



SSZ
Society of Scholars of
ZOROASTRIANISM



Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago
proudly hosts the
2026 Society of Scholars of Zoroastrianism (SSZ) Conference

at the
Rustam Guiv Dar-e-Mehr
8615 Meadowbrook Drive, Burr Ridge, IL 60527
on

Saturday November 14, 2026

9 am Central time (8:30 pm IST) to 9 pm Central time (8:30 am IST)

supported by

Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA)

FEZANA Information Research Educational System (FIRES)

and

World Zoroastrian Organization US Region

All community members, students, scholars and members of interfaith communities are invited and encouraged to participate. Your presence gives support to the speakers, and your feedback is invaluable so that future research efforts may be directed in a constructive manner for the benefit of both the academicians as well as the community.



**The Society
Of Scholars
Of Zoroastrianism**

Presents

The Academic Research Segment

Conducted by –
Prof. Miguel Ángel Andrés-Toledo with
Dr. Céline Redard
Dr. Ted Good
Dr. Parvaneh Pourshariati
Dr. Jamsheed K. Choksy

**To Help Scholars Learn And Grow,
By Sharing In The Discoveries That Really Matter!**

Saturday, Nov 14th, 2026
09:30am – 12:00pm Central Time Zoom Link- <https://bit.ly/2026-SSZ>

Logos: UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, FEZANA, ZAMC, ZOROASTRIAN UNITY WORLDWIDE, FIRES

Program

Conference Chair: **Prof. Miguel Ángel Andrés-Toledo**

Tech Support: **Eruch Rustomji** and **Tushad Driver**

Morning Session – Session Chair: **Afshan Barshan**

9:00 Breakfast and Registration

9:30 -- 12:00 **Academic Symposium**, online on ZOOM and in-person at the Dar-e-Mehr.
conducted by **Prof. Miguel Ángel Andrés-Toledo**, **Zal Taleyarkhan** and **Noshir Contractor**.

Dr. Céline Redard – “*Preservation and evolution of the Yasna ceremony through the lens of the Gujarati ritual directions between the 16th and the 19th centuries.*” Dr. Celine compares passages from these manuscripts, with the living tradition.

Dr. Ted Good – “*Let Wisdom be Your Guide*” – Drawing on the Denkard, Ted Good explores the Zoroastrian relationship between a spiritual guide and a student.

Prof. Miguel Ángel Andrés-Toledo – “*Greek Exegesis of Zoroastrian Rituals in the Derveni Papyrus.*” Prof. Andrés-Toledo proposes new interpretations on how the Zoroastrian component of this papyrus could be understood, and implications to the study of ancient Zoroastrianism.

Prof. Parvaneh Pourshariati – “*Mithra in Iran: Reconsidering the Archeological, Epigraphic and Literary Evidence.*” Professor Pourshariati examines the longstanding debate surrounding the relationship between Roman Mithraism and the Iranian worship of Mithra.

Dr. Jamsheed Choksy – “*A Fire Temple on the Pearl of the Indian Ocean.*”

12:30 **Dastur Kersey Antia** – “*Writings for Beating the Odds against our Survival in North America.*”

1:00 **Mobedyar Boman Damkevala** – “*Boi Ceremony*” in Prayer Room.

1:30 Lunch

Afternoon Session – Session Chair: **Jamshed Rivetna**

Community-Forum (in-person at the dar-e-mehr)

2:00 Registration for Afternoon Session

2:15 Benediction – **Dastur Kersey Antia**

Monajat – **Mani Rao**

Welcome – **Tushad Driver** (President, ZAMC)

Welcome – **Kayomارش Mehta** (President, WZO US Region)

Welcome – **Aban Rustomji** (Co-chair FEZANA-FIRES)

Welcome, Introduction to SSZ and Annual Report – **Zal Taleyarkhan** (SSZ President) and **Rohinton Rivetna**

3:00 **Professor Miguel Ángel Andrés-Toledo** – “*The Origin of Chess and Backgammon in the Zoroastrian literature*”.

3:30 **ZAMC Youth** with **Meheryar Rivetna**, **Khursheed Ichhaporia**, **Kamal Saher** and **Zenobia Damania** – “*Quiz: Sharpen Your Knowledge of Zoroastrian history, and scriptures.*”

4:30 Tea

4:45 **ZAMC Youth** – “*Texts, Traditions and Truth: A Fireside Chat with Scholars of Zoroastrianism.*”

5:30 **ZAMC Youth** – “*Zoroastrianism and Human Rights, Then and Now.*”

ZAMC Youth are: **Arya Barshan**, **Azita Barshan**, **Katy Daruwalla**, **Anahita Driver**, **Rayhan Guard** and **Jayden Ullal**, assisted by Religious Class teachers **Persis Driver**, **Shara Godiwalla** and **Persis Guard**.

Evening Session – Session Chair: *Binaisha Patel*

6:00 Cocktails

6:30 *Mehraboon Irani* – “Origins of the Indian Movie Industry”

7:00 Dinner

Thanksgiving Toast to celebrate our togetherness – *Tushad Driver* (ZAMC President)

Registration

If participating in person: \$20 per person. \$25 after November 3 (No charge for youth 18 and under); Payment may be made at the door. Please RSVP to Zarin Karanjia (zarin.karanjia@yahoo.com) with:

- Name
- Age (if 18 or under)
- Will attend Morning session (Academic Symposium) with Breakfast and Lunch
- Will attend Afternoon Session (Community Forum) with tea, cocktails and dinner.

If participating on ZOOM only, there is no charge.

ZOOM link for the Academic Symposium and Community Forum: <https://bit.ly/2026-SSZ>

Registration for the Academic Symposium is recommended, but not required, at:

<https://ZoroastrianAcademics.eventbrite.com>

For SSZ Conference information contact *Rohinton Rivetna* (Rivetna@aol.com, 630 248 -4387).

For information relative to the online Academic Symposium contact

Zal Taleyarkhan (773 677-1110, zaltaleyarkhan@gmail.com).



The Society of Scholars of Zoroastrianism invites you to join us for our upcoming
SSZ Conference which will feature a presentation on:

**“Preservation and evolution of the Yasna ceremony through the lens of the Gujarati ritual directions
between the 16th and the 19th centuries”**



Abstract of Presentation

Reading the Gujarati ritual instructions preserved in manuscripts dating from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century allows us to gain a better understanding of the Yasna ceremony over time. This presentation will focus on selected passages from these manuscripts, which will be compared with the living tradition in order to assess its continuity and dynamism, and even its adaptability.

About Dr. Céline Redard

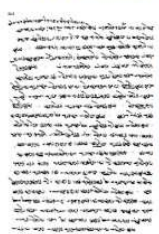
Céline Redard obtained her PhD at EPHE (Paris, France) for her doctoral thesis on the *Vidēvdād* 19. After working as a research assistant at the Collège de France (Paris) from 2008 to 2014, she was awarded a Marie Curie Fellowship at the University of Liège in Belgium (2014-2016). Then she worked for the Multimedia Yasna project based at SOAS (London) from 2017 to 2022. She is now Associate Professor in History of Religions at the University of Strasbourg (France). Among her books, she co-authored in 2021 a book with Dr. Kerman Daruwalla, titled “The Gujarati ritual directions of the *Paragnā*, Yasna and *Visperad* ceremonies” and published the same year a commented edition of the *Srōš Drōn* (Yasna 3 to 8).

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"Let Wisdom Be Your Guide"



About Dr. Ted Good

Dr. Ted Good is a scholar of Zoroastrian philosophy and the history of religions, specializing in Zoroastrian thought during the early Islamic period. He earned his PhD in Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations at the University of Toronto in 2023 and subsequently held a Marie Skłodowska-Curie postdoctoral fellowship at Ruhr University Bochum in Germany. His research focuses on the *Dēnkard* and other Zoroastrian philosophical writings, examining their ideas about human nature and the philosophical foundations of religious belief.

Abstract of Presentation

How does a spiritual teacher help a student develop understanding and wisdom? Drawing on the *Dēnkard*, Ted Good explores the Zoroastrian relationship between a *dastwar*, or spiritual guide, and a student. The presentation examines this relationship in the period when Zoroastrians no longer benefited from imperial patronage, but continued to preserve and communicate their religious teachings. Through the text's exchanges between teacher and student, we will investigate the psychological and spiritual processes involved in learning, highlighting how guidance and dialogue contribute to religious understanding.

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"Greek Exegesis of Zoroastrian Rituals in the Derveni Papyrus"



Abstract of Presentation

The Derveni Papyrus, written in ancient Greek in the 4th century BCE but dating back to the 5th, contains a commentary on an Orphic poem. Apart from its importance for other reasons, it provides us with a very valuable comparison between Orphic and Zoroastrian beliefs and ritual practices. In this contribution, I will propose new interpretations on how the Zoroastrian component of this papyrus could actually be understood and the implications of this Greek source to the study of ancient Zoroastrianism.



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About Professor Miguel Ángel Andrés-Toledo



He is the FEZANA Professor of Zoroastrian Languages and Literatures at the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations of the University of Toronto as well as the Acting Director of the *Elahé* Omidyar Mir-Dialali Institute of Iranian Studies. He has worked on ten international projects in the fields of Old and Middle Iranian languages and literatures, Zoroastrianism, and Indo-Iranian linguistics, like for instance the Avestan Digital Archive (University of Salamanca) or the Middle Persian Dictionary Project (Hebrew University of Jerusalem). His research interests mainly cover the Avestan and Pahlavi languages and literatures, with a specific focus on their written transmission and the Pahlavi translations and exegesis of Avestan texts. As the FEZANA Professor at the University of Toronto, he offers courses on Avestan, Old Persian, Middle Persian (Pahlavi), and Zoroastrian Literature of Ancient and Late Antique Iran.



The Society of Scholars of Zoroastrianism invites you to join us for our upcoming
SSZ Conference which will feature a presentation on:
"Mithra in Iran: Reconsidering the Archaeological, Epigraphic, and Literary Evidence"



Abstract of Presentation

Professor Parvaneh Pourshariati examines the longstanding debate surrounding the relationship between Roman Mithraism and the Iranian worship of Mithra. Drawing on archaeological, epigraphic, and literary evidence from Khurasan and northern Kuhistan, including significant inscriptions, Parthian ossuaries, and the Arsacid sanctuary of Adur Burzēn-Mihr, she challenges the prevailing view that Roman Mithraism was fundamentally disconnected from its Iranian origins. Her research also explores the Iranian antecedents of the seven grades of Roman Mithraism, offering new perspectives on Mithra's enduring religious, cultural, and social significance in ancient Iran.

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About Professor Parvaneh Pourshariati



Professor Parvaneh Pourshariati is Associate Professor of History at the City University of New York (CUNY), specializing in Late Antique and medieval Iranian and Western Asian history. She is internationally recognized for her groundbreaking book, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, which reshaped scholarly understanding of Sasanian Iran and the Arab conquests. Her research encompasses Iranian religious traditions, Mithraism, the Abbasid Revolution, and the political and cultural history of ancient Iran. Previously a professor at The Ohio State University, she has held prestigious fellowships at Princeton, NYU, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She is also the founder and director of the Circle for Late Antique and Medieval Studies (CLAMS) at CUNY.



The Society of Scholars of Zoroastrianism invites you to join us for our upcoming
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"A Fire Temple on the Pearl of the Indian Ocean"



Abstract of Presentation

This presentation examines Navroz-Baug, the Parsi Zoroastrian fire temple in Colombo, as a center of worship, learning, and communal memory. Established in 1927, it has served generations of Sri Lankan Parsis through periods of migration and demographic change. Its thanksgiving, initiation, and memorial ceremonies, together with votive offerings, devotional images, and a library of religious and scholarly works, reveal how shared practices and material objects sustain religious identity. Particular attention is given to depictions of Zarathushtra, donations connecting the temple with Zoroastrian communities in India and Iran, and the adaptation of religious traditions to local circumstances. Drawing on the temple's history and the author's personal recollections, the presentation explores how Navroz-Baug preserves knowledge, strengthens communal ties, and sustains Zoroastrian life within a small but enduring community.

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About Dr. Jamsheed K. Choksy



Jamsheed K. Choksy is Distinguished Professor at Indiana University Bloomington and Director of the Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center. A graduate of Columbia and Harvard universities, he has served on the council overseeing the National Endowment for the Humanities and is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. His books include *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism*, *Conflict and Cooperation in Medieval Iranian Society*, and *Evil, Good, and Gender in Zoroastrian Religious History*. He has published more than 60 peer-reviewed articles and over 90 foreign affairs analyses.