Intermountain West Journal of Religious Studies

Volume 11
Number 1 *Fall 2021*

Article 6

10-26-2021

Food and Purity in Zoroastrianism: Then to Now

Taylor A. Nelson
University of Pennsylvania

Taylor Nelson will graduate with honors from the University of Pennsylvania with a degree in Middle Eastern Studies in May 2021. He previously attended the United States Military Academy.

Taylor A Nelson †

FOOD AND PURITY IN ZOROASTRIANISM: THEN TO NOW

INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to examine the concept of purity as it relates to food in Zoroastrianism. In the past and until today, the essence of Zoroastrian religion rests on belief in an ongoing struggle between light and dark forces within each human being. Focused on "good thoughts, good words, good deeds," Zoroastrianism has emphasized pure living, both in ancient times and today, in ways that bear upon what people eat. In terms of food, there are many examples of purity and ritual in Zoroastrianism. As one example, religious participation has required eating food cooked only by Zoroastrians. Another example is that there seems to be a demonic association with honey. On the other hand, there does not seem to be any evidence of a ban on meat or wine in religious texts. Of course, animals are of high importance to Zoroastrians, which is why some texts advise feeding animals, especially dogs, before feeding humans. Even menstruating women possess their own restrictions when it comes to food.

Through all of this, it seems that views about Zoroastrianism as a religion that must be expressed through traditional rituals continue to this today. While it may be true that various ritual practices are to be found uniquely amongst Zoroastrians, it is not necessarily true that they

† This is where you can put the author's attributions.

constitute the essential principles of being Zoroastrian. Indeed, in the modern age, many Zoroastrians affirm that they place greater emphasis on morality rather than specific rituals, some of which may now seem bizarre or outdated. One can see then that in ancient times, Zoroastrians othered different cultures and ethnicities for dissimilar and "impure" food practices, particularly Arabs.

Because urbanized Zoroastrians today eat food in greater quantities and of much wider variety, expectations and practices about food have changed over time in many ways. This implies that while society has changed, and food rituals have disappeared, the moral sense of being a Zoroastrian has not been compromised, and thus Zoroastrians continue in their pursuit of purity.

This study primarily draws upon a wide range of books and articles about Zoroastrianism, specifically regarding their practices of food, including translated copies of Zoroastrian religious codes from ancient Persia. This study also examines modern day Zoroastrian-style cookbooks, such as *My Bombay Kitchen* by Niloufer King. For better contextual support and comparison, it also utilizes more theoretical books regarding the relationship between food and rituals as well as the progression of food and its views over the course of history. Of course, this study would not be complete without including texts about ancient Persian and Iranian history to help explain the context of Zoroastrian history and evolution over time.

The first section of this study begins by examining the background of Zoroastrian beliefs and its history. This section will also review specific Zoroastrian terminology that will be used throughout the remainder of the study. The second section will address Zoroastrian beliefs about animals since these classifications determine the purity of certain foods. The final section focuses on examples of ancient Zoroastrian food rituals and practices and shows their transformations to the modern-day.

Essential Elements of Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism is one of the world's oldest surviving religions, originating in ancient Persia, and it is often suspected to be the world' first monotheistic tradition.[1] Zoroastrianism gets its name from that of its Prophet Zarathushtra (Zoroaster) who probably lived in what is today

[1] Richard Foltz, "Zoroastrian Attitudes toward Animals," *Society & Animals* 18, no. 4 (2010): 367.

eastern– northeastern Iran between 1700 and 1500 BCE.[2] The hymns attributed to him, known as the Gathas, which form the core of the Zoroastrian sacred text, the Avesta, are in an ancient East Iranian language that has been poorly understood even by Zoroastrians themselves.[3] Richard Foltz, in his article on Zoroastrian attitudes toward animals, summarizes the basic context of these texts:

> In the Gathas, the deity of wisdom (Mazda) from the divine class known as ahuras (Sanskrit asura) is elevated to the status of supreme being, with the other ahuras as his adjuncts in the cause of good, while the daevas (Sanskrit deva), praised in the Vedas, are demoted to the status of demons in league with the evil deity Angra Mainyu (Ahriman). The two sides—originally order versus disorder but interpreted in later texts as Truth versus the lie—are engaged in an ongoing cosmic battle, in which every human being must choose a side.[4]

Thus, the Gathas provides a basic understanding of Zoroastrianism. Most Zoroastrian texts, however, come from a much later period. In fact, they are written in Middle Persian, dating to the ninth and tenth centuries CE, during the early Islamic period.[5] Indeed, it is believed that one-third of Zoroastrian sacred literature involves law in its various forms, including the laws for food.[6]

During that same time period, the Zoroastrians were oppressed so severely that a large group emigrated from Khorasan area of Iran to what is now the state of Gujarat in Western India; they would later become known as the Parsis.[7] Thus, some of the food practices and beliefs mentioned in the study are sometimes referred to as Parsi rules, but they are still Zoroastrian if they are used in this context. It is important to know that today the Zoroastrian community is spread over the globe. The estimated worldwide Zoroastrian population according to the latest report in 2012 is about 111,201, which shows a decline of approximately 13,752

---

[2] Eliz Sanasarian, *Religious Minorities in Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 48.
[3] Richard Foltz, "Zoroastrian Attitudes toward Animals," 368.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Touraj Daryaee, "Food, Purity and Pollution: Zoroastrian Views on the Eating Habits of Others," *Iranian Studies* 45, no. 2 (2012): 230.
[6] Nezhat Safa-Isfehani, *Rivāyat-I Hēmīt-I Ašawahistān: A Study in Zoroastrian Law: Edition, Transcription, and Translation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Dept. of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 1980), i.
[7] Eliz Sanasarian, *Religious Minorities in Iran*, 48.

since the previous survey in 2004.[8] Zoroastrians are mainly residing in Iran, Pakistan, and India (and especially Mumbai); sometimes, these Zoroastrian communities are congregated in villages, especially in Yazd, Iran.[9]

Animal Classifications and Purity in Zoroastrianism

To provide an overview of the evolution of Zoroastrian purity and food practices from its original status to its contemporary status, it is essential to differentiate these versions of Zoroastrianism, in part by the varying religious texts produced and published in vastly different eras. It follows then that one must be careful not to project meanings from later texts onto early ones and vice versa. This study seeks to ensure this at all costs.

Of course, if one is to understand why food rituals and practices are important, one must understand their underlying meanings and causes. If one is to study food, one must understand the religious associations of animals (non-humans). After all, much of the food Zoroastrians eat comes from animals. Thus, it is necessary to start by analyzing Zoroastrian animal classifications from the onset of the religion.

Classical Zoroastrianism (from the Sasanian period, 224-751 CE) established that all living creatures originally belonged to one of two classes: they were either beneficent (relating to Ohrmazd) or they were evil (relating to Ahriman).[10] It seems that the basis for this distinction relies on what is useful or agreeable to human beings. Each beneficent animal must be assisted to grow to maturity; thus, it is a sin to kill it in its formative stages. On the other hand, evil animals are naturally impure and polluting, so slaughtering them is a positive virtue. These evil animals are thought to pollute the elements.[11] There are, however, other potential reasons why the animals are classified the way they are. This is explained in the following section.

Examples of beneficent animals include dogs, cows, horses, sheep, and goats. Of these, dogs and cows are the most respected and protected in Zoroastrianism although the dogs appear more prominently than the cow

---

[8] Navid Fozi, *Reclaiming the Faravahar: Zoroastrian Survival in Contemporary Tehran* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2014), 14.
[9] Eliz Sanasarian, *Religious Minorities in Iran*, 50.
[10] Jamsheed K. Choksy, *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism: Triumph Over Evil* (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1989), 14.
[11] Ibid.

in late Zoroastrian texts. For example, some rituals require the presence of a dog, and dogs even have their own funerals.[12] The dog is the guard for men and sheep, thus it follows that the dog would be a beneficent animal given the theme that beneficent animals are useful to humans. Cows are also extremely important. Because cows ploughed the field and produced milk, cows are seen as beneficent animals. Killing a cow is forbidden in part because it is a beneficent animal, but also in part because it provides humans with great service and is so useful.[13] This, of course, implies that dogs and cows had economic benefits as well. Since dogs protected animals such as sheep, this preserved the capital of the owner. Cows, with their production of milk and plowing of the field, were a significant economic resource. Hence, one might say that economics might have had an impact on why certain animals were considered beneficent, even in more ancient times.

Examples of evil animals include ants, bees, locusts, snakes, mice, and wolves. These animals are perceived by Zoroastrians to be harmful or disgusting to humans, crops, and livestock. While beneficent animals provide economic value, evil animals hurt economic value. They are also seen as creations of evil and are therefore considered impure, noxious, and profane.[14] It seems that priests encouraged the killing of these harmful animals because this would be seen as a good deed and promised reward later on for Zoroastrians.[15] This stemmed from the belief that noxious creatures polluted the environment. Some Persians and Zoroastrians believed that individuals became impure because they had filled themselves with noxious animals.[16] In the famous Persian epic, the *Shahnameh,* Fereydun is instructed not to kill Zahhak by an angel.[17] Zoroastrians texts describe that he is instructed not to kill him because doing so would release noxious animals into the environment and pollute it.[18]

---

[12] Richard Foltz, "Zoroastrian Attitudes toward Animals," 370.
[13] Fahimeh Shakiba, "The Social Life of Zoroastrians in the Safavid Era 1501-1722, Based on the Accounts of Travel Memoirists, and the Influence of Religious Teachings on It," *Tarih Kültür ve Sanat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 8, no. 2 (2019): 273.
[14] Ibid., 273.
[15] Ibid., 274.
[16] Touraj Daryaee, "Food, Purity and Pollution," 236.
[17] Firdawsī., Reuben Levy, and Amin Banani, *The Epic of the Kings: Shah-Nama the National Epic of Persia* (London: Routledge, 2011), 24.
[18] Touraj Daryaee, "Food, Purity and Pollution," 236.

Of course, these beliefs about animals changed over time. These rules and beliefs about killing noxious animals and preserving beneficent animals were enforced by the Zoroastrian clergy during the Sasanian period and the early centuries of Muslim rule in Iran; however, after the sixteenth century, many of these rules were not strictly followed.[19] Today, one can expect Zoroastrians to only follow general protocols of preventing the pollution of the earth by noxious animals because following strict Zoroastrian laws in the multireligious societies of today is quite burdensome and even impossible in certain areas. For example, while animals such as wasps, ants, beetles, were regarded as unclean in Classical Zoroastrianism, and should be killed, some Zoroastrians today actually spare small quantities of food for corn-stealing ants because they are "hard-working."[20] Thus, it seems that the economic element of the ants, with their corn-stealing habits, has become a less-important factor in contemporary Zoroastrians' perspectives about evil animals.

Likewise, cats were seen as evil animals, particularly because in the older periods they were not domesticated.[21] Over time, however, some Zoroastrians began to view cats in a positive light, possibly because they saw cats as agreeable and not harmful. This might also be due to the increasingly Islamic nature of Iran and because in Islam cats are viewed favorably and dogs are not, contrary to Zoroastrian beliefs. This implies much about the status of Zoroastrian beliefs of purity because as other religions invade the space that Zoroastrians practice, their customs and ideals change.

Bees are yet another example of changing Zoroastrian perception of evil animals. In the past, there was a demonic association with honey. There are three important demons in the Zoroastrian tradition and these demons are credited with giving honey to the bees, not to mention being filled with honey themselves.[22] Yet, over time, many Zoroastrians found the products of bees agreeable.[23] This is partly due to the coming of Islam and its positive view of honey.[24] This represents a theme that the coming

---

[19] Jamsheed K. Choksy, *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism*, 15-16.
[20] Richard Foltz, "Zoroastrian Attitudes toward Animals," 372.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Touraj Daryaee, "Honey: A Demonic Food in Zoroastrian Iran?" *Studia Litteraria Universitatis Iagellonicae Cracoviensis* 14 (2019): 55.
[23] Jamsheed K. Choksy, *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism*, 15.
[24] Touraj Daryaee, "Honey: A Demonic Food in Zoroastrian Iran?" 56.

of Islam and its wide influence in Iran and the other primary areas that Zoroastrians resided significantly impacted the beliefs of Zoroastrians about animals and also food. It seems that other religions, not just Islam, used honey for food, and so Zoroastrians became exposed to it. In the medieval period, Zoroastrians finally accepted the fact that honey should be consumed, but they still relied on customary food purity laws which meant that Zoroastrians should not buy honey from a non-Zoroastrian.[25] This Zoroastrian law that deals with not buying food from a non-Zoroastrian will be discussed later.

One might be wondering how the classification of and beliefs about animals relates to food purity. In Zoroastrian texts, the foods which may be eaten are detailed as those which are Ohrmazdian (beneficent), while the foods which cannot be eaten are listed as those which are Ahremanian (evil).[26] Thus, Zoroastrians and their practices of food purity relies heavily on the classifications of animals. One typical example that illustrates this dependence on animal classifications is the perception of milk in the diet of Zoroastrians. Bruce Lincoln, writes in his article, "Of dirt, diet, and religious others: A theme in Zoroastrian thought," about the positive views of milk:

> Nowhere was this goodness more evident than in the milk of these animals, which conveys the ideal, life-sustaining qualities of moisture, warmth, and light to those who consume it. Numerous texts describe milk as the best of foods, capable of fulfilling all mortal needs and one should also note that, in contrast to most other foods, milk is obtained without causing death to any plant or animal. Infants subsist on milk alone, as did the firstborn humans. Souls are greeted with milk (or butter) as they enter paradise, and when the world's perfection is restored, people will return to an all-milk diet, then renounce food altogether.[27]

Hence, one can see that milk maintains high status in Zoroastrianism. One can also see the relation between milk and cows, which are highly respected and admired beneficent animals. Whether milk is regarded so highly because of its production from cows, or whether cows are so highly regarded for their milk has not always been clear; however, based on

[25] Ibid.
[26] Touraj Daryaee, "Food, Purity and Pollution," 235.
[27] Bruce Lincoln, "Of dirt, diet, and religious others: A theme in Zoroastrian thought," *DABIR* 1, no. 1 (2015): 45.

Bruce Lincoln's findings, it would seem that cows are venerated because of their milk production.

Examples of Food Rituals and their Transformations over Time

Now that the link between animal classification and beliefs about purity in Zoroastrianism has been established, it is possible to examine specific food purity laws and rituals. The next step in analyzing food purity laws is to define exactly what food is for Zoroastrians. For Zoroastrians, the purpose of food is "to make possible the continuation of life in the face of entropy and death, insofar as food renews the body's material substance and supplies the Ohrmazdean qualities (warmth, moisture, light, etc.) on which all life depends."[28] In this definition, one can see that food should maintain Ohrmazdean qualities. This is consistent with the beliefs about beneficent animals since those animals have Ohrmazdean qualities. Of course, Zoroastrians believe then that one must avoid food that contains Ahrimanian qualities. Food that contains Ahrimanian qualities is destructive and must be expelled from the body by defecation before it can cause significant harm.[29] This is representative of a theme in Zoroastrian that excrement and recently deceased flesh are toxic to Zoroastrians.[30]

Having established that excrement and dead flesh are sources of pollution, it is possible to understand why Classical Zoroastrianism requires that one not purchase or eat food prepared by non-Zoroastrians. As Jamsheed Choksy explains in his book, *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism: Triumph over Evil*, this ancient rule is no longer in practice today:

> Because contact with non-Zoroastrians caused ritual impurity, Zoroastrians who associated with nonbelievers were required to undergo the nine-night purification. Even in 1875 CE, a Zoroastrian man and his daughter were refused entry into a fire temple in Bombay until they underwent this purification to regain purity lost through partaking of a meal cooked by a Muslim... This was, however, a rare instance in which the practice was enforced at such a late date. Indeed, this rule is no longer obeyed by anyone other than priests, who usually do not eat food prepared by non-Zoroastrians. Converts to Zoroastrianism

[28] Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 199.
[29] Ibid., 200.
[30] Ibid., 201.

> during the fourteenth to early nineteenth centuries were required to undergo this purification to attain socioritual purity prior to entering the Zoroastrian community… Zoroastrians in Iran and India who had been polluted through direct contact with carrion continued to undergo the Purification of the Nine [Days and] Nights until the eighteenth century.[31]

Thus, while eating food cooked by others resulted in ritual impurity, so did contact with other non-Zoroastrians. One could expect that over time these practices would disappear given their overly impractical and strict nature. That text does not, however, explain why food prepared by others is defiling. The reason that eating food prepared by others is polluting for Zoroastrians, or at least was polluting for Zoroastrians, is that this food prepared by others is contaminated.[32] Non-Zoroastrians do not receive the proper training that Zoroastrians in their observance of pollution, thus the food they produce can be dangerous because a piece of their hair, a drop of their blood, a fleck of their skin, or a bit of their snot could find its way into the food, which would then pollute the food since these are all sources of pollution.[33]

The theme of excrement and dead flesh in Zoroastrianism resulted in another food practice that has also been "relaxed." Those that disposed and cared for the dead, known as corpse bearers, had to abide by certain food rituals to remain pure and ensure that those around them would remain pure. For example, corpse bearers were not allowed to attend religious feasts, but today, they are allowed to attend although they are served separately from the rest of the community.[34] It should be noted that Parsis no longer require this separation. In fact, it is important to know that Parsis and Zoroastrians, although sharing common heritage, food, language, and religious beliefs, nevertheless maintain substantial differences, which explains why Parsis no longer require this separation of corpse bearers from traditional participants in terms of food consumption at religious feasts.[35] Food consumption at religious feasts was not the only issue for corpse bearers, however. Prior to the 1960s, in Iran, these corpse

---

[31] Jamsheed K. Choksy, *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism*, 41.
[32] Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society*, 203.
[33] Ibid., 204.
[34] Jamsheed K. Choksy, *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism*, 110.
[35] Richard Foltz, "Iranian Zoroastrians in Canada: Balancing Religious and Cultural Identities," *Iranian Studies* 42, no. 4 (2009): 562.

bearers would often eat separately from their own family.[36] Hence, one can see that these ideals about dead flesh and pollution remained strong until the 1960s. Since corpse bearers routinely dealt with rotting flesh, they could easily be polluted and spread that pollution to other Zoroastrians. It is interesting, however, that this idea about pollution from excrement and contaminated flesh is only now evolving, unlike other Zoroastrian views about animals which changed during the coming of Islam.

It comes as no surprise that Classical Zoroastrianism would require some seemingly bizarre food practices by contemporary standards. For example, roughly during the time of the prophet Muhammad, there was a Zoroastrian practice of not speaking during meals.[37] Instead, it appears that Zoroastrians should mumble. The reasoning for this practice is not completely understood, yet it must be in an effort to preserve the purity of the food and reduce pollution. In any case, contemporary Zoroastrians generally do not entertain this practice. Another example of seemingly bizarre food practices that attempt to preserve purity are menstruation laws for women. These laws are also based around the theme of contamination from blood and flesh. Yet, compared to the restrictions for corpse bearers, they seem extraordinarily stringent. Zoroastrian texts describe that a menstruating woman should be thirty feet away from a sacred place and three steps from a pious man. Additionally, food should be carried to her in metallic utensils in company with a bowl of cattle urine, with which she should wash her face and hands three times, while eating the foods in a way that her hands do not come in contact with the food.[38]

While it is understandable that corpse bearers might pollute those around them due to their contact with the dead, among whom might be non-Zoroastrians, the stringent restrictions against menstruating women who are Zoroastrian seem severe. After all, in this case, menstruating women are still Zoroastrian. Yet, one must understand that in Zoroastrianism, blood becomes impure once it leaves the body, no matter from a Zoroastrian or not.[39] In fact, the flood of blood from the body is

---

[36] Jamsheed K. Choksy, *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism*, 110.
[37] David M. Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food: Constructing Otherness in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Law* (Berkeley, C.A.: University of California Press, 2011), 124.
[38] Nezhat Safa-Isfehani, *Rivāyat-I Hēmīt-I Ašawahistān: A Study in Zoroastrian Law: Edition, Transcription, and Translation*, 307.
[39] Jamsheed K. Choksy, *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism*, 95.

regarded as an attack from demons on Ahura Mazda.[40] Thus, in this sense, blood leaving the body is vulnerable to attack by demons. One theme that emerges from this line of thought is that being a Zoroastrian does not necessarily entitle one to curtail restrictions because Zoroastrians must always strive to be pure and free from pollution.

While the imposition of new cultures can greatly influence and affect how Zoroastrians view certain foods and animals, at other times, Zoroastrians hold fast to their own ideas about food purity. For example, while Zoroastrians' view on honey changed with the influence of Islam, their view of wine has not. For Zoroastrians, good or bad nature is manifested by wine, but anyone who drinks wine should drink it in moderation since drinking in excess is considered a sin.[41] Zoroastrian sources describe that individuals who drink to excess will see grave health problems, suffer dishonor, and his or her soul will become unrighteous.[42] Yet despite these warnings of drinking in excess and pressure from the Islamic community to abstain from drinking altogether, Zoroastrians have continued to partake in the consumption of wine since ancient times, even for use in rituals.[43]

Of course, wine is just one example of a food or drink that has stood the test of time in Zoroastrian traditions. Along the same lines, meat is another food that Zoroastrians partake in regularly. One would think that due to the Arab invasion, Zoroastrians might have limited their pork consumption for instance, but that is not the case. In fact, it seems that Zoroastrian texts do not discuss the consumption of pork or other meats.[44] Thus, the consumption of meat is generally accepted among Zoroastrians. It seems that in this case, instead of the Arabs influencing the Zoroastrians, the opposite is true. Persians, some of which could have been Zoroastrian, influenced Arab cuisine in many ways, especially during the Abbasid dynasty, where various meats and organs were prepared.[45]

---

[40] Ibid., 94.
[41] Fahimeh Shakiba, "The Social Life of Zoroastrians in the Safavid Era," 270.
[42] Touraj Daryaee, "Food, Purity and Pollution," 242.
[43] Antonio Panaino, "Sheep, Wheat, and Wine: An Achaemenian Antecedent of the Sasanian Sacrifices Pad Ruwān," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, New Series, 19 (2005): 113.
[44] Fahimeh Shakiba, "The Social Life of Zoroastrians in the Safavid Era," 270.
[45] Jean-Louis Flandrin, Massimo Montanari, Albert Sonnenfeld, and Clarissa Botsford, *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 192.

These instances were conducted in the palace, likely where rituals and feasts held high importance.

This study would not be complete without a short discussion on the importance of these rituals in Zoroastrianism in a theoretical ritual context. While many who have followed religion have had trouble understanding the stringent restrictions that they impose, there is undoubtedly a connection between these rituals and the wholistic view of the religion.[46] When it comes to food, it would seem that ritual and religion are dancing partners, who move in response to each other.[47] Food rituals are significant events that are often sentimental, symbolizing tradition and cultural identity.[48] Given all this information, it appears that food rituals in Zoroastrianism are no different. Zoroastrian rituals create an alternative religious space with the distinct white vestments and melodic voices; the images, smells, and meanings of these rituals, even food rituals, have ensured that Zoroastrian traditions have not faltered, even in contemporary times.[49] On the other hand, while there is no doubt that many of these rituals have kept the religion and its traditions alive, many of these rituals have disappeared since the beginning of Zoroastrianism. It seems that in this contemporary era, more Zoroastrians are placing emphasis on moral values and the ethical sense of being Zoroastrian, rather than adhering to the rituals themselves.[50] Therefore, food rituals in Zoroastrianism today are walking a fine line with tradition as more and more modern Zoroastrians discontinue them.

Conclusion

[46] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 48.
[47] Katheryn C. Twiss, *The Archaeology of Food: Identity, Politics, and Ideology in the Prehistoric and Historic Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 155.
[48] Alice P. Julier, *Eating Together: Food, Friendship, and Inequality* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 123.
[49] Navid Fozi, *Reclaiming the Faravahar*, 179.
[50] Shahin Bekhradnia, "The decline of the Zoroastrian priesthood and its effect on the Iranian Zoroastrian community in the twentieth century," *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 23, no. 1 (1992): 46.

Every religion has evolved in one aspect or another since its inception till the modern day. Zoroastrianism is no different. Every religion has rituals. Zoroastrianism is no different. Yet, in Zoroastrianism, rituals represent a significant aspect of its identity, especially when it comes to food and animals. This is not surprising since much of these rituals regard issues of purity and pollution. Other cultures and peoples have influenced these rituals over time, including the rituals surrounding corpse bearers, the consumption of honey, the feeding of ants, the keeping of cats as pets, the eating of foods prepared by non-Zoroastrians, and the restrictions of menstruating women. While these practices and rituals have changed from outside influence and increased secularization, Zoroastrian ideals and traditions have ensured that certain rituals remain. Wine remains a significant aspect of Zoroastrian ritual and is consumed in moderation. Pork and other meats are also consumed although that is due to lack of reference in Zoroastrian texts. Nevertheless, this underscores that Zoroastrian beliefs remain strong in spite of the continuing intermingling of cultures and societies.

Zoroastrianism will always be rooted in ancient traditions, but it is also rooted in moral values, evidenced by its creed of "good thoughts, good words, and good deeds" and by its distinctions of Ohrmazdean (beneficent) and Ahrimanian (evil). This implies that while lifestyle has changed over the years, and some food rituals have disappeared and been relaxed, Zoroastrians remain true to their pure nature and adherence to ethical behavior.