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Source: *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol. 30, No. 1, Fiftieth Anniversary Volume (1967), pp. 30–44

Published by: Cambridge University Press on behalf of School of Oriental and African Studies

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/611813>

Accessed: 13-09-2016 07:22 UTC

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# BĪBĪ SHAHRBĀNŪ AND THE LADY OF PĀRS

By MARY BOYCE

Interest in the Zoroastrian religion is widespread among scholars, and knowledge of Zoroastrian practice has been diligently acquired. The main source of information has, however, been the Indian branch of the community; and a number of evidently ancient customs observed in the Persian homeland have passed almost, and sometimes indeed entirely, unnoticed in the West. Among these is the cult of shrine and pilgrimage, which hardly exists among the Parsis, but is a very important element in the lives of Persian Zoroastrians.<sup>1</sup> Each Zoroastrian village in the plain of Yazd has its small shrines to different *yazatas*, most commonly to Mihr, Vahrām, Srōš, and Aštād. These are ordinarily known only to the villagers who make their regular devotions there. As well, there are five great sanctuaries in the mountains which fringe the Yazdī plain, and these are the goal of general pilgrimage for the whole community. So deeply are these mountain shrines venerated that one reason I heard given by Zoroastrians for their survival in Yazd was that they had been preserved there 'for the sake of those in the hills', that is, to serve these holy places.

A study of the Zoroastrian cult of these shrines is not without complexity. In the observances there the high ethical teachings of Zoroaster are certainly not forgotten; but the Yazdīs are tenacity itself, and they appear also to maintain some of the ritual of the old Iranian religion, practised in Persia before the coming of the prophet and reformed by him to a still undetermined extent. Together with such rites of unknown antiquity, there exist also certain superficial concessions, largely in terminology, made in modern times to Islam, to secure a measure of respect for these holy places and save them from desecration.

One such verbal concession is designed to obscure a fundamental difference between a Zoroastrian and a Muslim shrine. A cult of the dead existed among the heathen Arabs,<sup>2</sup> and though rejected by Muḥammad himself, it persisted into Islam, with the grave of a holy man replacing that of a warrior-hero as the object of veneration. The typical Shī'a shrine is thus the tomb of a holy person, and the great Persian pilgrimages to Mashhad and Qum are visits to sepulchres. In addition to major shrines such as these, the land is scattered with minor sanctuaries made at the tomb of some humbler holy man, the *imāmzāde* or *pīr*.

The Zoroastrians on the contrary never make a sanctuary of a grave. They have a horror of the uncleanness of a corpse, and regard the committal of one to earth as sin. Their village shrines, as has been seen, are sacred to incorporeal

<sup>1</sup> The information on which this article is based was gained during a year's study leave from the School of Oriental and African Studies, 1963-4. During most of this time I was the guest of Mr. Rustam Nōshirvān Belivānī, the very able head of the Zoroastrians of the village of Sharifābād-i Ardekān, Yazd, to whom I am deeply indebted for hospitality, friendship, and help in countless ways. With Mr. Belivānī and members of his family I went to all the major shrines mentioned here, as well as to most of the lesser village shrines.

<sup>2</sup> See I. Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, I, 229 ff.

deities, the *yazatas* who are there invoked ; but to protect them the Zoroastrians have prefixed to each dedication the word *Pīr* or ' Saint '. Thus one has for example *Pīr-i Mihrized*, *Pīr-i Tir-u-Teštar*; and collectively the shrines are known as the *pīrān*. More strikingly still, the shrines of *Srōš* are regularly dedicated in the Yazdī villages to *Khwāja Khedr*,<sup>3</sup> and one in the city of Yazd is dedicated to *Eliath*. Both *Khedr* and *Eliath* are Muslim *rajal al-ghaib*, men who never died but who, having drunk the water of immortality, pass between this world and the next, as does *Srōš*, the messenger-god. Because these are living *pīrs*, the Zoroastrians could adopt their names without offending principle. Conversely, so rooted is the cult of the grave among Muslims, that even in their shrines to *Khwāja Khedr* there is to be found a tomb-shaped object.<sup>4</sup> If one presses an inquiry, those who have thought about it will say that *Khedr* sleeps upon this when he visits the shrine. Others, more confused, simply take the object for an actual tomb, a proper and necessary feature of a Muslim sanctuary.

A certain amount of protective assimilation to Muslim practice has thus to be allowed for in the dedication of Zoroastrian shrines. This established, let us turn to consider the dedication of the major shrines of Yazd. These are in fact six in number, since as well as the five ' in the hills ', there is one in the desert sands just to the east of the city. All are the object of regular annual pilgrimage ; and of their antiquity as sacred places there can, I think, be no doubt. On the one hand there is the tenaciousness of local tradition, on the other the remoteness of the mountain shrines and the ruggedness of the approaches. Until the present generation, the journey to each, on donkey-back, was long, tiring, and dangerous. That Zoroastrians should maintain ancient and hallowed rites at these places is comprehensible. That they should have initiated worship there during the difficult days of Islam is harder to accept.

Yet the story which is now devoutly believed of the foundation of these sanctuaries relates to the coming of Islam, and runs as follows. When the last Sasanian king, *Yazdigird III*, was fleeing from the invading Arabs, his family took refuge in the desert city of Yazd. Here their pursuers came upon them, and the queen and her children were forced to take flight again. The queen herself reached only a little way beyond the city walls before weakness overcame her, and she sank exhausted. Her children scattered and fled singly into the surrounding mountains. The Arab soldiers followed in their tracks. Each prince or princess struggled on until he or she was spent. In each case at the moment of despair the fugitive uttered a prayer to God, and for each and all of them the mountain opened, and they were taken living into the rock as their

<sup>3</sup> I owe this explanation of the dedication to Mr. *Belivāni*, and it was subsequently confirmed by *Dastur Khodādād Nēryōsangī*, the priest of *Sharifābād*. The more ignorant villagers have by now lost sight of the true Zoroastrian dedication behind the protective Muslim one. On *Khwāja Khedr* and *Eliath* see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, first ed., articles by A. J. Wensinck and M. Longworth-Dames on ' al-*Khadir* ', ' *Khwādja Khidr* ', and ' *Ilyās* '.

<sup>4</sup> As for example in the hill-side shrine to *Khwāja Khedr* near the city of *Kermānshāh*.

pursuers closed upon them. Similarly the earth of the desert had opened to receive the queen their mother.<sup>5</sup>

This legend is profoundly and devoutly believed by the Zoroastrians, for whom it holds a deep significance. It is true that Yazdigird III himself hardly bore the stamp of holiness, or even of resolution; but he was the last representative of a long line of kings believed to trace descent from Vištāspa, the first ruler on earth to adopt the Zoroastrian religion. As such he had the divine grace with him, and the tale of his children's sufferings, lonely, exhausted, and afraid, pursued by an alien and pitiless foe, embodies both the community's sorrow for the fate of their kings, and their own deep sadness as a persecuted minority, with centuries-old memories of massacre, rape, and forced conversion. Moreover, according to the legend Ōhrmazd intervened in his mercy to save his followers in the very sight of the Arab unbelievers. There is thus faith and hope in the legend also.

To a detached consideration, however, these legends appear naïve and fairly late fabrications, without historical basis. Yazdigird is known to have kept not merely his own family but also his whole enormous court with him during his protracted flight; and it was not until he reached distant Khorāsān that the Arab armies came up with him. The uniformity of the legends suggests moreover their growth through an imitative process. The story in each case is said to have been revealed by dream to some chosen person, none having survived the original pursuit to tell the tale (except of course the Arab soldiers, and they did not choose to do so). In the case of several of the shrines this revelation came in recent times, during the course it seems of the late nineteenth century. Moreover, only one shrine has a dedication that gives any support to the legend, and that is the shrine of Bānū-Pārs, the 'Lady of Pars'. Of the other mountain shrines, three appear to be known by place-names (Nārakī, Narestān, Hrišt), and one is called Pīr-i Sabz, the 'Green Saint', apparently because of the exquisite greenness of this sanctuary, set amid barren limestone rocks. The shrine to the queen mother is known as Setī Pīr. This sanctuary consists of three tiny rock-hewn cells, now well below the level of the shifting sands; and the name is popularly etymologized as the 'Threefold Saint' (Se-tā Pīr), it being said that two attendants were swallowed with the queen mother in the earth.

Not only is the shrine of Bānū-Pārs the only one whose dedication at all bears out the legend; it is also the only one for which the story has details, and some touches of realism. The sanctuary is set in the mountains to the extreme north-west of the Yazdī plain, not far from Aghdā; and the path of the fleeing princess is traced along the plain to a point a little north of the present village of Erdinjān, where, faint with thirst, she is said to have begged a drink from a peasant. He milked his cow for her, but just as the bowl was

<sup>5</sup> Details of the tradition for each individual shrine are recorded by Jamshid Soroush Soroushian in his invaluable book, the *Farhang-e Behdīnan*, ed. Manoochehr Sotoodeh, Tehran, 1956, 204 ff. (where material is also given for the chief shrines of Kermān).

full the animal kicked it from his hands, and the pursuit drawing near, the princess was forced to go on with parched throat. She turned into the mountains (the old pilgrim track is said to follow her steps) and stumbled up a dry river-bed strewn with great boulders, until at last she lost hope and uttered her despairing cry to God, who opened the rock before her. As she hastened in, a piece of her veil was caught by the closing stone; and this fragment of cloth held in the rock is said to have been visible up to 100 or 150 years ago, until the piety of pilgrims finally wore it away. Old men say their grandparents spoke of having seen it.<sup>6</sup>

Before we consider this legend further, and the shrine with which it is associated, it is necessary to take account of a very similar legend which exists about the Muslim shrine of BĪbĪ Shahrbānū, far away to the north. This shrine is set high on a hill-side looking out over the plain of the old royal city of Ray; and the popular Shī'a legend attached to it is as follows. One of the daughters of Yazdigird III, called Shahrbānū, was captured by the Arabs and taken to Madīna, where she became the wife of Ḥusayn son of 'Alī. To him she bore a son, 'Alī Zayn al-'Ābidīn, who became the fourth Shī'a Imām. After the tragedy of Karbalā' the Persian princess fled, as Ḥusayn himself had bidden her, on her dead husband's horse, and rode for her life back to Persia, with her enemies in hot pursuit. They were close upon her as she drew near Ray, and in desperation she tried to call on God; but instead of *Yāllāhu!* 'O God!' her weary tongue uttered instead *Yā kūh!* 'O mountain!', and miraculously the mountain opened before her and took her living into its rocks. A piece of her veil was caught in the stone and remained an object of veneration for centuries.

What purports to be the historical element in this legend, namely Ḥusayn's royal marriage, is a matter of some importance in Shī'a tradition, and authority for it has been sought in a number of written works. The legend concerning the shrine itself has on the whole been either ignored or piously accepted; but fairly recently a Persian scholar, Sayyid Ja'far Shahīdī, has made a penetrating study of the tradition as a whole, with special reference to the shrine at Ray.<sup>7</sup>

The recorded tradition about the mother of 'Alī Zayn al-'Ābidīn is as follows: Ibn Sa'd (d. A.D. 844) states that 'his mother was a slave-girl (*umm walad*) called Ghazāla, who, after Ḥusayn, was married to his client Zuyaid, to whom she bore 'Abdullāh ibn Zuyaid'.<sup>8</sup> Ibn Qutayba (d. A.D. 889) amplifies this slightly: 'Alī Aṣghar son of Ḥusayn is the only person through whom any descendants of Ḥusayn survive. It is said that his mother was a Sīndī woman

<sup>6</sup> A detailed account of this legend of Bānū-Pārs is given by M. M. Murzban in his enlarged edition of D. Menant's *Les Parsis*, entitled *The Parsis in India*, Bombay, 1917, I, 136-7.

<sup>7</sup> See his *Āyāt-i rōshan dar donyā-yi tārik*, Tehran, 1333/1954, chapter entitled '*Bahsī dar bāre-yi Shahrbānū*'. I am much indebted to Professor Mojtaba Minovi both for referring me to this work and for securing for me, through the kindness of the author, an offprint of the relevant chapter.

<sup>8</sup> *Ṭabaqāt*, Leyden, 1904, v, 156.

called Sulāfa, or it is said Ghazāla, who after Ḥusayn was taken to wife by Zubaid, the client of Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī. She bore to him 'Abdullāh ibn Zubaid, who is therefore of the same mother as 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn'.<sup>9</sup>

The first statement concerning 'Alī's royal parentage comes in the work of the Shī'a historian Ya'qūbī, writing at about the same time as Ibn Qutayba. Ya'qūbī states: 'Among the sons of Ḥusayn were 'Alī Akbar . . . whose mother was Laylā, daughter of Abū Murra b. 'Urwa b. Mas'ūd al-Thaqafī; and 'Alī Aṣghar, whose mother was Ḥarār, daughter of Yazdigird, whom Ḥusayn used to call Ghazāla'.<sup>10</sup>

In the *Fīraq al-Shī'a*, attributed to Nawbakhtī (first part of the tenth century A.D.), it is said that 'Alī was 'the son of an *umm walad*, whose name was Sulāfa; and before she was made captive she had been called Jehānshāh. And she was the daughter of Yazdigird . . . the last of the kings of Persia'.<sup>11</sup>

The author of the *Ta'rīkh-i Qum* (composed A.D. 988) states that the mother of the Imām 'Alī, son of Ḥusayn, was 'Shahrbānoe, daughter of Yazdigird', and that she died in giving birth to 'Alī.<sup>12</sup> He also gives a second tradition to the effect that 'Alī's mother was called Salāma (MS variant Sulāqa), but that her name was in fact Jehānshāh, daughter of Yazdigird; and that her grave is to be found beside that of her son's uncle Ḥasan at Madīna.<sup>13</sup>

There is thus some persistence of the names Sulāfa (Sulāqa) and Ghazāla for 'Alī's mother, and agreement that she was a slave by capture; but over her identity and subsequent fate the Shī'a version differs radically from the Sunnī one recorded by Ibn Sa'd and Ibn Qutayba. There exists, however, an interesting and apparently genuinely early Shī'a tradition which ingeniously unites the two. This is recorded by Ibn Babūya (d. A.D. 988) in the *'Uyun akhbār al-Riḍā*, on the authority, through three named intermediaries, of one Sahl ibn Qāsim Nōšjānī, a Persian contemporary of al-Riḍā (d. 818). Sahl is represented as relating the following story. 'Al-Riḍā said to me in Khorāsān: "I and you are kinsmen". I said: "Amīr! what is this kinship?" He declared: "At the time when 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amīr ibn Kuraiz conquered Khorāsān, he made captive two daughters of Yazdigird, son of Shahriyār, king of Persia, and sent those two to 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān. 'Uthmān gave one to Ḥasan and the other to Ḥusayn. These two women both died in childbirth. The one belonging to Ḥusayn gave birth to 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn; and 'Alī was looked after by an *umm walad* of his father's, and grew up knowing no other mother than her. Then he came to know that she was his freedwoman. People used to call her his mother and say he had given away his mother in marriage (God forbid!). He only bestowed this woman in marriage in accordance with what we have stated. The reason for it was that he had had intercourse with

<sup>9</sup> *al-Ma'ārif*, Cairo, 1935, 94.

<sup>10</sup> Ed. Houtsma, II, 293; see E. G. Browne, *Literary history of Persia*, I, 131.

<sup>11</sup> Ed. Ritter, Istanbul, 1931, 48.

<sup>12</sup> Ed. Sayyid Jelālu 'l-Dīn Tehrānī, Tehran, 1313/1934, 195, 196.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, 197.

one of his women, and went out to wash, and was met by this mother of his. He said to her: 'If you have any thoughts about this, fear God and tell me'. She said 'Yes'. Whereupon he gave her in marriage. Certain people said that 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn had given away his own mother in marriage''.<sup>14</sup>

This early Shi'a tradition actually gives support to the Sunnī one which it seeks to discredit, since in it the distasteful features of the latter are preserved, though an effort is made to explain them away. From these various testimonies it would therefore appear that the mother of 'Alī was in fact an *umm walad* of Ḥusayn's, of uncertain name and unknown (probably Sindī) parentage; that she was married again after Ḥusayn's death; and that gradually a Shi'a tradition grew up which explained away these unpalatable facts by asserting that his true mother was not she, but a Sasanian princess, who, though so exalted, died too soon to leave a mark in history. It evidently took time to establish a name for this unknown princess, and in these early sources either no name is given, or a variety of names, some Arabic, and others, which are Persian, not proper names at all, but honorifics.

The Shi'a tradition was early elaborated. Thus Kulīnī (d. A.D. 940) has 'Alī's mother brought, not before 'Uthmān, but before 'Umar, hated by the Shi'a; ignoring thereby two historical facts, one, that 'Umar died in 644, whereas 'Alī was not born till 657, the year after 'Uthmān's death; the other, that Khorāsān was conquered during the caliphate of 'Uthmān. According to Kulīnī, 'Umar sought to harm the princess, but 'Alī father of Ḥusayn intervened, and bade him let her choose for herself a husband among those assembled. She went at once to Ḥusayn. Being questioned by 'Alī, she declared her name to be Shahrbānū, whereat he replied: 'No, you are Jehānshāh'.<sup>15</sup>

This version contains the essence of the story as it is repeated in a number of subsequent works, which need not detain us here; namely that the princess was brought before 'Umar, threatened by him (usually with being sold as a slave), and rescued by 'Alī; and that she was either given by 'Alī to Ḥusayn, or herself chose Ḥusayn as husband. In none of these accounts is anything said about the ultimate fate of the princess.

Meantime the popular beliefs, which connect the princess with Ray, are to be found embodied in the *ta'ziya*, the plays performed annually in honour of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. These are not held, however, to go back earlier than the eighteenth century A.D.,<sup>16</sup> and can shed no light on how the legend came to be linked with that city.

<sup>14</sup> *Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, lith., Tehran, 1275/1858, 309. This valuable reference is given by Shahīdī, who also provides a Persian translation, according to which, however, 'Alī was popularly accused of himself marrying his own mother. I owe the translation given above to the kindness of my colleague Dr. W. N. 'Arafat, who reads the three occurrences of the word زوجه as *zawwaja* 'he gave in marriage', instead of *zuwwiya* 'he was married to'. This is plainly the correct reading in the light of the Sunnī tradition.

<sup>15</sup> *al-Kāfī*, Tehran, 1381/1962, I, 466.

<sup>16</sup> See C. Virolleaud *Le théâtre persan*, Paris, 1950, 7 f. (with bibliographical references).

A Persian scholar, 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Navā'ī, considering this problem, has suggested<sup>17</sup> that there must have been some pre-Muslim, hence Zoroastrian, shrine at Ray whose sanctity attracted this legend. This suggestion appears eminently reasonable; and it has been followed up by Bāstān Pārizī, who had previously made a study of some of the many hills, forts, and bridges in Persia which are associated with *Dukhtar* 'the Maiden'.<sup>18</sup> These, he suggested, must in many cases have had an old association with the only major goddess in the Zoroastrian pantheon, namely Ardvīsūr Anāhīd. In 1965 Pārizī published a second longer work on this subject, in which he sought among many similar identifications a connexion between this goddess and the shrine at Ray.<sup>19</sup> Such a connexion again seems very probable; and one of the cogent reasons for suggesting it lies in the name *Shahrbānū* itself, which is the one most frequently bestowed on the princess in both written and popular versions of her story. This is in fact a title rather than a name, and means 'the Lady of the Land'. It is not used, either by Zoroastrian or Muslim, as a proper name; but it is twice recorded in epic<sup>20</sup> as the title of a Parthian royal lady, and has been recently revived as the title of the present queen of Persia. In Sasanian times the equivalent for the wife of the King of kings was *bānbīšn*.<sup>21</sup> But although the term *Bānū* 'Lady' was not then used for the queen herself, it was regularly employed for the goddess Anāhīd. The fire dedicated to Anāhīd at Istakhr was called 'the fire of Anāhīd the Lady',<sup>22</sup> and in the Paikuli inscription Narseh invokes 'Ōhrmazd and all the gods, and Anāhīd who is called the Lady'.<sup>23</sup> A Sasanian gem bearing what is thought to be a representation of the goddess has beneath it simply the identification 'the Lady'.<sup>24</sup> In a Middle Persian part of the Zoroastrian liturgy the goddess Arədvī Sūrā is termed 'the Lady';<sup>25</sup> and in Zoroastrian documents of Islamic times there are references

<sup>17</sup> In the monthly journal *Ittilā'āt*, II, 9, month Azar 1328/1949 (ref. *apud* Shahīdī; the journal itself is not available in London).

<sup>18</sup> In an article in the *Majalle-yi Bāstān-shināsi*, spring 1338/1959, 1-33. (This article contains at the end some interesting material about old customs observed in the Pāriz mountains near Kermān.)

<sup>19</sup> *Khātūn-i Haft Qal'eh*, Tehran, 1344/1965, 271. In May 1965 I gave a lecture at the Royal Asiatic Society in London seeking to establish the connexion, before this publication reached me.

<sup>20</sup> According to Firdausi, *Shāhnāme*, 12e, 909, Gēw gave his sister Shahrbānū Iram in marriage to Rustam (on Gēw as a Parthian king see Nöldeke, *Das iranische Nationalepos*, second ed., 7); and in the Parthian romance of *Vis u Rāmīn* (see Minorsky, *BSOAS*, XI, 4, 1946, 741 ff., XII, 1, 1947, 20 ff., XVI, 1, 1954, 91-2), the royal mother of Vis, Shahrō, is called Shahrbānū, and also *Māh-duxt* 'princess of Media' and *Māh-i bānuvān* 'the Moon of Ladies' (see Minorsky, *BSOAS*, XI, 4, 755). This lady claimed descent from the mythical king Jamshēd, and took precedence over the 'shāh's wife' and her own husband (Minorsky, *BSOAS*, XII, 1, 30).

<sup>21</sup> See Herzfeld, *Paikuli*, p. 217, No. 636; Henning, *Sogdica*, 17-18.

<sup>22</sup> KZ, Kartir, l. 8 (Sprengling, *Third-century Iran*, 47; M.-L. Chaumont, *JA*, CCXLVIII, 3, 1960, 343): 'nxyt ZY MR'T'.

<sup>23</sup> Paikuli (Pahlavi), l. 10 (Herzfeld, 98): 'nxyt ZY MR'T' ŠM.

<sup>24</sup> Horn-Herzfeld, *Sassanidische Siegelsteine*, plate VI, No. 1621, inscribed *b'wky*; see Henning, *BSOAS*, XII, 3-4, 1948, p. 603, n. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Y 68.13, *arədvī sūrā bānū* (see Darmesteter, *Zend-Avesta*, I, 419 with n. 25).



both to 'Anāhīd the Lady'<sup>26</sup> and to 'Ardivisūr the Lady',<sup>27</sup> or 'Ardivisūr the Lady of the Waters'.<sup>28</sup>

Anāhīd was widely worshipped in ancient Iran, and her cult was prominent at court, both in late Achaemenian and in Sasanian times (evidence for the Parthian period is lacking). It is very probable therefore that the shrine at royal Ray was dedicated to her of old as 'the Lady of the Land' (sc. of Iran). She was goddess of waters and goddess of fertility; and in Islamic times at least the shrine has been approached only by women (and through a concession, by male descendants of Muḥammad), the chief of whose prayers have probably always been for husbands and for sons. Although the shrine is high on the hill-side, the link with water also exists, for there is a sacred spring at the foot of the mountain, with a magnificent mulberry growing beside it, where too petitions are offered up by pilgrims.<sup>29</sup>

There were still Zoroastrians in Ray in the tenth century A.D., but naturally long before that time Muslims predominated there. It must be supposed too that then as now the shrine drew pilgrims from far beyond the city's boundaries. Humbler converts to Islam, and those without theological learning, may be presumed to have clung to their rites at the sanctuary; but under monotheistic Islam devotions to a goddess had no place. The worship of Anāhīd became disreputable, while the story of Ḥusayn's Sasanian wife gained currency. With her, 'the Mother of the Nine Imāms', a princess of the Persian blood royal, a human figure came into existence remote enough and exalted enough to be identified with 'the Lady' of Ray. Once the identification was made, then it became necessary to forge a link between the wife of the long-dead martyr of Karbalā' and the mountain shrine where 'the Lady' was still venerated as a living presence; and so, one may suppose, the legend was shaped that brought the princess to find refuge alive in the rocks of the sanctuary. This legend, with its basic concession to Zoroastrianism, remained the popular one, as is shown in the *ta'ziya*, which continue to celebrate the 'becoming hidden' (*ghaib šodan*) of Shahrbānū.<sup>30</sup> The story of someone passing living into the hereafter is found elsewhere in Iranian tradition (notably in the story of Kai Khusrau), and was thus in keeping with Iranian thought. A similar legend was evolved among Persian Shi'a with regard to the twelfth Imām.

Naturally as Zoroastrian concepts were gradually overlaid, the shrine came

<sup>26</sup> *Saddar Bundelesh*, ch. 44, §25, in *Saddar Naṣr* and *Saddar Bundelesh*, ed. B. N. Dhabhar, Bombay, 1909, 116 (transl. by Dhabhar in *The Persian Rivayat of Hormazyar Framarz*, Bombay, 1932, 537): اناهید بانو.

<sup>27</sup> *Dārāb Hormazyār's Rivāyat*, ed. M. R. Unvala, Bombay, 1922, I, 93 (transl. Dhabhar, op. cit., 96, and cf. 304): اردویسور بانو; 219-20 (transl., 221): بانوی اردویسور; *Saddar Bundelesh*, ch. 46, §3 (Dhabhar, ed. 118, transl. 538): بانوی اردویسور امشاسفند.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, ch. 78, §11 (Dhabhar, ed. 149, transl. 559): آبان بانو اردویسور.

<sup>29</sup> A detailed description of this spring, and of the shrine itself, has been published by Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī Muṣṭafāvī in the monthly journal *Ittilā'āt*, v, 2, 1331/1952, 15 ff. (quoted in full by Shahīdī).

<sup>30</sup> See E. G. Browne, *Literary history of Persia*, I, 131.

to be regarded by many as containing the actual grave of Shahrbānū. The oldest part of the existing buildings is held to date from the tenth century A.D. —possibly, that is, from the time the shrine became a Muslim sanctuary.<sup>31</sup> The buildings were extended during the Ṣafavid period, and there were further additions under the Qājārs. In the inner sanctuary there is a tomb carved in the early fifteenth century A.D., which purports to contain the remains of the princess (something in the manner of the ‘tomb’ of Khwāja Khedr). On it is the inscription: هذه المقبرة لام المؤمنین و خیر الخواتین ستی شهر بانویه قدس الله سرها.

‘This is the tomb of the Mother of Believers, the most excellent of princesses, my Lady Shahrbānoe. May Allāh sanctify her secret!’<sup>32</sup> In the *ziyārat-nāme* of the shrine the princess is called Shahrbānū, daughter of Yazdigird, and also Shāh-Jehān ‘King of the World’, Shāh-i Zanān ‘King of Women’,<sup>33</sup> and Jehān-Bānū ‘Lady of the World’. It seems probable that these names are in fact old invocations of the goddess, which became attached to the putative daughter of Yazdigird after her story was associated with the shrine. If this is so, this association took place between the late ninth century A.D., when Ya‘qūbī wrote, and the tenth century, when one finds the titles Shahrbānū and Jehānshāh used as proper names for the princess.

When converts to Islam adopted the legend of Yazdigird’s daughter (probably in all sincerity) in order to continue their devotions at the Lady’s shrine, they must have done so the more readily because the legend created a link for them between old patriotism and the new faith. If now we turn back to the Zoroastrian shrine of Bānū-Pārs, it is to find no such compelling reasons for the adoption of a similar legend there. Yet the likeness between the two legends is so close that a dependence of one upon the other must be assumed. This being so, it is reasonable to suppose that the basic legend, which furnished the prototype, is the one evolved under the pressure of new doctrines at Ray.

On the other hand, in the case of the Yazdī shrine the evidence is even stronger for believing that it too was dedicated originally to Anāhīd, goddess of the waters. The shrine is set, not high in the mountains, but on a rocky platform a few feet above a river-bed, at a place which in times of rain becomes a tremendous watersmeet. The sacred rock is beside the highest of three confluent river-courses, where flood-water comes pouring down from an upper mountain basin to the west, through a narrow gorge. Just below the shrine two other river-courses meet, from north and south, and the water of all three

<sup>31</sup> For a detailed archaeological description of the sanctuary see Muṣṭafavī, loc. cit., and also in *Guzārishhā-yi Bāstān-shināsi*, III (Tehran), 1334/1955, 254–305. The celebrated set of medieval silks excavated in 1925 at ‘Bibi Shahrbānū’ (Pope, *Survey of Persian art*, III, 1998) was in fact discovered in a group of tombs some 2 km. to the south-west of the sanctuary; see Gaston Wiet, ‘Soieries persanes’, in *Mémoires présentés à l’Institut d’Égypte*, LII, 1947, 9.

<sup>32</sup> This inscription is reproduced by Muṣṭafavī in the works cited above.

<sup>33</sup> The title *Shāh-i Zanān* is recorded by Ṭabarī as an honorific for the Sasanian queen Bōrān, who ruled in her own right, A.D. 630–1; see Nöldeke, *Ṭabarī*, p. 399, n.

confluents rushes down to join a fourth, flowing in again from the south. A great mountain ridge then blocks their path, and the combined torrent, racing eastward, is forced to swing north and so churn its way round this barrier out on to the plain. The setting is a superb one for an altar to a water-deity. Those who have seen the rivers in spate say that both sight and sound is tremendous; and even when the river-beds are dry, their deep boulder-strewn courses bear witness to the abundance and force of the water that seasonally flows through them. The mountain to the east shuts in the four river valleys, framing the sacred area; and around the sacrificial rock itself, on the hill-side and along the opposite cliff above the river-bed, there is room for a great congregation. Although all the mountains round Yazd have deep *sailāb* channels cut in them, I saw nowhere a more striking confluence of rivers, or a place that so lent itself to worship of a water-goddess. There is moreover a living spring that rises to the west of the shrine, whose waters are led down beside the river-bed to form a constant pool above the sanctuary.

It may be assumed therefore that the shrine of Bānū-Pārs is an ancient shrine to Anāhīd of the Waters, dedicated, since Yazd 'lies on the skirt of the land of Pārs',<sup>34</sup> to her as the Lady of that region. There is still living evidence for the cult of the goddess there in the fact that among the Zoroastrians Āb-Nāhīd '(A)nāhīd of the Waters' is a popular girl's name,<sup>35</sup> which still occurs frequently, in its current form Ōw-Nahīr, in the villages near Bānū-Pārs. The Zoroastrian *Rivāyāt*, with their references to the Lady Anāhīd and the Lady Ardvisūr of the Waters,<sup>36</sup> show that this name must have kept its significance still in the seventeenth century; but by now this is forgotten, and neither of the goddess's two names means anything any longer to the local Zoroastrians, who recite her *yašt* as a hymn to the waters only. This is at first sight strange, since the other great *yazatas* are remembered; but the explanation lies possibly in Anāhīd's shrine having been taken from her, and assigned to a mythical 'real' princess, who is celebrated in her stead. The question remains, why without change of faith did the Zoroastrians adopt the legend of this princess? The answer must naturally be speculative, and it is probable that several factors are involved. There can be no doubt that the priests of Anāhīd's shrine in Pārs learnt of the legend adopted for Anāhīd's old shrine at Ray. They lacked, even more than their Muslim contemporaries, the means of assessing its historical validity; and it must have held a powerful attraction for them, since they had still greater cause than their apostate fellow-countrymen to mourn the downfall of the Sasanians. One must suppose, therefore, that conviction gradually grew as to the historical identity of the Lady whose shrine they served; and that a story came to be evolved for her in turn, with this difference that in it the Muslim Arabs in general represent the powers of evil, and not merely the Umayyads.

<sup>34</sup> *Dārūb Hormazyār's Rivāyāt*, II, 452, transl., 614.

<sup>35</sup> See Sorushian, *Farhang-e Behdīnan*, 201, s.v.

<sup>36</sup> See above, p. 37, nn. 26-28.

It is probable moreover that Muslim pressures were exerted which quickened the inclination to believe such a legend. Sturdily though they there held by their ancient faith, the Zoroastrians were by the tenth century a minority even in Pārs, and could not be wholly impervious to influences from the Muslim majority. A powerful weapon in the Muslim armoury has been, and still is, mockery; and once the cult of the saint's grave was implanted in Persia, the altars of Zoroastrianism must have become a target for scorn—empty places, impersonal, without particular historical association. This legend provides just such an association, without bringing in the actual cult, so abhorred by Zoroastrians, of a grave.

This factor, together with the deep poignancy of the legend for the Zoroastrians, probably explains why the story of the Sasanian princess was adopted for Bānū-Pārs. When this took place cannot be precisely determined. If it is accepted that the prototype-legend was associated with the shrine at Ray in the early tenth century, this provides a *post quem* date; and it is probable that the one attaching to Bānū-Pārs was evolved not many generations later. There is no evidence concerning the shrine, however, until A.D. 1626, when the Zoroastrian priests of Turkābād, a village not far from Bānū-Pārs, wrote to their co-religionists in India to tell them that an Indian layman, a messenger from the Parsis, was staying with them, and that among other observances he had 'rendered homage to Khātūn-Bānū-Pārs, which is a place of pilgrimage'.<sup>37</sup> Khātūn is the name given the daughter of Yazdigird in the legend of the shrine. It is used on occasion by priests, and appears in the *ziyārat-nāme* of the sanctuary; but I never heard it replace Bānū-Pārs (or rather, Bōnū-Pōrs) in popular use. Its occurrence in the early seventeenth century appears reasonable evidence for the existence of the legend then. However, it may be objected that since Khātūn is simply a rendering of Bānū, the name cannot by itself be taken as proof positive of this. For such proof we have to wait till A.D. 1854, the year when Manekji Limji Hataria, the first emissary of the Parsis, came to Persia.<sup>38</sup>

Hataria found the legend of a fugitive princess attached not only to Bānū-Pārs itself, but also to Pīr-i Sabz,<sup>39</sup> a shrine in the mountains to the east of the Yazdī plain. This shrine is perhaps the most beautiful and beloved of all the Zoroastrian sanctuaries. Like that of Shahrbānū, it is set high on a hill-side facing south. The sacred rock is beside a little pool of sweet water, fed by a spring which flows, it seems miraculously, out of bare rock high above it. The water trickles down and splashes into the pool, where fat black fishes

<sup>37</sup> *Dārāb Hormazyār's Rivāyat*, II, p. 159, l. 3: خدمت خاتون بانو پارس که زیارت گاهست هم کرد; Dhabhar, transl., 593.

<sup>38</sup> Hataria's reports to the Parsi community were written in Gujarati, but use has been made of them by Parsis writing in English. I am much indebted to Ervad Dr. P. K. Anklesaria for giving me a copy of an English translation he has had made of Hataria's account of his early years of work, published as *Ezhāre šyāte Īrān*, Bombay, A.Y. 1234/A.D. 1865.

<sup>39</sup> See Hataria, op. cit., ch. xiv; and Murzban, *The Parsis in India*, I, 136.

swim. The course of the waterfall is green with clinging plants, and the pool and sacred rock are shaded by a huge old plane tree, said to have grown from a stick with which the princess supported her steps, which she thrust into the ground as she entered the rock. Even in the burning heat of high summer, when the mountain-side is oven-hot, the shrine is cool and green with its trees and falling water. The princess in its legend has received the name Ḥayāt Bānū 'the Lady of Life'; and it is possible that this shrine too is one originally dedicated to Anāhīd, in her aspect of goddess of fertility, and that it therefore early attracted the princess-legend.<sup>40</sup> It is certainly not the case that the legend of the princess was simply imitated mechanically from Bānū-Pārs to the next nearest shrines, regardless of their original dedication; for between Bānū-Pārs and Pīr-i Sabz (which are two long days' donkey-ride apart) lies the much-loved shrine of Hrišt, and this had evidently no such legend attached to it in Hataria's day. Indeed so little currency has the legend of a royal fugitive gained there even by now that I have spoken at the shrine with a pious but ill-instructed *malatī* (a citizen of Yazd itself), who knew nothing of the story, but was simply making his pilgrimage as to a holy place. Hrišt is entirely lacking in water (in the old days at times of pilgrimage water was carried there on camel-back), and hence presumably in any link with Anāhīd. At Nārakī and Narestān likewise confused discussion may be heard among pilgrims about details of the shrines' legends; whereas every Yazdī Zoroastrian knows the legends of the princesses of Bānū-Pārs and Pīr-i Sabz.

It seems therefore that the legends of these two shrines are the oldest within the Zoroastrian sphere, the legend of Bānū-Pārs having been early

<sup>40</sup> Once the legends of Shahr-bānū/Khātūn Bānū were evolved for the two great shrines, they seem to have inspired through euhemerism a number of imitative legends at scattered lesser shrines, probably also dedicated to Anāhīd. Thus, e.g., H. Rawlinson, *J. Royal Geographical Soc. of London*, ix, 1839, 32-3, describes a deep gorge near the stronghold of Sasanian Holwān, through which flows a stream of the only sweet drinking water over a wide area. Low down this gorge 'there is a natural double cave in the rock, very difficult of access, which is called the Haramkhānah of Shahr-bānū, the daughter of Yazdijird, who afterwards became the wife of the Imām Hasan [*sic*]; it is a curious place, and looks like the grotto of a hermit'. In the Harm district of Fārs, not so very far from Yazd, Edward Strack came across a naïve legend which is a rough inversion of the Zoroastrian one; see his *Six months in Persia*, I, London, 1882, 119. According to this, at the time of the Arab invasions, a certain Zoroastrian, Shāh Kāran, was besieged at Karyun by 12,000 Arabs; and sallying out of the fort while they were at their prayers (which they would not leave), he slew them all. There were 40 virgins in the camp, who prayed to Allah for deliverance from him. The earth duly opened and swallowed 37 of them. The remaining three fled, pursued by him and his men. One turned to the mountains to the north and was nearly captured, when a cave opened in the mountain-side and she ran in and disappeared. 'The cave is called The Ghar Bibi, or Lady's Cave, to this day, and is well known to have no end.' Another of the maidens also disappeared into the mountain-side 'and water has trickled from the cleft ever since'. The third is said to have died of exhaustion on the mountains to the south. 'Her shrine, called that of the Bibi darmānda, or Tired-out Lady, is a famous place of prayer for childless wives.' Strack also records (*op. cit.*, 227-8) that at one place in the Zarand district, between Kermān and Bafk 'a solitary hill breaks the evenness of the plain. It is about 400 feet high, and has a shrine at the top, sacred to one Hayat Bibi, or Lady of Life, of whose history I was not able to discover anything'.

imitated for Pīr-i Sabz because this too was a shrine of Anāhīd. (The legend of Bānū-Pārs must be allowed priority, because of its closer resemblance to that of Shahrbānū. The dedication of this shrine suggests moreover its greater importance.) The legends of Hrišt (a wedded princess with her infant), Nārakī (a wedded princess), Narestān (a prince or princes), and Setī Pīr (the queen mother) all appear late nineteenth century (i.e. post-Hataria) extensions of the original legends, evolved during the time of literacy. Education had been forbidden for Zoroastrians, and in general only their priests and a few of the more prosperous behdīn families had been able to maintain some degree of traditional learning. By the time schools came to be permitted them (through Parsi influence and active help), and literacy spread, a need was probably felt to supply dedications for the sanctuaries which lacked them,<sup>41</sup> and legends were duly evolved, and a *ziyārat-nāme* was written for each shrine, in Muslim style, for all to read. These more recently-evolved legends do not, however, command the same profound acceptance as those of Bānū-Pārs and Pīr-i Sabz, though the devotion to the shrines themselves is as deep.

Hataria had a particular concern with the shrine of Bānū-Pārs. As a Parsi he had an abhorrence, learnt from the Hindus, of killing a cow; and he was much distressed by the annual sacrifice of cows that took place there, a custom which he succeeded eventually in ending. Animal sacrifice was (and still is) performed at all the mountain shrines; but it was only at Bānū-Pārs that the costly offering of a cow was made even in the days of bitter poverty under Islam. The flesh of the cow was not, according to Hataria, eaten, but was given to Muslims (whereby not only his piety, but also his sense of thrift was offended).<sup>42</sup> Animal sacrifice to Anāhīd, of '100 horses, 1,000 cows, 10,000 sheep' is repeatedly attested in the Zoroastrian hymn to this deity. This is a

<sup>41</sup> It is very probable that some of these shrines were simply places where worshippers went up to sacrifice 'to Ōhrmazd and all the gods', and that no one deity had ever been associated with them.

<sup>42</sup> See op. cit., ch. xiv. P. M. Sykes, *Ten thousand miles in Persia*, London, 1902, 156, corroborates Hataria's statement in a brief account based on what he heard in Aghdā. He says that Zoroastrians paid for the cows, but that Muslims killed them and ate the flesh. This statement, based on Muslim reports some years after the custom had ceased (Hataria died in 1890), must in part be discounted, however. No Zoroastrian would conceivably offer a sacrifice by the hand of an unbeliever. Muslim beggars and poor people fairly regularly present themselves, however, at Zoroastrian religious occasions for a dole of food. I questioned a number of the older people of Sharifābād (which is near Bānū-Pārs) about the cow sacrifice. The fact of this sacrifice is well known; and more than one person said that the cows had been killed in the usual way (that is, by the sacrificing priest). This fits with Hataria's remark (loc. cit.) that 'the mobeds helped in this work'. As for the flesh, the Sharifābādīs thought, but rather vaguely, that this had been disposed of also in the usual fashion, that is, part of it eaten by those who made the offering, part distributed in charity. Nearly 100 years have elapsed, however, since the custom ceased; and Hataria's evidence is perhaps to be preferred, as that of a good contemporary witness. The possibility cannot, however, be excluded that the Yazdīs, who were deeply grateful to him, sought to mitigate the wrongness of the sacrifice in his eyes by giving away wholly in charity what had previously been consumed in part at least by members of the community themselves. It should perhaps be stressed that the general term 'cow' (*gāv*) includes 'bull'. Male or female animals were sacrificed, as circumstances dictated.

general formula ; but a passage in Plutarch suggests that cows were in fact particularly sacrificed to Anāhīd, since it is said that in Armenia, where her worship was strong, great herds of cows were kept which were dedicated to the goddess.<sup>43</sup> In the late Avestan text, the *Nīrangistān*, a cow is sacrificed beside (and presumably to) the waters.<sup>44</sup> As a fact of ritual the cow sacrifice is accommodated in the legend of Khātūn Bānū, since it is said to be an annual punishment for the act of the cow that kicked away the bowl of milk before the princess could drink.

The lesser sacrifice of sheep and goats is still offered annually at Bānū-Pars ; and similar sacrifices are made also at Bibī Shahrbānū, where a gravestone just outside the precinct serves as the place of slaughter. The Zoroastrians likewise never kill an animal within the actual sanctuary ; but in their ritual the living animal, its horns bedecked, is led or carried to the sound of music seven times widdershins around the sacred rock, while herbs and sweetmeats are strewn before it. It is very probable that these rites are pre-Zoroastrian in origin, since the prophet was concerned with the sacrifice of an upright heart rather than with tangible offerings. There is no clear evidence to show that he sought to end such sacrifices ;<sup>45</sup> but it is wholly unlikely that he instituted them.

It seems probable, moreover, that in pre-Muslim times there were no buildings at all at the Zoroastrian mountain shrines, but simply bare rock, according to the ancient Persian custom described by Herodotus.<sup>46</sup> Under Islam, until the position of the Zoroastrians began to improve at the end of the last century, all that stood by way of a building at each place was a tiny mud-brick cell, domed, without door or window, entered by an aperture so low that one had to stoop to creep through it. No trace of older masonry is to be seen. These little cells were erected, I think, both to screen the sacred rock from impious eyes, and to create an appearance in keeping with the Muslim concept of a shrine. The humble little buildings were probably all that Zoroastrian poverty could erect, or Muslim dominance allow. All the shrines have now been enlarged, and the present buildings at Bānū-Pārs, begun in 1962, are not quite finished yet. Although they are now considerably larger

<sup>43</sup> Plutarch, *Lucullus*, 24.

<sup>44</sup> See A. Waag, *Nīrangistān*, Leipzig, 1941, ch. lxx–lxxi, p. 81. According to the Pahlavi text *Šāyist-nē-šāyist*, xi, 4 (ed. Davar, p. 59 ; transl. West, SBE, v, 336) the goddess partakes also of the commoner sacrifice of a gōspand, receiving the right shoulder.

<sup>45</sup> See *JRAS*, 1966, 3–4, p. 110 with n. 3. Some blood-sacrifices were still made by Parsis down to the present century, see *ibid.*, pp. 105–6 ; and it is noteworthy that it was only the sacrifice of a cow which shocked Hataria. He made no attempt to end the much more general offerings of sheep, goats, and hens.

<sup>46</sup> ‘Histories’, I, 131 : ‘It is not their custom to make and set up statues and temples and altars . . . but . . . they offer sacrifices on the highest peaks of the mountains’. The sacred rocks of the Yazdī shrines are undressed, irregular, natural stone. They are not, it is true, at the very ‘highest peaks’, but to ascend these in Iran one would need to be a trained mountaineer, unencumbered by sacrificial offerings. There is likewise, N.B., no trace of a pre-Islamic building at the shrine of Bibī Shahrbānū ; see above, pp. 37–8.

than the tiny original cell, they are still dwarfed by the overwhelming grandeur of the encircling mountains.<sup>47</sup>

One of the great differences between Zoroastrian and Muslim practice is that Muslims, men and women, go sadly to their shrines, regarding sorrow as a decent offering to God; whereas to the Zoroastrian grief is a creation of the devil, and tears serve only to strengthen his power. It is difficult to remain long within the shrine of Bībī Shahrbānū, one's ears are so assailed by the wailing and lamentations of the black-shrouded women gathered there; whereas at Bānū-Pārs, though the pilgrims think as they approach of the fugitive princess, and express their pity and grief for her, yet once they are at the shrine itself, they rejoice whole-heartedly. I made my own first visit there in spring, when pilgrims in bright New Year clothes were strewing sprays of white almond-blossom on the sacred rock. After prayer and sacrifice there was feasting and wine, with music, song, and dancing, far into the moonlit night. As the doggerel pilgrim-song has it: 'Joyfully we came to this house of joy; joyful we have been, in joy we ate, joyful we are. Joyful and merry we depart' (*Mā dar īn manzel- i šād, šād āmadīm. Šād būdīm, šād khordīm, šād hastīm. Šād u khorram mīravīm*).<sup>48</sup> Thus it is in diverse ways, here sorrowful, there rejoicing, that Muslim and Zoroastrian alike still offer devotion and sacrifice at these two ancient altars of the Lady.

<sup>47</sup> At Hrišt, Nārakī, and Narestān the tiny old cells have been incorporated, with minor modifications, in the new buildings. The shrine of Pīr-i Sabz has not been much enlarged because of its position, clinging like a beehive to the mountain-face. At Bānū-Pārs the old cell has been swept away entirely; but the building and its dimensions were fully described to me by those who remembered it.

<sup>48</sup> Although the Yazdī Zoroastrians, rich and poor alike, still invariably speak among themselves in their own language, commonly called Gabrī, I never heard them sing even work-songs in anything but standard Persian. Soroushian (op. cit., 203) gives, however, some *bayt* in Kermānī Gabrī. In Kermān, Gabrī is now used only by some of the older people among themselves, and is not even understood by the rest. The only times I heard Zoroastrians speaking Persian among themselves in Yazd were when there was a Kermānī in their company.