



## MĀZAN

**MĀZAN**, term for a giant demon in Avestan and Middle Persian texts.

The Avestan term *māzainiia-* from \**māzana-* (<*maz-*, *AirWb.*, col. 1156, “gigantic; monster”; MPers. *m ā zan-*, *māzanīg*, *māzandar*; MMPers. *mzn*; Sogd. *mzny'n dyw* ‘Mazanya demons’; Skr. *mājaṃda-*) indicates a hostile land known to Iranians in their legendary period and the dwelling place of a class of demonic beings.

In the Avesta and Middle Persian texts, the hero Haošiiāṇha (MPers. **Hōšang**) and the deity **Sraōša** (MPers. *Srōš*) were designated to constrain these demons. Haošiiāṇha implored various deities to grant him the support he needed in order to conquer *māzainiia* demons (*Yašt* 5.22; 9.4; 13.137; 15.8; 17.25; 19.26; *Dēnkard* 7.1.18; Madan II, p. 594; *Mēnōg Xrad* 26.20). He succeeded in destroying two-thirds of them (*Dēnkard* 3.26.20), while Sraōša fights them every day and night (*Yašt* 11.12; *Bundahišn* 26.52).

The Middle Persian books supplement the Avesta’s depiction of *māzainiia-*: they were giant sized creatures who looked like humans, save for the fact that they were so tall that the waters of the ocean **Frāxkard** reached only up to their mid-thigh, some up to the navel, and in the deepest place, it reached their mouth (*Dēnkard* 9.21.17-18; Madan, II, p. 813; *Bundahišn* 14.36); they were also loudmouthed and violent (*Zādspram* 2.11). Whenever they came to Xwanirah (Av. X<sup>v</sup>aniraθa-), the central continent where the Iranian Expanse is located (see **CLIME**, they caused grievous damage and much carnage. After one of their attacks, people went to the king-hero Frēdōn (see **FERĒDŪN** to complain



that ever since he had defeated and captured Aži Dahāg (see [AŽDAHĀ](#)), fettering him to Mount [Damāvand](#), no one had protected the region from the *māzandars* (*Dēnkard* 9.21.18-19; Madan, II, p. 813). Their grievance prompted Frēdōn to gather an army to fight these demons. At first, the *māzandars* thought lightly of Frēdōn and dismissed him in a derisory tone: “You struck Aži Dahāg, who was the swiftest in existence, who was the king of both demons and humans. But it was Ohrmazd who made you more capable of victory than the other creatures in order to strike him. But we will settle in this place and we will dwell in it and will not let you enter here” (*Dēnkard* 9.21.21; Madan, II, p. 814). Nevertheless, Frēdōn fought the *māzandars* in the plain of Pēšānseh. During the battle, when Frēdōn exhaled, he projected snow and ice and all the cold of winter from his right nostril and fiery stones, as large as a house in size, from his left nostril. Frēdōn made them run up in the air and struck them and destroyed two-thirds of their towns (*Dēnkard* 9.21.23-24; Madan II, p. 814). Thus, he conquered the *māzandars*, who never again attacked the continent of Xwanirah (*Dēnkard* 3.26.40; *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 26.40) nor even contemplated the thought of entering it (*Bundahišn*, 29.1; *Dēnkard* 9.21.14-25; Madan II, pp. 812-815; *Dēnkard*, 7:1.25-26; Madan II, p. 596).

For the geographical location of *māzainiia-*, W. B. Henning proposed Varəna, the fourteenth in the list of the places and settlements in the first chapter of the *Vidēvdād* (Vd. 1.17) which precedes *hapta hāndu*, Sankrit *Varṇu*, the *Aornos* of Alexander, the modern Buner, north of Peshawar (Henning, 1947, pp. 52-53; in the Mahāmāyūrī catalogue, *Varṇu* [30] stands next to the Suvāstu, the Swat, the Sindhu [the Indus], and very close to Gāndhāra, see Lévi, pp. 71-73).

These demons are also cited in some Middle Persian texts that cover the ritual disposal of trimmed hair and nails, since if they are not properly disposed of, they could serve as weapons and implements in their (*māzanīgān dēwān*) hands (*Pahlavi Widēwdād*, 17.9-10; *Zand ī Fragard ī Jud-Dēw-Dād* 35.5; *Šāyest nē šāyest* 12.6; *Šaddar Nasr* 14; *The Persian Rivāyats*, pp. 248-50).

In Manichean Middle Persian texts, the term *mazan* often appears side by side with *āsreštār*, and usually in plural form, *mazanān* and *āsreštārān*. Both terms usually denote the demonic abortions which fell on earth and became instrumental in the creation of Adam and Eve by their leaders, Ašqalūn, a male demon, and Nebrō’el, a female one, the procreators of the first human couple (Andreas and Henning, p. 195 /R/i/26-27; see [MANICHEISM iii. THE](#)

## MANICHEAN PANDÆMONIUM).

According to the apologetic text *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* (Doubt-dispelling exposition), in Manichean parlance the Middle Persian term *māzendar(ān)* meant the demons fettered in the skies (chap. 16.14; 16.28-36; ed. de Menasce, pp. 252-55). This is confirmed by Manichean Middle Persian fragment M 2157: its headline *ʾbr mʾzynd(r)ʾ(n)* “About the *māzendar*” can be deciphered as also the name of Narsahyazad (*nryshyzd*), the Third Messenger, who is well known as one aspect of the divine beauty which seduced the male and female archons in the skies, just as the *māzandarān* are seduced by the twelve daughters of *Zurvan* as described in *Škand Gumānīg Wizār*. The Manichean “term *māzendar* could indeed be used to designate different categories of demons imprisoned in the skies, the lustful archons on the one hand, and the lustful watchers on the other” (Sundermann, p. 42; see [COSMOGONY AND COSMOLOGY iii. IN MANICHEISM](#)).

The term *Māzandarān* appears in two separate episodes set in the *Šāh-nāma*: In the first, the hero *Sām* (see [KARSĀSP](#)), under *Manučīhr*’s order, organized a military campaign against *Māzandarān* and *Gurgsārān*; in *Māzandarān* he fought with demons and defeated them (I, line 224, p. 179). In the second narrative, *Kay Kāwus* (see [KAYĀNIĀN v.](#)), spellbound by a demon disguised as a minstrel from *Māzandarān*, leads an army against that land. The king of *Māzandarān* seeks help from *Div-e Safid* (the White Demon), and with the demon’s magic, *Kāwus* loses his sight, and he and his companions are trapped. (II, lines 11-222).

The description of *Div-e Safid* in the *Šāh-nāma* is very close to the physical description of the *māzandars* in the Zoroastrian sources – his enormous size is described in the fifth *ḵvan* (see [HAFT ḴVĀN](#)) as like a mountain “with shoulders, breast, and neck ten cords across”- (II, line 479, p. 36). *Div-e Safid* is unknown from Zoroastrian tradition, but the story suggests the poet’s familiarity with ancient Iranian myths, the extreme hostility of Iranians towards demons, and a reflection of earlier events related in the Avesta and Middle Persian texts that are reshaped in the *Šāh-nāma*.



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