

Zoroaster



By the 3rd century, Zoroastrianism had spread throughout the Middle East. Zoroaster with bull-head mace, the varza (Middle Persian, gurz) pointing to the sky.

Known for

Founder of Zoroastrianism

Spouse(s)

Hvōvi (*traditional*)

Children

Freni, Pourucista, Triti;

Isat Vastar, Uruvat-Nara, Hvare Ciθra (*traditional*)

Parents

Pourušaspa Spitāma, Dughdova(*traditional*)

Zoroaster (/ˌzɒroʊˈæstər/ or /ˈzɒroʊˌæstər/, from **Greek** Ζωροάστρης *Zōroastrēs*), also known

as **Zarathustra** (/ˌzɑrəˈθuːstrə/; **Avestan**: *Zaraθuštra* *Zaraθuštra*; **Persian**: زرتشت *Zartosht*, زردشت *Zardosht*) was the founder of **Zoroastrianism**. Though he was a native speaker of **Old Avestan** and lived in the eastern part of the **Iranian plateau**, his birthplace is uncertain. He is credited with the authorship of the **Yasna Haptanghaiti** as well as the **Gathas**, hymns which are at the liturgical core of Zoroastrian thinking. Most of his life is known through the Zoroastrian texts.

Avestan, the language spoken by Zoroaster and used for composing the Yasna Haptanghaiti and the Gathas, on archaeological and **linguistic** grounds, is dated to have been spoken probably in the first half of the 2nd millennium BCE.

Contents

- 1 Etymology
- 2 Date
- 3 Place
- 4 Life
- 5 Death
- 6 Philosophy
- 7 Iconography
- 8 Western Civilization
 - 8.1 In classical antiquity
 - 8.2 In the post-classical era
- 9 In other religious systems
 - 9.1 In Islam
 - 9.2 Ahmadiyya view
 - 9.3 In Manichaeism
 - 9.4 In the Bahá'í Faith

Etymology

Zoroaster's name in his native language, **Avestan**, was probably *Zaraθuštra*. His English name, "Zoroaster", derives from a later (5th century BCE) **Greek** transcription, *Zōroastrēs* (Ζωροάστρης), as used in **Xanthus's** *Lydiaca* and in **Plato's** *First Alcibiades*. This form appears subsequently in the Latin *Zōroastrēs* and, in later Greek orthographies, as *Zōroastris*. The Greek form of the name appears to be based on a phonetic transliteration or semantic substitution of the **Avestan** *zaraθ-* with the Greek *zōros* (literally "undiluted") and the **Avestan** *-uštra* with *astron* ("star").

In **Avestan**, *Zaraθuštra* is generally accepted to derive from an Old Iranian **Zaratuštra-*; The element half of the name (*-uštra-*) is considered to be the Indo-Iranian root for "camel", the entire name meaning "he who can manage camels". Reconstructions from later Iranian languages—particularly from the **Middle Persian** (300 BCE) *Zardusht*, which is the form that the name took in the 9th- to 12th-century **Zoroastrian** texts—suggest that **Zaratuštra-* might be a **zero-grade** form of **Zarantuštra-*.¹ Subject then to whether *Zaraθuštra* derives from **Zarantuštra-* or from **Zaratuštra-*, several interpretations have been proposed.

*Following *Zarantuštra- are:*

- "with old/aging camels": related to **Avestic** *zarant-*.^[2] (cf. **Pashto** *zōr* and **Ossetic** *zæron*, "old"; Middle Persian *zāl*, "old") "with angry/furious camels": from **Avestan** **zarant-*, "angry, furious".

*Following *Zaratuštra- are:*

- "owner of the] golden camel": this is derived from old Eastern Iranian word **zar-* for gold and *uštra* for camel, further corresponding to an Eastern Iranian origin (the Old Persian word *dar* as a Western-Iranian dialect would be the equal term of Eastern Iranian *zar*; Modern Persian uses the Eastern Iranian word for gold).
- "who is driving camels" or "who is fostering/cherishing camels": related to Avestan *zarš-*, "to drag".
- Mayrhofer (1977) proposed an etymology of "who is desiring camels" or "longing for camels" and related to Vedic *har-*, "to like", and perhaps (though ambiguous) also to Avestan *zara-*.
- "with yellow camels": parallel to younger Avestan *zairi-*.

A folk etymology of the name is from *zaraθa*, "golden", and the **uštra*, "light" (from the root *uš-*, "to shine"). In yet another etymological variation, *Zaraθuštra* is split into two words: *zara*, "gold", and *θuštra*, "friend". Several more etymologies have been proposed, some quite fanciful, but none are factually based.

The interpretation of the *-θ-* (/θ/) in Avestan *zaraθuštra* was for a time itself subjected to heated debate because the *-θ-* is an irregular development: As a rule, **zarat-* (a first element that ends in a dental consonant) should have Avestan *zarat-* or *zarat-* as a development from it. Why this is not so for *zaraθuštra* has not yet been determined. Notwithstanding the phonetic irregularity, that Avestan *zaraθuštra* with its *-θ-* was linguistically an actual form is shown by later attestations reflecting the same basis. All present-day, Iranian-language variants of his name derive from the Middle Iranian variants of *Zarθošt*, which, in turn, all reflect Avestan's fricative *-θ-*.

Date

The date of Zoroaster, i.e., the date of composition of the Old Avestan gathas, is unknown. Classical writers such as Plutarch and Diogenes proposed dates prior to 6000 BCE. Dates proposed in scholarly literature diverge widely, between the 18th and the 6th centuries BCE.

Until the late 17th century, Zoroaster was generally dated to about the 6th century BCE, which coincided with both the "Traditional date" (see details below) and historiographic accounts (Ammianus Marcellinus, 4th century CE). However, already at the time (late 19th century), the issue was far from settled.

The "Traditional date" originates in the period immediately following Alexander the Great's conquest of the Achaemenid Empire in 330 BCE. The Seleucid kings who gained power following Alexander's death instituted an "Age of Alexander" as the new calendrical epoch. This did not appeal to the Zoroastrian priesthood who then attempted to establish an "Age of Zoroaster". To do so, they needed to establish when Zoroaster had lived, which they accomplished by counting back the length of successive generations until they concluded that Zoroaster must have lived "258 years before Alexander". This estimate then re-appeared in the 9th- to 12th-century texts of Zoroastrian tradition, which in turn gave the date doctrinal legitimacy, especially since it was made plausible also by the observational history of the

Pleiades in the **Geoponic** that indicates Zoroaster as a principal source of some observations. In the early part of the 20th century, this remained the accepted date (subject to the uncertainties of the 'Age of Alexander') for a number of reputable scholars, among them **Hasan Taqizadeh**, a recognized authority on the various Iranian calendars, and hence became the date cited by Henning and others. By the late 19th century, scholars such as Bartholomew and Christensen noted problems with the "Traditional date", namely in the linguistic difficulties that it presented. The **Old Avestan language** of the Gathas (which are attributed to the founder himself) is still very close to the **Sanskrit** of the **Rigveda**. Therefore, it seemed implausible that the Gathas and Rigveda could be more than a few centuries apart, suggesting a date for the oldest surviving portions of the **Avesta** of roughly the 2nd millennium BCE. A date of 11th or 10th century BCE is sometimes considered among Iranists, who in recent decades found that the social customs described in the Gathas roughly coincide with what is known of other pre-historical peoples of that period. The Gathas describe a society of bipartite (priests and herdsmen/farmers) nomadic **pastoralists** with tribal structures organized at most as small kingdoms. This contrasts sharply with the view of Zoroaster having lived in an empire, at which time society is attested to have had a tripartite structure (nobility/soldiers, priests, and farmers). Although a slightly earlier date (by a century or two) has been proposed on the grounds that the texts do not reflect the migration onto the **Iranian Plateau**, it is also possible that Zoroaster lived in one of the rural societies that remained in Central Asia.

Place

Yasna 9 & 17 cite the Ditya River in **Airyanem Vaējah** (**Middle Persian** *Ērān Wēj*) as Zoroaster's home and the scene of his first appearance. The **Avesta** (both Old and Younger portions) does not mention the Achaemenids or of any West Iranian tribes such as the **Medes**, **Persians**, or even **Parthians**.

However, in *Yasna*, the *zaraθuštrotema*, or supreme head of the Zoroastrian priesthood, is said to reside in 'Ragha'. In the 9th- to 12th-century Middle Persian texts of Zoroastrian tradition, this 'Ragha'—along with many other places—appear as locations in Western Iran. While the land of Media does not figure at all in the Avesta (the westernmost location noted in scripture is **Arachosia**), the **Būndahišn**, or "Primordial Creation," puts Ragha in **Media** (medieval **Rai**). However, in Avestan, Ragha is simply a toponym meaning "plain, hillside."

Apart from these indications in **Middle Persian** sources which are open to interpretations, there are a number of other sources. The Greek and Latin sources are divided on the birthplace of Zarathustra. There are many Greek accounts of Zarathustra, referred usually as Persian or Perso-Median Zoroaster. Moreover they have the suggestion that there has been more than one Zoroaster. On the other hand, in post-Islamic sources **Shahrastani**(1086–1153) an **Iranian** writer originally from Shahrīstān, present-day **Turkmenistan**, proposed that Zoroaster's father was from **Atropatene** (also in Media) and his mother was from **Rey**. Coming from a reputed scholar of religions, this was a serious blow for the various regions who all claimed that Zoroaster originated from *their* homelands, some of which then decided that Zoroaster must then have then been buried in their regions or

composed his Gathas there or preached there. Also Arabic sources of the same period and the same region of historical Persia consider **Azerbaijan** as the birthplace of Zarathustra.

By the late 20th century, most scholars had settled on an origin in Eastern **Iran** and/or **Afghanistan**. Gnoli proposed **Sistan, Baluchistan** (though in a much wider scope than the present-day province) as the homeland of Zoroastrianism; Frye voted for **Bactria** and **Chorasmia**; Khlopin suggests the Tedzen Delta in present-day **Turkmenistan**. Sarianidi considered the **Bactria–Margiana Archaeological Complex** region as "the native land of the Zoroastrians and, probably, of Zoroaster himself." Boyce includes the **steppes** to the west from the **Volga**. The medieval "from Media" hypothesis is no longer taken seriously, and Zaehner has even suggested that this was a Magi-mediated issue to garner legitimacy, but this has been likewise rejected by Gershevitch and others.

The 2005 *Encyclopedia Iranica* article on the history of Zoroastrianism summarizes the issue with "while there is general agreement that he did not live in western Iran, attempts to locate him in specific regions of eastern Iran, including Central Asia, remain tentative."

Life



Zoroaster holds the **celestial sphere** in Raphael's *School of Athens*

The *Gathas* contain allusions to personal events, such as Zoroaster's triumph over obstacles imposed by competing priests and the ruling class. They also indicate he had difficulty spreading his teachings, and was even treated with ill-will in his mother's hometown. They also describe familiar events such as the marriage of his daughter, at which Zoroaster presided. In the texts of the Younger *Avesta* (composed many centuries after the *Gathas*), Zoroaster is depicted wrestling with the *daevas* and is tempted by **Angra Mainyu** to renounce his thinking. The *Spend Nask*, the 13th section of the *Avesta*, is said to have a description of the prophet's life. However, this text has been lost over the centuries, and it survives only as a summary in the seventh book of the 9th-century *Dēnkard*. Other 9th- to 12th-century stories of Zoroaster, such as the *Shāhnāmeḥ*, are also assumed to be based on earlier texts, but must be considered as primarily a collection of **legends**. The historical Zoroaster, however, eludes categorization as a legendary character.

Zoroaster was born into the priestly family [citation needed] of the *Spitamids* and his ancestor *Spitāma* is mentioned several times in the **Gathas**. His father's name was *Pourušaspa*, or "Poroschasp", a noble **Persian**, and his mother's was Dughdova (*Duyδōuuā*). With his wife, Huvovi (*Hvōvi*), Zoroaster had three sons, Isat Vastar, Uruvat-Nara and Hvare Ciθra; three daughters, Freni, Pourucista and Triti. His wife, children and a cousin named Maidhyoimangha were his first converts after his illumination from **Ahura Mazda** at age 30. According to *Yasnas* 5 & 105, Zoroaster prayed to **Anahita** for the conversion of King **Vištaspā**, who appears in the *Gathas* as a historic personage. In legends, Vištaspā is said to have had two brothers as courtiers, Frašaōštra and Jamaspa, and to whom Zoroaster was closely related: his wife, Hvōvi, was the daughter of Frashaōštra, while Jamaspa was the husband of his daughter Pourucista. The actual role of intermediary was played by the pious queen Hutaōsa. Apart from this connection, the new prophet relied especially upon his own kindred (*hvaētuš*).

Death

Zoroaster's death is not mentioned in the *Avesta*. In *Shahnameh*, he is said to have been murdered at the altar by the **Turanians** in the storming of **Balkh**. Zoroaster's death was said to have been in **Balkh** located in present-day **Afghanistan** during the Holy War between **Turan** and the **Persian empire** in 583 BCE. Jamaspa, his son-in-law, then became Zoroaster's successor.

Philosophy

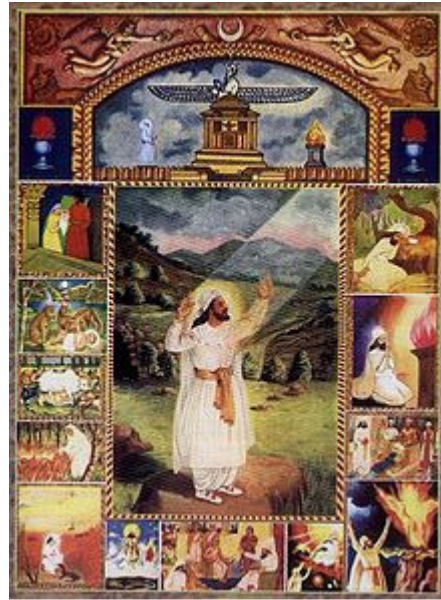


Detail of *The School of Athens* by Raphael, 1509, showing Zoroaster (left, with star-studded globe).

In the *Gathas*, Zoroaster sees the human condition as the mental struggle between *aša* (truth) and *druj* (lie). The cardinal concept of *aša*—which is highly nuanced and only vaguely translatable—is at the foundation of all Zoroastrian doctrine, including that of **Ahura Mazda** (who is *aša*), creation (that is *aša*), and existence (that is *aša*) and as the condition for Free Will. The purpose of humankind, like that of all other creation, is to sustain *aša*. For humankind, this occurs through active participation in life and the exercise of constructive thoughts, words and deeds. Elements of Zoroastrian philosophy entered the West through their influence on **Judaism** and **Middle Platonism** and have been identified as one of the key early events in the development of philosophy. Among the classic Greek philosophers, **Heraclitus** is often referred to as inspired by Zoroaster's thinking. Zoroaster emphasized the freedom of the individual to choose right or wrong and individual responsibility for one's deeds. This personal choice to accept *aša* or arta (the divine order), and shun *druj* (ignorance and

chaos) is one's own decision and not a dictate of Ahura Mazda. For Zarathustra, by thinking good thoughts, saying good words, and doing good deeds (e.g. assisting the needy or doing good works) we increase this divine force *aša* or arta in the world and in ourselves, celebrate the divine order, and we come a step closer on the everlasting road to being one with the Creator. Thus, we are not the slaves or servants of Ahura Mazda, but we can make a personal choice to be his co-workers, thereby refreshing the world and ourselves.

Iconography



Zoroastrian devotional art depicts the religion's founder with white clothing and a long beard

Although a few recent depictions of Zoroaster show the prophet performing some deed of legend, in general the portrayals merely present him in **white vestments** (which are also worn by present-day Zoroastrian priests). He often is seen holding a *baresman* (Avestan; **Middle Persian barsom**), which is generally considered to be another symbol of priesthood, or with a book in hand, which may be interpreted to be the **Avesta**. Alternatively, he appears with a mace, the *varza*—usually stylized as a steel rod crowned by a bull's head—that priests carry in their installation ceremony. In other depictions he appears with a raised hand and thoughtfully lifted finger, as if to make a point. Zoroaster is rarely depicted as looking directly at the viewer; instead, he appears to be looking slightly upwards, as if beseeching. Zoroaster is almost always depicted with a beard, this along with other factors bearing similarities to 19th-century portraits of **Jesus**.

A common variant of the Zoroaster images derives from a Sassanid-era rock-face carving. In this depiction at **Taq-e Bostan**, a figure is seen to preside over the coronation of **Ardashir I or II**. The figure is standing on a lotus, with a *baresman* in hand and with *agloriole* around his head. Until the 1920s, this figure was commonly thought to be a depiction of Zoroaster, but in recent years is more commonly interpreted to be a depiction of **Mithra**. Among the most famous of the European depictions of Zoroaster is that of the figure in **Raphael's 1509 The School of Athens**. In it, Zoroaster and **Ptolemy** are having a discussion in the lower right corner. The prophet is holding a star-studded globe.

Western Civilization

In classical antiquity

Although, at the core, the Greeks (in the **Hellenistic sense** of the term) understood Zoroaster to be the "prophet and founder of the religion of the Iranian peoples" (e.g. **Plutarch** *Isis and Osiris*, **Diogenes Laertius** and **Agathias** "the rest was mostly fantasy"). He was set in the impossibly ancient past, six to seven millennia before the Common Era, and was variously a king of **Bactria**, or a **Babylonian** (or teacher of Babylonians), and with a biography typical for every **Neopythagorean** sage, i.e. a mission preceded by ascetic withdrawal and enlightenment.

Most importantly however, was their picture of Zoroaster as the sorcerer-astrologer *non-plus-ultra*, and indeed as the "inventor" of both magic and astrology. Deriving from that image, and reinforcing it, was a "mass of literature" attributed to him and that circulated the **Mediterranean** world from the 3rd century BCE to the end of antiquity and beyond. "The Greeks considered the best wisdom to be exotic wisdom" and "what better and more convenient authority than the distant—temporally and geographically—Zoroaster?"

The language of that literature was predominantly **Greek**, though at one stage or another various parts of it passed through **Aramaic**, **Syriac**, **Coptic** or **Latin**. Its ethos and cultural matrix was likewise Hellenistic, and "the ascription of literature to sources beyond that political, cultural and temporal framework represents a bid for authority and a fount of legitimizing "alien wisdom". Zoroaster and the magi did not compose it, but their names sanctioned it." The attributions to "exotic" names (not restricted to magians) conferred an "authority of a remote and revelation wisdom." Once the magi were associated with magic in Greek imagination, Zoroaster was bound to metamorphose into a magician too. The 1st-century **Pliny the Elder** names Zoroaster as the inventor of magic "However, a principle of the division of labor appears to have spared Zoroaster most of the responsibility for introducing the dark arts to the Greek and Roman worlds." That "dubious honor" went to the "fabulous magus, **Ostanes**, to whom most of the pseudepigraphic magical literature was attributed." Although Pliny calls him the inventor of magic, the Roman does not provide a "magician's persona" for him. Moreover, the little "magical" teaching that is ascribed to Zoroaster is actually very late, with the very earliest example being from the 14th century. One factor for the association with astrology was Zoroaster's name, or rather, what the Greeks made of it. Within the scheme of Greek thinking (which was always on the lookout for hidden significances and "real" meanings of words) his name was identified at first with star-worshiping (*astrothytes* "star sacrificer") and, with the *Zo-*, even as the *living* star. Later, an even more elaborate mythoetymology evolved: Zoroaster died by the living (*zo-*) flux (*-ro-*) of fire from the star (*-astr-*) which he himself had invoked, and even, that the stars killed him in revenge for having been restrained by him. Similar ideas about Zoroaster also appear in early Christian literature, beginning with the **Clementine Homilies**, which identifies him with a parallel series of traditions about **Nimrod** having been the founder of astrology. In this account, Nimrod is killed by lightning and posthumously deified by the Persians as

"Zoroaster, on account of the living (*zosan*) stream of the star (*asteros*) being poured upon him."

The second and "more serious" factor for the association with astrology was the notion that Zoroaster was a **Babylonian**. The alternate Greek name for Zoroaster was Zaratas/Zaradas/Zaratos **Clement Stromata** which—so Cumont and Bidez—derived from a Semitic form of his name. The **Pythagorean tradition** considered the mathematician to have studied with Zoroaster in Babylonia (**Porphyry Life of Pythagoras**, Alexander Polyhistor apud Clement's *Stromata*, Diodorus of Eritrea, Aristoxenus apud Hippolitus. **Lydus** attributes the creation of the seven-day week to "the Babylonians in the circle of Zoroaster and Hystaspes," and who did so because there were seven planets. The **Suda's** chapter on *astronomia* notes that the Babylonians learned their astrology from Zoroaster. **Lucian of Samosata** decides to journey to Babylon "to ask one of the magi, Zoroaster's disciples and successors," for their opinion.

While the division along the lines of Zoroaster/astrology and Ostanos/magic is an "oversimplification, the descriptions do at least indicate what the works are *not*." They were not expressions of Zoroastrian doctrine; they were not even expressions of what the Greeks and Romans "*imagined* the doctrines of Zoroastrianism to have been." The assembled fragments do not even show noticeable commonality of outlook and teaching among the several authors who wrote under each name.

Almost all Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha is now lost, and of the attested texts—with only one exception—only fragments have survived. Pliny's 2nd- or 3rd-century attribution of "two million lines" to Zoroaster suggest that (even if exaggeration and duplicates are taken into consideration) a formidable pseudepigraphic corpus once existed at the **Library of Alexandria**. This corpus can safely be assumed to be pseudepigrapha because no one before Pliny refers to literature by "Zoroaster", and on the authority of the 2nd-century **Galen of Pergamon** and from a 6th-century commentator on Aristotle it is known that the acquisition policies of well-endowed royal libraries created a market for fabricating manuscripts of famous and ancient authors.

The exception to the fragmentary evidence (i.e. reiteration of passages in works of other authors) is a complete Coptic tractate titled *Zostrianos* discovered in the **Nag Hammadi library** in 1945. A three-line cryptogram in the colophones following the 131-page treatise identify the work as "words of truth of Zostrianos. God of Truth [*logos*]. Words of Zoroaster." Invoking a "God of Truth" might seem Zoroastrian, but there is otherwise "nothing noticeably Zoroastrian" about the text and "in content, style, ethos and intention, its affinities are entirely with the congeners among the Gnostic tractates."

Among the named works attributed to "Zoroaster" is a treatise *On Nature* (*Periphyseos*), which appears to have originally constituted four volumes (i.e. papyrus rolls). The framework is a retelling of Plato's *Myth of Er*, with Zoroaster taking the place of the original hero. While Porphyry imagined **Pythagoras** listening to Zoroaster's discourse, *On Nature* has the sun in middle position, which was how it was understood in the 3rd century. In contrast, Plato's 4th-century BCE version

had the sun in second place above the moon. Ironically, **Colotes** accused **Plato** of plagiarizing Zoroaster, and **Heraclides Ponticus** wrote a text titled *Zoroaster* based on (what the author considered) "Zoroastrian" philosophy in order to express his disagreement with Plato on **natural philosophy**. With respect to substance and content in *On Nature* only two facts are known: that it was crammed with astrological speculations, and that **Necessity (*Ananké*)** was mentioned by name and that she was in the air. Another work circulating under the name of "Zoroaster" was the *Asteroskopita* (or *Apotelesmatika*), and which ran to five volumes (i.e. papyrus rolls). The title and fragments suggest that it was an astrological handbook, "albeit a very varied one, for the making of predictions." A third text attributed to Zoroaster is *On Virtue of Stones* (*Peri lithon timion*), of which nothing is known other than its extent (one volume) and that pseudo-Zoroaster *sang* it. Numerous other fragments are attributed to "Zoroaster," but the titles of whose books are not mentioned. These pseudepigraphic texts aside, some authors did draw on a few genuinely Zoroastrian ideas. The *Oracles of Hystaspes*, by "**Hystaspes**", another prominent magian pseudo-author, is a set of prophecies distinguished from other Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha in that it draws on real Zoroastrian sources. Some allusions are more difficult to assess: in the same text that attributes the invention of magic to Zoroaster, Pliny states that Zoroaster laughed on the day of his birth, although in an earlier place, Pliny had sworn in the name of **Hercules** that no child had ever done so before the 40th day from his birth. This notion of Zoroaster's laughter (like that of "two million verses") also appears in the 9th– to 11th-century texts of genuine Zoroastrian tradition, and for a time it was assumed that the origin of those myths lay with indigenous sources. Pliny also records that Zoroaster's head had pulsated so strongly that it repelled the hand when laid upon it, a presage of his future wisdom. The Iranians were however just as familiar with the Greek writers. The provenance of other descriptions are clear, so for instance, Plutarch's description of its dualistic theologies: "Others call the better of these a god and his rival a daemon, as, for example, Zoroaster the Magus, who lived, so they record, five thousand years before the siege of Troy. He used to call the one **Horomazes** and the other **Areimanius**" (*Isis and Osiris*).

In the post-classical era



An early 19th-century perception of Zoroaster derived from the portrait of a figure that appears in a 4th-century sculpture at **Taq-e Bostan** in south-western Iran. In

both the original (seen [here](#)) and the 19th-century interpretation, the figure bears a *barsom* in hand. In the original, the *barsom* solemnizes an investiture ceremony. In the reinterpretation, the figure wears the ceremonial headgear of a **Zoroastrian high priest**. In the academic literature of 19th and early 20th centuries, the figure in the original 4th-century carving was indeed assumed to be an depiction of Zoroaster. That assumption is no longer followed today. Zoroaster was known as a sage, magician, and miracle-worker in post-Classical Western culture. Although almost nothing was known of his ideas until the late 18th century, his name was already associated with lost ancient wisdom. However as early as 1643 statements by Sir **Thomas Browne** are the earliest recorded references to Zoroaster in the English language. Zoroaster appears as "Sarastro" in Mozart's opera *Die Zauberflöte*, which has been noted for its Masonic elements. He is also the subject of the 1749 opera *Zoroastre*, by **Jean-Philippe Rameau**.

Enlightenment writers such as **Voltaire** promoted research into Zoroastrianism in the belief that it was a form of rational **Deism**, preferable to **Christianity**. With the translation of the *Avesta* by **Abraham Anquetil-Duperron**, Western scholarship of Zoroastrianism began. In **E. T. A. Hoffmann's** novel *Klein Zaches, genannt Zinnober*, the mage Prosper Alpanus states that Professor Zoroaster was his teacher. In his seminal work *Also sprach Zarathustra (Thus Spoke Zarathustra)* (1885) the philosopher **Friedrich Nietzsche** uses the native Iranian name Zarathustra which has a significant meaning as he had used the familiar Greek-Latin name in his earlier works. It is believed that Nietzsche invents a characterization of Zarathustra as the mouthpiece for Nietzsche's own ideas against **morality**. **Richard Strauss's** Opus 30, inspired by Nietzsche's book, is also called *Also sprach Zarathustra*.

Zoroaster was mentioned by the Irish poet **William Butler Yeats**. He and his wife were said to have claimed to have contacted Zoroaster through "**automatic writing**".



Zoroaster (left) standing over the First Judicial Department of The New York Supreme Court.

The **Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of New York** has a sculpture of Zoroaster towering over the building on E. 25th St. and Madison Ave in Manhattan, representing the ancient Persian judicial wisdom. The sculpture was made by **Edward Clarke Potter** in 1896. Also on the south side of the exterior of **Rockefeller Memorial Chapel** in the campus of the **University of Chicago**, there is a sculpture of Zoroaster among other prominent religious figures. The protagonist and narrator of **Gore Vidal's** 1981 novel *Creation* is described to be the grandson of Zoroaster. *Zarathustra*, the mythic hero in **Giannina Braschi's** 2011 dramatic novel "United States of Banana", joins forces with Shakespeare's **Hamlet**.

In other religious systems

In Islam

Citing the authority of the 8th-century **al-Kalbi**, the 9th- and 10th-century historian **al-Tabari** reports that Zaradusht bin Isfiman (an **Arabic** adaptation of "Zarathustra Spitama") was an inhabitant of Israel and a servant of one of the disciples of the prophet **Jeremiah**. According to this tale, Zaradusht defrauded his master, who cursed him, causing him to become leprous (cf. **Elisha's** servant **Gehazi** in Jewish Scripture). The apostate Zaradusht then eventually made his way to Balkh (present day Afghanistan) where he converted Bishtasb (i.e. **Vishtaspa**), who in turn compelled his subjects to adopt the religion of the Magians. Recalling other tradition, al-Tabari recounts that Zaradusht accompanied a Jewish prophet to Bishtasb/Vishtaspa. Upon their arrival, Zaradusht translated the sage's Hebrew teachings for the king and so convinced him to convert (Tabari also notes that they had previously been **Sabis**) to the Magian religion.

The 12th-century heresiographer **al-Shahrastani** describes the Majusiya into three sects, the *Kayumarthiya*, the *Zurwaniya* and the *Zaradushtiya*, among which Al-Shahrastani asserts that only the last of the three were properly followers of Zoroaster. As regards the recognition of a prophet, the Zoroaster has said: "They ask you as to how should they recognize a prophet and believe him to be true in what he says; tell them what he knows the others do not, and he shall tell you even what lies hidden in your nature; he shall be able to tell you whatever you ask him and he shall perform such things which others cannot perform." Namah Shat Vakhshur Zartust, Shortly before the advent of the prophet of Islam, Muhammad, Persia was under the sovereignty of Sasan V. When the companions of the Prophet, on invading Persia, came in contact with the Zoroastrian people and learned these teachings, they at once came to the conclusion that Zoroaster was really a Divinely inspired prophet. Thus they accorded the **same treatment** to the Zoroastrian people which they did to other "People of the Book". Though the name of Zoroaster is not mentioned in the Qur'an, still he was regarded as one of those prophets whose names have not been mentioned in the Qur'an, for there is a verse in the Qur'an: "And We did send apostles before thee: there are some of them that We have mentioned to thee and there are others whom We have not mentioned to Thee." Accordingly the Muslims treated the founder of Zoroastrianism as a true prophet and believed in his religion as they did in other inspired creeds, and thus according to the prophecy, protected the Zoroastrian religion. James Darmestier remarked in the translation of **Zend Avesta**: "When Islam assimilated the Zoroastrians to the People of the Book, it evinced a rare historical sense and solved the problem of the origin of the Avesta."

Ahmadiyya view

Ahmadi Muslims view Zoroaster as a Prophet of God and describe the expressions of Ahura Mazda, the God of goodness and Ahraman, the God of evil as merely referring to the coexistence of forces of good and evil enabling humans to exercise free will. **Mirza Tahir Ahmad**, the fourth **Caliph** of the **Ahmadiyya Muslim**

Community, in his book *Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge & Truth* views Zoroaster as Prophet of God and describes such the expressions to be a concept which is similar to the concepts in *Judaism, Christianity and Islam*.

In Manichaeism

Manichaeism considered Zoroaster to be a figure (along with **Jesus** and the **Buddha**) in a line of prophets however, many of these other Zoroastrian elements are either not part of Zoroaster's own teachings or are used quite differently from how they are used in of which **Mani** (216–276) was the culmination. Zoroaster's ethical dualism is—to an extent—incorporated in Mani's doctrine, which viewed the world as being locked in an epic battle between opposing forces of good and evil. Manichaeism also incorporated other elements of Zoroastrian tradition, particularly the names of supernatural beings; Zoroastrianism.

In the Bahá'í Faith

Zoroaster appears in the **Bahá'í Faith** as a "**Manifestation of God**", one of a line of prophets who have progressively revealed the Word of God to a gradually maturing humanity. Zoroaster thus shares an exalted station with **Abraham, Moses, Krishna, Jesus, Muhammad**, the **Báb**, and the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, **Bahá'u'lláh Shoghi Effendi**, the head of the Bahá'í Faith in the first half of the 20th century, saw Bahá'u'lláh as the fulfillment of a post-Sassanid Zoroastrian prophecy that saw a return of Sassanid emperor **Bahram**: Shoghi Effendi also stated that Zoroaster lived roughly 1000 years before Jesus.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia