Almut Hintze. “Zoroastrian Afterlife Beliefs and Funerary Practices”

Salman Aliyari Babolghani
The article presents an overview of the Zoroastrian afterlife beliefs and funerary practices. It starts with a short introduction to Zoroastrian communities, the theological background of Zoroastrian funeral ceremonies, and also the architecture of a daxma or ‘Tower of Silence’. The author recounts the traditional Zoroastrian funerary rites (e.g., the recitation of Ašōm Vohu-prayer, the performance of sagdīd ‘seen by a dog’ rites, etc.) from the death of a person to the exposure of his/her corpse in the daxma to be devoured by scavenger birds.

In the next section, the Zoroastrian eschatological beliefs (e.g., the soul perceiving its own daēnā ‘religious views’, its crossing of the Činwad Bridge, etc.) and also the ceremonies (e.g., Yašt-i sewwom, Hōm Drán, etc.) which are performed on behalf of the departed to protect his/her soul against evil forces, are discussed and explained.

Finally, Hinze presents some interesting archaeological evidences for daxmas and the different types of pre-Islamic funerary practices in relation to Zoroastrian prescriptions. She also mentions some difficulties related to the practice of exposure that Zoroastrian communities encountered both in Iran and India, and the solutions they managed to find according to their religious prescriptions, e.g., burying the dead in cement or stone-lined graves in Iran and using electric crematoria in India.
AUTHORS

SALMAN ALIYARI BABOLGHANI

Iran