



ASTWIHĀD

ASTWIHĀD (Av. *Astō.vīδōtu*, lit. “he who dissolves the bones, bone-breaker, divider of the body”), the demon of death in the Avesta (*Vd.* 4.49, 5.8-9) and later Zoroastrian texts. He destroys life in cooperation with Vāyu, and none can escape him (*Aogəmadaēčā* 57.73). In Pahlavi literature he is identified with the Evil Wāy (q.v.): “Astwihād is the Evil Wāy who carries the breath-soul away. As it is said: When he touches a man with his hand, it is sleep; when he casts his shadow on him, it is fever; and when he looks upon him with his eyes, he deprives him of the breath-soul” (*Bundahišn*, p. 186.12). Astwihād was sent by Ahriman to cast his fatal noose on Gayōmard (cf. the noose of Vedic Yama), and he is one of the evil assessors of the soul at its judgment. His meaning is summed up in *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 36.38: “Astwihād is explained as the disintegration of material beings” (*astwihād wizārīhēd astōmandān wišōbagīh*).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

See also Gray, *Foundations*, pp. 201-02.

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