

WERE THE ACHAEMENIANS ZOROASTRIAN? — INSLER'S VIEWS

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Nov 17, 2018; updated Dec 28, 2018

Relying on his understanding and interpretation of the Gathas, Stanley Insler too maintains that the Achaemenian kings were Zoroastrian, as reported in the *Jam-e-Jamshed Weekly* (May 28, 2000, p. 14). Insler maintains “The *Vanguhi Daena*, the Good Religion, became not a Mystical Vision but a Body Of Laws relating the world of Man and the Cosmos: as there is a Right Order in Heaven, so shall it be here on earth. The follower of Truth—its possessor, is an Ashavan opposed to Deceit.

From there on it was a natural step for the Zoroastrian Achaemenian Emperors Darius I and Xerxes I to follow exclusively the worship of Ahura Mazda. In their inscriptions was the impress of Gathic teaching, Darius was the upholder of Truth, the enemy of deceit; he was not hostile, nor deceitful nor did he wrong the weak. Xerxes prays that he may be happy when alive and blessed when dead for he had observed Ahura Mazda's laws (= the Good Religion) and worshipped with Truth and reverence. In response to a subsequent question concerning Darius I's moral pronouncements, Professor Insler considered these to stem not from the Babylonian Hammurabi's Code but from Zarathushtra's Gathic Teaching. It became very evident that Insler did not side with those who believed the early Achaemenian Emperors not to be Zoroastrians!

“The Good Rule of Ahura Mazda can be realized here on earth through the exercise of Truth and Good Thinking. The inter-relationship of Truth and Good thinking is made clear when it is known that one cannot comprehend Truth without understanding it. They are the products of Ahura Mazda's wisdom. With Aramati/Armaiti, often qualified as Spenta – Beneficial or Salutary, Khshathra is interlocking where Armaiti is loyalty. Once more Darius I's inscription was invoked: through the exercise of his authority, this emperor rewarded the loyal man. This, in view of such a conspicuous correspondence and similarity of the Achaemenian governing principles and ideology with the Gathic precepts leave little doubt that the Achaemenians were essentially Zoroastrian, even closer to the spirit of the Gathic teachings of Zarathustra than the later adherents of Zarathustra, especially as no one other than Zarathustra is known to have taught the kind of ideology reflected in the Achaemenian inscriptions and governing principles.