 87–90; Shaughnessy, 1969: 26, 39, 42–43, 48–49, 69–71). This line of thought still has its adherents today. Christian Lange, in one of his recent books entitled *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions* – a book that, according to its author, offers “the most complete overview of Islamic eschatology hitherto available in the literature” (Lange, 2016: 31) – argues that “much of Qur’ānic eschatology is indebted to the eschatological imagery of Late Antique Christian and Jewish literature” (Lange, 2016: 67, 56–70). Lange (2016: 114–115) also claims that some of the eschatological themes mentioned in the *sīra* (biography of Muhammad) and hadith literature echo the visions of paradise and hell described in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic texts. Likewise, speaking about the statements regarding the *barzakh* (an intermediary state) in the Qur’ān, Tommaso Tesesi (2016: 31–55) argues that they are “closely related to doctrines, beliefs and tropes widespread among Syriac Christians during Late Antiquity.” Along similar lines, Gabriel Said Reynolds (2010: 251) states that “the Qur’ān’s eschatological imagery, both in regard to the Day of Judgment . . . and in regard to heaven and hell, follows closely that found in the writings of the Syriac fathers” (see also, Reynolds, 2010: 252–253).

This article takes a different approach to tracing the development of Islamic eschatological themes. It explores how some eschatological ideas discussed in the Islamic tradition – especially those related to the judgment of individual souls after death – are rooted in Zoroastrian sources. Although some scholars have examined aspects of the influence of Zoroastrianism on the formation of Islamic eschatological doctrines, they have only explored such topics in passing.¹ Despite their contributions, none of these scholars has provided a complete overview of the numerous Islamic eschatological themes that are also found in Zoroastrian texts.²

This article consists of three sections. The first section enumerates the Zoroastrian and Islamic sources in which eschatological ideas are largely found. The second section explores the wider influence of Iranian culture on Islam in order to provide a framework for the more specific discussion of eschatological doctrines. This section explains the complex relationship between ancient Iranian and Islamic culture and beliefs. The final and main part of this article examines in seven sub-sections the Zoroastrian roots of a number of eschatological doctrines found in Islamic literature –

particularly those related to the judgment of souls after death – including: (1) the concept of a bridge over which all should pass on the day of judgment; (2) the notion of a spiritual scale in the afterlife by which people's deeds are weighed; (3) the existence of a middle abode, which becomes the place for those who do not deserve heaven or hell; (4) the existence of a respite state after one's death; (5) the notion of the personification of deeds in the afterlife; (6) the accounts of hell as described by both Zoroastrian and Islamic texts; and (7) the idea of weeping for the dead as explained in both Zoroastrian and Islamic sources. Each of these sections begins with a discussion of the Zoroastrian belief and then proceeds to discuss the modified version as it appears in Islamic literature.

Sources of Eschatological Teachings in Zoroastrianism and Islam

The most important source for our knowledge of the earliest period of Zoroastrian history is the collection of writings referred to as the Avesta, the oldest of which is the series of hymns known as the Gathas. The later Avestan texts, including the Yashts, the book of Visprat and the Vendīdād, possibly reached their final form before the Achaemenid period, sometime between 700 and 550 BCE (Skjærvø, 2011a: 2). The later Avestan texts, sometimes referred to as the Younger Avestan texts, describe eschatological beliefs in much greater detail than the Gathas. A number of Zoroastrian eschatological doctrines are also preserved in the inscriptions belonging to the third and fourth century – a period when the Sasanian kings were in power. Of these documents, we may refer to the inscriptions of Kerdīr (or Kartir), a prominent Zoroastrian priest in the second half of the third century CE (Skjærvø, 2011a: 5). Kerdīr's inscriptions include a visionary account of his journey into the afterlife, and in it he reports what he has seen in heaven and hell. (For Kerdīr's vision, see Shaked, 1994a: 35–36, 45–46; Skjærvø, 2012. For visionary journeys in Sasanian Iran, see Shaked, 1999: 65–86.)

There are numerous documents written in the Pahlavi language in which the most extensive eschatological teachings of Zoroastrianism are recorded. Most of these Pahlavi texts were either written or completed after the fall of the Sasanian Empire, especially in the ninth and tenth centuries during the rule of the Abbasids. Scholars often acknowledge that most of the materials covered in these Pahlavi writings reflect older materials no longer available in their Avestan forms (Pavry, 1929: 6–7; Dhalla, 1914: xxxi; Shaked, 1994b: 43; Khanbaghi, 2006: 30). Among these, we may refer to *Bundahishn* (Primal Creation), *Dēnkard* (Acts of the Religion), *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* (Religious Ordinances) and *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī xrad* (Ordinances of the Spirit of Wisdom), as well as the *Ardā Wirāz nāmāg* (the Book of Ardā Wirāz) whose author, like Kerdīr, leaves his body in a visionary journey and explores the other world, including paradise and hell.³

Eschatological ideas are central to Islamic literature, too. The themes of divine judgment and the promised rewards and punishments of the afterlife are key elements of the Qur'ān. In the canonical collections of hadith, we encounter several traditions about such eschatological matters too. The three canonical books of hadiths in which themes about the afterlife receive the greatest attention are the ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhari (d. 256/870) and Muslim b. Hajjaj (d. 261/875), as well as the al-Jami' of al-Tirmidhi (d.

279/892). Eschatological descriptions are also found in the *sīra* literature which deals with Muhammad's life. Ibn Ishaq (d. 150/767), who wrote the oldest *sīra*, recorded some narratives concerning the afterlife. In Ibn Ishaq's *sīra* (1955: 181–187), we find some significant *mi'rāj* narratives that include descriptions of paradise and hell. In general, in the chapter dealing with Muhammad's night journey and ascent to heaven, Muhammad's biographers often describe how he saw the rewards and punishments that the inhabitants of paradise and hell experience (see Tottoli, 2010).⁴

During the following centuries of Islamic history, Muslim theologians devoted some of their writings to descriptions of the afterlife. Of the various works that might be considered in this context we may refer to al-Samarqandi's (d. 983) *Admonition of the Neglectful* (tenth century), *Daqā'iq al-akhbār fī dhikr al-jannah wa al-nār*, translated into English under the title *Islamic Book of the Dead* written or compiled by an anonymous author in the eleventh century, which is sometimes attributed to 'Abd al-Rahim ibn Ahmad al-Qadi ((Pseudo) al-Qadi, Abd ar-Rahim ibn Ahmad, 1979), the anonymous *Precious Pearl* (probably written in the eleventh century),⁵ and parts of al-Ghazali's (d. 505/1111) *Revivification of the Religious Sciences* (al-Ghazali, 2006), as well as some books such as *Kitāb al-Rūh*, written by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah (d. 1350), and *Bushra*, which is attributed to Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (d. 849/1505).

Iranian Influences on Islam: A Brief Overview

It is highly probable that Iranian beliefs penetrated different parts of the Arabian Peninsula prior to the rise of Islam. According to Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), a renowned Muslim historian of the ninth century, some Arabs of the Tamim tribe practiced Zoroastrianism during the pre-Islamic era. He also reports the presence of Manichaeism among the Quraysh, the tribe to which Muhammad belonged (Ibn Qutayba, 1960: 62).⁶ It is within this context that Persian legends and beliefs seem to have earned a high degree of popularity among the inhabitants of Mecca.⁷ According to Ibn Ishaq (1955: 136), when Muhammad preached in Mecca, Nadr ibn Harith, one of Muhammad's opponents, claimed that he himself would be "a better story-teller than" Muhammad. Nadr is reported to have told the inhabitants of Mecca stories of Persian kings and the tales of Rustam and Isfandiyar. In Medina, when the nascent Muslim community was attacked by the pagans of Mecca in a battle known as the battle of *khandaq* (or the Battle of the Trench), Salman al-Farsi, a Muslim convert of Persian descent and a companion of Muhammad, advised Muhammad to dig a deep trench around the town to make it difficult for attackers to occupy it. Muhammad followed Salman's advice, and accordingly the siege of Medina gradually dragged on. This was a Persian military tactic suggested to Muhammad, and the word *khandaq* itself is of Persian origin (Shaked, 2015: 494).

The appearance of some Persian words in the Qur'ān, as a number of scholars have argued, reflects the influence of Iranian cultural norms on pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arab society (Jeffery, 1938; Widengren, 1955: 178–198; Carder, 2009: 130; Cheung, 2017; for the appearance of Iranian words in the Qur'ān and early Arabic literature, see Eilers, 1962). Some Iranian religious themes that do not have parallels in Jewish and Christian writings are found in the Qur'ān too (for some studies see Brinner, 2005a: 404;

Bausani, 2000: 117–118; Shaked, 1992: 145; Yarshater, 1998: 37–39; Simon, 1997: 139; Gil, 1992: 38–41). Scholars often acknowledge that Iranian norms, values and institutions continued to influence Islamic culture after the Arab invasion of the Sasanian Empire, and these norms became acceptable during the early centuries of Islamic history. Tarif Khalidi (1975: 90) states that “of all ancient histories, Persian history was perhaps the most familiar to Muslim historians of the ninth and tenth centuries.” It is also often argued that during the early centuries of Islamic history, specific Persian norms of kingship were absorbed into many Islamic texts that sought to present an ideal model of the caliphate.⁸ Some scholars point to the recurrence of other Iranian beliefs in medieval Islamic literature. For instance, the Islamic *miʿrāj* literature, in which Muhammad’s ascension to heaven is related, contains elements of Persian origin (Shaked, 1992: 144). Moreover, as Bausani (2000) argues, the Zoroastrian tradition that speaks of a legend of a miraculous opening of the young Zarathustra’s breast by angels appears in an almost identical version in post-Qur’anic Islamic writings, especially the *sīra* literature.⁹

Various features of pre-Islamic Iranian religious and political ideas were incorporated into Shiʿi beliefs as well. For example, the Shiʿi treatment of unbelievers as impure¹⁰ and the exercise of *taqiyya* (Shaked, 1992: 150) as well as the Shiʿi doctrine of the imamate and the notion of the immunity of the imams from sin (*maʿsumiyat*) have parallels in Zoroastrian writings (Lambton, 1981: 280). In addition, the idea and figure of the Mahdi – a savior-figure who, it is said, will return to fill the world with justice and equity – which is more prevalent in Shiʿism than in Sunnism, is echoed in Zoroastrian texts.¹¹ Further, some Shiʿi socio-religious practices such as the *sofreh* rite – a ceremony in which a piece of cloth is spread on the floor or on a table where foodstuffs are blessed and then shared by the entire congregation – is argued to be the continuation of pre-Islamic Iranian practices (Kalinock, 2004).

Zoroastrian Influences on Islam on Eschatological Teachings

The range of influence of Zoroastrianism on the development of Islamic beliefs extends beyond the aforementioned themes. In the remainder of this article, specific attention will be given to the influence of Zoroastrian beliefs on the formation of eschatological doctrines found in Islamic literature. The article does not only confine itself to the examination of the influence of Zoroastrian texts on the primary sources of Islam, that is, the Qurʾān and the hadith literature, but also on the body of literature produced by certain Muslim theologians and eschatologists during the later stages of Islamic history, mainly from the tenth to the sixteenth century.

When analyzing the influence of Zoroastrianism on Islam, three points should be emphasized from the very outset. First, when dealing with the issue of the “influence” of one culture on another, it is important to remember that the recipient culture borrows only some aspects of the ideas developed by the donor tradition, and thus borrowing of all elements or details does not often occur. As such, what should be noted is that the term “influence” does not necessarily mean copying of every detail of a belief. Second, following Shaul Shaked (2015: 491–492), I do not distinguish in this article between “the direct impact of Zoroastrianism on Islam and the indirect absorption of Zoroastrian ideas through Judaism, Christianity, and Hellenism which subsequently influenced Islam.” It

is only rarely that we can state with certainty that a specific teaching in Islamic literature has been derived directly from one of these religions or cultures – be it Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity or Hellenism – independently of other religions. Some of the Zoroastrian eschatological teachings which, this article claims, have influenced Islamic beliefs may be found in Jewish and Christian literature too; but whether Islam has borrowed such teachings directly from Zoroastrianism or indirectly through Judaism and Christianity is not our concern here. Third, following Shaked (1984b: 324), who argues that “it does not seem at all likely that so many similarities [between religions] could have been formed in parallel independently,” this article presupposes that the close similarities between the eschatological doctrines in Zoroastrianism and Islam are evidence of the influence of the former on the latter.

The Concept of the Respite State

The issue of the interim fate of the dead and the events that take place right after one’s death are among the themes discussed in both Islamic and Zoroastrian accounts of the afterlife. According to Zoroastrian teachings, the soul’s journey towards the next world does not begin immediately after death. The Avestan texts maintain that the soul of an individual remains on earth for three days and nights before it receives divine judgment. During this time, the soul hovers around the dead body (Yasht 22:1–6; Yasht 22:19–24; Vendīdād 19:27–28). The status of one’s soul during this period of suspense depends on the deeds that one has performed during a lifetime. While the soul of a wicked person experiences as much suffering as all living human beings can experience collectively (Yasht 22:22), the soul of a righteous person experiences as much pleasure as all living human beings can experience collectively (Yasht 22:4). The Pahlavi texts depict in greater detail the happy experiences of the righteous souls and the punishment that the wicked souls receive, inflicted by the demon Vizaresh during these three days.¹²

Some features of this Zoroastrian teaching are incorporated into the Islamic notion of *barzakh*. The Qur’ān in Q 23:100 describes the *barzakh* as a barrier between this world and the next world. The term *barzakh* occurs in two other Qur’ānic verses (55:20; 25:53), and in each case it refers to a “barrier.” From a linguistic point of view, some scholars suggest that the term *barzakh* itself is of Persian origin (Jeffery, 1938: 77; Widengren, 1955: 179–185; Segal, 2004: 650; Shaked, 2012). The Islamic *barzakh*, like the respite state described in Zoroastrian texts, conveys the notion of the separation of this world from the realms of paradise and hell, meaning that a person who is in the *barzakh* has not yet gone through the process of judgment.¹³ Some of the Qur’ānic verses (Q 23:99–100) in which the concept of *barzakh* is alluded to state that the deceased person asks God to send him back to the world to do righteousness. This echoes the ideas reflected in the Pahlavi texts that the deceased person wishes that he could go back to the world to make up for the faults he committed in his lifetime (*Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 16:4; *Greater Bundahishn* 200:4).

Like Zoroastrian texts, some Islamic sources hold that the soul of a deceased person remains around the body for a certain period of time (*Daqā’iq al-akhbār*, (Pseudo) al-Qadi, 1979: 62; al-Suyuti, 1969: 31). In addition, both Islamic and Zoroastrian texts share the idea that the bodily senses (such as the senses of sight, hearing, and smell) of

one who is recently deceased remain active, in some way, for a short period after death.¹⁴ Similar to the Zoroastrian account given in both the Avestan and Pahlavi texts, some Islamic sources also emphasize the idea that the deceased's earthly deeds directly affect his/her conditions in the *barzakh*, although *barzakh* is not a place of reward and punishment, from an Islamic perspective. There are a number of traditions narrated by Muslim scholars that mention the gruesome experiences of the wicked, often referred to as “the punishment of the grave” (*adhāb al-qabr*), which echo the Zoroastrian idea that the wicked are punished during the first three days and nights after death.¹⁵ In this sense, *Daqā' iq al-akhbār* ((Pseudo) al-Qadi, 1979: 51) mentions certain deeds that people can do in their lifetime in order to avoid the punishment of the grave.¹⁶ Further, in some Islamic literature dealing with eschatological matters, the good and evil deeds of people are said to appear before their eyes right after their death, and possibly in the grave¹⁷ – an idea that echoes the Zoroastrian teaching that all the sins and crimes committed by a person are seen with his or her own eyes in the first three days and nights after death (*Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī xrad* 2:158–160).

The Bridge of Judgment

Another example of the influence of Zoroastrian eschatological beliefs on Islam is the Zoroastrian idea that all human beings, whether righteous or wicked, should cross a bridge entitled *chinvat* before arriving in paradise or hell.¹⁸ The concept of the *chinvat* bridge is one of the oldest eschatological themes of Zoroastrianism and is mentioned in the Gathas and Avesta. According to Yasna (19:6; 71:16), Vendīdād (13:3; 19:30), and Vishtāsp Yasht (24:42), the souls of the departed should pass the *chinvat* – a dividing line or bridge created by Mazda¹⁹ – before reaching heaven or hell. The *chinvat* spans the abyss of hell and leads to paradise on the other side. The righteous, we are told, successfully pass the *chinvat* and reach the “holy world,” the “excellent world,” or “the world of paradise.” The wicked, on the other hand, are unable to cross it and fall into hell (Vendīdād 18:7).

In his journey to heaven, the priest of the third century Kerdīr states that the *chinvat* bridge becomes wider for the righteous, enabling them successfully to pass over it: “A wooden beam goes over that well [= hell] like a bridge . . . That bridge is becoming wider and is now greater in width than in length . . . Now they have crossed the bridge over to the other side [which is] excellent and beautiful” (Skjærvø, 2011b: 184). Kerdīr also speaks of the bridge functioning like a “razor blade” (see Tafazzoli, 2011; Skjærvø, 2012). Later Pahlavi texts provide detailed accounts of the *chinvat* bridge, especially with respect to its location and length; but some of the ideas mentioned in these texts are already pointed out in the Avesta and in Kerdīr's inscriptions. Like earlier Zoroastrian scriptures, the Pahlavi texts (*Bundahishn* 30:3; *Ardā Wirāz* 53:3) state that hell is below the bridge, and that the bridge becomes wide for the righteous in order for them to easily pass over it (*Bundahishn* 30:23; *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 21:5; *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī xrad* 2:123). In particular, *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī xrad* (21:5) states that the *chinvat* “becomes a narrow bridge for the wicked, even unto a resemblance to the edge of a razor” – a statement that echoes the Kerdīr's inscriptions. Likewise, the *Bundahishn* (30:25) maintains that the

bridge becomes “a sharp blade and does not give passage” to the wicked souls and thus “after taking [only] three steps forward,” they “fall headlong down to hell.”

Islamic texts, too, refer to a bridge called *ṣirāt* over which each person, including the prophets, should cross before they can be admitted into heaven or hell. Although the Qurʾān uses the term *ṣirāt* (literally meaning the path or way) especially in reference to the straight path (*ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*), it is also used in an eschatological sense in one Qurʾānic verse: “The angels will be ordered: Gather those who committed wrong, their kinds and what they used to worship, and guide them to the path (*ṣirāt*) of Hellfire” (Q 37:22–23). The hadith literature describes the *ṣirāt* in detail. Here, Muhammad is quoted as having said that everyone should cross over the *ṣirāt* before he reaches paradise or hell. As in the Zoroastrian account, it is said that the saved pass over the bridge more easily, finally reaching the other side, while the damned will fail to cross over it and fall down to hell. These hadiths often maintain that the *ṣirāt* is laid across hell (for related hadiths, see Bukhari, Vol. 1, Book 12, Number 770; Bukhari, Vol. 8, Book 76, Number 577; Muslim b. Hajjaj, Book 1, Number 0349; Muslim b. Hajjaj, Book 1, Number 352).

Therefore, the *ṣirāt* has the same function as the *chinvat*, since both are described as a path to heaven or hell. Both the Islamic and Zoroastrian accounts explored above also stress an inescapable descent of the damned into hell. Further, like the accounts provided by Kerdir and the Pahlavi texts, the *ṣirāt* is described in the hadith literature as “thinner than the hair and sharper than the sword” (Muslim b. Hajjaj, Book 1, Number 353). Later Muslim theologians and eschatologists such as al-Ghazali, al-Suyuti, and the author or compiler of *Daqāʾiq al-akhbār* provide a similar description of the *ṣirāt*, though occasionally with the additional detail that the *ṣirāt* becomes “darker than night” for the damned (al-Ghazali, 2006: 209; *Daqāʾiq al-akhbār*, (Pseudo) al-Qadi, 1979: 101; see also Smith and Haddad, 2002: 79). Moreover, there are some accounts found in both Islamic and Zoroastrian texts which imply that the more pious one is, the less suffering one has to bear on the bridge. Here, the similarities between the descriptions in Zoroastrian and Islamic texts give very strong reasons to conclude that the latter have borrowed many features of the former.²⁰ Other similarities can be found too. Gray (1902: 165) notes that “like Sraosha, who with Atar [two Zoroastrian angels] guides the souls of the pious [Zoroastrians] across the Chinvat bridge, Gabriel keeps the Muslim from falling into the pit of hell [in Islamic accounts]” (also see *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī xrad* 2:124; for the same concept in Islamic tradition, see *Daqāʾiq al-akhbār* ((Pseudo) al-Qadi, 1979: 103). Certain accounts in both Zoroastrian and Islamic texts, however, hold that Zarathustra and Muhammad lead the saved members of the Zoroastrian and the Muslim communities, respectively, to pass over the bridge (Yasna 46:10; Smith and Haddad, 2002: 79, 215).

The Personifications of the Soul’s Deeds

Zoroastrian eschatological teachings maintain that the souls of the just and the wicked should cross over the *chinvat* bridge, where they are met either by a beautiful maiden or by a hag. This beautiful maiden or hag is the personification of people’s deeds or their inner self (*daēnā/dēn*), and this idea is one of the fundamental teachings found in Zoroastrian texts. According to the Yasht (22:9), “it seems to him [on the *chinvat* bridge]

as if his own conscience were advancing him . . . in the shape of a maiden fair, bright, white-armed, strong, tall-formed, high-standing, thick-breasted, beautiful of body, noble, of a glorious seed, of the size of a maid in her fifteenth year, as fair as the fairest things in the world” (see also Vishtāsp Yasht 24:55–56; Vendīdād 19:30). And now the conversation between the person and his *daēnā* begins: “the soul of the faithful one addressed her, asking ‘what maid art thou, who art the fairest maid I have ever seen?’” and she answers him “O thou youth of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds . . . I am thy own conscience” (Yasht 22:10–11; Vishtāsp Yasht 24:57–58). The figure of the *daēnā* appeared in the inscriptions of Kerdīr, where the high priest envisions a beautiful maiden who leads the righteous from the *chinvat* bridge to paradise (Skjærvø, 2011b: 182). With regard to the wicked souls, the Yasht (22:26–32) states: “it seems to the soul of the wicked man as if he were inhaling that wind with the nostrils, and he thinks: Whence does that wind blow, the foulest-scented wind that I ever inhaled with my nostrils?” And finally according to Kerdīr, “he who is wicked, his dēn will lead him to hell” (Skjærvø, 2011b: 182).

The idea that the righteous soul encounters the personification of his deeds in the form of a beautiful maiden is also stated in the Pahlavi texts (*Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī xrad* 2:130; *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 24:5; *Ardā Wirāz nāmag* 4:18–24). These texts also describe the converse picture of a beautiful maiden, namely a hideous hag who is a tormentor – an idea that did not exist in later Avestan scriptures (*Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī xrad* 2:167–171; *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 25:5, and *Ardā Wirāz nāmag* 17:10–15; *Zādspram* 1:14).²¹ When the wicked soul asks the hideous hag who she is, she replies that she is the personification of his own conscience, and represents the quality of the deeds he performed during his lifetime. According to *Ardā Wirāz nāmag* (17:10–11), in addition to the manifestation of an old woman, the wicked soul encounters a stinking wind – a wind fouler “than which he had not perceived in the world.”

The theme of an encounter between the soul and his good or evil deeds in the form of a maiden or a hag is also frequently found in the writings of Muslim theologians and eschatologists, though it has no Qur’ānic parallel. Here, we see such a close affinity between Zoroastrian and Islamic ideas that we might surely suppose that the former have influenced the latter. As in the Avestan texts, we encounter in these writings a series of questions and answers exchanged between the soul and his *daēnā*, as a result of which the true identity of the latter is revealed to the soul. *The Precious Pearl* (al-Ghazali, 1979: 34) states that the good deeds of the righteous people in the afterlife “come to him in the form of the loveliest of creatures . . . with pleasant perfume and attractive clothing, saying to him ‘Do you know me’ . . . and he replies ‘I am your own good deeds.’” Al-Ghazali (2006: 136) and al-Suyuti (1969: 55–56) recount the same narration in their writings (also see *Mishkat al-Maṣābih*, Robson, 1975, 1: 341). Al-Ghazali (2006: 137) holds, too, that the wicked soul is approached by “one of vile countenance, corrupt-smelling and meanly attired, who says, ‘Receive the tidings of God’s wrath, and of a painful and abiding torment.’” And when the soul asks who he is, he replies “I am your foul deeds.” Like the Zoroastrian story, the hideous figure that appears before the soul of the wicked in al-Ghazali’s account (2006: 137) is a foul-smelling tormentor.

Some scholars (Shaked, 2012; Bausani, 2000: 118; Choksy, 2002: 72) have speculated that the Qur’ānic depiction of figures known as the “maidens of paradise,” or *ḥūrīs*,

is influenced by the Zoroastrian notion of the eschatological female counterpart of man (the *daēnā*).²² There are certainly some similarities between the *hūrīs* of paradise as described in the Qurʾān and the figure of the *daēnā* of the righteous as explained in Zoroastrian texts. The *hūrīs* of paradise, like the *daēnā* of the righteous, have beautiful faces (Q 44:54; Q 52:20) and “swelling breasts” (Q 78:33). Despite these similarities, it cannot be stated with certainty that the Qurʾānic figure of the *hūrīs* is of Zoroastrian origin, since the *hūrīs* are described as one of the rewards for the righteous in paradise, while the beautiful maidens in the Zoroastrian texts appear before the righteous prior to their entrance into paradise. In addition, the *hūrīs* are preserved for male believers in paradise whereas, in the Zoroastrian texts, the maidens who meet the righteous on the *chinvat* bridge are only described as the personification of the good deeds that a believer has performed in his lifetime.²³

The Notion of a Spiritual Scale

Zoroastrian texts often maintain that when people stand before the heavenly assessors (Srosha and Rashn) to receive individual judgment, their good deeds are weighed against their evil deeds with the aid of a spiritual scale. The final decision about their fate is made according to the turn of this scale, which is said to be perfectly and justly balanced. If the good actions that one has performed outweigh one’s bad deeds, one’s soul is judged worthy of paradise; otherwise, one is delivered to hell. The Gathas hint at the idea that an individual’s righteous actions are weighed against his misdeeds: “deeds most just he will do toward the wicked, as toward the righteous, and toward him whose wrong and right deeds balance” (Yasna 33:1). According to Pavry (1929: 60), later Avestan texts refer to the notion of “the balancing of man’s good and bad deeds” (see also Pavry, 1929: 61–62; Visprat 15:1). Pavry (1929: 53–54, 81) also refers to a passage from Herodotus in support of the Iranian provenance of this belief. According to this account, the idea of balancing men’s actions coheres with the principle of Persian jurisprudence in antiquity. Kerdīr provides more details. In his spiritual journey to the afterlife, a person witnesses a “princely man sitting on a throne with golden ornaments,” before whom a huge scale (*tarāzūg*) stands for the purpose of weighing people’s good deeds against their bad actions (Skjærvø, 2011b: 183).

Not surprisingly, the Pahlavi texts provide even more details concerning the idea that one’s good and bad deeds are weighed against each other with a spiritual balance after one’s death (*Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī xrad* 12:13, 12:15; *Sikand-Gumanik Vizar* 4:93–94). In *Ardā Wirāz nāmag* (5:5), Rashn the Just – an angel or a heavenly assessor – holds the yellow golden scale in which the good deeds of people’s souls are weighed against their evil deeds. The *Bundahishn* (30:1) states that “one scale [of the balance] is on the base of Mount Alburz in the northern direction” and another scale “is on the summit of Mount Alburz in the southern direction.” The Pahlavi texts often state that all individuals are equal in the eye of divine justice, and the only issue that is taken into consideration is the sum of good and evil deeds that one has performed during one’s life on earth. The *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī xrad* (2:120–121) maintains that “the balance . . . renders no favor on any side . . . As much as a hair’s breadth it will not turn, and has no partiality.”

The Qur'ān refers a number of times to the balance (sg. *mīzān*, pl. *mawāzīn*) in the same way that Zoroastrian texts speak of weighing individuals' good and bad deeds. According to the Qur'ān (Q 7:8–9), “the weighing [of deeds] that Day will be the truth. So those whose scales are heavy – they are the successful. And those whose scales are light – they are the ones who will lose themselves for what injustice they were doing toward our verses” (Q 7:8–9; see Q 101:6–11; Q 23:102–103). The *tarāzūg* and *mīzān* have a similar function. The *mīzān*, like the *tarāzūg*, represents the importance of God's justice. As the Qur'ān states, “We place the scales of justice for the Day of Resurrection, so no soul will be treated unjustly at all. And if there is even the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it forth” (Q 21:47). The idea of balance appears several times in the canonical hadith literature, sometimes with an emphasis on what deeds a believer can do to make their *mīzān* heavier (*mīzān al-mu'min*) (Sahih Muslim, Book 39, hadith Number 6698; Tirmidhi, Vol. 4, 25:62, hadith Number 2002, 2003; Bukhari, Vol. 8, Book 78, hadith Number 673; Bukhari, Vol. 9, Book 93, hadith Number 652). This notion of “balance,” with a clear eschatological reference to the “scales” by which deeds are weighed on the day of resurrection, also appears in the writings of Muslim theologians and eschatologists. Adding their own reflections and admonitions, Muslim scholars, like the Pahlavi authors, often provide details about the length of each pan of the scale and the distance between them, as well as details about the place and position of these pans (al-Ghazali, 1979: 62–63, 84; al-Ghazali, 2006: 196; *Daqā'iq al-akhbār*, (Pseudo) al-Qadi, 1979: 100; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, 2010: 81).

The Middle Abode

As described in the previous section, according to both Zoroastrian and Islamic eschatological doctrines, the good actions of a person are weighed against his bad deeds in the afterlife, and if his good actions outweigh his bad deeds, he is taken to paradise; otherwise, he is taken to hell. A question arises here about the fate of those people whose good and bad deeds are proven to be exactly equal. Zoroastrian teachings tend to hold that such people will neither go to heaven nor to hell, but rather to a separate abode that exists in-between them. As some scholars have noted, a threefold division of abodes in the afterlife is hinted at in the Gathas (Dhalla, 1914: 58–59; Pavry, 1929: 50). According to Yasna 33:1, there are some people whose good and bad deeds are combined, or are “in equal measure,” in the afterlife. Leaning on the Gathas and later Avestan writings,²⁴ the Pahlavi texts use the term *hamistagān* (ever-stationary) for a place in the afterlife that is the abode of those people whose good and bad deeds are weighed equal by the *tarāzūg* (*Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī xrad* 12:14; also *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 24:6; *Bundahishn* 30:32; *Dēnkard*, Book 8, 14:8; *Ardā Wirāz nāmag* 6:5–7). The inhabitants of *hamistagān* are said in some of these texts to experience no other suffering than the changing seasonal temperatures of cold and heat (as compared with the inhabitants of heaven, who experience permanent warmth, and those of hell, who experience terrible heat and cold) (*Ardā Wirāz nāmag* 6:12; *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī xrad* 7:19).

A Qur'ānic verse refers to a place, called *arāf*, whose inhabitants look upon both paradise and hell. Although they wish to enter paradise, they cannot. They turn toward the inhabitants of hell and ask God not to deliver them there (Q 7:46–47). The exegetical

tradition has often maintained that *ʿarāf* is a place that separates the inhabitants of hell from those of paradise. The people of *ʿarāf* are those whose good and bad deeds are exactly equal, and who can thus neither enter paradise nor hell. Indeed, leaning on Q 7:46–47, many Muslim theologians, eschatologists and Qurʾānic commentators considered the possibility of the existence of a “limbo” position in the afterlife (*The Precious Pearl*, al-Ghazali, 1979: 80; al-Ghazali, 2006: 195–196; for the references to *tafsīr*, Tabari and Razi, see: Brinner, 2005b: 47; Smith and Haddad, 2002: 90).²⁵ Some Western scholars such as Bell and Watt (1970: 161), Andrae (1926: 77) and Lange (2016: 60), have found the origin of the Qurʾānic *ʿarāf* in the writings of Ephrem. They argue that *ʿarāf* refers to a privileged position in an elevated part of paradise from which hell is visible – an idea that hardly seems correct given that the Qurʾān states that the people of *ʿarāf* have not yet entered paradise.

Whether “the Qurʾānic intention was of an abode for those understood to be in an intermediate category” cannot be stated with certainty, as Smith and Haddad (2002: 90–91) note. However, the development of the idea of a limbo in Islamic theology and in the *tafsīr* literature could have been influenced by the Zoroastrian notion of *hamistagān*. The concepts of *hamistagān* and *ʿarāf* are closely connected to those of *tarāzūg* and *mīzān*, respectively, because in both the Islamic and the Zoroastrian accounts, the limbo position that the soul might occupy is held to result from the judgment that is received after one’s earthly deeds have been weighed by the spiritual scale. People residing in this limbo position are those whose good and bad deeds are measured equal by the scale.²⁶ Indeed, the argument put forward for the existence of the “limbo” place in both Zoroastrian and Islamic doctrines is premised on the idea that there are naturally some people whose bad and good deeds are exactly equal, such that they can neither go to paradise, nor to hell.

Descriptions of Hell

There are certain descriptions of hell in medieval Islamic literature that closely correspond to what is depicted in the Zoroastrian writings. The inhabitants of hell are described in some Islamic and Zoroastrian texts as being punished by various animal torturers such as snakes and serpents. In his visionary account of heaven and hell, Kerdīr records that he saw in the well of hell all sorts of *ahrimanian* animals such as snakes, lizards, and other noxious creatures (Gignoux, 2003). The *Ardā Wirāz nāmāg* provides more details. According to this text (37:3; 60:8; 69:1; 81:1), the inhabitants of hell are often gnawed upon by various animals such as snakes, scorpions, and other noxious creatures (*xrafstar*). In his visionary description of his journey to the other world, Ardā Wirāz (19:2–9; 69:4) states that he saw a man who had committed sodomy suffering severe punishment from a snake, which entered through his “fundament” and “[came] forth out of his mouth.” The Qurʾān does not refer to animals as a means of tormenting the inhabitants of hell. However, post-Qurʾānic literature, possibly under the influence of Zoroastrian texts, frequently alludes to animal punishers in hell. Al-Ghazali (2006: 226) refers to various serpents and scorpions of hell that are of great size and “do not tire of stinging and biting for a single moment.” Along similar lines, *Daqāʾiq al-akhbār* ((Pseudo) al-Qadi, 1979: 104, 117) refers to various snakes and scorpions of hell that

consistently torture the sinners. As Lange (2008: 141) argues, “snakes and scorpions figure most prominently” among animal torturers in medieval Islamic literature dealing with descriptions of hell. Similar to the *Ardā Wirāz nāmag*, the authors of these texts speak of thick snakes that bite off the hands of sinners, entering their bodies and leaving through their backs (Lange, 2008: 141).

The Pahlavi texts often speak of the existence of a region of hell in which its inhabitants experience both severe cold and heat (*Ardā Wirāz nāmag* 18:3–4; *Bundahishn* 27:53). In particular, according to the *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī xrad* (7:28), in the same way that there is a place in hell “where, as to heat, it is such as that of the hottest and most blazing fire,” there is also a place “where, as to cold, it is such as that of the coldest frozen snow” (*Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī xrad* 7:27). Therefore, the inhabitants of hell experience not only extreme heat, but also severe cold as recompense for the evil acts they committed in this world (*Ardā Wirāz nāmag* 55:1). Hell is, above all, described as a realm of fire in the Qur’ān (Q 14:50; Q 18:29; Q 21:39; Q 22:19; Q 23:104; Q 56:55). The Qur’ān does not mention severe cold as a punishment for the inhabitants of hell. The term *zamharīr* (literally meaning severe cold or bitter cold), which is possibly of Persian origin, is mentioned in one Qur’ānic verse (Q 76:13), albeit in a different context, where it refers to the inhabitants of paradise who shall see neither burning sun nor freezing cold. The canonical hadith literature does not explicitly speak of *zamharīr* as a kind of punishment, but does indicate that hell includes a cold place. The extreme temperatures that people of this world experience during summer and winter, respectively, are connected in a number of hadiths to the two ‘exhalations’ that God grants hell permission to breath out to expel its intense heat and cold (Sahih Muslim, Book 004, Number 1292; Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 1, Book 10, Number 512; see also al-Ghazali, 2006: 224). However, like the Pahlavi texts, later Islamic sources speak of the existence of a freezing cold layer in hell which serves as a place of punishment, and one can speculate about the influence of the former on the latter. Many Qur’ānic commentators from the early ninth century onwards have accepted *zamharīr* as one kind of punishment for the inhabitants of hell (for details, see Lange, 2008: 127; Tottoli, 2008).

There is often a tendency in both Islamic and Zoroastrian accounts of hell to stress that the form of punishment inflicted on the wicked corresponds to the crimes they committed in this world. Indeed, the punishment inflicted on the sinner takes a visible form in hell, and we can guess from the different forms of punishment that sinners receive what misdeeds they have committed in this world. Speaking about hell and its inhabitants, the *Vendīdād* (5:62; 7:22) states, “to that world, to the dismal realm, you are delivered by your own doings.” The Pahlavi texts provide more details. As one passage in the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* (32:11) describes it, “out of his sin is the punishment connected with it, and that punishment comes upon him, from the fiend and spirit of his own sin.” The *Ardā Wirāz nāmag* is replete with details about the “attaching” of sins in visible form to the bodies of the sinners. The person who has slain a pious man, the merchant who used false scales, a tyrant king, a liar, a slanderer and an apostate, each receives a punishment analogous to his sins. For example, while a liar and a slanderer have their tongues gnawed upon by noxious creatures (*Ardā Wirāz nāmag* 29:1–6; 33:1–6; 66:1–6), the merchant who used false scales and sold people his goods at a high price must

measure dust and ashes with a bushel and gallon, and then devour them (*Ardā Wirāz nāmāg* 27:1–7).

The idea that a person confronts his own earthly sins in a corresponding form in hell is highlighted in Islamic texts too. The *sīra* literature states that Muhammad is shown sinners and their punishments during his night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem. In recounting Muhammad's night journey, Ibn Ishaq provided accounts of sinful behaviors and their corresponding punishments in hell. For example, those who have devoured the wealth of orphans, those who have committed usury, those who go after the women whom God has forbidden, and those who give birth to adulterous children, each receive a punishment that corresponds to their sins (Tottoli, 2010). *The Precious Pearl* (al-Ghazali, 1979: 60), too, states that “to whomever has sinned, the likeness of his sin appears in visible form.” Indeed, “the things about which they [sinners] had been niggardly on earth now surround each of them” (*The Precious Pearl*, al-Ghazali, 1979: 59). *The Precious Pearl* (al-Ghazali, 1979: 59–61) lists various punishments inflicted upon the sinners with the sins for which they are punished.

It is not necessary to discuss in detail the punishments inflicted upon sinners as narrated by Ibn Ishaq or by the author of *The Precious Pearl*; it is only important here to acknowledge the tendency of both Islamic and Zoroastrian sources to describe forms of punishment that correspond to the sins one has committed. Although many of the sins and their corresponding forms of punishments are different in Ibn Ishaq's *sīra* and *Ardā Wirāz nāmāg*, nonetheless, some are highly similar or the same. *Ardā Wirāz* states that “I also saw the soul of a woman who was suspended, by the breasts, into hell . . . And I asked thus: ‘What sin was committed by this body, whose soul suffers such a punishment?’” Then, Srosh the Pious and the angel Adar respond: “This is the soul of that wicked woman who, in the world, left her own husband, and gave herself to other men, and committed adultery” (*Ardā Wirāz nāmāg* 24:1–7). The same scene occurs in Ibn Ishaq's description of the suffering inflicted in hell upon the women who committed adultery. Ibn Ishaq (1955: 186) states on behalf of Muhammad that “I saw women [in hell] hanging by their breasts. These were those who had fathered bastards on their husbands.”²⁷

There are other similarities between the accounts of hell found in Pahlavi texts and those found in the Qur'ān and the canonical hadith texts. The Pahlavi texts state that the inhabitants of hell are given various disgusting kinds of food,²⁸ but they remain hungry: “there is no enjoyment and completeness in his eating,” and the food “increases his haste” (*Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 32:8–9). A nearly identical version of this idea is recounted in the Qur'ān and the hadith. The Qur'ān states that the food given to the sinners in hell “neither nourishes nor avails against hunger” (Q 88:6).²⁹ And according to a hadith narrated in Tirmidhi's *al-Jami'* (which was later recounted by al-Ghazali), the inhabitants of hell always seek to relieve their hunger, and although they are given a variety of unpleasant foods, these never appease their hunger (see Tirmidhi, Vol. 4, 37:5, hadith Number 2586; al-Ghazali, 1979: 225–226).

Weeping for the Dead in Funerals

There are some similarities between Islamic and Zoroastrian teachings concerning funeral rites. According to the Iranian scholar Ebrahim Pourdavoud (1978: 197–199), the

prohibition against showing grief after the passing of a person is well documented in the Gathas and later Avestan texts. The reason given is that gloom and despondency are characteristics of Ahriman and should be, as far as possible, avoided (Pourdavoud, 1978: 197). There are some places in Pahlavi literature in which an emphasis is placed on avoiding excessive displays of grief and mourning for a deceased person. The *Ardā Wirāz nāmag* (16:11–12) states: “When you are in the world, make no lamentation and [do not weep] unlawfully; for so much harm and difficulty may happen to the souls of your departed” (also see *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī xrad* 6:13). The tears one sheds for the death of a relative create a river in the afterlife that makes the passage of the deceased person through the next world more difficult (*Ardā Wirāz nāmag* 16:1–10).

Scholars such as Gray and Shaked argue that Islamic literature has borrowed this idea from Zoroastrian scriptures (Gray, 1902: 169; Shaked, 1992: 144–145; Shaked, 2002). The Qurʾān does not allude to the prohibition against showing too much grief and lamentation for a deceased person, but such an idea is found in the hadith literature. A hadith narrated by Umm Salama is relevant here (Sahih Muslim, Book 004, Number 2007):

When Abu Salama died I said . . . I shall weep for him in a manner that would be talked of. I made preparation for weeping for him when a woman from the upper side of the city came there who intended to help me (in weeping). She happened to come across the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) and he said: Do you intend to bring the devil into a house from which Allah has twice driven him out? I (Umm Salama), therefore, refrained from weeping and I did not weep.

Like the Zoroastrian teachings, the aforementioned hadith considers weeping for a deceased person a demonic act. The general view expressed in the hadith literature and in the writings of Muslim theologians and eschatologists is that although modest lamentation is acceptable, the relative of the deceased person should avoid too much weeping. *Daqāʾiq al-akhbār* ((Pseudo) al-Qadi, 1979: 48) narrates a tradition that underscores this idea: “loud lamenting is haram, but there is no harm in weeping for the dead; and patience is better” (see also *Mishkat al-Maṣābih*, Robson, 1975, 1: 361). The practice of loud wailing for the dead was later condemned in Sunni schools of thought, especially in Hanafism (Halevi, 2007: 114–142). The reason given in Islamic literature for this proscription against displaying too much grief, as Shaked (1992: 144) notes, is similar to that indicated in Zoroastrian texts. In both traditions, weeping worsens the condition of the dead. A few pieces of evidence drawn from Islamic texts will suffice to prove this idea. According to *The Precious Pearl* (al-Ghazali, 1979: 39), Muhammad announced that “the dead person is tormented by the tears of the living over him.” According to this prophetic hadith, the dead person, when that person appears in a dream, says that “my condition is poor because of [those] who are shedding many tears over me.” According to another tradition found in the same book (*The Precious Pearl*, al-Ghazali, 1979: 99), “He for whom there is wailing is punished in accordance with the wailing done for him.” Muhammad himself is reported to have enjoined his companions not to excessively mourn for him after his death. According to al-Tabari (d. 310/923), on his deathbed, Muhammad asked his companions not to hurt

him by “beating themselves,” and to avoid “mournful and vehement cries” after his death (al-Tabari, 1990: 174).

It is worth mentioning here one last idea that is found in both Islamic and Zoroastrian sources, namely, that women who excessively weep for the dead will be cursed or punished. The *Ardā Wirāz nāmāg* maintains that the souls of those women who display excessive lamentation for the dead will be heavily punished in hell (see *Ardā Wirāz nāmāg*, Chapter 57). *Daqā’iq al-akhbār* ((Pseudo) al-Qadi, 1979: 48) also includes the following quote which is attributed to Muhammad: “the curse of Allah and all angels and people is upon the female wailer and those around her who listen to her.”

Conclusion

This article has sought to trace the origins and development of a number of eschatological doctrines found in Islamic literature. I have not argued here that all features of Islamic eschatology exactly echo Zoroastrian vision of the afterlife; it is even important to acknowledge that some elements of Islamic eschatology include anti-Zoroastrian elements. I have suggested in this article that one can observe the process of “borrowing” on the part of some Islamic eschatological teachings from Zoroastrian ideas and texts in two major respects. First, passages in the Qur’ān that speak of such eschatological concepts as *barzakh*, *ṣirāt*, *zamharīr* and *mizān* have parallels in the Zoroastrian tradition. The second process of “borrowing” occurred when the post-Qur’ānic literature was taking shape. As examined above, a more elaborate doctrine of the afterlife gradually appears in the post-Qur’ānic literature, and some books exclusively dedicated to discussing matters concerning the afterlife emerged from the tenth century onwards in Muslim communities. The development of some of the issues covered in these books can be argued to have a Zoroastrian provenance. This applies, for example, to the notion of the middle abode. The interpretation of the Qur’ānic passage in which the term *arāf* is found could have been carried out by Muslim exegetes under the influence of the Zoroastrian notion of *hamistagān*, since the Qur’ān itself does not discuss the possibility that such a limbo exists in the same way that it explicitly affirms the reality of both paradise and hell in numerous verses. Along similar lines, some Islamic eschatological themes, such as the personification of deeds and the prohibition on weeping for the dead, have no Qur’ānic parallels, but their development, both in the hadith literature and in the writings of Muslim eschatologists, might be indebted to Zoroastrianism. The seven eschatological themes discussed in this paper may be taken as representative, but by no means exhaustive, examples of the range of ideas found in medieval Islamic literature which developed under Zoroastrian influence.

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Notes

1. An important article on the general influence of Persian themes on Islam in connection with various issues, including eschatological matters, has been produced by Ignaz Goldziher (1901). Among other scholars who have explored the influences of Iranian ideas on Arabic literature and civilization, with some references to eschatological themes, we can refer to Widengren's work (1955: 80–85, 124–126, 178–198) and Yarshater's work (1998: 4–125). Prominent scholars in this field such as Shaked and Bausani have noted that some of the eschatological themes covered in Zoroastrian texts were transmitted to Arabic/Islamic literature. Shaked (1992: 144) states that “one fairly large topic on which there is quite clear evidence of close affinity between Iranian and Islamic ideas so as to suggest probable dependence is eschatology.” And Bausani (2000: 117–118) maintains that strong “links between Iranian culture and the Qur'ān exist in the area of eschatological descriptions.” For some references to the eschatological ideas that were transmitted from Zoroastrian sources to Islamic literature in Bausani's and Shaked's works, see Bausani (2000) and Shaked (1992: 144–145). Shaked (1984a; 1990; 2015: 492–498) explores the influence of Iranian religious and cultural ideas on Islamic civilization and literature in a number of other articles, some of which include eschatological themes.
2. The only article, to my knowledge, that has dealt solely with the influences of Zoroastrianism on Islam with respect to eschatological matters is that written by Louis Gray (1902).
3. The titles of Zoroastrian books are transliterated following the *Encyclopedia Iranica*. Names of Arab authors are not transliterated. The names of Pahlavi books and medieval Islamic sources are given in italics. However, names of Gathaic sources, later Avestan texts and early sources of Islam, that is, the Qur'ān and hadith literature, are not italicized.
4. It should be noted that the hadith and the sīra literature emerged in the eighth and ninth centuries CE, more than one hundred years after Muhammad's death. Although the biographers and hadith collectors often claim to relate traditions on the authority of earlier sources, it is not possible to state with certainty how much of the information provided in their books reflects Muhammad's actual maxims and deeds. Even Ibn Ishaq's biography has not itself survived, and it is known only through its later versions, the most important of which is the sīra of Ibn Hisham (d. 218/833), composed at the beginning of the ninth century.
5. The authorship of this book is sometimes attributed to al-Ghazali. Here I refer to al-Ghazali (1979).
6. Some reports show that Zoroastrians were living in Bahrain and Oman. See Friedmann (2003: 69); Morony (1986: 1110); Yarshater (1998: 14). For details about the existence of Manichaeism in Arabia prior to Islam, see Andrae (1936: 105); Bausani (2000: 120–121); Gil (1992: 16–19).
7. According to Kister (1968: 144–145), there were also some Arab tribes in Mecca who embraced Mazdakism. Also, see Gil (1992: 26–29). It should be noted that Hira played a central role in religious, economic, cultural and political mediation between Sasanian Iran and the Arabian Peninsula. As argued by Kister (1968: 150), Sasanian monarchs granted some fiefs to the Hira rulers, which were used by the latter to pay their expenses and to win the obedience of other tribes. The court script of Hira is said to have been able to function in both Persian and Arabic (Fisher, 2011: 148). In addition, as argued by Bosworth (1983: 610), various features of the Persian lifestyle were reflected in Pre-Islamic poets.

8. D.G. Tor (2012: 149) notes that “the use of the pre-Islamic Iranian kings and heroes as an historical model or paradigm . . . was alive in the minds of the most Islamized class of the empire, the Abbasid courtesies.” Also see Rosenthal (1962: 68); Shaked (2015: 496–497); Daryaei (2015: 107). Ibn al-Muqaffa’s theory of government, according to which religion and kingship are twins, is also considered a reflection of the pre-Islamic Iranian method of governance (Shaked, 2015: 496; Shaked, 1984a: 31–67).
9. Bausani (2000: 119); for the reception of this legend in Islamic literature, see Birkeland (1955).
10. Goldziher (1918) was one of earliest scholars who paid significant attention to this issue.
11. As argued by Shaked (2012), one clear eschatological notion in the Gathas is the figure of Saoshyant, the future benefactor. For references to the figure of the Saoshyant in the Gathas, see Yasna 46:3; 46:9; 48:12.
12. For details concerning the happiness of the righteous soul, see *Bundahishn* 30:2–3; *Ardā Wirāz nāmāg* 4:8–14 and the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* (24:4), which asserts that the soul obtains pleasure during the first night from his good thoughts, during the second night from his good words, and during the third night from his good deeds. For the punishment of the wicked soul, see *Ardā Wirāz nāmāg* 17:1–9; *Bundahishn* 30:4; Pavry (1929: 15, 23).
13. The Qur’ān does not say anything about the length of time that it takes to pass through the *barzakh*, but later Islamic traditions attempted to specify this (al-Ghazali, 2006: 176; *Daqā’iq al-akhbār*, (Pseudo) al-Qadi, 1979: 83). For studies on the *barzakh* and the notion of the punishment of the grave, see Eklund (1941).
14. al-Suyuti (1969: 31) states: “the dead person knows who washes him and carries him and who wraps him and who lowers him in his grave,” and *Daqā’iq al-akhbār* ((Pseudo) al-Qadi, 1979: 62) maintains that the dead person “sees whoever prays for him and is sad over him.” Also see Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah (2010: 4–21); Smith and Haddad (2002: 50–51). The Pahlavi texts, too, as noted by Bailey (1971: 113), state that although the *jān* (body) of the deceased person is gone, his *ruvan* “retains all the faculties which it enjoyed in union with the body.”
15. To my knowledge, Bausani (2000: 119) is the only scholar who notes the Iranian origin of this idea: “the torment the angels inflicted on a dead person in his tomb certainly has an Iranian origin.” The concept of punishment in the grave is found in some Islamic literature dealing with eschatological matters. *The Precious Pearl* (al-Ghazali, 1979: 36) states that the bad deeds of the wicked “are transformed into a young dog that punishes him in the grave according to the degree of his sin.” For similar traditions, see Smith and Haddad (2002: 50).
16. It is generally believed that the righteous do not experience the punishment of the grave. *Daqā’iq al-akhbār* ((Pseudo) al-Qadi, 1979: 52) states that the righteous encounter “angels with white faces . . . and with them is one of the shrouds of the Garden and some of the embalming oil of the Garden.” Also see *Mishkat al-Maṣābih* (Robson, 1975, 1: 36).
17. According to al-Ghazali (1979: 137), “Before every man that dies appear his good and his evil works. He fixes his gaze upon the former and averts it from the latter.” Also see Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah (2010: 32).
18. The influence of this Zoroastrian belief on Islamic teachings about eschatology has been examined by a number of scholars. See Gray (1902: 163–165); Khalil (2012: 150); Smith and Haddad (2002: 78–79).
19. For the creation of the *chinvat* bridge by Mazda, see Sirozah 1:30; Vendīdād 19:29; 19:36.
20. According to a tradition narrated in the Muslim b. Hajjaj’s collection, “The believers would then pass over within the twinkling of an eye, like lightning, like wind, like a bird, like the finest

horses and camels” (Muslim Book 1, Number 0352; also *Mishkat al-Maṣābih*, Robson, 1975, 2: 1185). Compare this with a Zoroastrian narration, according to which “the angel of wind, takes the pious soul by its hand and escorts it to its proper place” (cited in Dhalla, 1914: 274). *Daqā’iq al-akhbār* ((Pseudo) al-Qadī, 1979: 102) narrates that some of the pious ask, when they have crossed the bridge: “where is the *sirat*?” and they are told “you have crossed it without difficulty by the mercy of Allah.” Al-Ghazali (2006: 208) states that “there are some among mankind who shall cross [the bridge] like the wind, others like a shaft of lightning; others shall pass over like the wind, others like horses at a gallop . . .” With regards to the damned, al-Ghazali (2006: 208) states that they are punished when crossing the bridge. The Zoroastrian texts, too, speak of various punishments inflicted upon the damned when they cross the *chinvat* bridge (see Yasna 31:20; 46:11; for details see Pavry, 1929: 70). According to the *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī xrad* (2:165–166), the wicked souls weep with a loud voice when crossing the *chinvat* bridge, seeking assistance, but no one assists them. The passing over the bridge is more difficult for those sinners who committed eviler deeds (*Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī xrad* 21:19–21).

21. As noted by Bailey (1971: 115), Zādspram also provides a different narration, where it (30: 48) states that the righteous wear their good deeds as a garment and the wicked wear a garment of their deeds. But, as noted by him, this narration is not common in Zoroastrian texts.
22. This idea had already been noted by Berthels, in Berthels (1925).
23. It should be noted, too, that the physical descriptions of the *hūrīs* of paradise appealed to the seventh-century audiences of the Qur’ān who held a particular ideal of beauty, and thus this concept was closely connected to the context in which the Qur’ān emerged.
24. Later Avestan texts use the term *misvana gatu* (the place of mixing), which is often interpreted as a separate abode for those whose good and bad deeds are equal. See the use of such a concept in Sirozah 1:30; Sirozah 2:30; Vendīdād 19:36. For details, see Pavry (1929: 74–75); Dhalla (1914: 179).
25. Some consider the possibility that the people of *ā’rāf* will eventually enter paradise (see *Mishkat al-Maṣābih*, Robson, 1975, 2: 1185–1186).
26. Note, for example, that *The Precious Pearl* (al-Ghazali, 1979: 80) states that the inhabitants of *ā’rāf* are those whose two pans of the balance are exactly equal, so they are “neither of the people of the Garden nor of the people of the Fire.”
27. There are other similar forms of punishment described in Islamic and Zoroastrian texts. One similar form of punishment in both traditions, for example, is the cutting of the body parts of sinners. See *Ardā Wirāz nāmag* 79:2; 84:2; 96:1; 97:1 and 81:1. For a similar form of punishment in Islamic sources, see Lange (2008: 149); Gray (1902: 172–173).
28. According to the oldest Zoroastrian texts, the wicked souls are fed with the foulest and the most poisonous food in hell (Yasna 31:20; Yasna 49:11; Yasht 22:35–36). The Pahlavi texts, too, hold that the demons bring the inhabitants of hell “the foulest and vilest of eatables, the food which is nurtured in hell” (*Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī xrad* 2:190). The inhabitants of hell eat “the poison and venom of the snake and scorpion and other noxious creatures” (*Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī xrad* 2:191–192). According to Yasht (22:36), “food of poison and poisonous stench” is “the food for the fiendish woman, rich in evil thoughts, evil words, and evil deeds, evil religion, ill-principled, and disobedient to her husband” (see also, *Ardā Wirāz nāmag* 63:1–8). The same punishment is said to be inflicted on the women who are disobedient to their husbands in the Bukhari collections of hadith (Vol. 2, Book 18, Number 161). According

to this hadith, Muhammad said “I saw that most of the inhabitants were women.” The people asked, “O Allah’s Apostle! Why is it so?” The Prophet replied, “Because of their ungratefulness.” It was asked whether they are ungrateful to Allah. The Prophet said, “They are ungrateful to their companions of life (husbands) and ungrateful to good deeds.”

29. Islamic texts, like Zoroastrian texts, maintain that the inhabitants of hell would constantly eat unpleasant food. Similarly, the Qur’ān and later Islamic tradition say that the inhabitants of hell will drink boiling water (Q 6:70) as well as eating the fruit of the tree of *Zaqqum* which is “bitter in taste, burning in touch, rotten in smell and black in appearance,” in the words of Razi (see Awa, 2005, 5: 571); *Zaqqum* is also mentioned in three Qur’ānic passages: Q 37:62–66; Q 44:43; Q 56:52).

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