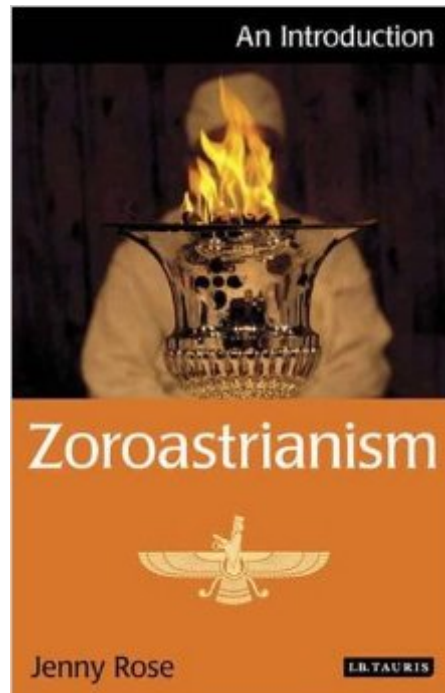


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Zoroastrianism: An Introduction (I.B.Tauris Introductions To Religion)



Synopsis

Zoroastrianism is one of the world's great ancient religions. In present-day Iran, significant communities of Zoroastrians (who take their name from the founder of the faith, the remarkable religious reformer Zoroaster) still practice the rituals and teach the moral precepts that once undergirded the officially state-sanctioned faith of the mighty Sasanian empire. Beyond Iran, the Zoroastrian diaspora is significant especially in India, where the Gujarati-speaking community of exiles from post-Sasanian Iran call themselves "Parsis." But there are also significant Zoroastrian communities to be found elsewhere, such as in the USA, Britain, and Canada, where western cultural contexts have shaped the religion in intriguing ways and directions. This new, thorough and wide-ranging introduction will appeal to anyone interested in discovering more about the faith that bequeathed the contrasting words "Magi" and "magic," and whose adherents still live according to the code of "Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds." The central Zoroastrian concept that human beings are continually faced with a choice between the path of "good" and "evil," represented by the contrasting figures of Ahura Mazda and Ahriman, inspired thinkers as diverse as Voltaire, Mozart, and Nietzsche. Jenny Rose shows why Zoroastrianism remains one of the world's most inspiring and perennially fascinating systems of ethics and belief.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I got this book hoping for an deeper understanding of ancient Zoroastrianism. While the work

touches on this, it was rather light on the early history of this religion. As an overview of a 2500 year tradition, this book is very successful. It covers it from its origins to the present-day. However, the focus of the book is changes in practice which are relevant to modern day believers in this ancient religion. I walked away from this book with a few new bits of trivia (some modern practitioners use ephedra for haoma), but with no real insights into how this religion fit into the milieu of the ancient world. While this provided (for me) few insights into pre-Islamic Zoroastrianism in the larger Mesopotamian world, it does recount the evolution of one of world's oldest living religious traditions.

Jenny Rose's book is in my view exceptional. I as a layman, first developed an interest in Zoroastrianism 20 years ago and I started out with an over simplified concept of one man at one time who had some important ideas the development of which moved in a steady linear progression. This author, however, has illustrated with great clarity how the ideas of this religion developed in a multitude of different ways in different places, times and circumstances. Without ever losing her grasp of the overall theme, Rose is always diligent in tying her synthesis to the available evidence. Her commentary on the religion in Central Asia was particularly illuminating (at least for me). Two minor quibbles. Occasionally Rose slips into un-necessary academic jargon when simple Anglo-Saxon would do the job more efficiently. One of her academic reviewers described her English as beautiful. It ain't; it's accurate, even good, but might have benefited from a non-academic edit prior to publishing. Secondly, better use might have been made of better maps though I understand they would add to costs. I repeat, minor quibbles. I would give 6 stars to this book if I could. It really is that good.

An excellent introduction to the complex historical development of Zoroastrianism. A must-read for anyone interested in the religion as it developed over the three-and-a-half millennia of its existence and is today.

The good news is that this book provides a wealth of information about Zoroastrianism--including its history and development. Unfortunately, I found the writing and style of the book to be rather dense and dull. In fact, the writing style somewhat distracted from the good information that the book contained, which actually wound up distracting me to the point that I had a hard time retaining the information that the book provided! Therefore, as a resource this book is really good. But, if you are looking to read a book that can educate you (and introduce you) to Zoroastrianism, I'd have to say look else. This book was just too dense to really get into or appreciate.

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