

RELIGION AND POLITICS IN EARLY PERSIA.

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PROCOPIUS of Cæsarea writes in that book of his history of the wars which deals with the Persian campaigns:

But as time went on Kobad became more high-handed in the administration of the government, and introduced innovations into the constitution, among which was the law which he promulgated providing that Persians should have communal intercourse with their women, a measure which by no means pleased the common people. Accordingly they rose against him, removed him from the throne, and kept him in prison in chains.¹

In so writing Procopius not only lives up to his reputed fondness for strange tales, but also shows how partial historians can distort history by telling only a part of the truth.

The "law" referred to by Procopius was the doctrine of Mazdak, and it is our great misfortune that, as Reynold Nicholson has remarked,² none but hostile accounts survive of this interesting reformer. First among the annalists of these events were the Greeks, remote in time and place, and willing, in view of the intense Græco-Persian rivalry of the sixth and seventh centuries, to exemplify so easily the rottenness of the Persian rule. Cedrenus Georgius tells the incident thus:

Moreover Kobad the last son of Perozes began to use the kingdom very badly, a law even being promulgated which commanded that wives should be common to all. And so the Persians took the rule from him.³

Agathias, who was more nearly contemporaneous, but still wrote nearly a century after the events, says:

¹ *De Bellico Persico*, tr. Dewing, I, v, 1-2.

² *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. viii, p. 509. Cf. Browne, E. G., *Literary History of Persia*, p. 166: "Magian priests by whose hands the national chronicles were shaped."

³ *Historiarum Compendium*, ed. Bonn, p. 624.

Kobad⁴ . . . rendered himself disagreeable and unendurable to his subjects by changing the policy of the state and reversing customs established by holy wisdom. They say that he published a law to make women common, not following the intention of Socrates, nor Plato, nor to procure for his people the advantages which these philosophers believed one could get from such a community, but to give to all men an audacious freedom of enjoying whatever women pleased them, however else she might be bound to another by the laws of marriage. So they fell into the most shameful prostitutions which were authorized by this law. This much offended the people of condition who could not resign themselves to suffer this shame. Consequently this new ordinance was the occasion of a conspiracy against him and of the ruin of his grandeur.⁵

These accounts tell nothing of the doctrine save that part which refers to women, and attribute the downfall of the king purely to this circumstance. Agathias, it is true, does suggest something of the religious basis of the new theories by the words "holy wisdom". But the similarity of the patent facts in the accounts is noteworthy, with respect to what they include as well as with respect to what they omit.⁶ This similarity is all the more remarkable in that, but a few lines previous, Agathias has said: "I do not agree with what Procopius has written concerning Kobad, believing that I ought to follow as more true what I found in "the chronicles of the Persians."⁷ Hence we must assume that "the chronicles of the Persians" accessible to Agathias differed little or not at all, concerning these particular events, in emphasis at least, if not in facts, from the Procopian account.

The essential characteristic of the Mazdakite belief, however, hinges about these words "holy wisdom", for it was in origin at any rate, religious.⁸ The "chronicles of the Persians" may have lied, but Persian tradition as recorded some centuries later by Firdausi pictures Mazdak as saying:

⁴ For divergent views concerning the previous conduct of Kobad, compare Agathias, IV, xxviii, with Tabari, *Chronique*, tr. Zotenberg, p. 151.

⁵ *Hist. Just.*, IV, xii, §§ 4-5. (tr. Cousin, p. 517).

⁶ *Jos Stylites*, ed. Wright, § 20, is equally guilty.

⁷ *Hist. Just.*, IV, xii, § 12. Elsewhere Agathias says guardedly: "Procopius has written very exactly what took place during the reign of Justinian" (i. e., 527-565 A. D.) and Kobad's deposition was in 498 A. D. The problem of sources is complicated not a little by the fact that Procopius, in speaking of Kobad, says: "The Persian accounts do not agree." (D. B. P., I, vi, 9.)

⁸ This is pointed out by Noeldeke as the chief thing distinguishing it from modern communism. ("Orientalischer Socialismus" in *Deutsche Rundschau*, Feb. 1879, pp. 284ff.)

I will establish this in order that the pure religion
 May be made manifest and raised from obscurity.
 Whoever follows any religion but this,
 May the curse of God overtake that demon.⁹

Mazdak, whatever his origin,¹⁰ and whatever the origin of his principles,¹¹ was the one who popularized and made notorious the ideas which bear his name. He may have been a man of deep religious faith and austere life¹² trying to do the will of God¹³ and preaching his doctrine "not from any base or selfish motive but simply from a conviction of its truth."¹⁴ Yet, as Browne says, "the charges of communism and antinomianism, especially in what concerns the relation of the sexes, were those most frequently brought against Mazdak."¹⁵

That the incidental, rather than the fundamental, things were most frequently head-lined in all the accounts unjustly, is coming to be the final judgment of modern historians. Mazdak's own

⁹ *Shāh-nāmāh*, ed. Turner Macan, Calcutta, 1829, p. 1613, q. Nicholson, op. cit. This religious character is not quite so plain, though, as these lines might indicate. Another translation by another authority reads: "I want to put in order these inequalities, so that purity (i. e., justice) may appear and noble things may be distinguished from base ones. He who does not become one of this faith (i. e., this new socialistic teaching) would, like a demon, be cursed by God." (J. J. Modi, "Mazdak, The Iranian Socialist," in *The Dastur Hoshang Memorial Volume*, Bombay, p. 121). This commentator eschews the religious aspect almost entirely in extracting Firdausi and interprets Mazdak as a minister stirred to socialism by a famine.

¹⁰ Nicholson, op. cit., p. 508, says "son of Bāmdādh, probably a native of Susiana". The Pahlavi "Vendidād" and the "Bahman Yasht" (q. Modi. op. cit., pp. 117-119) agree on the phrase "Mazdak, son of Bāmdād." Noeldeke, op. cit., p. 154, says "man from Madharija named Mazdak". Mirkhond, tr. De Sacy, p. 353, says "a native of Persepolis" and is followed by Malcolm, *Hist. Persia*, i, 132. Tabari, t. Zotenberg, ii, 148, says "of Nishapur in Khorassan" as does Modjmélal-Tewarikh (q. St. Martin in notes to *Le Beau, Bas Empire*, ed. Paris, 1827, vii, 322. I have found no substantial warrant for Rawlinson's phrase: "Archimagus, or High Priest of the Zoroastrian religion" (*Seventh Oriental Monarchy*, ii. 5) nor even for Hodgkins'; "The reformed Zoroastrianism of Mazdak" (*Italy and Her Invaders*, iii, 488) unless we can so interpret Tabari. (cf. Note 20 below).

¹¹ Said by some to have been invented by Zarādusht, son of Khurragan, (cf. Nicholson, op. cit., p. 508; Jos. Stylites, ed. Wright, 20; Browne, op. cit. p. 170). Noeldeke claims (op. cit., *Excursus IV*, p. 457) that "the teaching of community . . . can be found earlier even than Zarādusht." Modi. op. cit. pp. 128ff., finds a Chinese origin.

¹² This is Hodgkin's opinion (op. cit., iii, 488). It is also Noeldeke's (op. cit., p. 154 and p. 459) and Browne's (op. cit., p. 170).

¹³ Tabari, tr. Noeldeke, p. 154.

¹⁴ Rawlinson, *Seventh Oriental Monarchy*, ii, 5; Malcolm, (*Hist. Persia*, ed. 1829, i, 104) calls him "a religious imposter".

¹⁵ *Literary History of Persia*, p. 170.

testimony can never be obtained.¹⁶ The Greeks, as we have seen, played him up like a scandal dispatch in modern journalism. The Zoroastrians were even more unfriendly,¹⁷ and the whole Persian legend about him is tinged with intolerance.¹⁸ Nor is this otherwise than might be expected, knowing what we now do of human psychology and of human history as it is written on everything that touches religion. The Mormons of Salt Lake, the Jesuits of Elizabethan England, the Arians of the Sixth Century, and Mazdak of Peersia have all been popularly described to us by their own inveterate enemies. Just as in the reign of John of England we must look with caution on the words of ecclesiastical chroniclers when they speak of a king who quarrelled with the Church, so with what concerns the Mazdakites, we must approach the records with reservations and seize with avidity on every favorable phrase and sentiment. Mingled with economic measures, with royal intrigues, with innovations in morality, there was in the theories of Mazdak a religious idea.¹⁹

This is the manner in which the scribe Tabari told of his ideas:

Among the commands which he laid upon the people and

¹⁶ "His book, a Pahlavi document, *Mazdak-nāmah*, known to have existed, is now lost".—Browne, op. cit., p. 169. Cf. the *Dabistan*, tr. Shea, 1843, i, 372.

¹⁷ "The intolerance of Zoroastrian priests" is mentioned at length in T. W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, London, 1896, chap. vii, pp. 177-184.

¹⁸ "Chosroes I (532-578 A. D.) gained the title of Núshírwán (of immortal soul) by which he is still remembered as the kingly embodiment of virtue and justice, through his high-handed suppression of Mazdak, which in the eyes of the intolerant Magian priests, constituted his chief claim to 'immortality.'"—Browne, op. cit., p. 135.

¹⁹ Note how Bury (Later Roman Empire, i, 306-307) has avoided mention of religion and has used the phrases "naturally equal" and "contrary to nature", which might almost have been stolen from Rousseau, or at least from other philosophers like Helvetius and Holbach. The Oriental sources line up on this question as follows:

Macoudi speaks in a political frame of mind, mentioning a "revolt" (q. Modi, op. cit., p. 124)

Mirkhond declares: "He pretended that his new faith was revealed to him by God". (q. Modi, op. cit., p. 125)

Alberuni calls him a pseudo-prophet (q. Modi, op. cit., p. 126).

The *Dabistan* recites his theories as applying only to members who embrace the same religion (q. Modi, op. cit., p. 128)

In the Pahlavi *Vendidad* he is cited as an example of an "impious starving heretic" (q. Modi, op. cit., p. 117)

In the *Bahman Yasht*, his beliefs are "heresy", he is "opposed to the religion", and causes "disturbance among those in the religion of God" (q. Modi, op. cit., p. 118)

The *Dinkard* considers him an "apostate" and uses his name as synonymous with apostasy. (Modi, op. cit., p. 120).

earnestly enjoined was this, that they should possess their property and families in common; it was, he said, an act of piety that was agreeable to God, and would bring the most excellent reward hereafter; even if he had laid no religious commandments upon them, yet the good works in which God was well pleased consisted in such co-partnership. . . . They asserted that God placed the means of subsistence in the world in order that His servants might share them in common, but men had wronged one another in that respect. The Mazdakites said that they would take from the rich for the benefit of the poor, and give back to them that had little their due portion at the expense of those who had much; and they declared that he who possessed more than his share of wealth, women, and property, had no greater right to it than anyone else.²⁰

But this was not all. There were, it appears, if we pick up trifles here and there and put them all together, a few other elements to the doctrine besides the communism founded on religious theory. These, if we assume that hostile historians have

²⁰ Tabari, tr. Noeldeke, pp. 154, 141. The ethical basis of the doctrine was summarized by Firdausi not unfairly in the *Shāh-nāmah*, ed. Macan, p. 1614, lines 7ff. as follows:

Five things turn a man from righteousness;
 The sage cannot add to these five:
 Jealousy, anger, vengeance, need,
 And the fifth one that masters him is covetousness.
 If thou prevail against these five demons,
 The way of the Almighty will be made manifest to thee.
 Because of these five, we possess women and wealth,
 Which have destroyed the good religion in the world.
 Women and wealth must be in common,
 If thou desirest that the good religion should not be harmed.
 These two produce jealousy, covetousness, and need,
 Which secretly unite with anger and vengeance.
 The demon is always turning the heads of the wise,
 Therefore these two things must be made common property.

Tabari differs from Firdausi in the amount of emphasis placed upon the religious trend. Where Firdausi shows Mazdak in the beginning in a position of authority as king's minister suddenly devising new economic principles to meet emergencies thrust upon him by a famine which sends the populace to clamor at the door of the palace (q. Modi. op. cit., p. 120), Tabari says: "He pretended to be a prophet. He taught the old religion with this exception, that he abolished marriage and ownership in property, saying that 'the God of the Universe has given these equally to all men' . . . Kobad sent for him and inquired about it." (q. Modi, op. cit., p. 124).

Cf. also the accounts in Rawlinson (op. cit., ii, 5); Nicholson (loc. cit.) from whom the Firdausi is quoted; and Browne (op. cit., p. 170), who goes on to remark that Mazdak deserves some credit as an early instance of "that passion for philosophical speculation which is so remarkable a characteristic of the Persians, who have probably produced more great heresiarchs than any other nation in the world." (op. cit., p. 136). Noeldeke emphasizes the philosophical element of the doctrines when he says: "Mazdak lehrte, dass alle Menschen gleich geschaffen seien und das es Unrecht sei, wenn der Eine mehr Gueter und mehr Weiber habe als der Andere." (op. cit., p. 458).

misplaced the emphasis,²¹ were not unimportant. Browne had pointed out that in the Pahlavi translation of the Vendidad, the words of the Avesta text: "The ungodly heretic who does not eat" are illustrated by the gloss "like Mazdak".²² And all the trustworthy evidence goes to show that Mazdak did preach the sacredness of animal life and forbade the slaughtering of animals for food,—though he did permit milk, cheese, and eggs,—and continually emphasized abstemiousness and devotion.²³ He also preached simplicity in dress—uniformity in dress we cannot find—and a separation of families so that at least the child should not know his father or the father the child.²⁴ This last may well have been cited by his enemies at the time, as an inevitable result of his suggestion regarding promiscuous intercourse, or it may have been founded on some ideal of state education such as Platon contemplated. Which, it is difficult to say.

But Plato, Sir Thomas More, Francis Bacon, and William Morris never created such a stir in the world with their ideal commonwealths, philosopher-kings, and social systems as did Mazdak. The reason is obvious. Mazdak converted a monarch, of all monarchs an oriental monarch, an absolute monarch who could impose his will upon the realm. That the lower classes should embrace the creed is not surprising, when we consider its promises; but that Kobad should become on his throne a disciple of such a teacher, is truly amazing. Mirkhond²⁵ says "that Mazdak claimed to authenticate his mission by the possession and exhibition of miraculous powers. In order to impose on the weak mind of Kobad, he arranged and carried into effect an elaborate imposture. He excavated a cave below the fire-altar on which he was in the habit of offering, and contrived to pass a tube from

²¹ Bury speaks only of the "community of property and wives" (op. cit., i, 306-7) and Hodgkin only of "rights of property both in jewels and wives" (op. cit., iii, 488). Though Rawlinson mentions other things, they are only as "added tenets" and his chief emphasis is on "property and marriage", on "adultery, incest, theft", and on "the appropriation of particular women by individual men." (op. cit., 11, 5-8).

²² Op. cit., p. 169.

²³ Cf. Rawlinson, ii, 5-8 who cites these among the "added tenets"; Mirkhond, tr. De Sacy, p. 354 and Modi, op. cit., p. 125; and Noeldeke, op. cit., p. 460, who says "Nach Biruni verbot er, das Vieh zu schlachten, bis es von selbst verendete; da klinglt, als haben er Genuss des Fleisches crepiertes Thiere gestat was kaum richtig ist." See also Modi's translation, op. cit., p. 126.

²⁴ Tabari, tr. Noeldeke, p. 142.

²⁵ Tr. De Sacy, q. Rawlinson, op. cit., ii, 5-6 and also Modi's translation, op. cit., p. 125.

the cavern to the upper surface of the altar, where the sacred flame was maintained perpetually. Having then placed a confederate in the cavern, he invited the attendance of Kobad, and in his presence pretended to hold converse with the fire itself, which the Persians viewed as the symbol and embodiment of divinity. The king accepted the miracle as an absolute proof of the divine authority of the new teacher, and became thenceforth his zealous adherent and follower." This, however, seems a trifle too unusual a tale for full credence as indicating the real cause of Kobad's acceptance of the new creed, and may be looked upon by a reasonably skeptical historian as an invention of a hostile chronicler, if not in its facts, at least in its complete results. Although Tabari says Kobad became a disciple of Mazdak "and followed him in all things",²⁶ it is a difficult situation to imagine. Noeldeke has suggested that the Mazdakite movement about this time lost its religious character, as any movement with such concrete applications probably would when taken up by the people. But Noeldeke²⁷ is the first commentator who has analyzed the political motives of the king, saying that Kobad espoused the cause of Mazdak because he found the nobility and the Zoroastrian priests leagued against him. They would of course have been leagued against him afterwards; but it seems much more reasonable to suppose that he supported as friends the many enemies of his enemies than that he deliberately made enemies for himself by espousing such a cause. It was under his patronage that the Mazdakites extended their name and their influence to the Mediterranean²⁸ and into Armenia.²⁹ It was because of his patronage of these theories that the nobles and the priests of Persia aroused themselves sufficiently to overthrow him and force him into exile.³⁰ But the purely political character of his adherence to these theories is even more strikingly illustrated by the easy manner in which in 502 A. D., after escaping from prison and obtaining aid from the Ephthalites, Kobad was able to return to the throne. He actually was reinstated by a man who killed many

²⁶ Tr. Noeldeke, p. 144.

²⁷ Nicholson (op. cit., p. 508) and Browne (op. cit., p. 170) accept this explanation.

²⁸ Cf. St. Martin's notes to *Le Beau: Bas-Empire*, vii, 338.

²⁹ Cf. St. Martin: *Reserches sur l'Armenie*, i, 328-329; and Lazare Parbe, *Vie de Vahan*, p. 47, q. Rawlinson, loc. cit.

³⁰ Tabari, tr. Noeldeke, p. 142. This is the cause universally assigned. Cf. Procopius, Agathias, Jos. Stylites, Mirkhond, Rawlinson, Hodgkin, Bury, and Browne, as cited above.

Mazdakites.³¹ He actually announced that personally he held with Mazdak's doctrines; but officially he could not support them. Their political usefulness to him was over. That, it appears, is the only reasonable explanation.

The cautious historian must, however, always admit the possibility that chroniclers hostile to the theory have magnified all the unfavorable facts. When Rawlinson speaks of "the disorders of its votaries" and "extreme or violent measures" which had now "ceased to endanger the state",³² there is presented an unfavorable picture indeed. But it does seem that no inconsiderable eruption did occur. Says Tabari:

The mob eagerly seized their opportunity . . . and the Mazdakites became so powerful that they used to enter a man's house and forcibly deprive him of his dwelling, his women-folk, and his property, since it was impossible for him to offer resistance.³³

But even more conclusive is the indirect evidence offered in Kobad's son, Chosroës' later speech to the nobles and the priests after his coronation in 531 A. D.³⁴ "He dwelt upon their religion and the heavy losses they had incurred. The systematic regulations which he made for the purpose of compensating the sufferers, establishing the position of children of doubtful origin, etc., show that the social revolution must have developed considerably and that the upper classes bore the brunt of it."³⁵

Yet, the political character of Kobad's first adventure with the doctrine in 498 is illustrated not only by his political divorce from, and religious adherence to, Mazdak; but also by the fact that Mazdak himself escaped serious punishment. As Rawlinson says, "Mazdak was seized indeed and imprisoned; but his followers rose at once, broke open his prison doors, and set him at liberty. The government felt itself too weak to insist on its intended policy of coercion. Mazdak was allowed to live in retirement unmolested, and to increase the number of his disciples."³⁶ The politician was punished: the religious leader escaped. But his proselytizing was for many years probably of a purely religious character. Only when he sought again to secure

³¹ "Zarmihr, son of Sôchrâ, killed many Mazdakites and put Kobad back on the throne". Tabari, tr. Noeldeke, p. 142.)

³² *Op. cit.*, ii, 13.

³³ *Tr. Noeldeke*, p. 141.

³⁴ *Tabari*, tr. Noeldeke, p. 106ff.

³⁵ *Nicholson*, *op. cit.*

³⁶ *Op. cit.*, ii, 8, 13.

converts in high political circles did he meet determined opposition.

It seems that succession to the crown in Persia was not of a purely hereditary character. A contemporaneous traveller thus described the method of "election":

Some time after his accession the king chooses from his sons the most intelligent one, enters his name on a document, and keeps it in a sealed letter in his treasury without his other sons and the ministers knowing it. When the king dies, the assemblage [of princes and ministers] take out the letter, and he, whose name appears in the sealed letter cover, is to be raised to the throne.³⁷

Now, of the children of Kobad, there were three whose names figured prominently in those days. Of course, the brother, Zamasp, who had been king during the four years of Kobad's exile, was dead and therefore no longer an aspirant. Of the children, Chosroës was the favorite son and presumably destined for the crown. But the Mazdakites³⁸ had succeeded in converting Phthasuarsas and his sister Sambyke,³⁹ and naturally wanted Phthasuarsas to succeed. Their intriguing caused a crisis which ended in a wholesale slaughter of Mazdakites at the end of the year 528, or the beginning of the year 529,⁴⁰ regarding which the evidence is various. Malalas, first emphasizing the new spreading of the dogma, reports that:

The king, having called a meeting, was able to gather all the Mazdakites together with their bishops⁴¹ and gave orders to his army surrounding them, to kill them. And so the soldiers, in his presence, put to the sword all the Mazdakites with their bishop Indazar, and clergy. He burned all their books and issued a decree that any others found in the empire of Persia should be burned.⁴²

Theophanes' story is similar except that he says distinctly that

³⁷ Kentok Hori, "A Chinese Account of Persia in the Sixth Century", in *Spiegel Memorial Volume, Bombay*, 1908, p. 248.

³⁸ Confused with Manichees by Malalas and Theophanes. References under Note 39 show which is the correct name, now generally accepted.

³⁹ Noeldeke, *op. cit.*, p. 460; Malalas, *ed. Bonn*, p. 444; Theophanes, *ed. Bonn*, p. 261; Smith's *Dict. Greek & Roman Biography*, iii, 719, q. Rawlinson, ii, 26; and Modi, *op. cit.*, p. 124, note 2.

⁴⁰ Browne, *op. cit.*, p. 172. Rawlinson, *op. cit.*, ii, 26, says "about the year 523". Rawlinson's account is the fullest concerning the designs and intrigues on the succession.

⁴¹ Text reads "Manichees". For change see Notes 38 and 39 *supra*.

⁴² Malalas, "Chronographia", *ed. Bonn.*, p. 444-445. This is related on the authority of Bastagarius "who after being baptized was known as Timotheus".

it was Kobad who ordered the event and gives the details concerning the Phthasuarsas intrigue. He attributes the initiative in the affair to Glonazes, an archmagus, other magii, and Bazanes, a Christian bishop. His account is very similar in respect to the burning of books and the hue and cry raised throughout the empire.⁴³

There has been an inclination among historians to show that Kobad embarked upon the extermination of his former co-religionists at the instigation of Chosroës.⁴⁴ In popular legend at least Chosroës is credited with this slaughter, by which he is said to have earned his title of Núshirwán, "of immortal soul". At any rate, the names of Chosroës and Mazdak are still linked as, respectively, "the Just King"⁴⁵ and "the accursed Mazdak".⁴⁶ According to the current account,⁴⁷ Prince Chosroës, after exposing the evil designs and juggler's tricks of Mazdak to his father Kobad, deceived the heresiarch by a feigned submission and fixed a day when he would make formal and public profession of the new doctrine. Invitations were issued to the Mazdakites to a great banquet which the prince would provide in one of the royal gardens; but as each group entered the garden, they were seized by soldiers who lay in wait for them, slain, and buried head downwards in the earth with their feet protruding. When all this had been disposed of, Chosroës invited Mazdak, whom he had himself received in private audience, to take a walk with him through the gardens before the banquet, and to inspect the produce thereof. On entering the garden, "Behold," said the prince, pointing to the upturned feet of the dead heretics, "the crop which your evil doctrines have brought forth." Therewith he made a sign, and Mazdak was at once seized, bound and buried alive head downwards in the midst of a large mound of earth specially prepared for him in the middle of the garden. This is the legend of Persia.

Now, there is here a contradiction, because some accounts

⁴³ Theophanes, "Chronographia", ed. Bonn., p. 261.

⁴⁴ Nicholson, op. cit., p. 508; Noeldeke, op. cit., p. 465. Cf. Sa'di, the poet:

The blessed named Núshirwán doth still for justice stand,
Though long hath passed since Núshirwán hath vanished
from the land (q. Browne, op. cit., p. 135).

⁴⁵ Browne, op. cit., p. 166.

⁴⁶ Browne, op. cit., p. 168, from a late 12th century Pahlawi manuscript of "Bahman Yasht", cf. Modi, op. cit., p. 118. Also *Dabistan*, q. Modi, pp. 119-120.

⁴⁷ Given in its fullest form in the "Siyásat-námah" of Nidhámu 'l-Mulk, ed. Schefer, pp. 166-181, trans. pp. 245-266. Here extracted from Browne, op. cit., p. 170.

credit Kobad with the slaughter of the Mazdakites and some Chosroës. But the contradiction can perhaps be simplified by recognizing that the extermination was attempted on a large scale on two separate occasions. The Byzantine Malalas speaks clearly of two different occasions;⁴⁸ and Browne resolves the difficulty by placing the first massacre in 528 or 529 and the second in 531 "soon after Núshírwán's (i. e., Chosroës') accession to the throne."⁴⁹ The words of Malalas, in his second passage, can readily be interpreted to refer to an occurrence after Chosroës' accession in respect to both date and circumstances. After speaking of Chosroës becoming king, he says:

During this same time the king of the Persians had tolerated the heresy of the Manichees spreading through his realm. The Persian Magi, since he opposed this doctrine, conceived a plan with the great men of the kingdom, for depriving the king of his rule and putting his brother in his place. And the king of the Persians, hearing this, cut off his brother's head.

I conceive that in this passage by "the king of the Persians", Chosroës is meant, since Kobad did not avert his troubles by killing Zamasp; by "Manichees"; Mazdakites;⁵⁰ by "the Persian Magi", the Mazdakite heresiarchs, for the Greeks were inaccurate and very free in their use of ecclesiastical terms when referring to Persia, even calling Indazara a "bishop" when he was not a Christian even. Though not very specific in distinguishing between the two persecutions, Rawlinson, I believe, makes the same division and would place the second Malalas passage at the later date. Speaking of the accession of Chosroës, he says:

Zames, Kaoses, and all the other sons of Kobad were seized by order of Chosroës, and, together with their entire male offspring, were condemned to death. When Chosroës had by these means secured himself against the claims of the pretenders, he proceeded to employ equal severity in repressing the disorders, punishing the crimes, and compelling the abject submission of his subjects. The heresiarch Mazdak, who had escaped the persecution instituted in his later years by Kobad, and the sect of the Mazdakites, which, despite that persecution, was still strong and vigorous, were the first to experience the oppressive weight of his resentment; and the corpses of a hundred thousand martyrs blackening upon gibbets proved the determination of the new monarch to make his will law, whatever the consequences.⁵¹

⁴⁸ "Chronographia", ed. Bonn, pp. 444-445 and p. 472.

⁴⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 172.

⁵⁰ *Cf. note 41, supra.* This view is supported by Noeldeke, *op. cit.*, p. 462.

⁵¹ Rawlinson, *Seventh Oriental Monarchy*, ii, 43, 101, who cites Mirkhond and Tabari.

And if we for the moment recall that Tabari is in other respects one of our best sources, we gain further credence for our distinction. Tabari's chronicle is a very condensed and much abbreviated document. Yet, he has an account of the slaughter within the reign of Chosroës.⁵² And another, Arabic source, al-Yacubí, says that Mazdak and his master Zarátusht Khurragán were put to death by Chosroës.⁵³

To summarize briefly, then, we might well conclude that the whole Mazdak episode, from beginning to end, took place in the following stages:

(1) A religious movement popularized by Mazdak in the role of a vigorous social reformer.

(2) Kobad's conversion and his use of the Mazdakites as a political weapon which resulted in his fall. (498 A. D.)

(3) Kobad's return to power and his political rejection of the Mazdakites. (502 A. D.)

(4) New political ambitions of the Mazdakites culminating in the first massacre, under Kobad, possibly instigated by Chosroës. (528-529 A. D.)

(5) Accession of Chosroës and his purely political measures in exterminating the Mazdakites to make more secure his crown. 531 A. D.)

Beyond this there is little to say. The name and the influence of Mazdak still persisted, though in a very limited fashion in Persian social, religious, and philosophical history; but never again assumed much political importance.⁵⁴

⁵² Tabari, tr. Noeldeke, p. 154.

⁵³ Al-Ya qubi wrote about three hundred years after these events transpired. (Cf. references in Browne, op. cit., p. 169, note.)

⁵⁴ He was spoken of in philosophical treatises, and according to Biruni, his name turned up again two centuries later, when al-Muquanna, "the Veiled Prophet of Korassan" in 777-780 tried to make "obligatory for them all the laws and institutes which Mazdak had established." (Browne, op. cit., p. 318.) For details of the persisting re-occurrences of his name see Browne, op. cit., 312. Cf. also, *ibid.*, 247, 316, 323, 328, 382, 387, and a bibliography of the entire subject, p. 169. Among modern writers, not here quoted, who have treated of the subject are, Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, ed. Bury, v, 181-182; and Malcolm, Sir. J., *History of Persia*, ed. London, 1815, i, 132.