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Revealing the parallels between the Nag Hammadi hymn "The Thunder: Perfect Mind" and the Mandaean scriptures

ABSTRACT

The hymn called The Thunder: Perfect Mind in the manuscripts of Nag Hammadi was associated with the Mandaean texts and had a direct relationship with them. This study will include the process of comparing the text mentioned above with one of the texts of the Mandaean book Ginza Rabba, which is the text of Dananukht. It will be also compared with one of the hymns from the Mandaean psalm book.

From the comparisons, an undoubted match was found where the feminine character intended in the dialogue for the text of The Thunder: The Perfect Mind is the Babylonian goddess Ishtar, of the planet Venus. She was worshipped in many regions of the ancient world under different names.

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الكشف عن التشابه بين ترنيمة نجع حمادي "الرعد: العقل المثالي" والكتب المندائية المقدسة.

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الخلاصة:

الترنيمة المسماة "الرعد: العقل المثالي" من مخطوطات نجع حمادي هي مرتبطة بالنصوص المندائية ولها علاقة مباشرة معها. إذ تتضمن هذه الدراسة عملية مقارنة الترنيمة المذكورة مع أحد النصوص من كتاب الكنزا ربا أو الكنز العظيم وهو النص الخاص بدنانوخث (إدريس/هرمس). كما سوف نقوم بمقارنتها مع إحدى الترانيم من كتاب الصلوات المندائية.

ومن المقارنات يمكن إيجاد تطابق لا شك فيه؛ إذ إن الشخصية الأنثوية المقصودة في الحوار لنص الرعد: العقل المثالي هي الآلهة البابلية عشتار التي تُمثل شخصه لكوكب الزهرة. وكانت تُعبد في العديد من مناطق العالم القديم تحت أسماء مختلفة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المندائيون، الصابئة، الناصورائيون، نجع حمادي، الرعد: العقل المثالي، الكنزا ربا، دنانوخث، هرمس، إدريس، عشتار، الزهرة، مزامير توما، بلاد الرافدين، العراق، الفراعنة، الإلهة موت، الآلهة الأم.

Introduction

In Egypt's 1945, a large clay jar was found containing many old manuscripts written on papyrus. Those manuscripts were found by an Egyptian peasant during a cultivation process that he was carrying out. His mother claimed that she had burnt some of the manuscripts.

(Robinson, 1990: 22-25)

(Pagels, 1989: Introduction)

In the end, however, 52 manuscripts and books survived. They were named the Nag Hammadi manuscripts after the nearby village. Most of these manuscripts were written in Coptic, and three volumes of them were classified as written in the ancient Achaemenid language.

Those manuscripts were taken to the United States until they were approved for publication 31 years later. One of the researchers was assigned exclusively, "James M. Robinson", he translated and published parts of it with the help of other researchers.

These works have been classified as unrecognized Gnostic Gospels "Apocrypha" because many of their texts were inconsistent with the current Christian doctrine. This may have been the reason for its burial since ancient times because the influential religious Christian powers used to burn all books that departed from the scope of the Christian faith and held their authors accountable harshly. (Nixey, 2017: 144-152)

The manuscripts from Nag Hammadi represent one of the most important historical discoveries in the twentieth century, and the reason for that is their large number and the philosophy they carry. Scholars have identified most of them as translations, made in the fourth century AD to an older Gnostic manuscript, as written by James Robinson during the introduction of his work.

1. Psalms of Thomas and their relationship to the Mandaean's philosophy.

In 1930 Professor C. Schmidt discovered manuscripts classified as Manichaean Gnosticism in Egypt. This event occurred fifteen years before the manuscripts of Nag Hammadi appeared.

It consisted of seven volumes totalling 3,500 pages. Among them are some important texts that they called the Psalms of Thomas. One of the most essential texts found was the Manichean Psalm book. We know from the history of Manichaeism that it was from the third century AD.

(Säve-Söderbergh, 1949: 1)

The Swedish researcher Säve-Söderbergh studied these manuscripts, especially the aforementioned psalm book, for the purpose of judging their philosophy. The researcher took the Manichaean Psalm book from the Psalms of Thomas and compared it with the Mandaean books. He then made many comparisons between the hymns and texts, which are cited in the reference.

(Säve-Söderbergh, 1949: 29-30, 52-53, 82, 85-86, 98-104, 105-107, 110-114, 118-119, 124-126)

It was drawn from each individual comparison that the Mandaean text appears to be the original source and the oldest.

(Säve-Söderbergh, 1949: 2, 162)

Whereas, after comparing many of Thomas's twenty hymns with other Mandaean hymns and texts, Säve-Söderbergh concluded that the Mandaean texts are the origin of Thomas's hymns. He concluded that the Manichaeans translated the Mandaean hymns by copying them and twisting some of their words. He did this by presenting several compelling arguments, including the fact that the psalms of Thomas alone, and not the other Manichaean texts, take a remarkable resemblance to the Mandaean scriptures.

He also reviews the supposed history of those texts and compares it with the history of the Mandaean texts, which are older than it. And with the presence of the Mesopotamian elements that are fixed and complete in the Mandaean texts, the method of measuring the hymns is established according to the Mesopotamian elements that the Mandaean texts follow.

(Säve-Söderbergh, 1949: 64)

The subject of the Mesopotamian elements is related to the language and expressions used in the texts and the main idea that forms the fixed religious language expressing concepts of salvation. This includes the coming of the savior, his calling to the souls, the souls' response to him, and their attempt to ascend to their original homeland.

The drama of salvation and the concept of the savior existed in Mesopotamia many centuries before Manichaeism, Mandaism, Christianity, and the Persian religion. It dates back to Mesopotamian eras that speak of the drama of Tammuz, referred to as the pre-Gnostic or early Gnostic phase, when the king represented the young god Tammuz. An interpretation of Tammuz found during the late Babylonian period considers him to represent humanity. Thus, Tammuz symbolizes all human beings.

This explanation highlights the ancient Mesopotamian roots of certain religious concepts that later appeared in various belief systems, emphasizing the continuity and evolution of religious ideas in the region over time.

(Widengren, MEIM, 1946: 177-178)

The evidence of Manichaeism borrowing from the Mandaean text was clear, even with the presence of some words that they could not translate. So they left them in the Mandaean pronunciation as they were, or because their philosophy is related to the Mandaeans, so they kept them. One hymn belonging to the Manichaeism was remembering the Saviour Shetel, who is related to the Mandaean philosophy while he has no relation to Manichaeism.

(Säve-Söderbergh, 1949: 82)

It was also showing that the psalms of Thomas are limited and could not be the basis for the many Mandaean texts and hymns, rather the opposite is more likely. Other comparisons were also demonstrated to show that conclusion.

(Säve-Söderbergh, 1949: 155-163)

Säve-Söderbergh has also shown that it was unlikely for these Mandaean elements, in Thomas's hymns to be taken from Syriac or Coptic texts because they were not presented in them.

(Säve-Söderbergh, 1949: 115-117, 156)

He suggested that the date of writing Thomas's hymns dates back to the last quarter of the third century AD, and not the fourth century, as was thought.

(Säve-Söderbergh, 1949: 156)

Therefore, some manuscripts of Nag Hammadi might also be related to the Mandaean philosophy, as they were considered to have Gnostics elements. Meanwhile, some of them can be traced directly to the Mandaean philosophy, as it will be discussed and improved upon in this study. Thus, there is no longer any doubt regarding the relation between these texts and the Mandaean texts.

2. Study tools

For a higher accuracy in this research, there will be a direct reliance from the translations of the original Mandaean manuscripts. The date of its manual copying is from 1560 and 1883 by Mandaean clergymen. It will be compared with the text of The Thunder: Perfect Mind, which has

been translated by George MacRae. Given that his translation is the official one, which was reviewed by James Robinson.

(Robinson, 1990: 295-303)

This study will also rely on the meanings of the Mandaean vocabulary according to the concepts of the religious Mandaean philosophy. This philosophy is sometimes different from the concept known to Western scholars, who exclusively rely on the translations of Lidzbarski, Drower, and Macuch. Those scholars examine the Mandaean philosophy according to their concepts derived from non-Mandaean sources, which are different sometimes. However, the original manuscripts with my own translations will be included. The translations made by other respective scholars will also be provided for further reference.

3. Manichaeism relation with the Mandaean religion.

Researchers and translators have confirmed that most of Nag Hammadi's manuscripts are Coptic translations of philosophy from Gnostic groups in early Christianity as declared by James Robinson and others. They are thus similar to the manuscripts of the Manichaeism gnostic Psalm of Thomas as well, since Manichaeism was also considered a Gnostic religion together with the Mandaeans and the early Christian groups.

From the foregoing analysis of the Manichaeism hymns by Säve-Söderbergh, it can deduced that they carry a great deal of the Mandaean philosophy, as Mani himself used to belong to the class of clergymen. Ibn al-Nadim called them in his book ‘al-Mughassila’.

(Ibn al-Nadim, 987: 392)

In Arabic it means the bathers. The word is synonymous with the word baptisers used by the christians. It is also the most important ritual of the Mandaeans to baptize but they call it “Maṣbuta” (مصبوتا, ماصبوتا), Ṣ = ص = (ص) It came from the Mandaean’s word root “Ṣaba” (صبا صبا) which means dye.

(Drower & Macuch, 1963: 385, 388-389)

Its Akkadian origin is from Ṣibu (Drower & Macuch, 1963: 388)

and Ṣapu. (Black ,George & Postgate, 2000: 333)

The adjective becomes ”Ṣabi” which means dyed.

The migrating Arabs from The Arabian Peninsula, have seen the Mandaeans performing the “MaṢbuta” ritual often on the rivers banks, thus they called the Mandaeans “Ṣabba” which means dyed. The Mandaean language was the dominant language in southern Mesopotamia, (Al-Jader, 2024: 651)

The word “Ṣabba” was converted to Ṣabia or Ṣabeen in classical Arabic.

While a direct translation of this word to Arabic will be ”Ṣabigha” or ”Mughtassila” (صابغة أو مُغْتَسِلَة).

The Mandaeans perform ”MaṢbuta” on any river “Yardna” which is referred to as the living water. With special importance given to the Euphrates River in the Mandaean texts.

Ibn al-Nadim said in his book Al-Fihrist, that Mani’s father “Ftq” belonged to the Baptist group, and he took Mani with him to Maisan in the southern region of current Iraq- In order for him to be raised according to the religious doctrine there from a young age. Ibn al-Nadim placed Mandaeanism before Manichaeism in his book.

(Ibn al-Nadim, (n.d.): 392)

Likewise, al-Shahrastani mentioned in his book Al-Milal wa al-Nihal a similar story about the belongings of Mani’s father, Ftq, to a religious Hanafi group, and his son Mani was included in it as well.

(al-Shahrastani, 1992: 268)

While Al-Biruni in his book "The Remaining Signs" wrote of the Sabeans (Mandaeans) precedence over Manichaeism, Al-Biruni also placed the Sabeans before Christianity and Judaism, as they are followers of Hermes.

(al-Biruni, TRS,(n.d.): 408)

Mani was born in the year 216 A.D. in Babylon, as he mentioned in his book Al-Shapurqan in the chapter on the coming of the Messenger. He named his home village Mardino at the upper Kothi River.

(al-Biruni, TRS,(n.d.): 253)

Al-Biruni quoted this text from his book, confirming that Mani was born in Babylon and he was truthful.

(al-Biruni, TRS,(n.d.): 134)

It is also important to note that the designation of Babylon in ancient times included many cities in the south and centre of present-day Iraq.

From other references, Mani was taken by his father when he was four years old to be raised by the religious group, who were called Astila Hiwara, which means in Mandaean “white suit” because they only wore white clothes. They were vegetarians and only ate the vegetables which were cultivated by them. They baked their own bread, and did not eat anything that did not originate from them. They admit some of their male children to the priesthood, giving them a religious upbringing, which qualifies them to learn the sciences and philosophies of their era. Like medicine, astronomy, philosophy, and above all of this they learned respect for the creation and its creatures and to be peaceful.

(Widengren, MaM Arabic version, 1965: 41-44)

After Mani reached the age of twenty-four years when he was consecrated as a priest, he left the religious group that consecrated him and taught him to be a doctor, painter, and philosopher, probably because their faith was not subject to change as Mani wanted to introduce a philosophical change. This made him defect from them and then announced his prophethood after that.

Mani was relying on changing parts of the philosophy of the Mandaean religion, As we have seen from Säve-Söderbergh work. Also by mixing it with different aspects of both Buddhism and Zoroastrianism. He used to refer to himself as the thankful messenger sent from the land of Babylon.

(Widengren, MaM Arabic version, 1965: 41)

According to Ibn al-Nadim's book "The Kitab al-Fihrist", Mani did not acknowledge Jesus.

(Ibn al-Nadim, (n.d.): 398)

One of the chapters mentioned him in one of Mani’s books “The Book of Secrets”, he talks about Jesus, who was crucified by the Jews.

(Ibn al-Nadim, (n.d.): 399)

However, it looks like there is some confusion in the history books relating to the philosophy of Mani, as al-Biruni had conveyed in his book "The Remaining Signs" that Mani was recognizing Jesus in his book Al-Shapurqan as a prophet but not a divine figure.

(al-Biruni, TRS,(n.d.): 252)

Meanwhile, al-Shahrastani mentions in his book "Al-Milal wa al-Nihal" that Mani recognized the prophet Jesus, but not Moses.

(al-Shahrastani, 1992: 269)

Or it could be that Mani changed his declarations in his different books. Since the Al-Shapurqan book was intended to be given to the Persian king Shapur, while the Book of Secrets was for his followers.

Mani, who proclaimed himself as a prophet, was settled in the city of Babylon and made it a destination for all of his followers in all the countries in which they spread. Ibn al-Nadim says that the leadership of the Manichaeans was not approved in any other city than Babylon, and that it was not permissible for the religious leader to exist anywhere else.

(Ibn al-Nadim, (n.d.): 397)

Mani was dazzling his followers with his personality that had aspects of leadership, and also because he had a high degree of knowledge. Manichaeism had reached China, Tibet, and some parts of India in less than a century.

(al-Biruni, TRS,(n.d.): 253)

Manichaeism also spread in Africa, Spain, Greece, and Italy, as well as Illyria in the Balkans and Gaul which included France, Belgium, and parts of Germany.

(Widengren, MaM Arabic version, 1965: 152)

The international rapid spread of Manichaeism was caused with such force due to the global message that Mani carried with his missionary religion.

Manichaeism differed from the monotheistic Mandaism in that it relied on the dualistic philosophy, which makes luminous powers, as the symbol of truth, goodness, and light, while they make the dark powers as the symbol of evil and sin.

At the same time, Mani had taken Mandaean rituals and teachings and adopted them into his new religion. For example, it can be found in his philosophy about the exit of the righteous soul from the body.

(Ibn al-Nadim, (n.d.): 398)

The philosophy says that the ancient man will send him a wise divine messenger accompanied by another three gods (messengers) with the clothes, the band (Turban), the crown, and the wreath of light in order for the soul to wear it.

Those descriptions are very similar to the Mandaean perceptions for the process of the Mandaean believer's soul leaving its body.

A passage from the Ginza Rabba will be translated here according to the original manuscript. For those who would like to compare it with Lidzbarski or Baghdad translation, please see the references.

(Lidzbarski, 1925: 212).

(Ginza Rabba, Arabic edition, 2000: 169-170)

“After Dananukht completed his destiny in peace (completed his life while he was righteous). He came out of his body, then they brought him up to the door of the house of life.

Dananukht said: Open the door of the house of life to me.

They opened it to him and raised him to the prestigious steady group.

So they dressed him the suit of light, clothed him with the great turban of illumination, and brought him a crown of vine and laid it on his head.”

Ginza Rabba, Right part, original manuscript included with Appendix A.

Note: The Arabic translation of the Ginza Rabba of Baghdad edition, is considered closer to the original meaning compared to the translation by Lidzbarski. Even though, it is missing some texts, and it was formulated in a literary way.

Mani during his work to spread his religion took a lot of the Mandaean philosophy and texts and kept them as they are, while introducing some changes to them to suit his era and help in the spread of his religion. Mani divided his followers into the righteous and the hearers.

The righteous were exaggerating extremist rituals for oppressing the body because it is a symbol of sin and evil. They used to carry out rituals to conquer the desires and needs of the human body by starving it, preventing meat, wine, sex, procreation, refusing marriage, and other compelling acts. Those limitations and rituals were however only for the class of soothsayers who followed Mani the righteous.

The hearers however, had been given other duties that were forbidden to the righteous, such as marriage and eating what they wanted, while living a normal family life. They fasted however every Sunday.

(Widengren, MaM Arabic version, 1965: 127-128)

They were required to pray four times a day, fast the entire month of April, pay one-tenth of the Zakat, and feed the righteous soothsayers.

(Ibn al-Nadim, (n.d.): 395-397)

A great similarity can be found between the prayers of Mani and his followers and the Mandaean prayers, as mentioned by Ibn Al-Nadim. Even some of the expressions of Mani's prayer are the same as in the Mandaean book of hymns, one of them to say to the Great Life (Great Hayyi) that he is "*the great tree that is all healing*".

(Drower, 1959: 84)

This phrase was used in Mani's prayer. The difference in this passage is that they consider Mani not the (Great Life) as the great tree that is all healing.

Another example of Manichaeisms similarities with the Mandaicism philosophy is found from their doctrine as mentioned by Ibn al-Nadim. He talks about the characteristics of the land of light and the land of darkness. These are also mentioned in the Mandaean book Ginza Rabba albeit in greater detail.

(Lidzbarski, 1925: 277-282)

Even the Manichaean prayer times are the same as the Mandaean ones at sunrise, between noon and sunset, and before sunset. However, the Mandaean night prayer has been abandoned for the time being, despite the existence of a religious text discussing it while the Manichaeans used to perform it at that time.

It was mentioned about Mani's philosophy that he sanctified the first, second, and third life.

(Widengren, MaM Arabic version, 1965: 41-42)

This same phrase is found in Mandaean texts, including the previous text that was referred to "*First Life, Second Life, and Third Life*".

(Drower, 1959: 84)

Manichaeans were similar to Mandaeans as they performed the rituals to baptize or dye according to the Mandaean name “Maṣbuta ماصبوتا” in the rivers.

(al-Shahrastani, 1992: 268)

Likewise, the name Mani is Mandaean and it is affiliated with the Mandaean expression Mana, which means mind, angel, or enlightened by divine knowledge.

(Drower & Macuch, 1963: 246)

Even his father's name, Ftq, is from the Mandaean verb, Ftq which means to tear, and it is still similarly used in Arabic.

(Drower & Macuch, 1963: 385)

Because Mani's origins were from Mesopotamia, he had made Babylon the head religious centre for all of his followers in all countries of the world.

(Ibn al-Nadim, (n.d.): 397)

This can also be known from Christian sources that discuss it, including the book "Acta Archelai", which the researcher, Widengren says is full of lies and hatred about Mani. But despite that, he says it contains some correct material. From that book, he cites a personal description that depicts Mani holding a long ebony cane in his hand. Under his left arm, he carries a Babylonian book. The Babylonian appellation in Mani's description, referred to Lower Mesopotamia, where he grew up, and said that his beginnings were there. This confirms that at that time, they defined Mani as a Babylonian and belonging to Babylon.

Furthermore, Mani's original language was Eastern Aramaic, specifically Mandaic. Therefore, a coin written in Mandaean was found in southern Mesopotamia in Charax , which is the kingdom of Maysan, where it was written: "Mani, appointed by the order of Mithras."

(Widengren, MaM English version, 1965: 36, 74)

Given that Mandaic was the language of Lower Mesopotamia and Mithra served to legitimize the rule of the Persian king who reigned in his name and was his supreme god. Likewise, the Babylonian kings ruled under the name of Marduk, the supreme Babylonian god, and the Assyrians under the name of Ashur the supreme Assyrian god. Therefore, that coin meant the king's signature, which allowed Mani to practice preaching his religion in Mesopotamia.

Add to that, Mani himself had confirmed his Babylonian origins in his book when he said

”I am the disciple who rose from the land of Babylon.”

(Widengren, MaM English version, 1965: 24)

Add to that, Mani could not speak Persian, and he relied on an interpreter in all his meetings with the Persian king. His only book written in Middle Persian was 'al-Shapurqan' which means 'The Book of Shapur,' and was a gift to King Shapur to persuade him of his religion and teachings, thus allowing him to proselytize in Mesopotamia, which was under Persian rule. While some scholars have suggested that Mani may not have been proficient in the king's dialect, the more plausible explanation is that he employed a translator to render his book al-Shapurqan into Middle Persian language to convince the Persian king. Given that Mani did not write any of his other books in Persian, it is clear that he was not able to speak that language and was in need for an interpreter for this reason.

(Widengren, MaM English version, 1965: 40)

It is mentioned that Ibn Khaldun, in the context of his recording and writing of history, refused to mention the names of the Syriac kings, because those names had been distorted to become Persian by Dahr, the historian of the Persian state. The historian Ibn Said had transmitted those distorted names from him.

(Ibn Khaldun, (n.d.): 361)

Therefore, the issue of attributing Mani's origin to the Persians or assigning Persian names to his grandfather or grandmother in some sources influenced by ancient distortions is incorrect and falls within the realm of appropriating influential historical figures. The struggle over history by colonizers is as important as the struggle over geography, as it provides them with the pretext and reason.

Since Mesopotamia lost its independence long ago and became subordinate to empires and major states, its history has been subject to theft and distortion throughout those times.

Iraqi researcher Salim Mutar discusses in his book "The Wounded Self" the reasons that led to the theft of Mesopotamian history for the period before the Islamic conquest and its attribution to the Persians. He argues that this situation is still present to this day, by Iranian research centers in their efforts to alter Iraq's history by making it more Persian.

(Mutar, 2008: 85-91)

Even the similarity of his Manichaean teachings with Zoroastrianism is made to a small extent, which is related to the duality of the universe, or light and darkness. God, who is truth and light, against matter, which is composed of lies and darkness, although the Manicheans did not consider the matter to be a god, in the sense that they made God higher than matter.

(Widengren, MaM Arabic version, 1965: 63-66) Nevertheless, those expressions of light and darkness can be found abundantly in Mandaean texts, but without the existence of dualism in worship. Let's not forget that the philosophy developed by Mani was hybrid in order to preach his own religion, and for this, he was looking for similarities with the powerful religions at that time to attract followers.

It possible that Mani had likely put some similarities with Zoroastrianism in some of his books, apparently to stave off the wrath of the Persian Zoroastrian rulers who were occupying Mesopotamia and controlling the region. He had even named his book al-Shapurqan (Shapur book) according to the Persian king's name Shapur I. He also wrote only this book using the Middle Persian language.

(Widengren, MaM Arabic version, 1965: 48)

As Mani want to get closer to the king.

(al-Biruni, TRS,(n.d.): 252)

In any case, Mani brought for himself powerful enemies from the Christian Church that dominated the Roman Empire,

(Widengren, MaM Arabic version, 1965: 152)

and also the Zoroastrian temples that controlled Persia. His end came however at the hands of the Zoroastrian priest Carter and his group by submitting complaints against him to the Persian king Bahram I.

(Widengren, MaM Arabic version, 1965: 58)

The most important writing that reached us from the books written by Mani is a book he called The Treasure of the Living, in which he quotes directly from the Mandaean book Ginza Rabba (The Great Treasure).

(Widengren, MaM Arabic version, 1965: 103)

Likewise, Al-Biruni quoted from him in his book "Tahqiq Ma Lil Hind Min Makula", small passages which correspond to what is written in the Mandaean book Ginza Rabba.

(al-Biruni, TMLHMM, 1983: 31)

He describes there the luminous (ethereal) soldiers in the world of light, that they are similar and have living bodies and are called virgins. These are the same characteristics of the ethereal "Aothrei" in the world of light according to the book of Ginza Rabba.

(Lidzbarski, 1925: Right part, First book, 11)

There are also some texts copied from the book "Treasure of the Living" written by Mani, within the books "De Natura Boni" by Augustine, as well as the book of Eudius "De Fida Contro Manich", in which it is mentioned that the human is a small world.

(Widengren, MaM Arabic version, 1965: 103)

This concept alone represents a Mandaean philosophy that talks about the small world, which is the body, and the large world, which is the universe.

(Drower, APONC, 1963)

al-Biruni quoted Mani in his book The Remaining Signs of Past Centuries that Mani had mentioned in his Bible, which he wrote in the language of the alphabet consisting of twenty-two letters, that his belief was related to "the kingdom of the worlds of light, the ancient man, and the spirit of life".

(al-Biruni, TRS,(n.d.): 252)

Mani's belief was certainly derived from the Mandaean belief that says, "Hayyi, Mary, and Mandadhyyi"; Hayyi is the great life, who is the king of the worlds of light, Mary, who is the master or the Lord, whom Mani interpreted in his philosophy to be the ancient man, who is the truth and the light according to his definition. As for the meaning of Mandadhyyi, it is the knowledge of life or the knowing of life, Al-Biruni quoted it to be the spirit of life.

The Mandaean alphabet is in the order that Al-Biruni talks about, it has twenty-two letters, as well as the definition letter "ad", and they included the first letter "ah" at the end of the alphabet also because it represents the beginning and the end. It is also known that Mani wrote using an alphabet similar to Mandaic from other references.

(Widengren, MaM Arabic version, 1965: 55)

Mani was crucified, brutally murdered, and had his body hung in Ahwaz in AD 274 by the Persian Emperor Bahram I.

(Ibn al-Nadim, (n.d.): 398)

After that, the companions of Mani came and took the remains of his body and buried it in Ctesiphon, which is the Persian name for the city of Al-Madaain. It is located a hundred km north of the present-day ruins of Babylon, and they buried him there since it was his birthplace.

(Widengren, MaM Arabic version, 1965: 62)

4. Comparison of the text of Dananukht from the Ginza Rabba and the hymn of The Thunder: Perfect Mind from the Psalms of Thomas.

The hymn "The Thunder: Perfect Mind" is a beautiful text found in the Nag Hammadi manuscripts. Although the name has absolutely nothing to do with the text it still gives off and reflects of the desire of the researcher who translated it, George W. MacRae. It was published in the Nag Hammadi Library Publications which was supervised by James M. Robinson.

(Robinson, 1990: 295-303)

Mr. MacRae had however pointed out that there is a similarity between this hymn and a text found in Ginza Rabba, which is the text of Dananukht (Idris / Hermes). He had also stated that the texts were not close in meaning.

(Robinson, 1990: 295)

This could be because Mr. MacRae may have had little knowledge of the Mandaean texts. However, there is a need to point at that the translation he provided is missing many passages that have not been translated probably because the original text was damaged. There can also be found a lack of clarity in the meanings of the translated text, which may be due to the translator's inability to accurately understand the intended meaning behind the text (Metaphors).

This work will show the correspondence between the texts of The Thunder: Perfect Mind from the manuscripts of Nag Hammadi,

(Robinson, 1990: 297-303)

with a part of the text of Dananukht from the Mandaean book Ginza Rabba. The feminine character in both texts will also be revealed which referred to the Babylonian goddess Ishtar. Her worship existed in many countries centuries before the introduction of Christianity.

To begin with, there will be a translation of the text of Dananukht from the Ginza Rabba according to the original manuscript for a higher accuracy in the translation. For those who want to compare it with Lidzbarski or Baghdad translation, refer to the sources.

(Lidzbarski, 1925: Right part, 207)

(Ginza Rabba, Baghdad edition, 2000: 162)

“Then Iwath Roha ad-Qudsha¹ came to my Shakhntha². (1)

She stood in front of me and said to me: (1)

Why are you sleeping, Dananukht? (1)

And why do you sleep comfortably? (1)

I am the life that was from eternity. (2)

I am the Kushta (the truth/covenant) that was before everything. (3)

I am the light and I am the illumination. (4)

I am death and I am life. (5)

I am the darkness and I am the light. (6)

I am the error and I am the right. (7)

I am the ruin and I am the construction. (8)

I am the disease and I am the cure.” (9)

Ginza Rabba, Right part, original manuscript included with Appendix B.

5. Text analysis

In the beginning, focus is given to the definition of the feminine character whose name was *Iwath Roha ad-Qudsha*. The second part after Iwath means "the Holy Spirit", she was the one who addressed Dananukht.

For knowing more about her, another text from the Ginza Rabba will be taken and translated. The text talks about the evil gods who are personifications of the planets that rule over humans. Lidzbarski's translation is provided in the source.

(Lidzbarski, 1925: Right part 28)

The Holy Spirit.¹

Personal ritual temple.²

“The seven demons (*Diwi*) that seduce all the children of Adam and Hawa.

The first is called *Shamesh* (the Sun), and

The second is *Roha ad-Qudsha* (the Holy Spirit). Its name is *Istra* (*Ishtar*), *Libat*, *Amamet* (*Venus*).

The third is *Anbu* (*Mercury*), the messenger of lies who forged the original praises.

The fourth is *Sin* (the moon), and his name is *Sauriel*.

The fifth is *Kiwan* (*Saturn*).

The sixth is *Bel* (*Jupiter*).

The seventh is *Nireg* (*Mars*).”

Ginza Rabba, Right part, original manuscript included with Appendix C.

As found in the text, *Roha ad-Qudsha* is an epithet of *Ishtar*, the Babylonian deity, who is a personification of the planet Venus. However, for the name *Iwath*

(Drower & Macuch, 1963: 342)

it means the one who wails, mourner, or the woman who enumerates different things in a poetic form, especially in times of grief.

This was a profession for certain women from the Sumerian and Babylonian times until the 20th century. All those attributes applied to the feminine character in the hymn of The Thunder. This feminine character gives herself all the contradictory qualities in order to present herself as the main deity, that is behind everything- whether it be good or evil.

The Mandaean links most of the feminine deities with the character of *Ishtar*, which they call *Roha* or *Roha ad-Qudsha* (The Holy Spirit). It is a personification for the planet Venus, because they believe that she changes her shape, concepts, and philosophy to seduce people and create new religions, for the purpose to make them deviate from the worship of the Great Life (Great Hayyi).

Likewise, there is a similarity between *Amamet* or *Ishtar's* divinity, with the ancient Egyptian mother deities who gave birth to the world in a virginal birth, her name was *Mut*, and she wore a double crown plus a royal vulture headdress and carried a papyrus sceptre in her hand. She also has many other names, or was represented by other feminine deities during different historical periods.

(Budge, 1904: 451)

In the following text, passages will be highlighted from the text of Dananukht from the Ginza Rabba and the corresponding passages from the hymn of The Thunder. Those passages will be compared.

(1) From “text of Dananukht” original at Appendix B

“Then Iwath Roha ad-Qudsha came to my Shakhntha.

She stood in front of me and said to me:

Why are you sleeping, Dananukht?

And why do you sleep comfortably?”

The story of the text from the Ginza Rabba was about Dananukht who was eagerly searching for the truth in the world's subordination to God and getting to know about him. But he was unaware of the goddess Ishtar, who communicated with him through the knowledge of the books he was reading. Because of that, he started to think that she was unsatisfied with him because he was unaware of her.

She asked him how he could sleep and how sleep would be comfortable for him while he was ignorant of her and did not think about her, despite his search for the main god of the world. It was she who put herself in that main gods place.

This corresponds to what was found in several passages of the text The Thunder, where the feminine character advised the believers not to lose sight of her, and not to distance themselves from her with their senses, and not to be ignorant of her.

I was sent forth from the power, (Robinson, 1990: 297)

and I have come to those who reflect upon me, (Ibid)

and I have been found among those who seek after me. (Ibid)

Look upon me, you who reflect upon me, (Ibid)

and you hearers, hear me. (Ibid)

You who are waiting for me, take me to yourselves. (Ibid)

And do not banish me from your sight. (Ibid)

And do not make your voice hate me, nor your hearing. (Ibid)

Do not be ignorant of me anywhere or any time. Be on your guard! Do not be ignorant of me.
(Ibid)

You who know me, be ignorant of me, and those who have not known me, let them know me.
(Robinson, 1990: 298)

(2) From “text of Dananukht” original at Appendix B
“I am the life that was from eternity.”

Similar passages from the Thunder hymn, as shown below.

For I am the first and the last. (Robinson, 1990: 297)

For I am the one who alone exists, (Robinson, 1990: 303)

(3) From “text of Dananukht” original at Appendix B
“I am the Kushta (the truth/covenant) that was before everything.”

Similar passages from the Thunder hymn, as shown below.

I am the one who is called Truth, and iniquity. (Robinson, 1990: 302)

(4) From “text of Dananukht” original at Appendix B
“I am the light and I am the illumination.”

The light and illumination in the Mandaean philosophy is a metaphorical expression in which the light symbolizes intelligence and acumen, while the illumination symbolizes learning and knowledge. Similar passages from The Thunder hymn are visible, as shown below.

I am unlearned, and they learn from me. (Robinson, 1990: 299)

I am the knowledge of my inquiry, and the finding of those who seek after me, (Robinson, 1990: 300)

(5) From “text of Dananukht” original at Appendix B
“I am death and I am life.”

Similar passages from the Thunder hymn, as shown below.

I am the one whom they call Life, and you have called Death. (Robinson, 1990: 299)

I am war and peace. (Robinson, 1990: 298)

(6) From “text of Dananukht” original at Appendix B

"I am the darkness and I am the light."

Similar passages from the Thunder hymn, as shown below.

For I am knowledge and ignorance. (Robinson, 1990: 298)

I am unlearned, and they learn from me. (Robinson, 1990: 299)

I am the one whom they call Law, and you have called Lawlessness. (Robinson, 1990: 299)

(7) From "text of Dananukht" original at Appendix B

"I am the error and I am the right."

Similar passages from the Thunder hymn, as shown below.

I am the honored one and the scorned one. (Robinson, 1990: 298)

I am the whore and the holy one. (Ibid)

I am shame and boldness. (Ibid)

I am shameless; I am ashamed. (Ibid)

I am strength and I am fear. (Ibid)

I am the one who is disgraced and the great one. (Ibid)

I am senseless and I am wise. (Robinson, 1990: 299)

I am the one who is honored, and who is praised, and who is despised scornfully. (Robinson, 1990: 301)

I am peace, and war has come because of me. (Ibid)

I am control and the uncontrollable. (Ibid)

(8) From "text of Dananukht" original at Appendix B

"I am the ruin and I am the construction."

Similar passages from the Thunder hymn, as shown below.

I am war and peace. (Robinson, 1990: 298)

Give heed to my poverty and my wealth. (Robinson, 1990: 298)

I am the union and the dissolution. (Robinson, 1990: 301)

I am the abiding and I am the dissolution. (Ibid)

(9) From "text of Dananukht" original at Appendix B

I am the disease and I am the cure."

Similar passages from the Thunder hymn, as shown below.

I am the barren one and many are her sons. (Robinson, 1990: 297)

But I, I am compassionate and I am cruel. (Robinson, 1990: 298)

I, I am sinless, and the root of sin derives from me. (Robinson, 1990: 301)

I am a mute who does not speak, and great is my multitude of words. (Ibid)

The comparison of passages from both texts has been conducted. It is important to remember that these were translated from different languages, each with unique expressions. These expressions may or may not convey similar meanings. Nevertheless, a match is found within the Dananukht text from the Ginza Rabba book. The match found between both texts was that the qualities that the feminine character calls on herself were similar. This feminine deity was of Babylonian origin, and its most prominent name was Ishtar, her worship was in many places around the world in the past.

6. Another similarity of passages from The Thunder hymn with other Mandaean texts.

6.1. “*So I know and understand what was, what is, and what will be.*” Ginza Rabba.

Now, another passage will be translated which contains a phrase that Dananukht used to say and repeat from his text in the Ginza Rabba.:

"I sat between water and water.

I am Dananukht, the wise clerk.

The ink of the Books of the Gods³.

The proud, the dignified, and the powerful.

I have no master in my house, nor anyone who is greater than me by building in my upper structure (temple), nor in my lower house.

These are my books in my hands, and the book of memories in my both arms.

In my new books I meditate and from the old ones I learn.

So I know and understand what was, what is, and what will be.”

Ginza Rabba, Right part, original manuscript included with Appendix D.

He writes the books of the gods.³

(Lidzbarski, 1925: Right part, 206)

NB: Some variance exists with Lidzbarski's translation.

(Ginza Rabba, Baghdad edition, 2000: 158)

This last stanza of the text, which is "*I know and understand what was, what is, and what will be*" means knowing the past, the present, and the future. This same expression was used by the Egyptian mother the goddess Mut who says about herself:

"I am what was, what is, and what will be ... and no human being is able to lift my burqa".

(*al-Sawwah, 2002: 29*)

(Viaud, 1977: 37)

Whereas the phrase "*No human being is able to lift my burqa*" is found in other passages of the Thunder hymn as below.

I am the silence that is incomprehensible. (Robinson, 1990: 298)

I am the hearing which is attainable to everyone and the speech which cannot be grasped.

(Robinson, 1990: 301)

I am the hearing that is attainable to everything. (Robinson, 1990: 302)

I am the speech that cannot be grasped. (Ibid)

This is another approach to the close relationship between the text of Dananukht from the Ginza Rabba book, for the personality of Ishtar and her Egyptian counterpart, Mut, as mentioned about her in the sources, and with the text of The Thunder: Perfect Mind.

It is understood in the end of the text of Dananukht that he did not recognize Ishtar's divinity, as he only believed in one true God. Although Ishtar had given herself all attributes and positions, Dananukht himself did not recognize those gods of the planets as the true gods.

6.2. "If thou art with us, who will acquit us? And if thou acquit us, who will condemn us".

Now, another translation will be conducted from another text coming directly from the Mandaean's psalm book.

“Like the pure water in the Yardna (living water), before you, there is no one o Mandadhyyi.

We are the slaves who have all the sins, and thou are the Lord who has all forgiveness.

If thou art with us, who will acquit us?⁴

And if thou acquit us, who will condemn us?⁵”

Mandaeen’s psalm book, original manuscript included with Appendix E.

NB: I have a variance from Drower’s translation (Drower, 1959: 35-36), as I translate the words to their literal meaning, while she gives more of a general meaning to the phrases.

The same text in the same sense can be found by examining the passages of The Thunder hymn.

The congruence between the meanings of the two texts is evident.

If you are condemned by this one, who will acquit you? (Robinson, 1990: 302)

Or if you are acquitted by him, who will be able to detain you? (Ibid)

مجلة لارك للفلسفة واللسانيات والعلوم الاجتماعية

7. Sabians and Muslim historians

Many Muslim historians have recorded their observations and information regarding the Sabians. This includes what they had heard about them, the circumstances surrounding them, the events of the eras in which they lived, and also what they knew regarding the eras that preceded them.

These ancient writings retain historical value as they elucidate the general conditions, prevalent information, events, and news of the era in which they were written. However, it is important to note that the information they wrote about Sabian-Mandaeen philosophy is based on what the historians had heard about them from others and not what the Sabians provided. Therefore, much of the information written regarding the Sabian-Mandaeen teachings were wrong.

It will be my goal to present only facts cited from historical evidence, Therefore, we need to discuss the sources of information that were available to these ancient historians, and the extent of their credibility. It is also important to note that even though some historians were fair and neutral in

We will not need anyone else than you to acquit us.⁴

No one can condemn us, if you acquit us.⁵

their narrations, that they would mention their sources but also use filler words "I heard about so-and-so" if they did not have it. While some others were not this much professional.

Also that, some Muslim historians did not belong to the Arab countries and did not know the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, and therefore they had not seen the Sabians themselves and did not know the Mandaic language at that time.

It is also duly important to note that history is always written by the victors.

In the following I will quickly review the reasons that led some Muslim historians, known for their scholarly integrity, to convey information and stories that can be interpreted as suggesting that the Sabian religion is a man-made rather than a divine one. They also recount tales and teachings that do not belong to the Sabians and even undermine them.

The obscurity of Mandaean teachings and their philosophical rituals pushed ancient researchers to attempt to understand them through rumors, interpretations, and explanations put forth by other peoples about the Mandaeans. This was due to the lack of Mandaean books and sources available to them. Therefore, when referring to ancient historians and comparing their writings about the Sabians with Mandaean books, which have been translated and published for the public in our current era, we find that they do not match. Additionally, their attempts to understand Mandaean philosophy were not successful. Taha Baqir states that ancient scholars like Ibn Khaldun wrote based on the limited information available to them, whereas in our era, archaeological findings have provided extensive information that was not accessible to them.

(Baqir, 2009: 122)

This also applies to the Mandaeans and the Mandaean artifacts found in southern Iraq and in Mesopotamian cities occupied by Iran, such as Ahvaz, Shushtar, and Dezful. On the other hand, some ancient historians relied on the Torah as a source for understanding the literature and religions of Mesopotamia, as it was one of the few sources available at their time. However, Taha Baqir mentions that this is inappropriate due to the intense hostility that the Jews harbored towards the civilizations and people of Mesopotamia. This is especially true considering that they recorded the final version of the Torah in Babylon during the periods of Babylonian captivity, as well as the Jewish Talmud, which is known as the Babylonian Talmud.

(Baqir, 2009: 124)

Furthermore, some other historians were influenced by unreliable and biased sources, written by individuals affiliated with religious groups with political objectives. These sources attacked the philosophies of other religions that could potentially impact their own influential religious narratives in world history. This makes uncovering the truth particularly difficult, especially for weaker religions that cannot defend themselves, such as the Mandaean religion, which now has only a few tens of thousands of followers remaining.

The Mandaean religion is an ancient monotheistic faith. It is connected to the ancient and diverse religions of Mesopotamia, which cannot be reduced to a single philosophy. This is because the Sumerian kingdoms, which emerged from the earliest cities of civilization, each had their own rituals and texts and were never confined to a single idea, philosophy, or one temple teachings.

(Al-Shawaf. 1997: 85)

However, they shared general characteristics, all related to astronomy, cosmic phenomena, and natural forces. People had the freedom to worship, and there were temples with different philosophies, without any compulsion for people to adhere to the same philosophy or the same details. The Romans adopted Christianity as the official religion for their empire, as a means to unify the various peoples and ethnicities they had conquered. Perhaps this is because they learned from the experience of Alexander the Great's empire, which disintegrated into different states after his death due to the diversity of religions, ethnicities, and origins of the people they had integrated. Therefore, the Romans sought to unify their empire with a stronger bond than ethnic ties. They imposed Christianity on the conquered peoples and fought against the ancient religions in those regions to eliminate competition. Their primary accusation against those religions was that they were pagan, heretical, and based on magic, while attempting to disparage their religious philosophies. This provided justification for occupying their lands, exterminating the followers of those religions, and burning their temples and books.

The writer, Catherine Nixey, quotes some excerpts about the Christian's systematic destruction of ancient religions, and that its highest leadership issued the orders for these actions and were not the actions of individuals. She said: "Attacks against the monuments of the 'mad', 'damnable' and 'insane' pagans were encouraged and led by men at the very heart of the Catholic Church. The

great St Augustine himself declared to a congregation in Carthage that ‘that all superstition of pagans and heathens should be annihilated is what God wants, God commands, God proclaims!’”.

(Nixey, 2017: 20)

This situation continued with the persecution of religious interpretations that deviated from the Judeo-Christian teachings followed by the Church. Official bodies affiliated with the Church carried out this persecution from its beginnings until the nineteenth century, when the Catholic Inquisition was officially abolished.

(Nixey, 2017: 144-152)

Even the Egyptians before Christianity were Sabians, as mentioned by Al-Shahrastani in his book "Al-Milal wa Al-Nihal," until the Romans occupied Egypt and forcibly converted its people to Christianity.

(al-Shahrastani, 1992: 257)

Since the Mandaean religion emerged from the philosophies and religions of Mesopotamia, it inherited the sciences of astronomy and cosmic phenomena that the Sumerians discovered in their religions and that the Babylonians followed and developed, and those sciences and interpretations entered into the Mandaean religious texts. Therefore, the direct accusation by Roman Christianity against them was that they were heretics,

During intermittent Roman imperial control over Mesopotamia, the Sabians were subjected to periods of persecution, including extermination attempts.

The Mandaean sacred book, Ginza Rabba, is a compilation of ancient scriptures from various eras, with time differences between its texts of thousands of years. However, we also find sparse references to significant global events affecting the Mandaeans across different historical periods.

One such event was the Roman brutality aimed at eradicating the Sabians due to their religious differences. A particular passage in the text addresses this persecution, promising ascension to the realm of light for those who maintain their Mandaean faith, despite the torture and killings perpetrated by Roman Christians. This concept bears similarity to the Islamic principle of martyrdom.

"Do not believe in him.

If he tortures you and if he kills some of you, do not be afraid.

For when he kills your bodies, your spirits will be in the world of light.

So do not be afraid, do not be terrified, and do not be in awe of the false Christian roman."

Ginza Rabba, Right part, original manuscript included with Appendix F

For those who would like to compare it with Lidzbarsky's translation, please refer to the reference.

(Lidzbarsky, 1925: 49).

NB: Some variance exists with Lidzbarski's translation.

The Romans referred to the Sabians as "Chaldeans," meaning magicians. They also labeled them as "Pagans". The original meaning of the word "pagan" (Paganus) used by Christians was "peasant." However, due to its application to the peasants of Harran who practiced their Sabian rituals based on the movements of planets and stars and utilized astronomical observatories in their temples, the term's usage evolved to mean "pagan." According to the priest Putros Nasri Al-Kaldani, the Christians referred to the Sabians and Mandaeans as "Chaldeans" or "worshippers of the stars", terms that denote soothsayers and practitioners of divination.

(Al-Hamad, 1999, 25)

Al-Shahrastani (1076-1153 AD) also mentioned this in his book Al-Milal wa al-Nahal, stating that the Sabians are called Chaldeans. He also said that the king of Babylon followed the Sabian religion.

(al-Shahrastani, 1992: 258)

Although magic is considered one of the most severe prohibitions among Mandaeans, with numerous Mandaean texts threatening severe punishment for sorcerers and those who seek magic, we also find a text in the Ginza Rabba book that interprets the term "Chaldean" as a person who practices magic, and explicitly forbids that to the Mandaeans.

What are you whispering about, O Seven (the seven planetary figures - Shbiahai)?

I was not among your followers, I did not do your deeds,

I did not bear your mark, I did not repeat your words.

I was neither a Chaldean nor a soothsayer."

Ginza Rabba, Right part, original manuscript included with Appendix G

For those who would like to compare it with Lidzbarski's translation, please refer to the reference. (Lidzbarski, 1925: 587).

The writings of other historians also refute the accusation of paganism against the Sabians, asserting instead that they are the origin of monotheism. Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 CE) in his book, *The History of Ibn Khaldun*, provides a perspective that challenges the accusation of paganism against the Sabians. He said that the descendants of Shem were Hanafi and they were monotheists, who adhered to the monotheistic beliefs of the Chaldeans before them. He also states that the kings of the earth after the flood were from the Sabians, and the kings of Babylon were from the Sabians, including Nimrod.

(Ibn Khaldun, (n.d.): 360)

Despite Ibn Khaldun's affirmation of monotheism among the Sabians, he still labeled their religion as a heresy, implying it was not a divinely revealed faith. This perspective likely stems from the biases and erroneous sources previously mentioned, such as religious prejudice and incorrect sources they quoted from.

The Holy Quran has been fair to the Sabians and mentioned them explicitly among the believers in three Medinan verses: Surat Al-Baqarah 62 / Surat Al-Ma'idah 69 / Surat Al-Hajj 17. Additionally, the Sabians are implicitly referenced in other verses, including: Surat An-Naml 3 / Surat Luqman 4 / Surat Al Imran 114, as the Sabians are among those who establish prayer, pay zakat, believe in the hereafter, enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong.

When the Islamic State rose to power and the Sabians in southern Mesopotamia became its subjects, Sabian religious texts were not readily available for Muslims to examine from their original source. This inaccessibility was due to the prohibition that Sabians placed on spreading their philosophy and religious teachings. The deep details of the Mandaean religious teachings were exclusively available to members of the clergy community, which consisted of Nasoraian religious lineages that inherited the right to enter the Mandaean priesthood.

The lack of direct access to Sabian religious texts posed significant challenges for Islamic historians and researchers, compelling them to rely on secondary sources and accounts from other religions. This reliance often led them to consult writings produced during periods of Christian expansion in Mesopotamia and the Byzantine attempts to control the city of Harran in northern

Mesopotamia. Some of these accounts included translations of Christian texts about the Sabians, which resulted in confusion among certain Muslim historians when citing these narratives. Consequently, many of these external sources propagated various forms of misinformation and slander against the Sabians, portraying them as heretics, practitioners of magic, or as a splinter group from Judaism or Christianity, or somewhere in between.

If we take Ibn al-Nadim (932-1022 AD) as an example, he was one of the credible historians; However, it's important to note that he faithfully reported what he heard about the Sabians without being responsible for verifying the authenticity of the writings and statements he included in his works. In his book "Al-Fihrist", Ibn al-Nadim provided information about the Sabians, portraying them as monotheists. He dedicated an entire chapter to them, titled "The Harranian Chaldeans Known as the Sabians." He also mentioned that the beliefs and laws of the Sabians are the same and they called to God and the Hanafi school of thought that they are characterized by.

Ibn al-Nadim categorized Sabians into several groups based on what he heard about their various locations. He identified these groups as the Daysaniyya, the Kushtiyya, Mughtassila, and the Sabians of the Marshes, whom he associated with the ancient Nabataean doctrine.

His grouping of all of them under the Sabians was not because of the similarity of their names, but because they followed the same philosophy and shared the same teachings.

He also attributed several common characteristics to these groups: they oriented their prayer direction (qibla) towards the North Pole, sought wisdom and rejected what contradicted natural disposition, adhered to the four cardinal virtues of the soul, embraced partial virtues, and avoided partial vices. They have three prayers: the first is performed half an hour before sunrise, the second at noon, and the third at sunset. Their prayers are conducted in a state of ritual purity. they fast for thirty days, starting from the beginning of the month of Athar (March). They must perform ritual ablution after sexual intercourse, change their clothes, and avoid contact with menstruating women. They are prohibited from eating camel meat and any animal with teeth in both jaws, such as pigs, dogs, and donkeys, as well as any animal with claws. and from plants anything other than beans and garlic. They also avoid leprosy and other contagious diseases, do not practice circumcision, marry with witnesses, and have equal material inheritance rights for both males and females. Divorce is only permitted with clear evidence of adultery. Rewards and punishments are believed to affect the soul. Then he mentions among the Sabian scholars Hermes the Wise, who is the Prophet Idris, as well as Solon, the grandfather of Plato.

(Ibn al-Nadim, (n.d.): 383-385)

Based on the information provided, it appears that all of the characteristics and teachings attributed to the Sabians by Ibn al-Nadim are indeed applicable to the Mandaeans and can be corroborated by Mandaean texts.

Ibn al-Nadim, despite his credible reputation, did mention some criticisms against the Sabians, notably differentiating between the Sabians of Harran and those of the Marshlands. This distinction was based on a short story involving a visit by the Abbasid Caliph al-Maamun to Harran, as recounted in a book by the Christian author Abu Yusuf Isehaq al-Qutiai al-Nasrani and quoted by Ibn al-Nadim. According to this account, "the Caliph Al-Maamun, during his campaign against the Byzantines, passed through the lands of Mudar and encountered a group of Harranian pagans. These individuals wore long robes and had long hair, similar to the description of Qura, the grandfather of Sinan bin Thabit. Al-Maamun denied them and did not accept the jizya from them, giving them the ultimatum to convert to Islam or one of the religions recognized by Islam (Judaism, Christianity, Sabianism) or face death, allowing them time until his return from the campaign.

As a result, some of these Harranians converted to Christianity or Islam, while a small group claimed to be the Sabians mentioned in the Quran to seek protection under the covenant given to the Sabians, thus allowing them to pay the jizya. These individuals became known as the Sabians of Harran."

(Ibn al-Nadim, (n.d.): 385)

This passage highlights a significant discrepancy in the historical account attributed to Abu Yusuf al-Nasrani regarding the Sabians of Harran. The story is supposed to have taken place during the reign of Caliph al-Maamun (198-218 AH / 813-833 CE). However, In a contradictory way, the author mentions Sinan ibn Thabit ibn Qurra al-Sabi, who lived and worked much later, around 331 AH (943 CE), serving in a role equivalent to a modern Minister of Health during the Abbasid era. He was responsible for issuing medical practice licenses and held a privileged position under Caliph al-Muqtadir. The inclusion of Sinan ibn Thabit in this narrative creates a discrepancy of over a century between the supposed event and the historical figure mentioned. This anachronism suggests potential ulterior motives behind the story, as it may reflect a power struggle or competition for influence within the Abbasid court, and there might have been an attempt to discredit Sinan ibn Thabit, a prominent Sabian physician, by casting doubt on the faith of his

ancestors. The accusation implied in this story was extremely serious, as charges of apostasy or atheism, were punishable by death in that era.

(Al Marrani, 1981: 84)

Likewise, among the stories transmitted by Ibn al-Nadim about the Sabians, he narrates from another Christian source, Abu Saa'id Wahb bin Ibrahim al-Nasrani. According to this narrative, the Sabians allegedly burned sacrifices for demons, jinn, and spirits. It further claimed that they sacrificed children as offerings, mixed their flesh with flour, baked it... and other cheap lies.

(Ibn al-Nadim, (n.d.): 386-389)

But in another place, Ibn al-Nadim cited an account attributed to al-Kindi, who wrote about the Sabians of Harran. Al-Kindi stated: "He examined a book acknowledged by these people, which contained discourses by Hermes on monotheism, written for his son. These writings were of the utmost piety in monotheism, to the extent that a philosopher, even after exhausting himself, would find no alternative but to accept and affirm them."

(Ibn al-Nadim, (n.d.): 385)

The reasons for these Christian writer's disparagement of the Sabians, including those of Harran, are evident and have been documented by numerous ancient historians. Among them is Al-Biruni, who recounted the narratives propagated by these Christians within the context of the conflict between the Christian state over the inhabitants of Mesopotamian cities including the city of Harran, a city specifically associated with the Sabians. This city served as the final stronghold for the Sabians and was devoid of any Christian presence.

Whereas the historian Ibn al-Ibri mentioned in his book "Tarikh al-Zaman" a statement attributed to Abu al-Hasan Thabit ibn Qurra ibn Marwan al-Sabi al-Harrani, who said: "Many were compelled to follow falsehood out of fear of punishment. However, our ancestors endured what they endured with the help of God and survived bravely. While this blessed city of Harran has never been tainted by the falsehood of Christianity. We are the inheritors and transmitters of the Sabian spread throughout the world. Those who bear the burdens of the Sabians with firm hope are considered fortunate. Who populated the inhabited world and built cities, if not the best of the Sabians and their kings? Who established ports and rivers? Who elucidated the obscure sciences? To whom was divinity revealed, if not to the renowned Sabians? They are the ones who clarified all this and wrote about the medicine of souls and their salvation. They also taught the medicine

of bodies and filled the world with righteous and wise deeds that are the foundation of virtue. Without the sciences of the Sabians, the world would have become barren, empty, and plagued by need."

(Ibn al-Ibri, 1986: 48-49)

From the excerpts of the speech above, we find that Thabit ibn Qurra established several important historical points. Among these is that the Christian campaigns to convert the Sabians were the reason that compelled many of them to change their religion in other cities, except for the city of Harran, which remained resistant to them until Thabit's own time. He speaks of the great pressures they were subjected to by Christians. This is supported by the fact that he wrote his speech in Syriac, not Arabic, and if Ibn al-'Ibri had not translated it into Arabic, people would not have known about it. He also states that the Sabian who endures these pressures and remains steadfast in his religion is considered fortunate.

Thabit ibn Qurra then affirms the unity of the Sabians of Harran with Sabians everywhere, stating "We are the inheritors and transmitters of the Sabians spread throughout the world." He means that they are one religion following the laws and prayers of Hermes, who is called Dnanukht in Mandaean and Idris in Arabic.

Finally, Thabit reviews their achievements, saying that the Sabians and their kings were the ones who populated the earth, brought civilization, established ports, improved rivers, and originated the science of medicine. They filled the world with righteous and just deeds based on virtue, and without the Sabians, human civilization would not have reached its current state. He asserts that they were the ones to whom the kingship of heaven was revealed, which is given to priests, implying in other words that they were the possessors of prophecy and the first prophets.

We also observe that Abu al-Hasan al-Harrani was proud of his Sabian origin, which he used as his epithet. This indicates that the Sabians were a single religion that did not differ in Harran from the cities of southern Euphrates. The religion was spread along the Euphrates cities from Harran to the Arabic Gulf.

Al-Biruni, in his correction of the falsehoods of these writers about the Sabians, said regarding the book of the Christian writer Ibn Sinkla al-Nasrani about the Harranian Sabians:

"His book, which aimed to refute their creed, he filled it with lies and falsehoods."

Al-Biruni then clarifies:

"We know of them only that they are people who believe in the oneness of God and exalt Him above all negative attributes. They describe Him through negation rather than affirmation (free from negative attributes), saying: He is not limited, not seen, does not oppress, and does not tyrannize. They call Him by the most beautiful names metaphorically, as they do not know the actual attributes of Him. They attribute governance of the world to the celestial sphere and its bodies, saying they have life, speech, and hearing. they glorify the lights."

(al-Biruni, TRS,(n.d.): 243-244)

This is despite Al-Biruni himself being one of the conservative Muslim scholars. However, he reported on the subject with honesty about the Sabians, stating that they do not know with certainty anything except the monotheism that is apparent in the books of the Sabians. This passage and summary he mentioned are found in the Ginza Rabba book and the other Mandaean texts.

(Ginza Rabba, Baghdad edition, 2000: 2-3)

(Lidzbarski, 1925: Right part, First book, 8)

However, Al-Biruni mentions a transmitted account, stating: "Some have said that the Harranians are not truly the Sabians but are those referred to in the scriptures as Hanifs and pagans. The true Sabians are those who remained in Babylon from the Jewish tribes that rose during the days of Cyrus." According to this story he transmitted from others, he considered the Hanifs to be the Harranians with a pagan philosophy and regarded the true Sabians as descendants of the Jewish tribes.

(al-Biruni, TRS,(n.d.): 245)

The Sabian-Mandaean clergy were and still are organizing themselves in the form of groups, each group consisting of different religious ranks and following its own school. However, all these schools adhere to fundamental religious rules, which are the original Mandaean texts and teachings. So they do not deviate from it. As for scientific and philosophical research, there are different interpretations and efforts among these various schools and their students, which is the nature of research methodology. For this reason, some historians believed that the Sabians were divided into different sects, although Ibn al-Nadim testified that their call and laws were unified.

(Ibn al-Nadim, (n.d.): 383-385)

Ancient researchers often had access primarily to Jewish texts, due to Jewish continuous travels and dissemination of their religious teachings across various geographic regions. These texts

usually presented their monotheistic philosophy as the oldest religion from which all other religions emerged. Consequently, when lacking information about ancient monotheistic religions that predated them like Sabians, some early Muslim researchers would attribute these religions to Judaism or its derivatives based on the information from those Jewish texts.

Until recently, Europeans were unaware that Hebrew texts themselves were largely derived from the religious and literary texts of Egypt and Mesopotamia civilizations.

(Abu Al-Sawf, 2010)

(Khalif; 2004: 14-18)

(Al-Sawah, n.d.)

Of course, some of the research by the historians we mentioned regarding the philosophy and teachings of the Sabian Mandaean religion does not approach the complete truth, due to the lack of availability of Mandaean sources directly from the Mandaean people at that time. On the other hand, they narrate stories, observations, and information they heard, not all of which were credible. Meanwhile, some of the other information they transmitted has great credibility and historical value in our current time.

مجلة لارك للدراسات والبحوث الاجتماعية

Conclusion

Manichaeism takes Mandaean books and scrolls as a basis for its texts and hymns. The Babylonian Mani himself had defected from the Mandaean religion and declared himself a prophet after that. He was relying on the knowledge that he had taken from the Mandaeans while mixing it with elements of other dominant religions at his time.

There is much evidence found for the congruence of the feminine character presented by both the text of Dananukht in the Ginza Rabba and the feminine character in the Thunder hymn from the Nag Hammadi Manuscripts. It is also possible to find and analyse another match for that hymn within the Mandaean psalm book.

The reason that prevented the translator of the text MacRae and other scholars from discussing the goddess Ishtar as the feminine character in the hymn The Thunder is because they had already pre-classified these manuscripts as carrying Gnostic concepts. This is however contradictory to the main belief of Christianity as it is understood from their side that Gnosticism should come after Christianity and not before it. This is why they have attempted to give these philosophies dates

that do not predate Christianity. However it is clear that the presence of elements in these texts presented are linked to the ancient civilizations in both Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt.

This assumption however, had been rejected by eminent researchers in Gnosticism. Yamauchi explained in his book that the Mandaean philosophy differs from Christianity and other gnostic religions. Yamauchi also highlighted the evidence of the primacy of the Mandaean philosophy over the Gnosticism related to the early Christian sects.

(Yamauchi, 1983: 140)

He also shortly discussed the similarity between the text of Dananukht and The Thunder. (Yamauchi, 1983: 226-229)

There were also considerable differences between the two groups in philosophy, the Mandaeans on one side and the Gnosticism related to the early Christian sects on the other.

such as the Mandaean refusal to acknowledge Christ nor the Law of Moses, the rejection of the duality of worship and that the process of creation was accomplished by a fallen angel. It is also important to account for the rejecting rituals of fasting, torturing the body with the abstinence from lust, the emphasis on purity from sexual sins, the emphasis on marriage and procreation, and other concepts associated with the ancient Mesopotamian worship.

That is why Yamauchi had rejected the theory of the Western origins of the Mandaeans, which was theorized by Lidzbarski, Drower, and Macuch, which said that the Mandaeans defected from Judaism in Palestine during the first century AD. They then migrated to Mesopotamia because of the Roman persecution according to their theory. This theory however, was not based on any evidence except speculations and misreadings of one of the incomplete Mandaean manuscripts by both Drower and Macuch. The scroll was provided by the Vatican library, not the Mandaean community. It is the Scroll named by them Haran Gawaita.

The manuscript is missing its beginning, but it starts by stating that some Mandaeans fled Christian persecution to the city of Harran, where they joined their religious brethren. This indicates that the two groups followed the same religious doctrine. Interestingly, western researchers used this incomplete beginning to claim that the Mandaeans fled from Palestine to Harran to escape Christian persecution, while the story clearly describes their escape from southern Mesopotamia.

(Drower, 1953, 3-23)

From my side, I can explain that the Mandaean philosophy, texts, canons, and antiquities all belong to Mesopotamia, with no evidence that can support their relation with the location of historical Palestine. The relationship between the Mandaeans and Jews took place in Mesopotamia itself not because the Mandaeans migrated from Palestine. The Western theory was also contradicting the discoveries of other scientists such as Säve-Söderbergh, after his work with the Manichaean psalm book of Thomas.

(Säve-Söderbergh, 1949: 2, 166)

This contradiction will also be found if anyone searches for the many pieces of evidence supporting this fact. Among them is the conformity of their water rituals with the ancient rituals of Mesopotamia, the similarity between the Babylonians and Mandaeans clergymen, (Drower, 1937: Introduction)

the presence of Mandaean people and antiquities was exclusively in Mesopotamia, and the similarity in the Mandaean texts with the texts of ancient Mesopotamia. This includes the poetic formulation, literary and linguistic determinants. The similarity of the Mandaean legislation with the legislation of Ancient Mesopotamia, as well as the Mandaic language of southern Mesopotamia, is pure from the foreign terms found in the rest of the Aramaic languages. It would be more logical to think of the language with pure vocabulary as the older between itself and a different variant of the same, where other words from other languages are mixed in.

(Drower, 1937: 13)

(Al-Jader, 2024: 642)

We state further, that the information transmitted by some Muslim historians about the teachings of the Mandaeans was not entirely accurate, primarily due to the lack of access to the original Mandaean sources at that time. In addition, some factions of other religions deliberately distorted the Mandaean teachings during the religious conflicts that were taking place against the Mandaeans.

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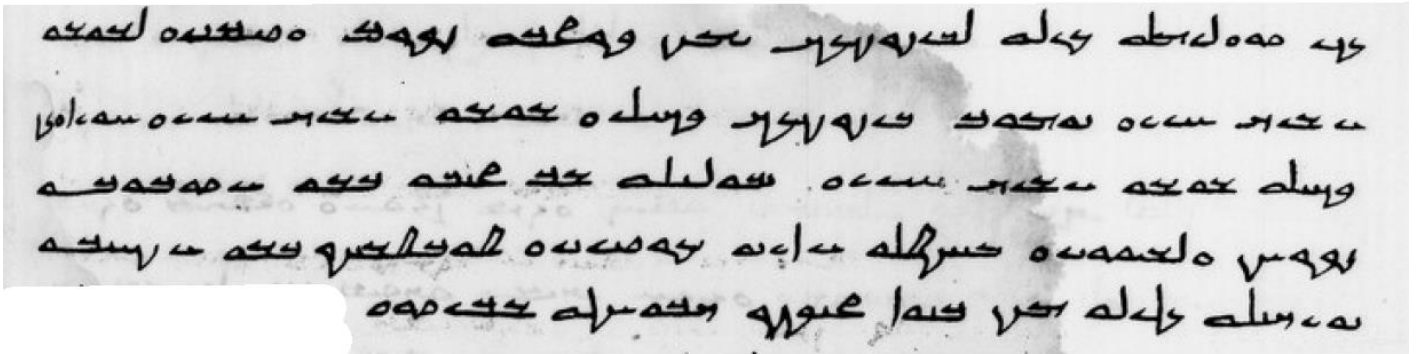
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Appendix A

Revealing the parallels between the Nag Hammadi hymn "The Thunder: Perfect Mind" and the Mandaean scriptures.

Translated by
Sinan Al-Jader



“After Dananokht completed his destiny in peace (completed his life while he was righteous). He came out of his body, then they brought him up to the door of the house of life.

Dananukht said: Open the door of the house of life to me.
They opened it to him, and raised him to the prestigious steady group.

So they dressed him the suit of light, clothed him with the great turban of illumination, and brought him a crown of vine and laid it on his head.”

Ginza Rabba, right part

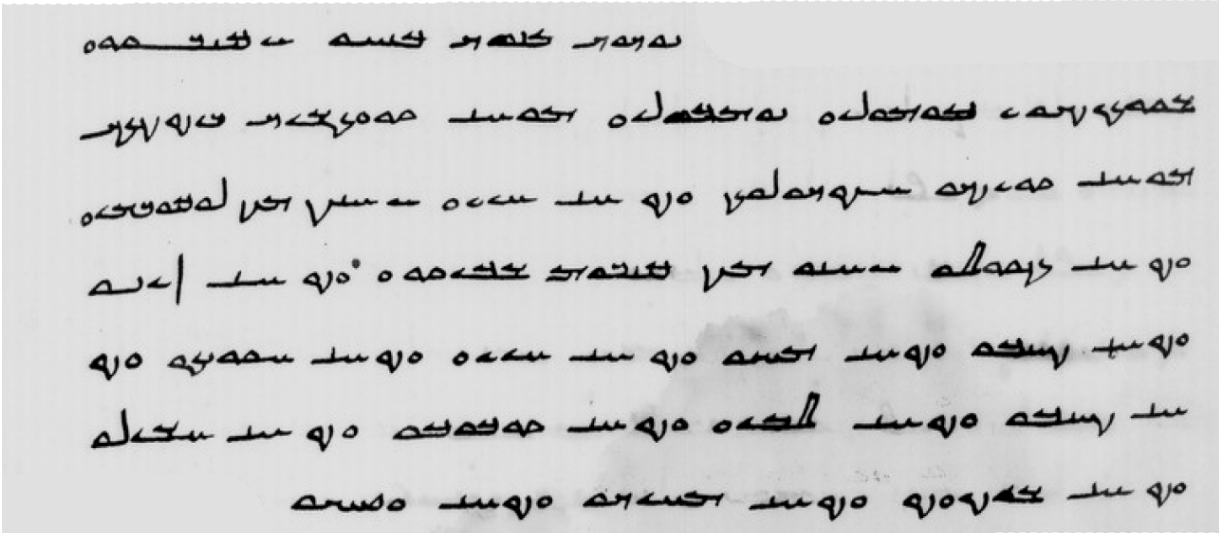
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Appendix B

Revealing the parallels between the Nag Hammadi hymn "The Thunder: Perfect Mind" and the Mandaean scriptures.

Translated by
Sinan Al-Jader



Then Iwath Roha ad-Qudsha (The Holy Spirit) came to my Shakhntha.
She stood in front of me and said to me:
Why are you sleeping, Dananukht ?
And why do you sleep comfortably?
I am the life that was from eternity.
I am the Kushta (the truth/covenant) that was before everything.
I am the light and I am the illumination.
I am death and I am life.
I am the darkness and I am the light.
I am the error and I am the right.
I am the ruin and I am the construction.
I am the disease and I am the cure.”

Ginza Rabba, right part

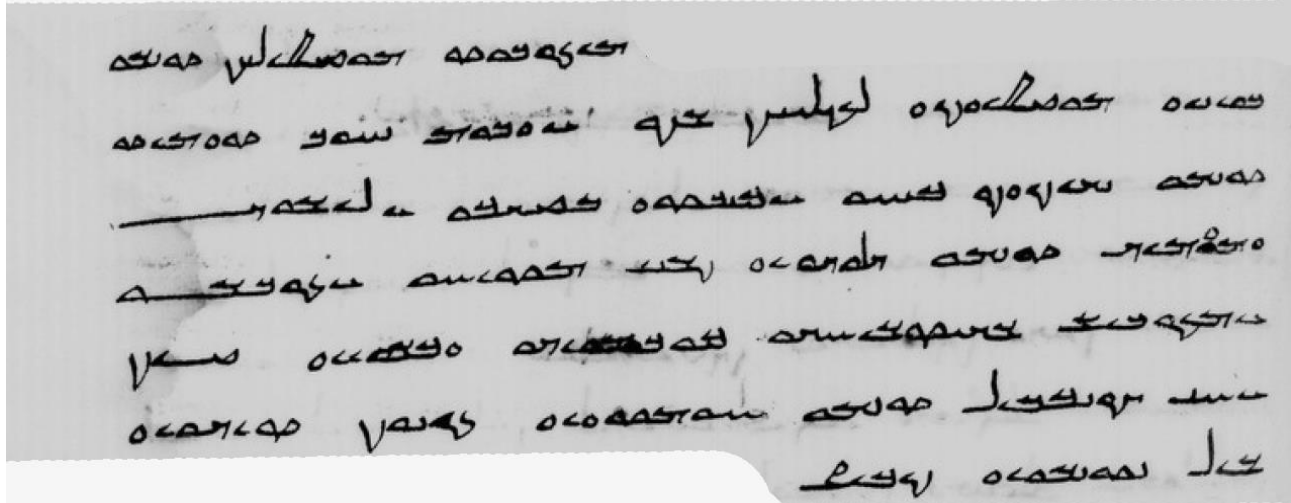
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Appendix C

Revealing the parallels between the Nag Hammadi hymn "The Thunder: Perfect Mind" and the Mandaean scriptures.

Translated by Sinan Al-Jader



The seven demons (Diwi) that seduce all the children of Adam and Hawa. The first is called Shamesh (the Sun), and The second is Roha ad-Qudsha (the Holy Spirit). Its name is Istra (Ishtar), Libat, Amamet (Venus). The third is Anbu (Mercury), the messenger of lies who forged the original praises. The fourth is Sin (the moon), and his name is Sauriel. The fifth is Kiwan (Saturn). The sixth is Bel (Jupiter). The seventh is Nireg (Mars).

Ginza Rabba, right part

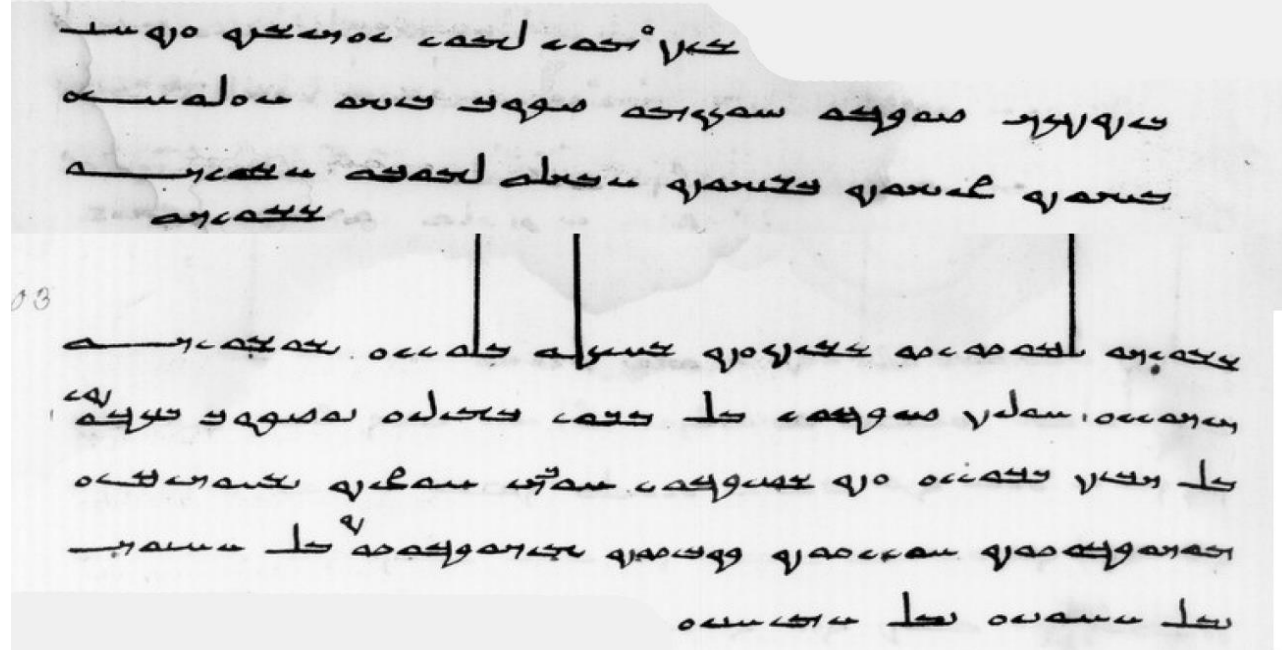
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Appendix D

Revealing the parallels between the Nag Hammadi hymn "The Thunder: Perfect Mind" and the Mandaean scriptures.

Translated by Sinan Al-Jader



I sat between water and water.
 I am Dananukht, the wise clerk.
 The ink of the Books of the Gods (who writes the books of the gods).
 The proud, the dignified, and the powerful.
 I have no master in my house, nor anyone who is greater than me by building in my upper structure (temple), nor in my lower house.
 These are my books in my hands, and the book of memories in my both arms.
 In my new books I meditate and from the old ones I learn.
 So I know and understand what was, what is, and what will be.

Ginza Rabba, right part

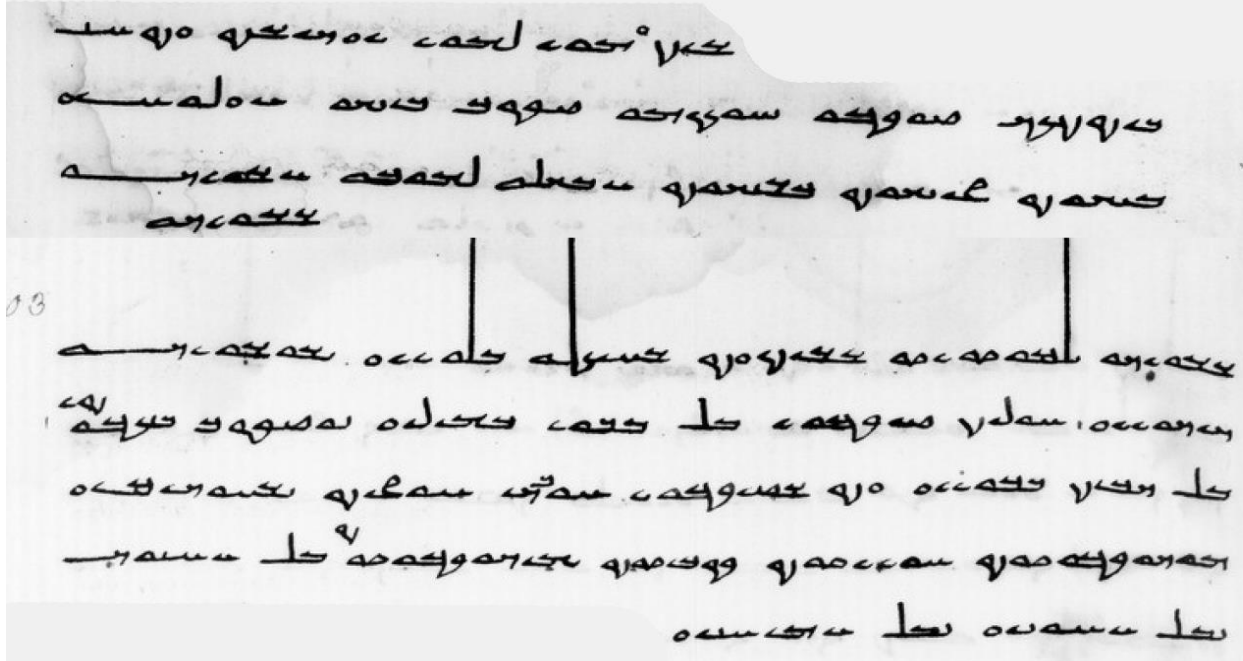
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Appendix E

Revealing the parallels between the Nag Hammadi hymn "The Thunder:
Perfect Mind" and the Mandaean scriptures.

Translated by
Sinan Al-Jader



I sat between water and water.
 I am Dananukht, the wise clerk.
 The ink of the Books of the Gods (who writes the books of the gods).
 The proud, the dignified, and the powerful.
 I have no master in my house, nor anyone who is greater than me by building in my upper
 structure (temple), nor in my lower house.
 These are my books in my hands, and the book of memories in my both arms.
 In my new books I meditate and from the old ones I learn.
 So I know and understand what was, what is, and what will be.

Ginza Rabba, right part

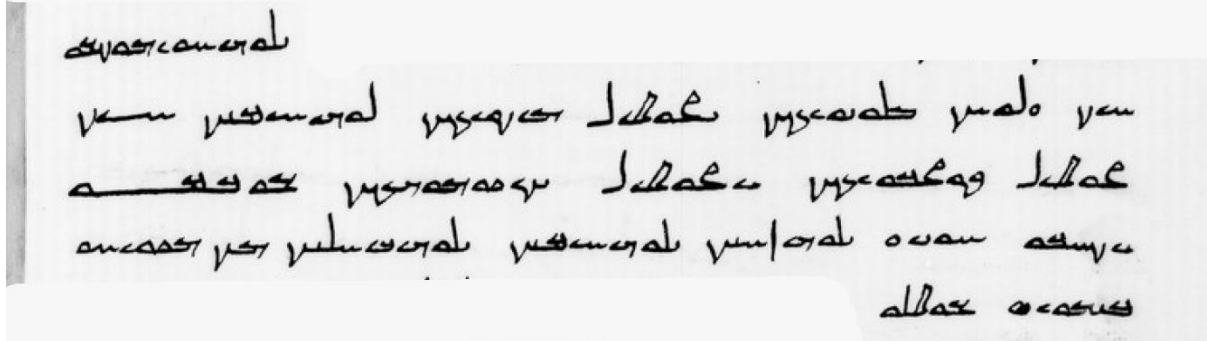
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Appendix F

Revealing the parallels between the Nag Hammadi hymn "The Thunder: Perfect Mind" and the Mandaean scriptures.

Translated by Sinan Al-Jader



"Do not believe in him.
If he tortures you and if he kills some of you, do not be afraid.
For when he kills your bodies, your spirits will be in the world of light.
So do not be afraid, do not be terrified, and do not be in awe of the false Christian roman."

Ginza Rabba, right part

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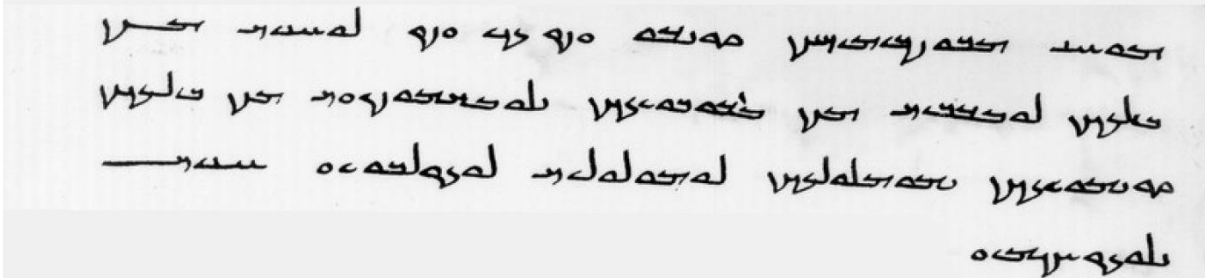
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مجلة لارك للفلسفة واللسانيات والعلوم الاجتماعية

Appendix G

Revealing the parallels between the Nag Hammadi hymn "The Thunder: Perfect Mind" and the Mandaean scriptures.

Translated by Sinan Al-Jader



What are you whispering about, O Seven (the seven planetary figures - Shbiahai)?
I was not among your followers, I did not do your deeds,
I did not bear your mark, I did not repeat your words.
I was neither a Chaldean nor a soothsayer.

Ginza Rabba, right part

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