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- 1 A first part of this chapter is devoted to religious issues. Despite the many textual and iconographical remains, several issues on the religion of the Achaemenid kings are still not solved. E.g. it is only from the reign of Darius that the Achaemenids call themselves 'worshippers of Ahuramazda', which held the highest position of the gods next to a variety of other deities. A special place in Achaemenid religion was also reserved for the magi or priests, who interfered with political life on a more or less regular basis. Their religious ceremonies, do's and don'ts as well as those of the kings are well described and thus give a good indication of religious practice at that time. All these elements are equally largely illustrated via seals, pestles and mortars for grinding the *haoma*, votive statuettes, plaques and amulets. Next to religion, Achaemenid burial customs are also considered in this paper. Although Zoroastrian religion prescribes defleshing of the skin via natural and animal phenomena; there is ample evidence that demonstrates that people were also just buried in coffins with no traces of defleshing and with or without additional grave goods. Some tombs of Achaemenid kings and noblemen also pass the revue, but we have no idea on burial customs used for the common men. Whatever type of burial was preferred, a rock-cut tomb or a coffin, the main concern of the Achaemenids was that their body was not at any one time polluted by a natural element such as earth.

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Thèmes : 3.2.2. Pré-Achéménides et Achéménides

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