



Mazdak and Porphyrios

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History of Religions, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Summer, 1963), 1-20.

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PORPHYRIOS*

I

The same great crisis which rocked the Roman Empire and the ancient world in general, around the middle of the third century A.D., also marked an epoch in spiritual history. To the existing world views it added two more—the Greek revival of Platonic philosophy and on the Iranian side the teaching of Mani and his disciples. They originated almost simultaneously in the two great empires of the Romans and Sassanians who, although they were inimical neighbors, nonetheless constituted together the “Lights” and “Eyes of the World.”¹ As the two empires were at the same time both distinct and yet bound together, so were the systems which originated in them.

For not only contemporaneity united the Neo-Platonics and the Manichaeans. The fact that both movements were re-adaptions of ancient traditions establishes a closer bond. That never ending struggle between the Father of Greatness² and the Prince of Darkness which was central to Mani’s world myth was inconceivable without Zathustra’s prototype. As with the Platonic revival, there was in Iran a return to the tradition which included all that was greatest and most

* This article is a translation of a section of the author’s book, *Geschichte der Hunnen*, III (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1961) 61–80.

¹ Petr. Patr. Frag. 13, *FGH*, IV, 188.

² The most convenient survey of the evidences is given in H.-Ch. Puech, *Le Manichéisme*, p. 154, n. 295.

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authoritative for its own folk, its own culture, and an attempt to renew that tradition in modern form.

To be sure, that which unites the two systems implies also that they remain separated by deep distinctions. The Manichaean teaching was as much determined by dualism as Neo-Platonism was by the unity of the divine. Certainly the latter did not renounce the manifoldness of the traditional Greek world of the gods.³ But that world was stripped of its meaning when its multiplicity was returned to unity. Artemis and Aphrodite had once been mutually exclusive aspects of the world which, unreconciled and irreconcilable, clashed and created the tragic conflict in Euripides' *Hippolytus*; now they became "powers" and "energies" of the same divine might. In proportion as the ancient gods were stripped of their form and with it their divine substance, the significance grew of the one who was assimilating all into his own comprehensive essence—the god of the sun. But he himself remained only the visible image and the instrument of the great One who stood above him. As "the Idea of existing things," the totality of the divine world was subordinated to the latter in a steeply ascending pyramid.⁴

Mani wrote in the newly developed Syrian literary language. But he was of Iranian, not Aramaean, extraction. The Neo-Platonics also came from a very circumscribed region. Ammonios Sakkas, the Hermetics, and Plotinos himself were Egyptians; Porphyrios was Phoenician; Longinos, Kallinikos, and Amelios were Syrians; Iamblichos had an Arabic name. "Eastern Roman Empire" is an unsatisfactory designation for this territory. Asia Minor, and above all Cappadocia, which was to be the home of three great teachers of the church, remains outside it. Neither does Semitic descent determine the homogeneity. It may, however, be significant that all the men named came from countries which would one day be strongholds of Monophysitism. It may seem surprising, but closer examination reveals an essential connection here.

When the Council of Chalcedon accepted the formulation of unity of the West as contained in the "Tome" of Leo the Great, it acknowledged two natures in Christ after his incarnation, in spite of the unity of his person. Dioscorus and the Egyptian bishops who supported their patriarch were sacrificed to the alliance between Constantinople and Rome. Alexandrine theology had always emphasized the divine nature of Christ at the expense of the human. Thus one side took pre-

³F. Altheim, *Aus Spätantike und Christentum*, pp. 56–57, and in the anthology published by C. Brinkmann, *Soziologie und Leben*, pp. 179–80.

⁴Altheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 19–20.

cedence over the other until finally the Egyptian church advocated Monophysitism, the teaching of one divine nature. In that teaching met the opponents of the formulation of 451—all who were united in repudiating Leo's "Tome." The decision at Chalcedon led to an irreparable break with Monophysite Egypt and Syria.

We need only to articulate it—Monophysitism continued the tenets of the Egyptian and Syrian Neo-Platonics. Both sides did not completely suppress that which had been given them: the Neo-Platonics did not fully lose the multiplicity of the ancient gods, nor did the Monophysites lose the *logos* beside the father. But they devaluated that which contested unity by assimilating it to a higher unity. The same tenet came to the fore in both Monophysitism and Neo-Platonism, and it is hardly an accident that both views recruited out of Egypt and Syria. A passionate striving for unity was just as characteristic of the men of these lands as dualism was of Iran.

The Arabians remain. The internal relationship between Monophysitism and Islam has recently been emphasized. Eutyches, one of the fathers of the Monophysite teaching, has been called a forerunner of Mohammed.⁵ Indeed the developments of the two run parallel. Mohammed's teaching was also inspired by reflections on unity and by the recognition that God has no "partner." He stands in a direct line with his Neo-Platonic and Monophysite neighbors and predecessors. But Mohammed's religious passion gave that which those before him had perceived and to which they had aspired a dissimilar and more distinctive stamp.

Nonetheless it is most astounding that Neo-Platonism also influenced Iranian thinking and recast it in its own likeness. The teaching of the divine unity gripped the land which had always professed dualism. It was strong enough to blot out the classic mythos of Iran; for awhile it seemed as if unity would triumph over divine duality there.

After their Athenian school was closed in 529, the heads of the Neo-Platonic teaching left the East Roman Empire and sought sanctuary with the Sassanians. They hoped to find there the Platonic state in which justice ruled, kingship and philosophy coincided, and subjects were temperate and humble. Reality was of such kind that the exiled philosophers preferred death to an honored life at the Persian court. Thus runs the report of Agathias.⁶ Neither he nor the exiled philosophers knew that a teaching grounded in the Neo-Platonic had just recently effected a revolution in Iran.

⁵ H. Grégoire in *Mélanges Ch. Diehl*, I, 107 f.

⁶ *Ibid.*, II, chaps. xxx-xxxI.

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Mazdak and the Mazdakites, whose elevation under Kavād I (488–97, 499–531) shattered the social and economic order of the Sassanian Empire, are of interest to contemporary historiography as precursors and pioneers of socialist thought. Yet already Th. Nöldeke, to whom we are indebted for the first scientific study of Mazdak and his teachings,⁷ concluded that the reformer differed from all of his true or ostensible successors in his religious character.⁸ A. Christensen has formulated this conclusion more specifically in his comprehensive and still fundamental monograph on the reign of Kavād I and the Mazdakite communism.⁹ He maintained that Mazdak's teaching built on the foundations which Mani had laid and that his system represented only an extension and special development of the Manichaeism.¹⁰ Christensen was enabled to go beyond Nöldeke both by the discovery of original Manichaean scriptures in Chinese-Turkestan and by long-range progress in Manichaean research. Undoubtedly Christensen has made an important discovery. We must ask only whether this one spiritual-historic characteristic of Mazdak concludes everything which may be said about him. We shall see that a second advance is permitted by a further discovery, of which Christensen could have known as little as Nöldeke before him knew of the Manichaean find. We may anticipate that it will lead us far away from Christensen's results.

The point of departure for this study will be an original fragment from a writing of Mazdak—the only one extant. Again we are indebted to Christensen for the recognition that these are Mazdak's own words. But Christensen's translation and interpretation of the fragment, preserved in Arabic translation, leaves something to be desired. Furthermore, the necessary conclusion has not been drawn out of the recognition that this is an original fragment.

That which has been and still is primarily available on Mazdak's teaching consists of doxographic reports which classify it according to rigid categories like communal property, communal wives, teachings of principles and elements. Such classifications may be necessary for certain ends; they have the advantage of simplicity and fixed order. But such methods threaten to evaporate the spiritual form of a teaching. It emerges only when the distinctively personal and unrepeatable original wording is available. Everyone remembers what a decided

⁷ *Gesch. d. Perser u. Araber*, pp. 455 ff.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 459 f.

⁹ *Klg. Danske Videnskab. Selskab., Hist.-filol. Medd.*, Vol. IX, Fasc. 6; the results repeated: *L'Empire des Sassanides*, 2d ed., pp. 316 ff.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 96 f.; *L'Empire des Sassanides*, 2d ed., pp. 337 f.

advance was made in opening up pre-Socratic philosophy when scholars turned from doxographic reports and kept to that which was preserved in the texts. At that moment there began a new epoch in pre-Socratic research. In the following pages, we shall turn from doxographic reports to a text which, no matter how brief it is, nonetheless guarantees that Mazdak himself is speaking to us.

II

In his *kitābu l-milal wa-n-nihal* Šahrastānī has also given a report about the teachings of Mazdak.¹¹ He begins with a few notes on his life, follows with a short report in the doxographic style and, beginning with *hukiya* or *hakā*,¹² he gives some additions. At the beginning there appears as guarantor Muḥammed b. Hārūn, named Abū ʿĪsā l-Warrāk¹³ with his *kitābu l-makālāt*.¹⁴

A third section is introduced by *wa-ruwiya ʿanhu*. The passage is distinguished from everything which precedes it by a great number of Iranian names and concepts in which, as we shall see, the Middle Persian form still shines through. The *-hu* in *ʿanhu* can only refer to Mazdak. This tradition claims to go back to Mazdak himself. Although reference to Mazdak is at first in the third person, there is no doubt that these are his own words.¹⁵ The terminology indicates that; both the innumerable details and the originality of the opinions expressed confirm it.¹⁶ The stylistic adaption made in the beginning is continuous with the preceding report; it does not deny that a fragment of one of the writings of Mazdak is here in slightly revised form. In the passage on the letters which is introduced by *kāla*, Mazdak speaks directly. The fragment thus continues literally.

According to the text, the object of Mazdak's veneration—presumably the god of light—sat on his throne in the upper world, just as ʿUṣraw did in the lower. The failure to mention the name of the deity is characteristic; we shall see it again. Opposite him there are four powers (*kuwā*), which will later be termed spiritual powers (*al-kuwā r-rūḥānīya*):

¹¹ P. 192, lines 19 f. ed. Cureton; Vol. I, pp. 119 f. of Bombay ed. of 1314 H.

¹² It cannot be determined whether, according to A. Christensen (*op. cit.*, p. 80, n. 2) a change of the source is assumed (*hukiya*) or whether Abū ʿĪsā l-Warrāk speaks again (*hakā*).

¹³ Šahrastānī, p. 188, lines 14 f., shows that he had formerly been a Zarathustran (Christensen, *op. cit.*, p. 79); cf. L. Massignon in *Enc. d. Islam*, IV, 1218, and C. Brockelmann, *Gesch. d. arab. Lit.-Suppl.*, I, 341.

¹⁴ Bērūnī, *Chronol.*, p. 277, line 13; p. 284, line 6; 23 ed. Sachau.

¹⁵ Christensen, *op. cit.*, p. 80, n. 3, accepts a third source, "qui prétend citer les paroles même de Mazdak."

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

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1. The power of discrimination (*tamyīz*), compared with the *mōbadān mōbad*;
2. The power of insight (*fahm*), compared with the Great-*hērbad*;
3. The power of vigilance (*hifz*),¹⁷ compared with the *spāhbaδ*;
4. The power of joy (*surūr*), compared with the *rāmiškar*.

Christensen translates *rāmiškar* as “musicien.” More pregnant is his interpretation “maître de plaisir du roi,” corresponding to *kuwwatu s-surūr*.

These four powers link the affairs of the two worlds (*yudabbirūna amra l-ālamain*) by seven of their viziers. *Tilka*, in Arabic, refers generally to the far distant; therefore it means the four powers of the upper world. “Their viziers,” then, are the viziers of the four *kuwā*. The viziers rule *amra l-ālamain* “the affairs of the two worlds”; that is, the upper and lower world.¹⁸ Only thus does a later sentence become intelligible—that when all the powers named unite in a man he belongs to God even in the lower world. We shall consider this later. The seven viziers bear the following names:

1. *sālār*, Middle Persian *sardār*, “the highest, the chief”;
2. *bēškār*,¹⁹ Middle Persian *pēškār*, “he whose deed is first, he who first acts”;
3. *bālwān*, compare Old Persian* *bardvan*,²⁰ “the high one”;
4. *barwān*, Middle Persian *parvān*, “the executor”;²¹
5. *kārdān*, Middle Persian the same, “he who supervises the work”;
6. *dastwar*, Middle Persian *dastvar*, “Judge”;
7. *kūdak*, Middle Persian *kōdak* (*kōdaγ*), “the insignificant.”²²

Again, the seven viziers revolve inside a circle of twelve *rūhānīyūn*, “Spiritual beings.” These are named:

1. *hwānandah*, read* *hwādandah*,²³ Middle Persian *xwādandaγ*, “the covetous”;
2. *dahandah*, Middle Persian *dahandaγ*, “the giving”;
3. *sitānandah*, Middle Persian *stānandaγ*, “the taking away”;

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 81: “la Mémoire.” This could also be *hifz*, but then the comparison with the *spāhbaδ* does not emerge.

¹⁸ Incorrectly translated by Th. Haarbrücker (*Schahrastani's Religionsparteien u. Philosophenschulen* [Halle, 1850–51]), I, 292, “die Angelegenheit der Welten”; Christensen follows him.

¹⁹ *byškēh* and the like in Oxon. Arab. XLVII Hunt. 158 and XCV Poc. 83, which we have compared.

²⁰ Cf. avest. *barəzman*—“high.”

²¹ Christensen, *op. cit.*, p. 81, n. 2.

²² The particulars in Chr. Bartholomae, *Altiran. Wb.*, col. 472 to avest. *kutaka-*.

²³ *hwāhandah*: Oxon. Arab. XCV. O. Szemerényi remarks on the 6. 3. 54: “*xwāhandaγ* is die Form, die man fürs Mittelpers. erwarten sollte: intervokalisches *d* wird hier zu *-h-*; *dahand* von *da-dā* ‘geben.’”

4. *barandah*, Middle Persian *barandaγ*, “the bringing”;
5. *ḥwarandah*, Middle Persian *xwarandaγ*, “the eating”;
6. *dawandah*, read* *darandah*, Middle Persian *darandaγ*, “the keeping”;
7. *ḥīzandah*, Middle Persian *xēzandaγ*, “the rising”;
8. *kišandah*, Middle Persian *kišandaγ* (*kašandaγ*), “the plowing”;²⁴
9. *zanandah*, read* *rađandah*,²⁵ Middle Persian *rađandaγ*, “he who makes (himself) ready”;²⁶
10. *kunandah*, Middle Persian *kunandaγ* “the acting”;
11. *āyandah* and *šavandah*, Middle Persian *āyandaγ* and *šavandaγ*, “the coming” and “the going”;
12. *bāyandah*, Middle Persian *pāyandaγ*, “the preserving” or “the enduring.”²⁷

As the Lord of Light in the upper world has in Țusraw his counterpart for the lower, so the four spiritual powers have theirs in the four arch-officials—the *mōbađān mōbađ*, the highest *hērbađ*, the *spāhbađ*, and the *rāmiškar*. The seven viziers who follow them work in both upper and lower worlds. Whether or not this holds true of the twelve spiritual beings is not indicated. One would imagine them to have been, like the viziers, in both worlds.

Explanation of particulars can begin with the spiritual beings. The linguistic form of their names is the same in all instances—they are present participles of verbs, expressing activity. The spiritual beings are therefore actors, as opposed to the powers, which represent spiritual *δυνάμεις* and are accordingly spiritual aspects of the Lord of Light. Thus there unfolds a polarity of aspect and deed, enduring and acting, being and becoming; we shall find this “syzygian principle”²⁸ again in the viziers.

The original Iranian terminology is given for the spiritual beings, unlike the powers. In three instances we adopt light conjectures. They each involve single letters, letters which are known to be readily confused in the Arabic language; that is, *n* for *d*, *w* and *z* for *r*. These changes seem to us to be imperative. Only in this way can we make sense of the order of the spiritual beings. Clearly, each two of the *rūḥānīyūn* constitutes a matching pair. Opposed are demanding and

²⁴ In New Pers. *kašīdan*, avest. ³ *karš-* “to plow”; Bartholomae, *Altiran. Wb.* col. 457; H. S. Nyberg, *Hilfsbuch des Pehlevi*, II, 128.

²⁵ *wlydh*: *Oxon. Arab.* XLVII.

²⁶ Zu avest. *rād-* “make ready”: Bartholomae, *op. cit.*, cols. 1520 f.; cf. Middle Pers. *rāđēnītan*.

²⁷ Christensen, *op. cit.*, p. 81: “celui qui reste.”

²⁸ J. Friedländer in *JAOS*, XXIX, 116; F. Meyer in *Art. Asiae*, XVI, 149.

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giving, taking away and bringing, consuming and preserving, growing of fruit and preparing the fields, preparation and activity, motion (for we can only comprehend coming and going in this generic term) and inertia. Thus we preserve the twelve *rūhānīyūn* which are required, unlike Christensen²⁹ who has thirteen, against the explicit information given at the beginning of the text.

The order of the viziers is in accordance with the same principle. But now we do not have giving, growing, and preserving on the one side and use and consumption on the other. The chief, the high one and planning beside the first acting, executing, and judging reflect a distinction between thought and deed. Again we meet the same polarity which was revealed in the comparison of powers and spiritual beings. Moreover, it pervades the collectivity of the viziers. Only the seventh vizier, "the insignificant," does not fall into line. But as a lesser member (who is named accordingly), he effects the transition to the twelve spiritual beings who constitute a lower order than the viziers. For that order is not unfolded of the tension between thought and deed, but rather of the material tension between consumption and creation. By contrast, the first, third, and fifth viziers, expressing the intellectual, point upward toward the powers who stand next to the throne of the Lord of Light.

We recognize an order of rank and degree. At its summit is God or the Light; before him are the four powers; then come the viziers, classified according to thought and deed; finally come the spiritual beings, also classified, but according to consumption and creation. There is revealed a succession which descends from light and its spiritual aspects, through thought and deed, through gratification of the requirements of life, to the material creation of the latter. The higher the rank of one of the beings named, the more he is characterized by light and spirit, by purity and self-contained contemplation. The more we descend, however, the more we attain to the realm of the material and the active.

Next is a sentence which Christensen translates as follows: Dans chaque homme toutes les quatre forces sont réunis, et les sept et les douze sont devenus maîtres dans le monde inférieur, et l'obligation leur a été ôtée."³⁰ Linguistically, this rendering is inconceivable; furthermore, it is meaningless. The sentence can only mean: "And that man, in whom these four powers, the seven viziers, and the twelve (spiritual beings) unite, he becomes one who belongs to God (*rab-*

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 81, n. 4. *Oxon. Arab.* XCV omits *rūhānīyūn*, No. 10.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 81 f., in direct continuation of Haarbrücker, *op. cit.*, I, 292.

bānī)³¹ (already) in the lower world, and his (earthly) burden will be taken from him (*taklīf*).” The world is divided into many individual powers and might. They govern and order their designated provinces; they are active in different ways. But if once they unite in a single man, an integration is effected which transcends their division and lifts that man to God.

Now there is a new thought, introduced by *kāla*. *Ḥusraw* in the upper world, it says, rules by means of the letters whose sum is equivalent to the most powerful name (*al-ismu l-aṣṣam*—it is probably that of the god of light). Previously the term *Ḥusraw* had been used for the lord of the lower world (*ḥusraw bi-l-ālamī l-asfal*); and the god of the upper world remained unspecified (*maḥbūdūhu*). The master of the upper world still has no name. In its place is a metonymic “*Ḥusraw* in the upper world.” This can only be understood to refer to that nameless god of the upper world who corresponds to “*Ḥusraw* of the lower world.” The meaning of the letters by means of which the lord of the upper world rules is generally denied to men. Nevertheless, to that man who is capable of formulating an idea of them (*man taṣawwara min tilka l-ḥurūfi šaiʿan*), the highest mystery is revealed (*as-sirru l-akbar*). Now the reason why the lord of the upper world remains unnamed becomes clear. Only the man to whom the “highest mystery” has opened can know that name; and a man with such knowledge will never relinquish his discovery. Moreover, the man to whom “the highest mystery” is refused (*man ḥurima dālīka*), exists in opposition to the spiritual powers (*fī muḳābalati l-kuwā l-arbaʿ*); that is, in the blindness of ignorance (*ʿamā l-ḡahl*) as opposed to the power of discrimination, in forgetfulness (*nisyān*) as opposed to insight, in spiritual indolence (*balāda*) as against vigilance, in sorrow (*ḡamm*) as opposed to joy.

The connection with that which has already been said is evident. Just as the man in whom the powers unite can become like god, so the man who knows the meaning of the letters knows the highest mystery.

III

In interpreting the fragment, we have kept as close as possible to Šahrastānī’s text itself. We have explained what is there and how it came to be there. However, one observation must not be neglected. The text has a series of discrepancies which give the impression that it has been abbreviated; hence it is inconclusive in and of itself. Its beginning compares the unnamed lord of the upper world and *Ḥusraw* in the lower, the four powers in the upper world and the four imperial

³¹ The two Oxford manuscripts have *rabbān*.

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officials of the lower. We expect the seven viziers and the twelve spiritual beings to have this same division according to two worlds. The term "vizier" is just as appropriate to the lower world as the term "spiritual being" is to the upper. One cannot escape the impression that there is in each case only one term of an anticipated pair. Furthermore, the names of the powers, that is, of the upper world, are Arabic; those of the officials of the lower world are Middle Persian. Similarly, the circumlocution for the lord of the upper world is *ma^abūduhu*; in the lower world ʤusraw reigns. The individual names of viziers and spiritual beings are all in Middle Persian form, but the designation for the class as such is Arabic. Following the preceding train of thought, we must infer that the viziers both collectively and as individual beings belong to the lower world and that their counterpart in the upper world is missing. On the other hand, *rūhānīyūn* as a generic term belongs to the upper world, but its corresponding specific names seem to have been left out. Conversely, one should assign the Middle Persian names of the spiritual beings to the lower world. Their generic term would be left out with *rūhānīyūn*, which should actually be part of the upper world, substituted.

There is one final difficulty. Christensen has observed that the number seven corresponds to the planets and the number twelve to the signs of the zodiac.³² This will be confirmed. But even if one assumes that the planets revolve inside the circles of the zodiac, the same notion (*hādīhi s-sab^atu tadūru fī itnā ʿašara rūhānīyan*)³³ applied to viziers and spiritual beings is implastic and totally absurd.

So much for the interpretation of the fragment. Now we must attempt to establish its historic context.

The first question concerns the counterpart to the unnamed Lord of Light of the upper world. Who is ʤusraw in the lower world? He cannot possibly be the contemporary of Mazdak who bore the name—the later Chusrō I Anōšarvān (531–579). For Mazdak could hardly have named in honor of his most inimical opponent the ruler who later murdered the prophet himself and thousands of his disciples. Moreover, Chusrō had already killed Mazdak when he ascended the throne (at the end of 528 or the beginning of 529).³⁴ Mazdak therefore could not have known him as ruler. Finally, our fragment itself shows that it was composed before the reign of Anōšarvān. Mention of only one *spāhbaδ* implies that, for Mazdak, only a single "spāhbaδ of the lands"

³² Christensen, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

³³ We are giving the correct form.

³⁴ Christensen, *op. cit.*, pp. 124 f.

existed; he had not yet been replaced by the four bearers of that title whose appointment constituted one of the first official acts of the reign of Anōšarvān.³⁵

Ḥusraw can only mean "king" in general, and not a specific bearer of the title. It is thus to be understood in the same way as the Arabic *kisrā*, a collective designation for all the Sassanians. But *kisrā* was first used as general designation of the kings of Persia only after Chusrō I and II, the two greatest among them, had invested the name with glory. Once more we are up against the problem of Mazdak's having used a term which he could not have adopted out of his own time.

A previously neglected remark of Ibn Ḥurdāqbeh suggests a solution. In a section dealing with the surnames of the kings of Chorāsān and of the East occurs that of the king of Chwārezm—*ḥusraw ḥwārizm*.³⁶ Therefore Ḥusraw was the name of the ruler who appears as *ḥwzrmn mlk* in the inscription of Paikuli³⁷ (parth.).

Except for a short episode under Bahrām V. Gōr,³⁸ Chwārezm was never subjected to Sassanian rule. In particular, neither Chusrō I Anōšarvān nor Chusrō II Aβarvēz ever exercised any sovereignty there. Accordingly the term Ḥusraw cannot stem from them. We do know well—and from a most authoritative source—that a mythological king of Chwārezm bore the name. According to Bērūnī,³⁹ a native of Chwārezm, Kai Ḥusraw appears at the head of all dynasties as first ruler of the land. The name of his historical successor is derived from this Ur-king.

Thus Mazdak used as example not the Sassanian king, but the ruler of Chwārezm, a country lying far to the north and one not under Sassanian rule. The fact that Kavād I, at least at times, was or was reported to be a disciple of Mazdak makes this conclusion even more astounding. Mazdak can only have been induced to choose his particular type of ruler by the immediate accessibility of the kingdom of Chwārezm to himself and to his audience. In other words, Mazdak was himself a native of Chwārezm or its vicinity and first came forward there.

To be sure, this contradicts existing opinion. Apart from Tabriz

³⁵ Tabarī, ann. I, 894, lines 5 f.; Dīnawarī p. 69, lines 11 f.; Nöldeke, *op. cit.*, p. 155, n. 2.

³⁶ P. 40, line 2, ed. de Goeje.

³⁷ 42' ed. Herzfeld.

³⁸ E. Sachau, in *SBAK Wien*, LXXIII, pp. 505 f. after a quotation of al-Baihaḳī which goes back to Bērūnī's lost history of Chwārezm.

³⁹ Chronol., p. 35, lines 9 f. ed. Sachau.

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or Iṣṭahr,⁴⁰ great importance has been attached to the information of Ṭabarī,⁴¹ according to which Mazdak was born in Maḍariya. But the location of the latter is open to question. Nöldeke considered the Susiane,⁴² but Christensen looked for it at the site of the modern Kūṭ al-ʿAmāra.⁴³ Yet Nöldeke himself calls his suggestion only a guess (with justice), and the equation of *maḍariya*⁴⁴ with *māḍarāyā* which Christensen proposes has little paleographic possibility. Perhaps a different approach will be successful. It is known that the name which Ṭabarī gives goes back to the Sassanian Book of Kings.⁴⁵ One is therefore justified in transliterating it into the Pahlavi script and in studying his results as constituting the genuine tradition. Accordingly all diacritical marks, the addition of Arabic scribes, must be disregarded. With a very slight alteration,⁴⁶ *mwlqʿb* would be read; from this is obtained *mwrqʿb* = Murḡāb.

That takes us far away from the Susiane and from Iraq. We reach outermost Chorāsān at the place where it borders in the Northeast on the Sogdiane and in the North at Chwārezm. Further information, neglected until now, points to the same locale. Balʿamī would have Mazdak come from Nēšāpūr;⁴⁷ others say Nisā. The chief proponent of the latter is Bērūnī,⁴⁸ himself a native of Chwārezm and thus again an authority little open to challenge. Nöldeke interpreted *ns*,⁴⁹ incorrectly vocalized by E. Sachau as Nasā (it is the ancient Nisaia or Parthaunisa), to have been a confusion with Fasā, the birthplace of Zrādušt, the second founder of the sect.⁵⁰ This interpretation, never very likely, is excluded by the fact that Murḡāb, Nēšāpūr, and Nisā

⁴⁰ Thereto the argument of Christensen, *op. cit.*, pp. 99–100. The form of the name is given according to Christensen. E. Littmann writes for us (on the 6. 3. 54): "Die Lesung *Murjāb* [cf. below] ist genial und wird das Richtige treffen. Der Ort, den Christensen vorschlug, wurde auf den Karten *kūt el-amāra* geschrieben. Ich glaube freilich, dass ich vor 38 Jahren *ʿAmāra* feststellte. Aber ich bin mir dessen nicht mehr ganz sicher. Der erste Teil des Names ist *kūt*: ein Ort dieses Namens in Babylonien ist schon aus alter Zeit bekannt."

⁴¹ Ann. I, p. 893, line 10. Not *al-Madariya*, as Christensen writes (*op. cit.* 99). The mistake is already in Nöldeke, *op. cit.*, p. 457; cf. G. Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate* (1930), p. 38.

⁴² *Op. cit.*, p. 154, n. 3; cf. p. 457.

⁴³ *Op. cit.*, p. 100.

⁴⁴ Adnotatio e) to *Ṭabarī*, ann. I, p. 893.

⁴⁵ Christensen, *op. cit.* pp. 28 f.

⁴⁶ The details are in Altheim and Stiehl, *Ein asiatischer Staat*, I, 200.

⁴⁷ Trad. Zotenberg II, 142 f.

⁴⁸ Chronol., p. 209, line 11, ed. Sachau.

⁴⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 457, n. 3.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Ṭabarī*, ann. I, p. 893, line 8.

are all situated in the same region. They confirm one another; together with the introduction of Ḥusraw in our fragment they certify that Mazdak first saw the light of day in northermost Chorāsān. Elsewhere it has been shown that the name-form *maždak* preserved in Bērūnī, chron. 209, 11, and 211, 11, confirms this inference.⁵¹ Only such an hypothesis makes comprehensible the naming of the Chwārezmšāh as the ruler who is the earthly counterpart of the Lord of Light.

IV

Christensen has observed that there are analogies between the teachings of Mazdak and Mani.⁵² They extend from the contrast of the two principles, the worlds of light and of darkness, to details, especially of terminology. The enumeration of long lists and groups of divine beings, minutely catalogued according to name and function, is Manichaeic in style. But designating Mazdak as a mere imitator of Mani for this reason is scarcely permissible. Differences come to light already in the teaching on the elements. Whereas Mani knew five of them, Mazdak, according to Šahrastānī, knew only three. Similarly, in spite of much coincidence of particulars, there is generally on the Manichaeic side nothing corresponding to the organization according to powers, viziers, and spiritual beings. Again, only Mazdak has the account of the numbers. However, the greatest difference between the two is that Mani sets in opposition to the Father of Greatness the Prince of Darkness; Mazdak has no equivalent for the latter. Also missing is the interminable conflict between light and darkness, good and evil, which is characteristic of Mani's teaching. Neither Mazdak's Lord of Light nor anything near him is combative—or even active. He reposes—as distant, untouched Being. Activity is first evident toward the base of the pyramid. It appears in increasingly greater amounts the further it is from the apex; and it is always subordinated to the powers of Being.

According to al-Warrāk, Šahrastānī noted explicitly that there were many parallels between the teachings of Mazdak and Mani. This is especially true of the two principles: light and darkness.⁵³ "Except that Mazdak would say that the light worked with intentionality (*bi-l-kašd*) and free decision (*wa-l-iḥtīyār*), but the darkness blindly (*alā l-ḥabt*) and according to chance (*wa-l-ittifāk*). And the light would be knowing (*ʿālim*) and aware (*ḥassās*), but the darkness ignorant (*gāhil*)

⁵¹ Altheim and Stiehl, *Philologia sacra*, p. 90.

⁵² *Op. cit.*, pp. 101 f., 102, nn. 1–2; *Empire des Sassanides*, 2d ed., pp. 340 ff., 341, nn. 1 and 3; 342, n. 1.

⁵³ Both are pointed out in the *Chronicle of Seert*, II, p. 125, lines 3 f., along with the communal holding of women to be characteristics of the teaching of Zrādušt, Mazdak's associate (cf. II, 125, lines 8 f.); astonishing esp. II, 147 lines 6 f.

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and blind (*a^cmā*). However, the mixture of the two principles would have occurred by chance and *ḥabṭ* and not by intentionality and free decision. And so salvation comes only by chance and never by free will.”

Nöldeke⁵⁴ first referred to the fact that Malalas⁵⁵ called Κανῶδ I Δαρᾶσθενος and that a decidedly Manichaean sect appears in the same author as τὸ (δόγμα) τῶν Δαρισθενῶν.⁵⁶ Malalas himself interpreted this name τὸ δόγμα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ.⁵⁷ Nöldeke has also recognized in the general term a *durust-dēn*, *darazd-dēn* = ὁρθόδοξος and called it the name of Mazdak’s sect.

This observation was adopted by Christensen.⁵⁸ He too apprehended Δαρᾶσθενος and τῶν Δαρισθενῶν as *dārist-dēnān* “ceux qui professent la vraie foi.” Likewise he thought that Malalas’ epithet for Κανῶδ I designated him a disciple of Mazdak and that consequently the *dārist-dēnān* were to be considered adherents of the latter. Anything else added by Christensen is less, or not at all, convincing.⁵⁹ But the kernel of his explication, particularly insofar as he depends upon Nöldeke, holds fast. It will also constitute our point of departure.

Malalas reports specifically that the Manichaean Bundos was supposed to have arrived in Rome in the time of Diocletian. He had broken with Mani’s teaching and he now proclaimed that the good god had fought the evil one and had conquered him. Therefore the good god must be honored as victor. Later Bundos withdrew to Persia and propagated his teaching there.

Indeed Bundos concurred with Mazdak in that, for both, the evil god, Prince of Darkness, has been eliminated from the struggle. It is thus completely conceivable that the teaching of Bundos was carried on in that of Mazdak. To be sure, little is accomplished by this concession alone. For the person of Bundos does not become concrete through Malalas’ evidence alone. Here we seem to be enabled to continue by means of a name which has thus far not been invoked in this context—that of the Syrian periodeutes Būd. The catalogue of au-

⁵⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 457, n. 1.

⁵⁵ P. 429, lines 11 f., ed. Bonn.

⁵⁶ P. 309, lines 19 f., ed. Bonn.

⁵⁷ A. Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, *D. röm. Kaisergesch. bei Malalas*, 404 f., is able to establish no hypotheses on the basis of Malalas’ information 309. 19 f. Neither was the coincidence of the two places surprising to him, nor did he know of the proposals of Nöldeke and Christensen.

⁵⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp. 18; 96 f.

⁵⁹ Thus the comparison of Bundos and Zrādušt (*op. cit.*, 98 f.) and the attempt to rediscover in the false writings of the Arabic authors that name which Malalas hands down (*ibid.*, 97 f.).

thors composed by ʿAḫdīšʿ b. Brikā after 1315–16 in Afrem’s meter⁶⁰ names Būd as the translator of the book of Kalīla wa-Dimna from Indic into Syriac.⁶¹ This information is incorrect insofar as the older Syriac translation came from the Middle Persian text which in turn can be traced to the physician Burzōē. There is in this instance no possibility of Būd’s having been the author. But we can infer in any case that the name Būd was still well enough known in late Sassanian times that a work could have been falsely attributed to him. We are led to the same conclusion by the narrative in the Maronitic chronicle about Scythianos, who introduced “the heresy of Empedocles (*pwḏklȳs*) and Pythagoras” to the Christians of upper Egypt. The latter’s student *bwdws* is supposed to have gone to Babylonia with Scythianos’ wife; there he wrote four works (which are then itemized).⁶²

The other writings attributed to Būd are of a different sort. There are discourses against the Manichaeans and the Marcionites and a study on the “*Ἀλφα τὸ μέγα* of Aristotelian metaphysics. All three seem to have had a Neo-Platonic author; chronologically, they reflect, at the earliest, the time when Plotinus wrote his extant work against the Gnostics, Alexander of Lycopolis wrote his against the Manichaeans, and Porphyrios wrote his against the Christians. The interest in Aristotelian philosophy is paralleled in Porphyrios. All this suggests the second half of the third century A.D.; this tallies with the time of Malalas’ Bundos.

The two different forms of the name remain. The sanskrit *budhā*—“Wise One”⁶³ might be proper for an alleged translator from the Indic. But it does not suit a man who opposed Manichaeans and Marcionites and who interpreted Aristotle. If Bundos withdrew from Rome to Persia, he may have come originally from Persia. We have *Bundād* comparable to *Windād*, *Windafarnah*—comparable to (gen.) “*Ἵνδοφέρρον, Γονδοφέρρον*”;⁶⁴ perhaps Bundos can be compared with *Binḏōē*, *Winḏōē*. With the assimilation of the *n* which is customary in Syria,⁶⁵ a *Bund* may have been changed to a *Budd*. As this would be written *bwd*, it would have been incorrectly read Būd.

It is immaterial whether or not one accepts the line of reasoning in-

⁶⁰ J. S. Assemani, *Biblioth. Orient. Clementino-Vatic.* (1719–28), III, I, 325 f.; for dating see A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syr. Lit.*, p. 325, n. 2.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, III, I, 219, and p. 125.

⁶² Chron. min., 2, p. 59, lines 1 f., ed. Brooks.

⁶³ F. Justi, *Iran Namensbuch*, p. 71r.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 369.

⁶⁵ Nöldeke, *Kurzgef. syr. Gramm.*, 2d ed., pp. 21 f., No. 28.

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dicated. Bundos seems to have been Neo-Platonic. The possible associations between his teaching and that of Mazdak are recognized as soon as the contents of Mazdak's original fragment are placed in their spiritual-historic context.

We notice two things immediately. First, by the elimination of the Prince of Darkness, Mani's dualistic system has been sidestepped. To be sure, the contrasts between upper and lower, lighter and darker have persisted. But the total order maintains a monarchistic culmination in the one whom Mazdak "venerates" (Šahrastānī—*ma^cbūduhu*) and in him whom Bundos before Mazdak commends for "honor" (τιμᾶν) as victor. Second, there is repeatedly demonstrated a thoroughgoing assessment of everything spiritual, contemplative, self-contained, and planning as superior to the active. The two are intrinsically connected. For the omission of the perpetual struggle between Mani's two principles has eliminated not only his dualism, but also the presentation of active conflict as an all-embracing category. Both, however, indicate Neo-Platonism.

The observation, made earlier, that Mazdak never speaks the name of his Lord of Light furnishes our first verification. He is like the World-God of whom the panegyric of 313 says: *quem . . . te ipse dici velis, scire non possemus*.⁶⁶ He is the θεοῦ ὀνόματος κρείττων⁶⁷ of the Hermetics, who ὀνόματος οὐ προσδέλται,⁶⁸ the ἄρρητος.⁶⁹ Here already there is Neo-Platonic terminology everywhere. But it is by no means confined to this.

Today we are acquainted with Porphyrios' writing on the sun, as it has been reconstructed from Macrobius⁷⁰ and from Julian's speech on King Helios.⁷¹ This text was composed before 263, that is, before Porphyrios went to Rome and joined the circle of Plotinus.⁷² Both the thoughts expressed by Porphyrios in his writings and their implications are mirrored in Mazdak's fragment.

For, like Mazdak's Lord of Light, the sun has the highest standing in Porphyrios. It is the visible image of the *divinitas* or θεϊότης, the *divina mens* or the divine νοῦς. Itself without name and invisible, the

⁶⁶ P. 9, line 26, ed. Baehrens.

⁶⁷ I, 298 Scott out of Lactant., div. inst. 4, 614.

⁶⁸ I, 162, 26; cf. 14; 156, 20.

⁶⁹ I, 536, Fragm. 11.

⁷⁰ Sat. I, 17-23.

⁷¹ Altheim, *Aus Spätantike u. Christentum*, pp. 2 f., 15 f.; cf. P. Courcelles, *Les Lettres grecques en Occident*, pp. 19 ff.; M. Rosenbach, *Galliena Augusta*, ΑΠΑΡΧΑΙ, III (1958), 53 ff.

⁷² Altheim, *Aus Spätantike u. Christentum*, pp. 9 f.

latter is revealed in the sun, who is mediator between him and the remainder of the world.

Noûs and sun institute a divine hierarchy comparable to that of Mazdak. Accordingly the four powers should be next in line. But we have for a long time recognized in the seven viziers the planets, moving inside the circles of the zodiac, or the twelve spiritual beings.⁷³ For Porphyrios the sun is also at the head of the planets;⁷⁴ likewise the circles of the zodiac are emanations of the sun and participate in his essence.⁷⁵ As are the gods, so the latter groups are *virtutes* and *effectus*, *δυνάμεις* and *ἐνέργειαι* of the sun. As with Mazdak, so in Porphyrios all these beings are arranged in a pyramid of attributes which descends from the highest essences through their active subordinates.

Mazdak compared the Lord of Light in the upper world to Husrav in the lower. Porphyrios himself makes no such comparisons; but the Greek and Roman panegyrics in the time of Diocletian and Constantine do. Porphyrios' thought world everywhere is determined by the analogy of emperor and sun and its associated symbolism.⁷⁶ In his oration composed on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the reign of Constantine, Eusebius calls the emperor the earthly image of God and his order.⁷⁷ Constantine sends rays like the sun into the farthest parts of the civilized world. The four Caesars are bearers of the light which streams from the ruler. Like Helios, Constantine links the foursome.⁷⁸ Here Mazdak's four powers which stand opposite the Lord of Light and the four officials at Husrav's side find their analogy. They are the translation of the four Caesars into Iranian.

A report of Mas'ūdī supports our conclusion. It calls Mazdak *Mōbād* and an interpreter of the Avesta.⁷⁹ "He established in place of its (the Avesta's) externalities (*li-žāhīrihi*) an interior (*bā'īn*) opposed to its (the Avesta's) externalities, and he was the first to be mentioned among the masters of interpretation and of inner things and of

⁷³ Christensen, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

⁷⁴ Macrobian., Sat. I, 17, 2.

⁷⁵ Macrobian., Sat. I, 21, 16–27.

⁷⁶ Altheim, *Aus Spätantike u. Christentum*, pp. 46 f., 51 f., 54 f.; cf. *Lit. u. Gesellsch.*, I, 138 ff.

⁷⁷ I. Const. p. 199, 2 f.; 215, 21, ed. Heikel; cf. H. Mattingly in *Proceed. Brit. Acad.*, XXXVII, 258 f.

⁷⁸ I. Const. 3, 4.

⁷⁹ *Kitāb at-tanbīh wa-l-išrāf*, p. 101, lines 10 ff., ed de Goeje.

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turning away from the externalities in the law of Zarathustra.”⁸⁰ External and internal, literal and allegorical—who can fail to recognize the Neo-Platonic model in this?

The distinctive innovations reflected in Mazdak’s teaching insofar as they are opposed to those of Mani have, therefore, been influenced by Neo-Platonism. With such a conclusion even Bundos takes shape. When he first appeared during the reign of Diocletian, he could have fallen under Neo-Platonic influence in Rome; after his removal to Iran (surely *Περσις* does not mean the Persis in its stricter sense), he would have implanted it there. Had he arrived there at the turn of the century, Mani would have been dead, and those of his students who had survived the persecutions would have been pushed across the Oxus toward the northeast.⁸¹ Bundos may also have had recourse to that area or to its vicinity. Enough—the teaching would have survived in northern Chorāsān for two centuries, until it emerged from its concealment with Mazdak in the beginning of the sixth century. Then Chorāsān, the original point of departure, was again the final refuge when Mazdak’s enterprise collapsed.⁸²

Such a reconstruction is defensible; indeed the author has accepted it in an earlier work.⁸³ But many difficulties remain. How can anyone imagine that Bundos’ teaching would have survived in concealment for two centuries—and then would suddenly have emerged from darkness into light and into historic significance? Was Chorāsān a cultural pocket in which something comparable to this might have been maintained in isolation? Just the opposite is to be demonstrated. And what happened to Porphyrios’ writing on the sun, which had such a great influence on Mazdak? These questions must remain at first open.

v

At the conclusion of the fragment is the sentence about the letters. Christensen called it cabbalistic.⁸⁴ But the solution is not quite so simple.

⁸⁰ The last sentence of Mas’ūdi refers to the Bātīniya or Isma’īliya which is also called Mazdakiya in ‘Irāk. We cannot here explore how close the relationship actually is. But whoever skims the section in Šahrastāni on the Bātīniya (pp. 147–52 Cureton) will find a multitude of references.

⁸¹ Fihrist, p. 337, lines 15 f., ed. Flügel.

⁸² At the end B. Spuler, *Iran in früh-islam. Zeit*, p. 205. We cannot be convinced of the Mazdakite movement in Chwārezm under the leadership of *Ḥurzād* which S. P. Tolstow has postulated (*Auf den Spuren d. alt-choresm. Kultur*, pp. 241 ff.): Altheim and Stiehl, *Finanzgeschichte der Spätantike*, pp. 264 ff.

⁸³ *Ein asiatischer Staat*, I, 204.

⁸⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 102.

The Lord of the Upper World, it says, rules by means of letters. To him who formulates an idea of them, the highest mystery is revealed. The sum of the letters yields the most powerful name.

The sum of the letters thus represents the world principle. And just as this sum reveals to man that which is highest, so the co-operation of the four powers, seven viziers, and twelve spiritual beings enables a man to become like God. The number of beings constituting the divine hierarchy should then be equivalent to the sum of the letters.

Four, seven, and twelve, plus the Lord of Light are twenty-four. The Aramaic alphabet does not have twenty-four letters (it has twenty-two and Mani's Evangelion was ordered in accordance with the latter number).⁸⁵ The Greek alphabet has twenty-four.⁸⁶ Furthermore, the seven viziers correspond to the number of Greek vowels. These are the pleroma of letter-mysticism. The twenty-four letters of the Greek alphabet were identified with the twelve *στοιχέα τοῦ κόσμου*; each two letters forms one such *στοιχέιον*. Either the first and thirteenth, the second and the fourteenth, etc., were combined, or the first and last, the second and the second-last, etc.⁸⁷ For Mazdak the twelve spiritual beings formed a series which corresponded in number—although this time simple, not doubled—to the *στοιχέα τοῦ κόσμου*.

Enough—Mazdak's letter-speculation is of Greek origin. This supports our conclusion that the thought content of Greek philosophy can be identified in his teaching. It permits us to assert that there is nothing in that speculation which can directly or indirectly be traced to Christian origins.

The reference is to a time when an all-overrunning world of Christian concepts had not yet caught up the letter-speculation. Again the time of Diocletian is nearest at hand; again we come to Bundos. Again he could have been the originator of the Greek elements reflected in Mazdak's fragment.

A word must yet be said about the relationship between our fragment and that which has been called Mazdak's social program. We are confirmed in believing that the latter was more religious than truly social.

The highest possibility for man is becoming *rabbānī* and therefore equal to (or like) God. Achievement of this ideal presupposes that one has previously divested himself of his own individuality. Accordingly

⁸⁵ Bērūnī, Chron., p. 207, lines 18 f. ed. Sachau.

⁸⁶ For the following F. Dornseiff, *D. Alphabet in Mystik und Magie*, 2d ed. (1926); R. Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, pp. 256 f.; A. Dupont-Sommer, *La Doctrine gnostique de la lettre "Wāw,"* pp. 15 f.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 40, n. 4.

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Mazdak bade his followers, *bi-ḡalli l-anfus*, "to free themselves from evil and from mixing with darkness."⁸⁸ There is intended not a "stifling of the souls" (as Haarbrücker and, following him, Christensen, translated), but rather the deadening of individuality. For indeed this must be required of one who was attempting to assimilate himself to the highest and divine principle.

Evil and mixing with darkness are in the same category as individuality. Contradiction, hate, and battle also belong there; Mazdak called wives and possessions their chief provocation.⁸⁹ Thus he wished even on earth to eliminate distinctiveness; already in the realm of the material he would introduce an all-effective principle abolishing individual differences. Mazdak permitted men to share women and possessions just as they did water, fire, and pastures.⁹⁰

Thus there resulted an order which led from differences and strife to equality, from particulars to generalities, from the "psychic" to the "pneumatic," and from individuality to God. It pervaded material and human states and the earthly order; its source was in the heavenly order, whose first principle was the Lord of Light.

⁸⁸ I, p. 193, lines 7 f., ed. Cureton.

⁸⁹ I, p. 193, lines 4 f.

⁹⁰ I, p. 193, lines 6 f.; cf. Eutychios 2, p. 177, lines 2 f., ed. Pocock; I, 206, lines 15 f., ed. Cheikho, where, instead of Mazdak, Pocockius' manuscripts have *mazdik*, and Cheikho's A and B as well as the Oxon. Marsh. 435 have *marzik*. On these last forms of the name see Altheim and Stiehl, *Philologia sacra*, pp. 90 f.