

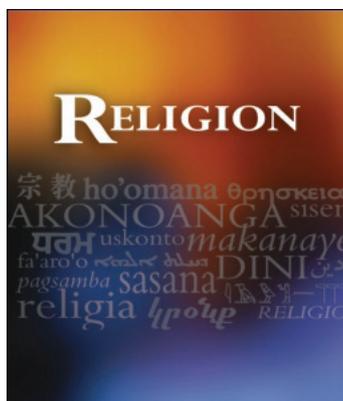
This article was downloaded by: [Universitetsbiblioteket i Bergen]

On: 13 April 2011

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 907435713]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Religion

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t931264822>

Pirān und Zeyāratgāh: Schreine und Wallfahrtsstätten der Zarathustrier im neuzzeitlichen Iran

Jenny Rose^a

^a Claremont Graduate University (USA),

Online publication date: 11 April 2011

To cite this Article Rose, Jenny(2011) 'Pirān und Zeyāratgāh: Schreine und Wallfahrtsstätten der Zarathustrier im neuzzeitlichen Iran', Religion, 41: 1, 118 – 122

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/0048721X.2011.553092

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2011.553092>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

formation of anthropology as a discipline by dwelling on introductory textbook accounts of Tylor, Durkheim, Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown and the framing of his research interests regarding Muslims in the West, bordering the sociology and psychology of Islam. Perhaps due to the far-ranging coverage of themes and issues, Marranci fails to develop a balanced and well-rounded line of argument on his own. The fact that he does not set up a consistent conceptual framework for an anthropology of Islam with a subtle focus on its field of research becomes especially clear as he repeatedly addresses the same topics in varying contexts, making the argumentation appear rather circular and redundant.

Covering a vast amount of literature at a fast pace, he encounters the problem of only superficially processing the literature, leading to foreseeable discussions and a predictable critique. As with his review of anthropological research on Muslim societies, he almost consistently follows the same schema. Rather than engaging in thorough discussions of specified controversial arguments on their own, the biased reading repeatedly fails to find solid grounds for his critique. Although this may give some students early in their careers a certain amount of guidance, it may not be suitable for a more insinuating understanding of the various facets related to this field, which is far more complex than what is condensed in this volume.

Lastly, besides some minor inconsistencies in the bibliographic style, the incorrect listing of some authors' names may make it difficult for students to identify their proper references (see, e.g., M.E. Hegland as "Heglnad, M, E."; S.H. Nasr as "Naser, S. H."; S. Vertovec as "Vetrovec, S."; E. Sinclair-Webb as "Sinclair-Web, E."; S.M. Mauroof as "Mahroof, M."; M.B. Zinn as "Baca Zinn, M."; H.L. Bodman as "Herbert, L. B."). This also extends to some incorrect and incomplete bibliographic references: (1) John R. Bowen, *Why [the] French [Don't] Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2008; (2) [Michael] Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy: Social [Poetics] in the Nation-State*, New York, Routledge, 1997; (3) S. Muhammad Ma[u]roof, *Elements for an Islamic Anthropology*, in: *Social and Natural Sciences: The Islamic Perspective*, [edited by Isma'il R. Al-Faruqi and Abdullah Omar Naseef], Hodder & Stoughton: Sevenoaks, 1981, pp. 15–23]. Finally, the publication indicated under Marranci (2004) does not exist. These shortcomings lower the quality of this book and undermine the persuasiveness of both his judicious and at times polemic critiques. They can become discouraging obstacles for students wanting to deepen their knowledge in this field based on Marranci's otherwise brilliant expertise – an expertise so well demonstrated in many of his other publications.

Jens Kreinath
 Wichita State University (USA)
 E-mail: Jens.Kreinath@wichita.edu
 © 2011, Jens Kreinath

Pīrān und Zeyāratgāh: Schreine und Wallfahrtsstätten der Zarathustrier im neuzeitlichen Iran, by Robert Langer, Peeters: Leuven, 2008, xviii + 1 DVD + illustrations + 708pp. ISBN 978 90 429 2193 1, €97 (hbk)

This book evolved from Robert Langer's 2001 fieldwork in Iran and his doctoral dissertation of 2002, which explores aspects of material culture and lay practice

relating to the Zoroastrian shrines (*pīrān*) and places of 'devotional visit' (*zeyāratgāh*) in Iran. The methodological and analytical approaches employed serve as a model for the study of any lived and living religion, and as such the work deserves to be translated into English. It also provides an illuminating window into Zoroastrian praxis in the early 21st century.

In the Preface, Langer details non-German summaries of his research, including his chapter entitled 'From Private Shrine to Pilgrimage Center' in *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context*, edited by Michael Stausberg (Ruprecht Karls Universität: Boston and Leiden, 2004: 563–592, plates XII/1 – XVI/16). Stausberg, Langer's doctoral supervisor at the University of Heidelberg, incorporated some of his student's written and visual material into the third volume of his opus *Die Religion Zarathushtras* (2004). In fine scholarly dialectic, Langer then included some of Stausberg's information, photos and analysis in this reformulation of his work. A Persian summary of Langer's research also exists in the booklet accompanying the prize-giving ceremony for 'Cultural Research of the Year' that was bestowed on Langer for his dissertation by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in 2003.

After an introductory chapter outlining research objectives, process, sources and methodology, the book divides into two main sections. The longer, second part (pp. 197–658) catalogues over 100 historical and contemporary Zoroastrian shrines in Iran, with the majority (over 80) located in Yazd province. Some of the shrines are no longer visited, and in some cases their exact location is no longer known, although there is literary evidence for their existence. In other instances, new shrines have emerged in the last few decades. Most of the shrines in Tehran, Yazd and Kerman are visually documented in the easily navigated DVD of photos.

The section preceding this documentation of the shrines is an overview of the history of Zoroastrianism in Iran from the advent of Islam to the Islamic Republic, with specific attention to those elements affecting the development of shrine worship, such as the Zoroastrian use of the Islamic *waqf* or 'endowment' system as an extension of the Sasanian practice of founding religious institutions 'for the soul' of a family member. Some Zoroastrian shrines continue to be endowed as charitable foundations to 'gladden the soul' of a deceased family member. This is particularly the case for those shrines where a believer's prayers have been answered. Such donations are used for the upkeep of the shrine, or for celebrations at communal festivals there.

Langer provides an extensive analysis of the various components of the shrines, from their physical structure to their ritual function. He begins by identifying the sites that constitute *pīrān* and *zeyāratgāh*, although these terms are used rather fluidly by Zoroastrians. *Pīr* literally means 'old', and therefore sometimes 'wise', but in a ritual context refers to a 'pure place' or 'place of worship'. The association of a *pīr* with a holy person in Islamic usage may have influenced its connection with 'someone who points the way' in a Zoroastrian context, or *vice versa*. Langer refers to several shrines dedicated to the daughters of Yazdegird III (the last Sasanian king), who fled from the advancing Arabs and were saved when the earth or mountain face opened up for them. As Langer notes, this last phenomenon has some parallels with the occlusion of the 12th imam in Shi'ite Islam, but he does not allude to its connection with heroic figures in pre-Islamic Iranian tradition, who disappear beneath the earth or inside a mountain, to emerge when they are needed to fight evil. The ancient Iranian character Yima, waiting out the winter of Ahriman in

his underground *vara*, comes immediately to mind. Since such stories were preserved initially within an eastern Iranian setting, it may be that we should look to Central Asia, rather than to the geographical Iranian or broader Middle Eastern context for comparable shrine cults. Indeed, Narshakhi, in his 10th-century *History of Bukhara*, mentions an annual gathering ‘of the Magians’ at the tomb of Siyavush by the city gate (R.N. Frye, *Al-Narshakhi’s History of Bukhara*, Marcus Wiener: Princeton, 2007: 22–23).

Langer documents the many different types of Zoroastrian shrine, ranging from the simplest form of *pīr* comprised of a lamp in a wall niche near the entrance to a fire temple, shrine, or private home (most of these types of *pīrān* had not hitherto been surveyed), to freestanding edifices, to the large complexes of regional pilgrimage centers. He describes private shrines in traditional adobe-clad houses, where four vaulted arches (Dari: *pesgam*) lead onto a courtyard, one of which, the *pesgam-e mas*, is reserved as the ritual space for the performance of the annual memorial service of departed family members.

The designation of a site as a *pīr* is often said to come through dreams, several of which are recounted later. Such verbally transmitted information has often remained oral, which is one of the problems Langer faced in identifying and cataloguing the shrines. Many of the families who constructed or endowed the shrines no longer live nearby, and their oral history is now lost. Langer describes one shrine, dedicated to Shah Varahram Īzed on Shaibani Street in Tehran (pp. 291–303), where he found no associated legends, although he had the name of the original benefactor. Coincidentally, a fourth-generation descendant of that benefactor, now residing in southern California, recently described the dream story behind the founding of the shrine (cf. *The Zoroastrian Journal*, Vol II/2, Summer 2007; *Chehrenama*, Spring 2007, No. 145). It is to be hoped that other Iranian Zoroastrians in diaspora will be motivated to augment Langer’s existing source material through their own oral histories.

Langer notes that the association of a shrine with an *īzed* (a ‘being worthy of worship’) is a common feature. Shrines are named after such divine beings as Ashtād (justice), Mehr (Mithra), Ātar (fire), and Tishtrya (rainfall and fertility), whose blessings are especially invoked. The oldest, historically attested extant shrine is Bānū Pārs (the ‘lady of Pars’) to the north of Yazd city, which is mentioned in early 17th-century letters. Had I read the entry on Bānū Pārs before my trip to Iran last year, I would have known the names of the elderly guardian of the shrine, which might have circumvented some of his reluctance to admit us, when we arrived with a Muslim driver. It was through the late 19th-century reports of the Parsi envoy, Maneckji Limji Hataria, that such Zoroastrian ‘pilgrimage centers’ as Pīr-e Bānū Pārs and Pīr-e Sabz were first known – as *zeyāratgāh* – to their co-religionists in India. *Zeyāratgāh* is sometimes synonymous with a *pīr*, but is more usually the designation for a place where individuals or groups go on a devotional visit at a particular time or for a particular purpose.

Many of the shrines are adjacent to, or incorporate, a water source: either a natural spring or a *qanat*. These watery sites often feature a tree, particularly a cypress or plane, which is also sometimes referred to as a *pīr*. Such is the case with the cypress at Cham, said to be an offshoot of that at Kashmar near Nishapur, which was planted by Zarathushtra and felled by an Abbasid caliph. The *Sarv-e Cham* is as popular a focus for ‘pilgrimage’ as the cypress at Abarqu, which is also linked with the Kashmar cypress. Langer identifies both as ‘wish trees’,

where lower branches are tied with votive ribbons or garlands (pp. 57, 459). At Cham, the villagers come to pay their respects at the shrine underneath the great cypress tree that overshadows the fire temple. The popularity of the shrine at Pīr-e Sabz, which has both water and trees, and where there is an annual midsummer festival attended by an international crowd of Zoroastrians, prompted Langer to add to his classification 'virtual shrines' – such as the pictorial representations of Pīr-e Sabz on the Internet – and 'ersatz pilgrimages', such as celebrated by some Zoroastrians in Vancouver at the time of the pilgrimage to Pīr-e Sabz.

Langer discusses the religio-social use of the shrine, the main festival days, and the frequency and constituency of visitors. It is interesting that most of the activities are lay-directed, with only the occasional *jashan* ceremony conducted by priests. One exception is the performance of *Sāl* (death anniversary) or *Farvardīgān* ('all souls') ceremonies by a priest at shrine areas in private homes. Of particular significance is the use of the shrines as the locus or focus of women's praxis. Women's visits to shrines are often oriented towards votive actions, and include the setting up of a ritual *sofreh* (a cloth upon which ritual elements are placed), such as that for the *Bībī se-shanbeh/nokhūd-e moshgel-goshā* ceremony, the purpose of which is to provide the resolution for a personal problem (pp. 106–111; also, p. 310). It would be salient also to explore the Parsi parallel to this ritual, known as *mushkil āsān* ('the difficult made easy'), and its continuation in parts of Islamic Central Asia. The fact that Parsis have been visiting shrines in Iran since Hataria's time, and have impacted both the restoration of some of the sites, as well as some of the current practices, could be considered in more detail. Shrine worship in Iran – particularly that of Shah Varahram Īzed – could also be fruitfully compared with the rise of similar praxes amongst Parsis in India.

Langer does consider the devotional activities at Zoroastrian shrines in Iran within the broader historical and cultural context of a predominantly Shi'ite Muslim society. He focuses on the parallels between the Muslim *imāmzādeh* cult and some of the Zoroastrian 'empty' shrines dedicated to *īzedān*. The example of Bībī Shahr-bānū in Rey is particularly pertinent: the story resembles that of the Sasanian princesses mentioned earlier, but has become part of Shi'ite Muslim narrative. This comparative perspective is valuable in exploring the particular expression of Iranian Zoroastrianism in its operation as a minority religion within the boundaries of a Muslim majority environment. An e-mail account (pp. 287–288) by a visitor to the new pilgrimage site of Pīr-e Bardsīr in Kerman expresses unease that her women's devotional pilgrimage was constrained by the presence of male participants for reasons of social conformity as well as safety. She regrets that Muslims must be kept away from the Zoroastrian ritual, not only in order for Zoroastrians to be more relaxed in terms of head covering, social interaction between genders, and the use of music and dance, but also to retain their police dispensation to hold separate religious ceremonies.

In the third section of the book, Langer expounds his taxonomy of the shrines and his contextualization of associated religious and social activities. He presents the shrines by region, including the name of the shrine; its geographical and topographical location; a description of the architectural features and material condition of the exterior and interior; the personnel connected with the site; its management and funding. This physical analysis is supplemented with textual and oral sources providing details of the historical development and devotional legends associated with the shrine. This book contains the first detailed analysis

of the modern inscriptions affixed on the buildings of shrine complexes. The few Western academics (viz. Mary Boyce and Michael M.J. Fischer) and Iranian researchers who focused in this field in the 1960s and 70s – all of whom Langer acknowledges as stimulating his own work – paid scant attention to these inscriptions as a significant source of information.

For those whose grasp of German is basic, but who are keen to use this book as a source, this documentation of the shrines is the easiest part to access, and the most useful in providing a practical guide to locating and describing Zoroastrian places of lay worship outside the fire temples. The metropolis of Tehran, where most Zoroastrians live, has relatively few ‘holy places’ (Langer identifies five), but in Yazd I discovered that one can spend several hours in a taxi (even one driven by a Yazdi Zoroastrian!), searching for a particular shrine location. I am grateful now to have recourse to both the map references and to the wealth of detailed information provided in Langer’s book.

Jenny Rose
 Claremont Graduate University (USA)
 E-mail: kali5@earthlink.net
 © 2011, Jenny Rose

Homosexuality and the Crisis of Anglicanism, by William Sachs, Cambridge University Press: New York, 2009, x + 256pp. ISBN 978 0 521 85120 6, US\$90 (hbk)

It is no secret or exaggeration that the Anglican Communion, and the Episcopal Church in the United States of America (ECUSA) *a fortiori*, is experiencing a crisis due to homosexuality. The association of 44 autonomous national churches stemming from the former British Empire is in danger of fracturing over the increasing tolerance of homosexuality in church life in Western liberal nations, which is unacceptable to African and Asian Anglicans of the ‘global south’. The vestiges of colonialism, economic disparity, intractable cultural differences, instant global communication networks and membership decline in the global north contrasted with dramatic growth in the global south, all exacerbate the rift. This book examines all of these issues, and more, in an attempt to understand the causes of the current crisis.

For the uninitiated, a brief review of Anglican troubles: In 2003 an ECUSA diocese consecrated a practicing homosexual bishop, V. Gene Robinson, an action met with vocal minority protest at the ceremony, the public regret of the Archbishop of Canterbury (the honorific head of worldwide Anglicanism), and the strong condemnation of scores of bishops worldwide. Earlier a Canadian diocese had authorized the blessing of same-sex unions. The following year the a group commissioned by Archbishop of Canterbury to study the situation and make recommendations on how to handle the disagreements, published its results in the Windsor Report, which advised a moratorium on such actions in future (angering progressives), but stopped short of calling for discipline for ECUSA and/or the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) (angering traditionalists). Subsequently some ECUSA and ACC dioceses continued to develop rites of