



KUNDA(G)

KUNDA(G) “drunkenness; delirium; sorcery” in Younger Avestan: *kunda*;; Middle Persian *Kunda(g)*; Pāzand *Kunī(d)*; Manichean Middle Persian *Kūnī*; and Sanskrit *Kūnī-(deva)*. In Zoroastrian literature *Kunda(g)* is identified as a distinct demon (*dēw*, q.v.). In the Avesta, Sraoša (*Vd.* 19.41) or Ātar (*Vištāsp Yašt* 26, Darmesteter, II, p. 672) is implored to cast the demon *Kunda(g)* into hell.

In Middle Persian Zoroastrian books, *Kunda(g)* is the steed of the sorcerers (*Bundahišn*, TD1, fol.79r.; TD2, fols. 181.8-189.2; *Anklesaria*, chap. 27, pp. 242-43) and has a son, *Kawīg/Kandag (*Zādspram*, chapter 25.2; Gignoux and Tafazzoli, pp. 86-87). Book 3 of the *Dēnkard* (q.v.) attributes a set of twelve evil advices pronounced by Mani (d. ca. 276 CE; q.v.) to refute the good sayings of Ādurbād son of Mahraspand (q.v.), the high priest of Šāpur II (r. 309-379). In one of them, Mani says that “the foundation (of the earth) is on the support of the demon Kunīg, which is the (original) principle” (*fragān pad stūn ī kunīg druz ī-š buništāg grāyīdan dawist*, ed. Madan, p. 217.20; Jackson, 1932, pp. 185, 318-19). In another passage of the same book, *Kundag* is mentioned as the third heretic figure appearing during the millennium of Zarathushtra (ed. Madan, p. 335; de Menasce, 1973, p. 318).

Mani, in fashioning his religion, took over parts of Zoroastrian demonology, and in a rendition of the myth of Manichean cosmogony preserved in *Škand Gumānik Wizār*, the macrocosm was created by dismembering *Kūnī/Kunda*, who is the demon commanding Ahriman’s (q.v.) army: “The sky is from the skin, the earth from the flesh, the mountains from the bones, and the trees



from the hair of the demon Kūnī who was captured and killed by being bound to the (celestial) sphere (de Menasce, 1945, chap. 16.10-16). This reading parallels in part the Zoroastrian cosmogony, according to which Ohrmazd created the plants from his hair (*Pahlavi Rivāyat*, ed. and tr. Williams, chap. 46.13, p. 74).

Outside the Iranian world, a demon by the name of *kordiakos* appears several times in the Talmud (Jastrow, II, p. 1341). In one instance a man suffering from *kordiakos* asks that a bill of divorce be written for his wife (*Gittin* 7:1). The Talmudic sage Samuel interprets *kordiakos* as “being overcome by new wine from the vat” (*Gittin* 67b). Most of the commentaries on the Talmud state that *kordiakos* is an alcohol-induced confusion of the mind. Rashi states that *kordiakos* is the name of the demon that rules in a person who drinks much wine from the vat; and for Maimonides, *kordiakos* is “an illness that occurs as a result of filling of the chambers of the brain, and the mind becomes confused therefrom; it is one of the varieties of falling sickness [i.e., epilepsy]” (Rosner, p. 184).

Although the etymology of his name is unknown, *kunda(g)* is usually interpreted as the demon of drunkenness (de Harlez, pp. cxxviii, p. 202, n. 1; cf. Spiegel, II, p. 135). It appears that *kunda(g)* denotes, not drunkenness or intoxication *per se*, but a malevolent spirit, desire, or energy that was probably characterized by dizziness, confusion, and mental incompetence after contact with intoxication or, in the case of the Talmud, with a vat of new wine that enters people’s minds. Like Ahriman and other demons, Kunda(g) was a demon capable of acting to harm a person’s mental faculty.

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