

MORONY'S VIEWS VERSUS RUSSELL'S ON THE SASANIAN CLERGY

Dr. Kersey Antia, Oct 11, 2019; updated Nov 10, 2019

Countering Michael Morony's views about Madjus, the Sasanian clergy, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, James Russell comments (*The Journal of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute*, No. 53, Bombay, 1986, p. 137-8): Nothing suggests that the country was priest-ridden, or that the Magi were the mere supporters of a cruel plutocracy, or, indeed, that the latter were the only laity in the land. Such a mistaken view forces Morony later in his article to postulate reforms rather than to recognize continuity, when evidence of Zoroastrian life after the Muslim conquest goes against his views on the earlier period. Thus, the high-priesthood of the *Hudenan peshobay* in 9th century Pars he calls 're-established', although it traced its descent to the fourth-century Adurbad I Amahrasandan. (Unfortunately this tendency is evinced by almost all historians.) He regards the *andarz* literature of the ninth-century books as a Zoroastrian accommodation to its modest, often straitened situation under Islam, but such moral tales in fact reflect the conditions of Sasanian life, and are usually attributed to Sasanian clerics. The *andarz* texts have close parallels among other peoples who did not share the conditions of post-Sasanian Zoroastrians. Zoroastrian pious foundations are attributed to the influence of the Islamic *waqf*, but, whatever mutual contacts may have existed to modify the Zoroastrian system at a later date, and they are so slight as to be negligible, the Mazdean communal charities probably belong to the early days of the Iranian state, if not of the Good Religion itself. For veneration of the *fravashihs* at yearly feasts, and special foundations in the memory of kings, go back to hoary antiquity. One recalls the sacrifices for Cyrus at Pasargadae, for instance. The *waqf*, as Perikhanian demonstrates in VDI, 1973, belongs to what Frye called 'the Iranian conquest of Islam'. Morony finds even the invocation *pad nam i yazdan* a twelfth-century calque on the expression *bismillah*, but P. Gignoux has more convincingly argued precisely the opposite, that the Islamic expression is pre-dated by the Iranian, upon which it is most likely based (see Gignoux in *Pad Nam i Yazdan Travaux de l'Institute d'Etudes Iraniennes*, Paris, 9, pp. 159-63)."