



ĀDURBĀD Ī MAHRSPANDĀN

ĀDURBĀD Ī MAHRSPANDĀN (“Ādurbād, son of Mahrspand”), Zoroastrian mobad of mobads (*mowbedān mowbed*) or high priest in the reign of the Sasanian king Šāpūr II (A.D. 309-79). The Pahlavi *Bundahišn* (p. 237.2) traces Ādurbād’s lineage back to the legendary Dürsarw, son of Manūčih; similarly Bīrūnī’s *al-Ātār al-bāqīa* mentions him as a descendant of *Dwsr* (ed. J. Fück, *Documenta Islamica Inedita*, Berlin, 1952, p. 76). He was a native of the “village Kurān” (*kwl’n MT*, *Dēnkard*, p. 219.11), unless this is a corruption of “a village of Mukrān,” southeast Iran (i.e., **mwkl’n MT*; see R. C. Zaehner, *Zurvan, a Zoroastrian Dilemma*, Oxford, 1955, p. 52, n. 1). A Korān in Fārs province is recorded by Yāqūt (IV, p. 247).

According to a tradition widely reported (see bibliog.), Ādurbād successfully underwent the ordeal (*war*) of molten bronze in order to prove the validity of his line of religious tradition. This means that the metal was poured onto his chest and he was seen to emerge unscathed. Ādurbād is mentioned in a description of the Avesta’s twenty-one *nasks* (*Dēnkard*, p. 679.20-21; cf. p. 413.4); and it may be that he played an important part in the definition of the Zoroastrian canon and that his ordeal related to matters of scriptural dispute. (The final version of the canon seems, however, to have been established during the reign of Kōsrow I, A.D. 531-79; see Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems*, p. 173.) In keeping with his religious zeal, Ādurbād was a force in the enactment and implementing of decrees against non-Zoroastrians; the established church is described as having then fallen on evil days, plagued by doubt and infidelity. (On Šāpūr II’s persecutions, see: [Acts of the Christian Martyrs](#);



Christianity in Iran.)

Various *andarz* texts (collections of wise counsels) are attributed to Ādurbād. 1. *Dēnkard* 3.199 (p. 215.20ff.) ascribes ten precepts to him; it follows these with a set of evil counsels allegedly uttered by Mani (d. ca. A.D. 276) specifically to contradict the good sayings of Ādurbād (3.200; see tr. in J. de Menasce, *Le troisième livre du Dēnkard*, Paris, 1973, pp. 208-10). Possibly these texts reflect an actual involvement of the high priest in the persecution of Manicheans. 2. *Dēnkard* 6 (p. 568.3-12) ascribes some further admonitions to Ādurbād; an Arabic version of these appears in Ebn Meskawayh's *al-Ḥekmat al-kāleda* (ed. 'Abd-al-Raḥmān Badawī, Cairo, 1952, p. 67). Ġazzālī also cites them, but without attribution to Ādurbād (*Naṣīḥat al-molūk*, ed. J. Homā'ī, Tehran, 1351 Š./1972, p. 224). 3. Two other groups of sayings occur in *Pahlavi Texts* (pp. 58, 144). The first, which the priest addresses to his son, is translated in part by Ebn Meskawayh (op. cit., pp. 26-28). The second comprises his supposed deathbed utterances. 4. A collection of questions addressed to him by a disciple and his replies is found in *Pahl. Rivayat* (pp. 193-200).

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