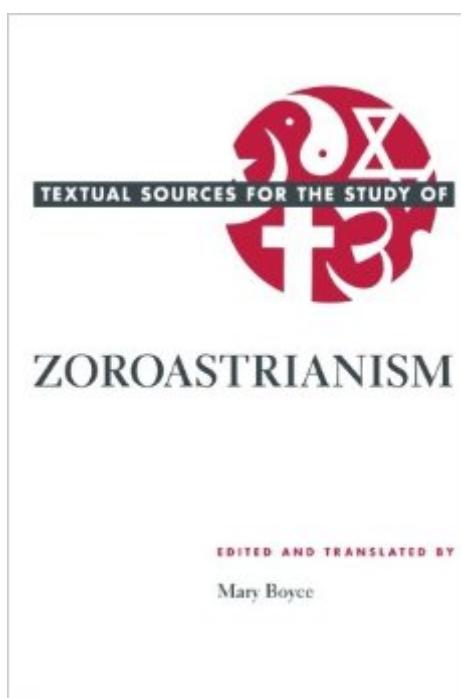


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Textual Sources For The Study Of Zoroastrianism (Textual Sources For The Study Of Religion)



Synopsis

"Boyce is a, perhaps the, world authority on Zoroastrianism. . . . Prefaced by a 27-page introduction, this anthology contains selections which offer a complete picture of Zoroastrian belief, worship and practice. There are historical texts from the sixth century B.C. onwards, and extracts from modern Zoroastrian writings representing traditionalism, occultism and reformist opinion. Anyone wishing to know more about this 'least well known of the world religions' should sample these selections."â "The Methodist Church"Wide-ranging. . . . An indispensable one-volume collection of primary materials."â "William R. Darrow, Religious Studies Review

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Customer Reviews

This book is a real gem as is the whole series. Series editor John Hinnels, himself an expert on Zoroastrianism he wrote Zorastrians in Britain, has done a good job of getting many experts to put together the most important sources on the world religions. In this one Mary Boyce, the authority on Zoroastrianism and Professor emeritus at the University of London gives us some basic sources. Anyone studying Zoroastrianism knows that new editions of the primary sources dont come out very often. This book contains only selections of the Avesta, Vendidad and other works unfortunately. However, it does contain many other sources including works from Herodotus, Strabo and my personal favorite a newspaper report of the new Atash Bahram in Bombay dated 1897. This is essential for anyone with an interest in the subject.

If you're interested in Zoroaster and the religion that came to bear his name, this book is essential reading. In it, Mary Boyce extracts and organizes texts from the now-(I gather)-degenerate form the Avesta has taken in the centuries since the religion became marginalized by Muslim conquest, into a comprehensible, rational sequence covering the the entire history of the religion. The translations are clear. The only caveat I have is her justification of a late Bronze Age date for the time of Zoroaster's life. Other than the archaic language of the Gathas and the simplicity of the society presupposed in the text, she offers no evidence, archaeological or otherwise, for the preservation, transmission, and flowering, in the later Persian empire, of Zoroaster's singular viewpoint. She requires a huge leap of faith the reasonable reader shouldn't have to make. For this reason, William Malandra's "Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion" is a valuable companion and counterpoint. When reading about archaic language and viewpoints, it's good to keep in mind our own experience with King James English and pastoral religious imagery, in a society where people speak modern English and have never seen shepherds or sheep!

If you are interested in the pure message of Zoroaster, this and many other interpretations of the religion are misleading. They deal generally with the traditional aspect of the religion as we know it today, which is really a mixture of many religious philosophies and practices which appeared before and after Zoroaster, such as Mithraism, Maniism, Mazdakism, Christianity which itself has derived many of it's traditions and concepts like Christmas, "son of god", Easter, etc. from Mithraism and other Iranian religions. We can conclude that Zoroastrianism in Iran stayed true to Zoroaster's message only through the Achaemenid dynasty, ended by Alexander's invasion of Iran around 300 BC. One major contributor was Alexander's destruction of the royal library at Persepolis which contained the only written text on Zoroastrianism. After 70 years of Macedonian rule, the Parthians (Iranian dynasty) started recollecting as much as they could to go back to their Zoroastrian roots, but they were not able to separate the true Zoroastrianism from other competing religions of the time. The truth about Zoroaster's brilliant and thought provoking message lies in the 17 simple chapters of Gatha, which is the only direct work of Zoroaster, in existence. His message was about human individuality, equality, truth, unification with the natural order, morality and, in fact, anti organized religion, which he viewed as root of greed and wrong doing in the world around him. So after reading this and other books about Zoroaster and Zoroastrianism, please pick up the Gatha of Zoroaster and read it. It is available in many languages on-line, for free. And for further understanding, refer to a book called "Zarathustra" by Jalaledin Ashtiani.

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