

MANSOUR SHAKI

## THE COSMOGONICAL AND COSMOLOGICAL TEACHINGS OF MAZDAK

Although there are numerous references to the social doctrine of Mazdakism by various indigenous and foreign historians, none but al-Shahristānī, the great heresiograph, has reported other aspects of its teachings. Without his significant evidence the philosophical outlook of the Dristdēns would have been lost to posterity and our knowledge of their faith remained wanting in many fundamental issues.

The numerous manuscripts of the *Kitābu 'l-milal wa 'l-niḥal*, in the first volume of which this text occurs, having been found to be at variance with each other, I have relied upon the oldest MS preserved in the British Library<sup>1</sup> which in spite of the shortcomings common to old MSS has relatively better retained the original forms of certain important terms and expressions.

I regret that this paper should appear in a concise and sketchy form owing to the shortage of time and personal circumstances, leaving out many interesting controversial and arguable points. None the less, I hope it will prove expressive of my deep admiration for Professor Mary Boyce to whom it is humbly offered.

As the previous authors<sup>2</sup> who have examined this text have employed corrupt copies, and, moreover, their translations are in part unsatisfactory, I have deemed it expedient to give the full translation of the BL copy:

'Mazdakism—it refers to Mazdak who appeared in the time of Qubād, father of Nūsharwān<sup>3</sup>, and invited Qubād to accede to his creed, whereupon he concurred with him. And Nūsharwān came to know of his notoriety and fallacy, upon which he summoned, took hold

<sup>1</sup> Add. 23, 349, dated 549 Hegira (Lunar).

<sup>2</sup> Following the pioneering study of Mazdak and his doctrine by Th. Nöldeke (*Geschichte der Perser und Araber*, pp. 455 ff.) the investigation of the subject gained further momentum by the works of A. Christensen (*L'Empire des Sassanides*, pp. 316 ff.; *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, pp. 311 ff.); F. Altheim-R. Stiehl (*La Nouvelle Clío* V, 1953, pp. 267 ff.); F. Altheim (*Mazdak und Porphyrios* (History of Religions, vol. 3, No. 1), 1963, pp. 1 ff.); and O. Klíma (*Mazdak*, Praha 1957).

<sup>3</sup> A contracted form of Anūsharwān, Pers. Anōšarwān.

of and put him to death. Al-Warrāq relates that the teaching of Mazdakism in regard to the two worlds and the two principles is similar to that of the majority of Manichaeans except that Mazdak maintained that Light acts on purpose and voluntarily and Darkness at random and by chance, and Light has insight and is perceptive, and Darkness is ignorant and blind<sup>4</sup>. And Mixture has come to be by chance and at random, not on purpose and by free will. And likewise the deliverance (of Light from Darkness) takes place at random, not by option. And Mazdak enjoined people to refrain from discord, hatred and war; and since most often these occurred by reason of women and property, he made (the possession of) women and property lawful (to all), and rendered people partners in these, as their partnership in fire, water and pasture. And it is related of him that he enjoined upon (the people) the subduing of passions<sup>5</sup> so as to deliver (the soul)<sup>6</sup> from evil and from admixture with Darkness. And his opinion on the (primal) principles and the Elements is that they are three: Water, Earth and Fire. When they combine, there appear the Director of Good and the Director of Evil. From their pure<sup>7</sup> (constituents) proceeds the Director of Good, and from their impure<sup>8</sup> (constituents) proceeds the Director of Evil. He (further) relates that his object of veneration is seated in the world above, after the fashion of the sitting of a king<sup>9</sup> in the world below. And he has at his disposal<sup>10</sup> four powers: Discrimination, Intelligence, Preservation and Joy, as there are under the control of a king four persons: *mōhedān mōbēd*, the chief *hērbeḏ*, the *iṣbahbaḏ* and the *rāmiṣkar*. And these four direct<sup>11</sup> the affairs of the world<sup>12</sup> by the assistance of the Seven beyond them<sup>13</sup>: سشکاه<sup>14</sup> and سالار<sup>15</sup> بالوان<sup>15</sup> and بروان<sup>16</sup> and کارران<sup>17</sup> and دستور<sup>17</sup> and کوزک. And this Heptad

<sup>4</sup> I.e. unaware, inattentive, indiscriminate.

<sup>5</sup> Lit. killing of the Soul, self-mortification.

<sup>6</sup> The enclitic pers. pron. *-hā* refers to *nafs* 'soul'.

<sup>7</sup> I.e. light (elements).

<sup>8</sup> I.e. dark (elements).

<sup>9</sup> MS appellatively *husrāu*.

<sup>10</sup> Altheim, 'opposite him', *Mazdak and Porphyrios*, 5.

<sup>11</sup> MS *yudabbirāna*, Altheim, *ibid.*, 6, link.

<sup>12</sup> MS *al-'ālam*, Christensen, *L'Iran*, 336, 'des mondes'; Altheim, *ibid.*, 'the two worlds'.

<sup>13</sup> MS *min warā'ihim*, Christensen, *ibid.*, 'leurs vèzirs', Altheim, *ibid.*, 'their viziers' owing to faulty ed. Cureton giving *vuzara' ihim*.

<sup>14</sup> Christensen, *ibid.*, *pēškār*, Altheim, *ibid.*, *bēškār*, MP *pēškār*.

<sup>15</sup> Christensen, *ibid.*, *bārvar*.

<sup>16</sup> Christensen, *ibid.*, *parvān*.

<sup>17</sup> Christensen, *ibid.*, and Altheim, *ibid.*, *kārdān*.

revolves within the Twelve spiritual (beings): خورنده, دونده,<sup>18</sup> جرنده, برنده, ايساننده, دهنده, خواهنده, باننده, شونده, انيده, كننده, زننده, كشنده. And every person in whom these powers of the Four, the Seven and the Twelve unite, he becomes (part of) God<sup>19</sup> in the world below and will be relieved from religious obligation<sup>20</sup>. He maintained that the king (Ruler) of the world above<sup>21</sup> rules by means of letters whose totality forms the Supreme Name<sup>22</sup> and whoever conceives anything of these letters, the Highest Mystery<sup>23</sup> (Truth) will be divulged to him. And he who is deprived of this (privilege) remains in unawareness<sup>24</sup>, ignorance, oblivion, stupidity and sorrow in opposition to the Four spiritual powers’.

#### COMMENTARY

The main purpose of our investigation is to establish on the basis of what may be safely concluded from the scanty and fragmentary information offered by the text the general tenets of the philosophical, cosmological and cosmogonical teachings of Mazdakism as opposed to the religious and philosophical environments prevalent in Iran.

At the outset Mazdakism has been presented as a form of Manichaeism, a tradition going back to J. Malalas. Mazdakism, we are informed, is like other Iranian religions based upon dualism, recognizing two primordial principles: Light and Darkness. It is allegedly different from Manichaeism only by its attribution of volition and knowledge to Light and ignorance and unawareness to Darkness. This is, however, by no means a matter of sectarian divergence from a faith, but a matter of doctrinal system shared also by Mazdeism, in which Ohrmazd is bestowed with omniscience (*harwis-p-āgāhīh*) and goodness (*wehīh*), and Ahreman with unawareness (*pas-dānīshīh*) and stupidity (*dušāgāhīh*)<sup>25</sup>. Thus, what has been adduced as a sectarian difference is,

<sup>18</sup> Christensen, *ibid.*, *khizandagh*, followed by Altheim, *ibid.* 7.

<sup>19</sup> MS *šāra rabban*, defective MSS *rabbānīyan*, which is also written in the margin of our MS by another hand; so Christensen, *ibid.*, 336-7, and Altheim, *ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>20</sup> MS *irtafa'a 'anhu'l-taklif*; Altheim criticising Christensen's translation (*L'Empire*, 81) renders: 'and his (earthly) burden will be taken from him' which is meaningless.

<sup>21</sup> MS *husrāu al-'ālamī'l-a'lā*; other MSS *husrāu bi-'l-'ālamī'l-asfal*, wrong.

<sup>22</sup> *al-ismū'l-a'zam*.

<sup>23</sup> *al-sirru'l-akbar*.

<sup>24</sup> 'amā 'blindness'.

<sup>25</sup> For these MP attributes see *GBd*, ch. I, §2; *Zs*, ch. I, §2; *ŠGW*, V, 4 (de Menasce, 50).

in fact, a strong argument for the doctrinal identity of Mazdakism with Mazdaeism.

The Mazdakite doctrine on the appearance of the mixed state and the subsequent salvation, the separation of the elements of Light and Darkness, as an indeterminate fortuitous process is patently inconsistent with its ascription of wisdom, purpose and volition to Light. Even in the domain of practice its egalitarian principle, its teaching on community of women and property, on asceticism, and on subduing passions devised to combat the Demons of Concupiscence (*Āz*), Lust (*Waran*), Infamy (*Nang*), Envy (*Arišk*)<sup>26</sup>, Hatred (*Kēn*), Discord (*Anāštīh*), War (*Paykār*), etc. being all purposeful endeavours to attain salvation, also run counter to the principle of indeterminism in the struggle between Light and Darkness. Although such dichotomous views are not hard to find in Mazdeism or any other religious system, it may be accounted for by the brevity of the text, assuming that not all that one would have desired has been reported. Be that as it may, their standpoint regarding freedom of the will in matters of piety, self-education by combating the seducing passions, etc. is in conformity with that of orthodox Mazdeism. It is to be noted that to the usual demonized passions such as Concupiscence, Envy, etc. whose subjugation has been enjoined not only by Zoroastrianism and Mazdakism but by almost all world-wide religions, the text adds *qitāl* 'war, killing' (MP *paykār*, *ardīg*), and *mubāgīza* 'discord' (MP *anāštīh*)<sup>27</sup>. Again the absence of the other moral evils in the text is an indication of its drastic curtailment.

Of great interest is the Mazdakite view concerning the elements. Strange as it may seem, it is explicitly stated that only three of them are recognized: Water, Earth, and Fire, each of which is composed of pure and impure parts. This doctrine is unprecedented in philosophical thought. It is all the more puzzling because the missing element, Air, has been considered by the Mazdeans as being included in the hot-moist (Being), the primal principle of material creations<sup>28</sup>. However, there are two circumstances that may explain this seeming singularity. It is noteworthy that among the Islamic philosophers, who by and large drew their information from the Greeks, there were some who con-

<sup>26</sup> See *DkM*, 6, 10-11; M. Shaki, 'The social doctrine of Mazdak in the light of Middle Persian evidence', *ArOr.* XLVI, 4, 1978, 290.

<sup>27</sup> *ČHP*, §47.

<sup>28</sup> *DkM*, 124, 19-20, M. Shaki, 'Some basic tenets of the eclectic metaphysics of the Denkart', *ArOr.* XXXVIII, 1970, 281.

sidered Air to be an imperfect or defective (*nāqiš*) element; because they regarded its qualities, the hot and moist, as being derived from Ether and Water respectively. It may also be surmised that the rejection of Air as an element might have been prompted by the predominant sanctity of the other three as the centres of purity. In any case, it is inconceivable that Mazdak, defying the authority and holy tradition of the orthodox Zoroastrians and strongly deprecating the banishment of their sacred element whose deity the Wind God (*Wāt*)<sup>29</sup> was the assistant (*hamkār*) of Hordād, should have put forward such a postulate without basing himself on a specious argument.

The duality of pure (light) and impure (dark) material elements as the very essences of Ohrmazd and Ahreman is one view among others set out in Mazdean cosmology. According to the *Bundahišn*<sup>30</sup> the essence of Ohrmazd is *gētīg rōšnīh* (material light) and the essence of Ahreman *gētīg tārikīh* (material darkness), which essentially conforms to the Mazdakite concept.

Less clear, however, is the origin of the two Directors. If we take the verb *hadata* in its literal and philosophical sense, Mazdak's antagonistic Directors must have proceeded from two sets of pre-existing light and dark material elements, which presupposes either origination of the deities and pre-existence of the elements, or the existence of another unnamed creator such as Zurvan. Granting the former proposition to be true would lead us to identify the Directors of Good and Evil<sup>30</sup> (*wēh rāyēnāg* and *rāyēnāg ī wattar*) with the antagonistic powers of the Seven and the Twelve which are designated as *brēhēnāg ud rāyēnāg ī gēhān* in MX, ch. VII, § 14: ... *ōyšan 12 axtar ud 7 abāxtar brēhēnāg ud rāyēnāg ī gēhān hēnd*. '... those twelve Signs of the Zodiac and the seven planets rule the fate of the world and direct it'. But as the text immediately proceeds to the next item with the description of the God of Good, assimilated to the king (Khosrow) of the world above, our Director of Good (*mudabbiru'l-ḥair*) cannot be anyone else but this very deity who is the totality of the good powers of the Four, Seven and Twelve. Of the God of Evil apart from his designation, *mudabbiru'l-šarr*, and his four daevic powers we know nothing from the text. Althēim inattentive to the express mention of the two deities by the text, bases his argument concerning the identity of Khosrow on the assumed unity of an unnamed God reported by al-Shahristānī and writes: 'Mani

<sup>29</sup> On *wāt*, *wāy* and its deities *Vāta*, *Vayu*, see Mary Boyce, *HZ*, I, s.v.

<sup>30</sup> *GBd*, ch. I, § 26-27.

<sup>30a</sup> *MX*, ch. VII, § 14; Zaehner, *Zurvan*, 268-9.

sets in opposition to the Father of Greatness the Prince of Darkness; Mazdak has no equivalent for the latter'<sup>31</sup>.

The Mazdakite Directors of Good and Evil, a typical Mazdean concept, find their parallel in the principal epithets of the *Spēnāg Mēnōg* and *Gannāg Mēnōg*. The *Dēnkard* describes the essence of Ohrmazd and Ahreman as robes donned by the two Spirits in the following terms: *yak āsrōnih brahm, weh abēzag rāyēnišnīgih ... ō x<sup>w</sup>ēš x<sup>w</sup>adih dōšišn ... ēn brahm Ohrmazd ō x<sup>w</sup>ēš x<sup>w</sup>adih ...* 'One is the robe of priesthood the directing of pure good ... (which) was chosen (approved) by him as his very essence ... this robe is the very essence of Ohrmazd'. *yak sātārih brahm watar abēzag rāyēnišn(ig)ih ... gannāg mēnōg ... ō x<sup>w</sup>ēš x<sup>w</sup>adih dōšišn ... ēn brahm x<sup>w</sup>ānīhēd gannāg mēnōg x<sup>w</sup>adih.* One is the robe of tyranny, the directing of pure evil ... (which) was chosen by *Gannāg mēnōg* as his very essence ... this robe is called the very essence of *Gannāg mēnōg*'<sup>32</sup>. Thus our *mudabbiru 'l-ḥair* and *mudabbiru 'l-šarr* rendering the original MP *wēh rāyēnidār/rāyēnāg* and *watar rāyēnidār*<sup>33</sup> are agents representing the chief attributes of the Good and Evil Spirits.

Returning to the origin of these deities, we may, in the light of our exposition, safely conclude that the Arabic verb *ḥadaṭa* has been employed by the Islamic historians casually, and cannot be taken at its face value. The sentence should, therefore, be taken to mean that the Directors of Good and Evil have as their essence the pure (light) and impure (dark) components of the elements respectively.

The text anthropomorphically compares the God of Mazdak seated on his throne on high with the king (Khosrow) in the world below. That Khosrow does not refer to Anōšarwān, who ascended the throne after the execution of Mazdak or to his name-sake who had ruled in Khwārezm, as Altheim has suggested<sup>34</sup>, may be seen by its use in the phrase *ḥusrau al-'ālamī'l-a'lā* 'the king of the world above', further in the text where it occurs as an appellative. And since its appellative sense as king has developed long after Mazdak and Anōšarwān, we may attribute its occurrence in connection with Mazdak to the association of ideas. It is well to bear in mind that the lack of respect for precise transmission of old traditions (except for Scripture) by the narrators or

<sup>31</sup> Altheim, *ibid.*, 13.

<sup>32</sup> *DkM*, 204, 4f.; *Zurvan*, 377.

<sup>33</sup> *Dd*. 36, 17; *ZP*, 45. These terms may quite as well render MP *weh* and *watar rāyēnāg* (*DkM*, 206, 12) or *hu-dušrāyēnidār* (*DkM*, 206, 8).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 10f.

copyists has never been wanting in oriental scribal tradition. The appellative use of *xosrōy* in the *Draxt ī Asūrīg*, a text coming down from the Parthian era, affords a similar case of tampering with the original text<sup>35</sup>. However, Altheim following Christensen in assuming the text to be the very words of Mazdak, identifies the Khosrow of our text with the ruler of Khwārezm, and thus he even traces his birth-place.

The next part treats of the description of the organization of the divine powers of the Director of Good in Arabic, Middle Persian, and New Persian terms, the resolution of some of which presents unsurmountable difficulties. The deity that we have identified as *Spenāg Mēnōg* is presented as being attended by three sets of spiritual powers<sup>36</sup>. The first four are the innate powers of the God corresponding to human powers of mind:

*al-tamīz*, 'discrimination'<sup>37</sup>, renders MP *wizīnīdārīh*;

*al-fahm*, 'intelligence, understanding', translates MP *ayāftārīh*, *ayābagīh*;

*al-ḥifz*, 'preservation, keeping'<sup>38</sup>, renders MP *dāštārīh*, *pādārīh*;

*al-surūr*, 'joy, delight', translates MP *rāmišn*, *huniyāgīh*.

The first three are respectively the functions of *xrad* 'wisdom, reason', *wīr* 'intelligence'<sup>39</sup>, and *ōš* 'memory'<sup>39</sup>: *wīr nērōg x<sup>w</sup>āstār ud ayāftār, ud ... ōš ōz dāštār ud \*pādār, ... xrad zōr nigerīdār ud wizīngar ud kāriḡēnīdār*<sup>40</sup>. 'The power of intelligence, is to seek and understand, the power of memory is to maintain and guard, and the power of reason, is to consider, discriminate and activate'. To these Aristotelian faculties of mind ἀνάμνησις, μνήμη, νοῦς the Mazdeans added a fourth power, *bōy*<sup>41</sup> 'perception, sensation' which Mazdak has, evidently not considering it to be compatible with the nature of God, replaced by *rāmišn* 'joy'. These powers, which have their counterparts in human

<sup>35</sup> M. Shaki, 'Observations on *Draxt ī Asūrīg*', *ArOr.* XLIII, 2, 1975, 49.

<sup>36</sup> MP *nērōg*, *zōr*, *ōz*.

<sup>37</sup> Christensen, *ibid.*, 336, 'Entendement'.

<sup>38</sup> Christensen, *ibid.*, 'Mémoire' which renders *ḥāfīza*, not *ḥifz*; Altheim, *ibid.*, 'the power of vigilance'.

<sup>39</sup> These are the prevalent meanings of *wīr* and *ōš* in MP, although sometimes their meanings are interchanged; viz. *wīr*, Av. *vīra-* 'understanding' is employed as 'memory', NP *vīr*, *bīr*, *BQ*, s.v., and *ōš*, Av. *uš-* 'comprehension', MP *ōš* as 'intelligence', NP *hūš*, *hōš* 'consciousness, intelligence'.

<sup>40</sup> *DkM*, 48, 14-16. For these powers of the mind see also *DkM*, 485, 5 f.; *ŠGW*, V, 82; *Zs*, 34, 50 and *ZP*, 110, 102.

<sup>41</sup> On the function of *bōy* cf. *DkM*, 242, 9-10: *bōy... ka-z az tan judāg jahēd ruwān andar tan anāgīh ud tan andar-iz zīndagīh \*amālišn bawēd*. 'When the boy is separated from the body, the *ruwān* is harmed in the body and the body though alive becomes insensible', *ZP*, 100 with slight difference.

psychology, are compared to the chief functionaries of the state and the king's attendants in the microcosm; the *mōbedān mōbed* stands as the incarnation of *tamīz* 'discrimination' (*xrad*), the *hērbedān hērbed* as the incarnation of *fahm* 'intelligence' (*wīr*), the *iṣbahbad* (*spahbed*) in his chief function as guardian, as the incarnation of *hiḫz* 'guarding, preserving' (*ōš*), and the *rāmišgar*<sup>42</sup> 'musician' as the incarnation of *surūr* 'joy' (*rāmišn*).

The replacement of *bōy* by *rāmišn* is significant in that that it emphasizes the importance of enjoyment, repose and by extension, peace, as an *ahuric* power, a state of mind or way of life, and brings out the humane Mazdakite teaching imbued with optimism. To stress the Mazdean advocacy of living a happy life is a platitude. Nevertheless, we will recall a few typical instances. The *Bundahišn*<sup>43</sup> speaks of the *garōdmān* 'paradise' as a place where 'ever therein the sound of sweet music comes whence the soul has delight and joy' (*hamwār ēwāz ī pad niwāg ī x<sup>w</sup>as̄ padīš hamē rasēd kē ruwān huniyāgih rāmišn aziš*). There is enjoined on the Mazdeans the necessity of devoting one-third of their days and one-third of their nights to eating, enjoyment (*rāmišn*) and repose<sup>44</sup>.

All these concepts are in complete accordance with Mazdean teachings, the only Mazdakite innovation being the introduction into orthodox Zoroastrianism of *rāmišn* as a principal power of God and of the human mind<sup>44</sup>.

Against this tetrad of spiritual powers or attributes of God are set four corresponding powers of the Director of Evil:

- (i) *al-jahl* 'ignorance' opposed to *tamīz*, rendering MP *duš-āgāhīh*, an epithet of Ahreman;
- (ii) *al-nisyān* 'forgetfulness', opposed to *hiḫz*, translating MP *frāmōšī-dārīh* or rather *būšāsp* 'sloth, sleepiness', causing people to neglect their Duty<sup>45</sup>;
- (iii) *al-balāda* 'stupidity', opposed to *fahm*, rendering MP *pas-dānišnīh*;
- (iv) *al-ḡamm* 'grief', opposed to *surūr*, translating MP *bēš*.

<sup>42</sup> MS *rāmishkar*, NP *rāmišgar* erroneously taken by Christensen, *ibid.*, and Altheim, *ibid.*, 6, 7 as a MP form.

<sup>43</sup> *GBd* Ankl. 190, 6 ff.; *ZP*, 114.

<sup>44</sup> Christensen, *ibid.*, 336, n. 1, on these powers notes: 'ce sont les *zōrān* des textes manichéens, comp. les quatres puissances du dieu de lumière'. However, the Manichaean powers of mind (*Nous*) are five, not four in number, and what is more not all of them correspond to those of Mazdak.

<sup>45</sup> The Demon of Forgetfulness in the Avesta is *Maršavan* (*Vd.* 19, 1, 2) rendered in MP by *sēj* 'trouble'.



Each tetrad of powers being immanent in the nature of one Director, and, therefore, not being prone to admixture, is expressly mentioned by the text.

We hardly need to stress that the following Seven and the Twelve refer to the planets and the Signs of the Zodiac. As against the first four powers, the Seven and the Twelve which revolve beyond them are transient spiritual powers by whose instrumentality the Director of Good manages the affairs of the world. The text, however, states that they are the four powers which direct the affairs of the world through the agency of the Seven beyond them, which is again in all likelihood another instance of careless formulation on the part of the compiler of the passage. Otherwise, the twelve spiritual (*rūhāniyūn*) powers would have been redundant.

The denominations of the seven planets in Middle Persian which seem to be in accordance with their astrological designations are partly transmitted without diacritical dots in Arabic script, hence admitting of various readings:

- (i) *sālār* 'commander', obviously fits the most powerful Saturn (*Kēwān*), called by the astrologers *axtarān spāhbedān spāhbed* 'commander-in-chief of the planets'<sup>46</sup>. Its abode is the seventh heaven (from below). According to the *Bundahišn* Saturn, the lord of darkness stood above the planets<sup>47</sup>. It is metaphorically called by the Islamic astronomers *dīdebān-e falak* 'the superintendent of the heaven', *Borhān-e Qāte*, s.v.
- (ii) \**pēšgāh*<sup>48</sup> 'leader, over-lord, master', an apt name or attribute for Jupiter (*Ohrmazd*). In this sense the word is attested in *ZWY*<sup>49</sup>: *apparagān ud xwurdagān be ō pēšgāhih ud rāyēnidārīh rasēnd*, 'The robbers and the lowly will attain to leadership and government', *DkM*, 682.20: *pēšgāh ī mēzd* 'president of offering ritual', continued in NP with the same meaning; see *Vullers*, 386, 'rex, principatus', *BQ*, s.v. 'king, sovereign'.

Judging from the two preceding and the last two planets, the following three terms for Mars, the Sun and Venus should also be epithets matching their astrological designations.

<sup>46</sup> *GBd* ch. I, §4; *Zurvan*, 159.

<sup>47</sup> *GBd* ch. V, MacKenzie, 'Zoroastrian astrology in the *Bundahišn*', *BSOAS*, XXVII, 1964, 521.

<sup>48</sup> Christensen, *ibid.*, 336, *pēshkār* 'président', Altheim, *ibid.*, *pēškār* 'he whose deed is first, he who first acts', for 'servant'.

<sup>49</sup> *Zand ī Wahman Yašt*, *Codex DH*, 117, 11-12.

- (iii) Looking for an interpretation that would suit the warlike character of Mars (Wahrām), we are induced to regard *b'lw'n/p'lw'n* as a misreading of *phlw'n*, \**pahrwān* 'guard' (?), Av. *pāθra-vant*; alternatively if we consider the letter *l* to be a miswritten *s*, i.e. inclining the *l* somehow to the right, we will have the southwestern form of the word *pāsawān*, *pāsbān*<sup>50</sup>; none of which, however, is quite convincing.
- (iv) *brw'n* prima facie is Pth *parwān* 'before, in front of'<sup>51</sup> which evidently cannot serve as a name. The word lends itself to various emendations: *aparwān/abarwān* 'the supreme one', *parwānag* 'envoy, leader'; however, more probable seems to be *pr<y/z>w'n*, *frēzwān* 'inspector'<sup>52</sup> for the Sun (Mīhr).
- (v) *kār-rān* and its variant in the late copies *kārdān* are NP forms<sup>53</sup>. As a NP form it may be resolved into *kār* 'fight, work', and *rān* 'to drive, push', hence 'warrior' or 'proficient official'<sup>54</sup>; Vullers, 764, gives 'Procurator'. The only MP form that is graphically and semantically allied to our word is *kārdār* 'state official, dignitary', none of which, however, characterizes Venus (Anāhīd).
- (vi) *dastwar* 'priest, religious authority' aptly describes Mercury (Tīr), connected with 'penmanship, scribeship, scientific activity, astronomy'. In NP literature it is referred to as *dabīr-e falak* 'the scribe of heaven'<sup>55</sup>.
- (vii) *kōdak* 'page'<sup>56</sup>, a fitting name for the Moon (*Māh*), residing in the first heaven (from below). The word is synonymous with *rēdak* 'page, child', and it is, indeed, in this capacity that in NP literature is called *barīd-e falak* 'the messenger or page of heaven', *BQ*, s.v., and in Zoroastrian literature 'the messenger of the Sun'<sup>57</sup> and an assistant of Wahman<sup>58</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> Christensen, *ibid.*, *bārvar* 'porteur de fardeux', for 'fruitful'; Altheim, *ibid.*, *bālwan*, comparing it with OP \**barđvan* 'the high one', not attested in MP, and not suggestive of the astrological character of Mars. If we consider the term to be a contracted form of \**bālāy-wān*, \**bālist-wān* or a corruption of *bāliat-wāz*, then the term would suit the Sun (Mīhr) rather than Mars, of which the *DkM*, 173, 6, states that 'at the primal creation the Sun stood at the highest point of the sky, (viz. was in its exaltation)'.

<sup>51</sup> Christensen, *L'Iran*, 336, 'commissaire'!, 'executor' (*L'Empire*, 81), followed by Altheim, *ibid.*, 6.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *MHD*, II, 30, 3-5; A. Perikhanian, *Sasanidskij Sudebnik*, Yerevan, 1973, s.v.

<sup>53</sup> Christensen, *L'Iran*, *ibid.*, *kārdān* 'expert'; Altheim, *ibid.*, *kārdān* 'he who supervises the work' — an impossible definition.

<sup>54</sup> *Farhang-e Nafisi*, 'proficient', s.v.

<sup>55</sup> Christensen, *ibid.*, 'conseiller'!

<sup>56</sup> Altheim, *ibid.*, 'insignificant'!

<sup>57</sup> *Pers. Riv. DHY*, II, 113.

<sup>58</sup> *GBD*, ch. III, § 12.

The twelve spiritual powers within which revolve the seven planets are, in fact, thirteen in number. Christensen has, perhaps inadvertently, retained them all, and Altheim<sup>59</sup> has taken *āyandah* and *šavandah* as one term! To my mind, the redundant element could have entered into the list as a variant reading of what might have seemed an ambiguous term to a copyist. Thus, of the two terms *kšndh* and *knndh* either one may be redundant on account of their graphic similarity; and since *kunanda* 'doing' signifies action in general, and is thus a general feature of all powers expressing activity, the last should be the odd one out<sup>60</sup>.

It is noteworthy that unlike the preceding terms these are given in NP nouns of agency formed by the NP productive suffix *-anda*. In contrast to NP the corresponding MP suffix *-andag* forming adjectives is highly unproductive. In MP the agent takes, as is commonly known, endings such as *-t/dār*, *-āk/g*, *-k/gar*, and by no means *-andak/g*<sup>61</sup>.

As some of these terms offer various readings and plurality of meaning at that, the assessment of their MP equivalents is of necessity conjectural. Our chief concern, therefore, is to establish the general framework of Mazdak's cosmology rather than its original formal details, which, therefore, need not detain us.

Assuming that these twelve powers are those of the Signs of the Zodiac, as has already been suggested, the most ostensible course would be to elicit their actual denotations by comparing them with the indications of the constellations as represented by the Houses of the Dodecatopos. With minor emendations and transposition of two terms they present close agreement with the indications or fortunes of the Houses, only if they are reckoned from Aries (*Warrag*), viz. the most powerful Xth House, the *Medium Caeli* (*Mayān ī āsmān*):

NP	MP	Houses	Indications
<i>x<sup>v</sup>āhanda</i> <sup>62</sup>	<i>bringar</i> 'determiner' <i>x<sup>v</sup>āstār</i> 'who wills, wishes'	<i>Mayān ī āsmān</i>	(rule of sovereign, government, absolute authority, etc.)

<sup>59</sup> Altheim, *ibid.*, 7.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *DkM*, 203, 20, *kunišgarān* 'agents'.

<sup>61</sup> On MP agents see de Menasce, *Une encyclopédie*, p. 72f. Not one of the forms in *-andag* considered MP agents by Christensen, and followed by Altheim and Klíma, viz. *dahandagh/-γ*, *sitānandagh/-γ*, *barandagh/-γ*, etc. is attested in MP literature; *zywndk*, *zindag*, *bawandag*, and the like, are not agents, but adjectives.

<sup>62</sup> Christensen, *ibid.*, *khvānandagh* 'celui qui appelle!'; Altheim, *ibid.*, *hwānandah*, read \**hwāḍandah*, MP *xūāḍanday*, 'the covetous', impossible phonetic change in NP and meaning in MP. On the Houses see MacKenzie, *ibid.*, 526.

<i>dahanda</i>	<i>baxtār</i> 'distributor' <i>brēhēnāg,</i> <i>brēhēnidār</i> 'who decrees, creates'	<i>Farroxān</i>	(happiness, friends, etc.)
<i>istānanda</i> <sup>63</sup>	<i>appurdār</i> 'who takes away, steals' <i>stanidār</i> 'who seizes'	<i>Duṣfarragān</i>	(enemies, prison, debt, fines, etc.)
* <i>parvaranda</i> <sup>64</sup>	* <i>parwardār</i> 'who maintains, nourishes'	<i>Gyānān</i>	(soul, life, education, etc.)
* <i>x<sup>v</sup>āranda</i>	<i>x<sup>v</sup>ardār</i> 'consumer'	<i>Kisagān</i>	(nutriment, livelihood, etc.)
* <i>dāranda</i> <sup>65</sup>	<i>dāštār</i> 'maintainer preserver'	<i>Brādarān</i>	(brothers, sisters, relations, jewels, intelligence, knowledge, etc.)
* <i>xēzanda</i> <sup>66</sup>	<i>waxšāg,</i> 'growing' <i>wālēnidār,</i> <i>waxšēnidār</i> 'who causes to grow' <i>āxēzidār</i> 'rising'	<i>Pedištān</i>	(ancestors, descendants, real estate, etc.)
* <i>zāyanda</i> <sup>67</sup>	<i>zahāg</i> 'engendering'	<i>Frazandān</i>	(children, friends, joy, etc.)
<i>kušanāda</i> <sup>68</sup>	<i>ōzanāg</i> 'killer' <i>kuštār</i> 'killer' <i>zadār</i> 'who smites'	<i>Waštāgān</i>	(sickness, defects of body, slaves, etc.)

<sup>63</sup> Christensen, *ibid.*, followed by Altheim, *sitānandagh*, vor *st*°.

<sup>64</sup> MS suggests *baranda* or *paranda*, none of which suggests itself as a special power. Christensen, *ibid.*, and Altheim, *ibid.*, *barandagh/-y*.

<sup>65</sup> MS *davanda* 'runner', emended with Altheim, *ibid.*, 7.

<sup>66</sup> MS suggests NP *čaranda* 'grazer'; the later MSS *xīzanda*. If we read the words as *čaranda* 'grazer' or *xazanda* 'creeper, fig. reptile', the two preceding emended words should also be read *paranda* 'flying, fowl of the air' and *davanda* 'running, biped, quadruped' giving popularly the classes of some animals, which apart from the fact that they do not represent special powers, another clue for the interpretation of the whole scheme, instead of the indications of the Houses, must be sought.

<sup>67</sup> MS suggests *zananda* 'smiting', Altheim emends to \**raḍandah*, MP *raḍanday* 'he who make himself ready' (!), and derives these forms from Av. *rād-* '(sich) bereit machen', *AirWb*, s.v., but he has failed to notice that Av. *rād-* gives NP and MP *ārāstan*, *ārāy-* 'to arrange', as Bthl. has correctly suggested, hence its NP agent would be *ārāyanda* and MP *ārāyišgar*.

<sup>68</sup> Altheim, *ibid.*, 7, reads *kišanāh*, MP *kišanday/kašanday* 'the ploughing' but the MP agent is *kārāg* 'sower'.

<i>āyanda</i> <sup>69</sup>	<i>madār</i> 'coming'	<i>Wayōdagān</i>	(women, giving in marriage, etc.)
<i>šavanda</i> <sup>70</sup>	<i>sazišnig</i> 'perishable' <i>widerišnig</i> 'who passes away'	<i>Margān</i>	(death and its causes, murder, imprisoning, etc.)
<i>pāyanda</i> <sup>71</sup>	<i>pādār</i> 'lasting, preserver' <i>ēstišnig</i> 'lasting'	<i>Kārdāgān</i>	(travel, religion, piety, fate, attainment of knowledge, philosophy, etc.)

Making a general survey of these forces of the constellations described by the Mazdeans as *bayān-baxtārān*<sup>72</sup> 'the gods distributing fortune (fate)' or *bayān ī nekīh baxtārān* 'the gods distributing goodness'<sup>73</sup>, one cannot fail to notice, in spite of our admittedly somewhat strained reconstruction, four groups of congeneric triplets starting with all-embracing sublime divine powers and passing, in descending order, to the more specific powers involved in human life and natural phenomena:

willing	— bestowing	— taking away
nourishing	— consuming	— maintaining
growing	— generating	— destroying
appearing	— passing away	— lasting or preserving

Such a hazy scheme that has been handed down in dubious and corrupt NP renderings would, naturally, lend itself to multifarious readings and interpretations, which, if not led by a well-advised criterion may drift far away from concepts and realities that Mazdak could have been acquainted with.

Before proceeding further with our inquiry, we will treat a few questions that suggest themselves at this stage. The general cosmological concepts presented by the text, the part played by the firmament, the Seven and the Twelve as instruments of the creator in directing the affairs of the world and deciding the fate of men, have analogues in Mazdeism, and sharply contrast with Manichaeism. Whereas Mani, unlike the prevalent astronomical practice, divides the heavens into six

<sup>69</sup> Altheim, *ibid.*, combines it with the following *šavanda* to reduce the number of the powers to twelve.

<sup>70</sup> Christensen has failed to take note of the fact that 'coming' and 'going' differ only in the direction of movement, and cannot represent two powers for which only *šavanda* will suffice.

<sup>71</sup> Christensen, *ibid.*, *pāyandagh* 'celui qui reste'.

<sup>72</sup> *DkM*, 206, 15.

<sup>73</sup> *ŠGW*, IV, 8 (de Menasce, p. 50).

parts<sup>74</sup>, Mazdak like the orthodox Zoroastrians recognizes twelve Houses. Mani, unlike Mazdak, disapproving of astromantic practices states: 'Know that the affairs of the world have changed, since the σφαῖρα of heaven, i.e. the spheres, have been changed, and the priest can no longer acquire such a knowledge of the stars in the circle of a sphere as their fathers acquired. What they prophesy may by chance happen, but frequently it does not happen'<sup>75</sup>.

The difference with Mazdeism, however, comes to light when we compare the function and nature of the luminaries in the Mazdakite with those of the Mazdean or astrological system. Contrary to the Mazdean, Zurvanite or astrological conceptions of the firmament, which either demonize the planets or consider some of them malefic, in the cosmology of Mazdak all luminaries appear to be *ahuric* as divine instruments of the God of Light; and yet in their capacity as the directors of the affairs of the world they are bound to impart favourable as well as unfavourable fortune, which entails the participation of the diabolic powers of the Director of Evil. If our reconstruction be granted, we will again face the bewildering fact that not all of the twelve spirituals (*mēnōgān*, *waxsigān*) are auspicious, viz. *istānanda*, *kušanda* and *šavanda* corresponding to the House of *Dušfarragān*, *Waštagān* and *Margān*. We are, therefore, justified in suggesting that the text, as it stands, is an epitome wanting in many respects; notably, the organization of the powers of the Director of Evil, thanks to which the mixture of Light and Darkness is being brought about.

The sentence that follows explicitly declares Mazdak to be a mystic and theosophist, pure and simple, that recalls Ḥusain ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj proclaiming *ana 'l-ḥaqq* 'I am the Truth'. According to the text gaining an insight<sup>76</sup> into these spiritual powers of the Four, the Seven and the Twelve will enable men to transcend their human individuality and unite with God<sup>77</sup>, and thus be relieved of religious obligation in the world below.

It is stated that Mazdak compared the intermediary powers of God with the letters of an alphabet the knowledge of which would enable the initiate to apprehend the Supreme Mystery (*al-sirru 'l-akbar*) and

<sup>74</sup> Taqī-zāde, *Gāh-šomāri*, 320.

<sup>75</sup> al-Bīrūnī, *India* (tr. Sachau), 381.

<sup>76</sup> MS *man tašawwara min tilka'l-ḥurūfi šai'an* (lit. whoever could imagine anything from these letters), considering the mystical content of the text, should be understood as 'whoever acquires a knowledge of real Truth through meditation or spiritual insight'.

<sup>77</sup> *šāra rabban*.

perceive the Supreme Name or attribute of God (*al-ismu 'l-a'zam*), presumably embodying the totality of the divine powers. The mystical teachings on the mysteries of the letters and the Supreme Name are evidently Neo-Platonic<sup>78</sup> and Neo-Pythagorean<sup>79</sup> contributions which later also spread to Islamic countries<sup>80</sup>.

Altheim straining this point to reduce Mazdak to a follower of Porphyrios suggests that his twenty-three powers correspond to those of the Greek alphabet which is twenty-four in number; and in order to substantiate his theory he has been forced to admit the God of Light himself into his power-alphabet scheme as an independent letter. Reckoning the whole as its own part, or God as one of his own powers, is a strange logic indeed. Thus, even if we take the significance of the letters literally, not metaphorically, the twenty-three spiritual powers of Mazdak fail to find an alphabet to fit in with, conforming neither to the Greek sequence of letters, nor to the Aramaic/Pahlavi, which are twenty-two. If we were to treat Altheim's argument in earnest, it would naturally be expected that by putting his theory into practice the mysterious Name, that all mystics throughout centuries have expectantly longed for, could be elicited from a suitable combination of all the twenty-four Greek letters!

The failure of our sketchy fragment explicitly to mention the name of the God of Mazdak has led Altheim to surprising conclusions. Connecting this circumstance with the mysterious Supreme Name, he argues: 'Now the reason why the lord of the upper world remains unnamed becomes clear. Only that man to whom the highest mystery has opened can know his name'<sup>81</sup> — which is an ill-advised appraisal of oriental mysticism. The concept of the Supreme Name forms also one of the tenets of Islamic mysticism, yet all Moslem mystics worship their God under the name of Allāh. Therefore, there is no reason why Mazdak, a Zoroastrian nonconformist, should not have invoked his God by his Mazdean name or designation. After all he was as much a Zoroastrian as Ḥallāj and Junaid were Moslems.

Returning to Mazdak's mystical views, it should be noted that apart from our present fragment, Mazdak has not been reported to have

<sup>78</sup> Altheim, *ibid.*, 16 ff.

<sup>79</sup> Von Wesendonk, *Das Wesen der Lehre Zarathuštrös*, 275.

<sup>80</sup> The Islamic *Ṣūfīs* have been divided on the interpretation of this mysterious name. They have suggested various attributes and names for the *ismu'l-a'zam*, such as Allāh, Ṣamad, al-Ḥayy, Muḥaimin and the like.

<sup>81</sup> Altheim, *ibid.*, 9.

conceded deification of the spiritually enlightened, whether in the material or Ideal existence, a profanity in the judgement of his opponents that could not have escaped being brought forward in the long list of accusations against him. In fact, our internal evidence runs counter to this assertion. In a *Dēnkard*<sup>82</sup> passage identified by me as Mazdakite, it is stated that 'a few of them (i.e. Mazdak's adherents) who have been more in opposition (i.e. held extreme opinions) (maintain that) through righteousness one becomes the best of beings in the corporeal as well as the impalpable, pure world'. The *Shāhnāma*<sup>83</sup>, which has faithfully preserved some of the religious and social tenets of the sect, depicts the way to salvation through self-edification and the subjugation of passions in the following words: 'When you have prevailed over these five Demons<sup>84</sup>, the way to the Ruler of the Universe will be revealed to you'. Whereas none of these authentic accounts supports al-Warrāq's 'union with God', the *Dēnkard* fragment attests 'liberation from obligation through piety' and hence Mazdak's adherence to mysticism<sup>85</sup>.

These comparisons of our text with trustworthy sources cast a shadow on the reliability of al-Warrāq's narration, especially that concerned with Mazdak's extreme mystical views. It may well be that our historian has depicted Mazdak, under the influence of the prevalent Islamic extreme mysticism, as a gnostic of the type of Ḥallāj whose ultimate goal was the attainment of the mystical stage of *fanā'* or absorption into the Deity.

In Mazdak's cosmology one cannot fail to observe partial analogies with various foreign teachings, notably, the mystical doctrines of Philo Alexandrinus, Neo-Platonists and Neo-Pythagoreans whose comparative study, however, falls beyond the scope of the present paper. It will suffice to note that Philo also enunciated that God's influence on the material world is effected through intermediary Platonic Ideas embodied in Logos, his wisdom, which link the Deity with the world below. Likewise his ultimate purpose in life was to achieve union with God through ecstasy.

<sup>82</sup> *DkM*, 653, 16-18; Shaki, 'The social doctrine of Mazdak', *op. cit.* p. 294. *az ōyšān ēīgām-iz-ē \*petyārağtar būd ēstend andar ax\* i astōmand ud agriftār (ud)āsnōmand ahlāyih [kē] az hastān pahlom.*

<sup>83</sup> *Shāhnāma*, ed. Moscow, VIII, 48.

<sup>84</sup> I.e. Concupiscence, Envy, Hatred, Wrath, and Want.

<sup>85</sup> See Shaki, *ibid.*, 161 ff.



The formal aspect of Mazdak's doctrine of 'liberation from obligation through knowledge' may even be compared with the *tattva* theory of the Indian materialists, which could have afforded him a model to frame his mystico-cosmological teaching. In the words of al-Bīrūnī<sup>86</sup> 'the *tattva*, that is the twenty-five things through the knowledge of which liberation is attained', consists of the following: '1. The general soul; 2. The abstract ὕλη; 3. The shaped matter; 4. The overpowering nature; 5-9. The simple matters; 10-14. The primary elements; 20. The directing will; 21-25. The instrumental *necessaria*. The totality of these elements is called *tattva*, and all knowledge is restricted in them.... Learn the Twenty-five by distinctions, definitions and divisions... afterwards adhere to whatever religion you like; your end will be salvation'.

The formal similarity between the *tattva* theory, in spite of its materialistic content, and Mazdak's gnostic principle is obvious. However, whether Mazdak would have known of such analogical concepts we have no way to assess.

To conclude, Mazdak's teachings as presented by al-Shahristānī are an eclectic doctrine blending Zoroastrian heresy with some elements of mysticism, a conclusion that we have already arrived at from the examination of Middle Persian evidence. It is significant that his heresy, apart from social doctrines, also extends over the cosmogonical and cosmological fields. Our examination establishes the fact that Mazdakism has had little in common with Manichaeism. Even in their asceticism, which may have confused some contemporary observers, Mazdak fundamentally differs from Mani on the method and principle of self-edification.

<sup>86</sup> al-Bīrūnī, *India* (tr. Sachau) 44 and 179.