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RELIGIONS AND RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS – I*

Ph. Gignoux and B. A. Litvinsky

Contents

Part One

ZOROASTRIANISM

(*Ph. Gignoux*)

Nothing would be known about Zoroastrianism (Mazdaism) under the Sasanians had not one of its most outstanding religious leaders, the *mōbad* (high priest) Kartir (Kirder), left four inscriptions carved in rock at various places in Fars: near Persepolis, at Naqsh-i Rustam (KKZ and KNRm) and Naqsh-i Rajab (KNRb), and to the south of Kazerun at Sar Mashhad (KSM) (Figs. 1 and 2). In them, the magus begins by describing his own career. A mere *ehrpat* (theologian) under Shapur I (241–272), he was appointed by Shapur's successor, Hormizd I (272–273), as *'Magupat* of Ohrmazd [Ahura Mazda]' (a title that refers to

* See Map 1.

the supreme god, not the king himself), and eventually by Bahram II (276–293) as *'Magupat* of the Blessed Bahram [i.e. referring back to Bahram I (272–276)] and of Ohrmazd'.[1] It was under Bahram II that Kartir obtained his most important offices, including judicial appointments. He benefited from the great favour of the king, who not only authorized him to have inscriptions carved and decorated with his bust but even had him included among the royal family and court officials on several reliefs.

The work of the magus was essentially, as he tells us in the inscriptions, to encourage the foundation of fire temples and increase the number of their attendants, and to combat religions other than Mazdaism: Manichaeism (see Part Two of the present chapter), which was beginning to spread under the vigorous leadership of its founder Mani, in whose death Kartir doubtless played a significant role; Christianity (see Chapter 18, Part One), which was gaining a foothold in Mesopotamia and Iran as early as the second century; and also Judaism and Buddhism (see Chapter 18, Part Two). However, Kartir also combated deviations from Zoroastrianism, which had been open to the influence of Greek philosophy and Babylonian astrology during the Hellenistic period. There is therefore no doubt that he contributed to the rise of a more orthodox Zoroastrianism, to establishing its supremacy over the other religions and, it is thought, to turning it into a 'state religion' linked to the power of the throne, though it is not certain that he succeeded in the last objective.

The Persians had no temples, but worshipped at fire altars on which the symbol of the supreme god burned. In the third century, only two types of fire appear to have existed: the *ādurān*, a lower category established in small localities; and the *Vahrām* fires, which

FIG. 1. Sar Mashhad. Inscription. General view. (Photo: R. Ghirshman. Courtesy of Ph. Gignoux.)

[1] Grenet, 1990; Gignoux, 1991.

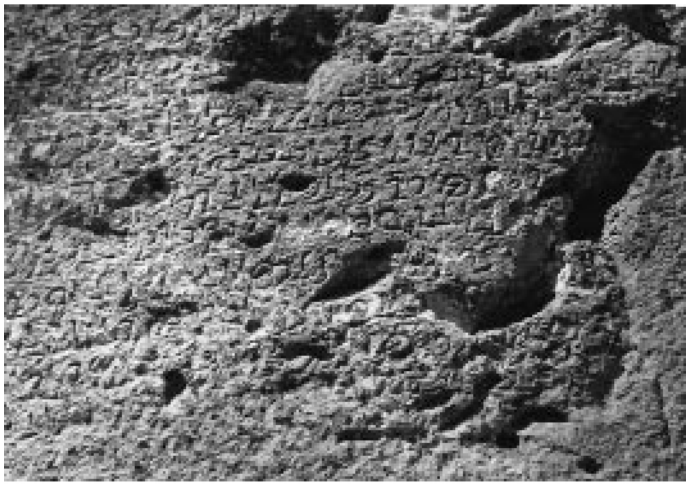

FIG. 2. Sar Mashhad. Inscription. Detail. (Photo: R. Ghirshman. Courtesy of Ph. Gignoux.)

served a province (*shahr*)[2] and were probably named after the king, as is suggested by coins and inscriptions – especially the great trilingual inscription of Shapur I at Naqsh-i Rustam (which mentions the fire of Shapur and fires named after members of the royal family) – rather than after the god of victory, *Vərəthraghna*.[3] There was also a temple to the goddess Anahita, for which Kartir became responsible.

The *Vahrām* fires remained the most important type during the post-Sasanian period, but at some moment that is impossible to identify, there came into being three major fires associated with social groups and bearing names that point more to a founder than to a deity. *Ādur-Farrbay* was the fire of the priests; *Ādur-Gušnasp*, the fire of the warriors; and *Ādur-Burzēn-Mihr*, the fire of the farmers. The second of these is the best known to us through German archaeological excavations[4] which discovered the exact site at Takht-i Sulaiman in Azerbaijan and a large collection of administrative documents, including the temple's official seal. The original location of the temple, however, is said to have been Media. The location of the other two major fires is also thought to have shifted westwards over the centuries, though archaeological research has failed to confirm what may be conjectured from some late texts, i.e. that the first of the fires, founded in Khwarizm, is thought to have been transferred to Kariyan, in Fars.[5] The site has not been found, but as its name was related to the *Xvarənah* (royal glory), it was also called *Ādur- Khvarreh*. The third great fire was established in Parthia, on Mount Revand (*Bundahišn* 9, 21), but its site has not been identified. It appears to have been the most venerated fire during the Arsacid dynasty.

[2] Harmatta, 1964, p. 226.
[3] Boyce, 1975–78, pp. 222–3.
[4] Osten, von der, and Naumann, 1961; Vanden Berghe, 1979.
[5] *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. 1, p. 474.

According to Boyce,[6] this triad of fires reflected the division of Iran between the Parthians, the Persians and the Medes.

Very little is known about the architecture of the fire temples since the only ones to have been properly excavated are the large Takht-i Sulaiman complex, the temple of Kuh-i Khwaja and the little temple of Tureng-tepe.[7] The monument at Bishapur, identified as a fire temple by Ghirshman,[8] is probably not one since it is an underground construction. The most common type is the domed *chahār-tāq*, of which some 50 are known (many discovered by Vanden Berghe), consisting of 4 quadrangular pillars connected by 4 arches supporting a cupola. They are small monuments with sides less than 10 m long, a few of them surrounded by a narrow corridor and some with subsidiary buildings (called *aiwān*s) added. This type of monument has often been equated with the Sasanian fire temple but it is impossible to say whether the *chahār-tāq* was a location for public ceremonies, a temple reserved for the priesthood or the place where the fire was kept. In addition, it may date back to the Parthian period and is certainly attested at the beginning of the Islamic era.[9] Some of these monuments are hard to distinguish from signal fires that were located at the tops of hills or mountains to guide travellers while also serving as places of worship. The existence of *open* temples, however, is highly improbable.

Although the worship of fire, which had to burn eternally, appears to have constituted the central ritual of Zoroastrianism, as is also attested by the *Nebenüberlieferung* (Acts of the Syriac martyrs, Graeco-Latin sources), the sacrifice of animals accompanied by various libations continued under the Sasanians. We learn this from the great Naqsh-i Rustam inscription of Shapur, who built up stocks of sheep, wine and bread, in particular for the maintenance of pious endowments established for the souls of dead and living members of the royal family, an institution which testifies to the importance of individual eschatology among the Mazdeans. The sacrificial victim was probably smothered or strangled, but not bled as among the Semites.[10]

The doctrine expounded by Kartir, which did not even refer to Zoroaster, was also essentially eschatological and could be summed up in a few simple ideas, such as the existence of a paradise for the righteous and a hell for the wicked. The need is stressed for justice and for obedience to the kings and the gods. Among the latter, explicit mention is made of Ohrmazd. In the account of a vision vouchsafed to Kartir by the gods, several deities with an eschatological function appear; though not named, they may be Rashn, Mihr

[6] Boyce, 1975–78, p. 473.
[7] Boucharlat, 1987, pp. 51–71.
[8] See Schippmann, 1971, pp. 142–53.
[9] Boucharlat, 1985, pp. 461–72.
[10] Gignoux, 1988, pp. 11–12.

or Vahman. This kind of journey into the other world, although presented for the purpose of moral edification and as a warning for the faithful, has several points in common with the journey of Arda Viraz,[11] a descent into hell suggesting a shamanistic experience.

Kartir appears to distinguish between two different rituals, that of Yasna, defined by the word *yašt*, and other rituals called *kirdagān*.[12] It should be noted that liturgical texts had not yet been written down: the Avestan alphabet had not been invented and a canon was not constituted until the fifth century at the earliest. Until that time, the only written language available was Pahlavi, but no written work from before the Islamic period has come down to us.

The *Gatha*s [Hymns] attributed to Zoroaster, and the so-called 'Recent *Avesta*' texts, were not written down until some ten to fifteen centuries later. This came after the invention of an alphabet derived from the cursive script of Book Pahlavi, supplemented by extra signs and admirably adapted to the phonetics of a language whose geographical home (Khurasan, Margiana, Bactria or even Seistan) is still a matter of discussion. Such a precise system may even not have been perfected until the Middle Ages by Zoroastrians who had taken refuge in India after the Islamization of Iran and who were familiar with the structures of Sanskrit, since the Avestan language can be correctly analysed only through comparison with that language. Indeed, it is through the Parsees of India that the *Avesta* manuscript tradition – and that of the Late Pahlavi texts – have come down to us.

The Avestan alphabet[13] comprises over 50 signs, many of them borrowed from Book Pahlavi, which serves to represent various phonemes or historical pronunciations. Old Avestan is the language of the *Gatha*s (*c*. 1000 B.C.; divided into 5 sections in verse) and of the *Yasna Haptanhāiti* (in prose), but this arrangement remains rather artificial. The Sasanian collection of the *Avesta* (most of which is lost) and its commentary (called the *Zand*) is described in Book VIII of the *Dēnkard* (see page 411). It was composed of 21 *nask*s (chapters), divided into 3 sections called *gathic*s (commentaries on the *Gatha*s and the legend of Zoroaster), ritual (liturgy, cosmogony, etc.) and law (primarily juridical texts). The extant *Avesta* contains, besides *Yasna* 28–53 (= *Gatha*s), various prayers, invocations and professions of faith. The *yašt*s (hymns to deities) constitute, together with the *Small Avesta* and the *Vendīdād* (laws relating to purification; comparable to the Book of Leviticus in the Bible), the main texts of the 'Recent *Avesta*'.[14]

In establishing itself, orthodox Zoroastrianism not only had to vie with Manichaeism, which rapidly constituted a body of doctrines presented in a great variety of writings and

[11] Gignoux, 1984*a*.
[12] Back, 1978.
[13] Hoffmann, 1971, pp. 64–73.
[14] *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. 3, Fasc. 1, pp. 36–44.

languages and was thus able to claim universality; it also had to struggle against internal deviations, the importance of which has occasionally been exaggerated. Among these deviations, Zurvanism was probably more a matter of popular belief than of heresy in the strict sense.[15] It expressed a more radical dualism than the Mazdean doctrine by making Zurvan, the god of time, the father of the two twin gods, Ohrmazd and Ahriman, in this way conferring equality on Good and Evil, both of which were thus created by God. This doctrine, which is described in particular in the *Nebenüberlieferung*, has been given too much weight by some authors, who either consider it the normal form of Sasanian Mazdaism[16] or attempt to expose this heresy in the Pahlavi literature. Zaehner,[17] for instance, believed he had detected three strands of Zurvanism, a claim that was rightly rejected by Molé.[18]

Mazdakism, which was as much a social as a religious movement, enjoyed a certain success because it was supported by the monarchy under Kavad I (488–531). The movement was not initiated by Mazdak but by one Zardusht. Thanks to the famous polygraph al-Shahrastani, who included a brief analysis of it in his *Kitāb al-milal wa 'l-niḥal*,[19] and to a few allusions in the *Dēnkard*, its doctrine is quite well known: in some ways reminiscent of communism, the movement impressed people by its teaching that possessions and women should be held in common. Shaki[20] has noted its limits, showing how such a system of marriage in common or in a group could only have evolved in a very closed society that practised incest or consanguineous marriage (*xwēdōdah*). In his view, too, the cosmogony of Mazdak hardly differed from that of Mazdaism.[21] Recently, however, Sundermann[22] has emphasized the Mazdakite community's sense of solidarity in times of famine, and pointed out that the consequences of holding women in common would tend to create a matrilinear society, which could only offend the Zoroastrians, attached as they were to male predominance. The fact that a few women (Boran, Azarmigdukht) attained supreme royal power at the beginning of the seventh century may reflect a certain change in attitudes.

The esoteric or mystical character of Mazdakism, which was welcomed by Arabo-Persian authors, who related it to the *bāṭiniyya*, enables us to define it as a gnosis, the principal traits of which have been defined by al-Shahrastani. Salvation was achieved through faith and justice, not through observance. There was no longer any religious obligation for those in whom the 4, 7 and 12 powers (an obvious reference to the planets and the signs

[15] See Shaked, 1969.
[16] Christensen, 1944, p. 150.
[17] Zaehner, 1955.
[18] Molé, 1963.
[19] Shahrastani, 1986.
[20] Shaki, 1978.
[21] *Papers in Honor of Professor Mary Boyce*, 1985.
[22] Sundermann, 1988.

of the zodiac) were united. Shaki recognizes that it was, like any gnosis, a syncretic movement in which doctrines deriving from the Graeco-Jewish writer Philo, neo-Platonism and neo-Pythagorism may also be detected, but that it had little in common with Manichaeism. Mazdak is said to have been put to death by Khusrau I (531– 579), who brought the movement to an end.

Al-Shahrastani believes that there were a large number of sects or heresies in Sasanian Iran. Indeed, as Shaked[23] has shown, a pluralist attitude to faith may have predominated. He points to great tolerance over differences in the formulation of doctrines, though such deviations from religious orthodoxy did not necessarily entail the constitution of separate ecclesiastical structures – it was simply that Sasanian Zoroastrianism was not monolithic.

The presence and expansion of Zoroastrianism in the eastern provinces of Sasanian and Kushano-Sasanian Iran, and further east through Central Asia and as far as China, remain obscure, despite large numbers of excavations in regions governed by the former Soviet Union. These have so far yielded little evidence apart from archaeological monuments and objects relating to the religious or material culture. There are almost no texts apart from those found at the famous sites of Turfan and Dunhuang. These do not concern Zoroastrianism but are essentially related to Manichaeism, Nestorianism and Buddhism, which cohabited or succeeded one another in East Turkestan. They are fundamental for the history of those religions and even more so for our knowledge of Middle Iranian (Sogdian, Middle Parthian and Middle Persian) and Turkic.

Using the literature published in Russian over the last few decades and as a result of his own studies, Grenet has shown that the northern regions, Sughd and Khwarizm, provide evidence of funeral practices and eschatological doctrines that accord with what we learn from the works in Pahlavi (see below) on sixth- and seventh-century ossuaries. For several of these, Grenet[24] has identified scenes of Mazdean liturgy, the representation of the six *Amesha Spenta*s (Abstract Entities), or even the judgment of the soul, in accordance with the doctrine of the Pahlavi texts, even though lamentation rites (as on the Panjikent frescoes) were normally prohibited.

In Bactria, Kushan coins attest to a whole series of Zoroastrian deities but to only two of the *Amesha Spenta*s, Shahrewar and Wahman, whose relationship to Greek and Indian gods provides evidence of a clear tendency to syncretism.[25] The cult of water, concentrated on the deified Oxus (Amu Darya), which is represented on these coins as a bearded man with a fish, is also found at Panjikent. On the Kushano-Sasanian seals, it is Mithra who

[23] Shaked, 1987.
[24] Grenet, 1986.
[25] Grenet, 1988.

invests the king (further west this falls mainly to Ohrmazd) and plays an important role together with the river god.

Central Asia seems to have been unaffected by the development of the fire cult as the only legal form of Zoroastrianism, the type found in western Iran. This is shown by the Kushano-Sasanian coins and by the name of the temple in Sughd (*va γn* < **bagina*: 'dwelling-place of god'), where there appear to be signs of the worship of statues of Iranian deities. Of the temples excavated, only Temple B of Surkh Kotal may be regarded as a genuine fire temple. Those at Toprak-kala (Khwarizm, fourth–fifth century), Er-kurgan (Sogdiana, second–seventh century, and where a *dakhma* for exposing the dead has, it seems, also been identified), Kurgan-tepe (Samarkand, third–fourth century), Panjikent (fifth–eighth century) and Kayragach (Ferghana, fifth–sixth century), among others, are not fire temples, although their functions as places of worship are well established. The temple of the god Oxus at Takht-i Sangin merely has two 'chapels' reserved for the worship of fire. The cassolettes for incense or for the burning of offerings, found in connection with a deity in Kushan Bactria, in Sogdiana and as far as Gandhara, should not be confused with the receptacles for fire in the fire temples. The lack of texts rules out a detailed overview but the essential fact that emerges is that the cult of images was not, in eastern Iran, subject to the iconoclastic taboo of Sasanian Zoroastrianism.

In Margiana and Bactria, Sasanian Zoroastrianism had to compete with Buddhism, and also with Hinduism and the worship of Shiva, but the Buddhist complex at Kara-tepe was abandoned in the fourth century (?), probably because of the Zoroastrians. Merv had a Nestorian community in the fourth century and there was a bishopric at Samarkand, where Jews and Manichaeans also lived, in the sixth century. To the north in Khwarizm and Sogdiana, on the other hand, Buddhism made little headway.

As far as is known, relations between Iran and China did not really start until the end of the fourth century when, with the decline of the Kushan Empire, the Sasanians were able to gain control over the first portion of the Silk Route, the rest of it being in the hands of Sogdian and Indian merchants and later, after the fall of the Hephthalite Empire, of Persians. These last did not really establish themselves in China until some time during the sixth century, as attested by the discovery of several hoards of Sasanian coins. There was at that time a considerable penetration of Iranian culture into China from Central Asia. One eloquent, albeit rather late (784) piece of evidence is the Pahlavi-Chinese tomb inscription of Xian.[26]

Although we are unable to determine the nature of Zoroastrianism in China itself, the works in Pahlavi, though not written until the ninth and tenth centuries, are a rich source of information concerning the religion as it was practised in the east. This collection includes

[26] Humbach and Wang, 1988.

translations of Avestan texts (the *Yasna*, the *Vendīdād*, etc.) and compendiums covering a wide range of subjects. For example, the cosmogonic myths about the creation of the world, together with eschatological doctrines concerning the destiny of the individual soul and the events of the last days leading to the restoration of a world identical to that of the beginning of time, are found chiefly in the *Bundahišn* [The Primal Creation] and in the *Vizīdagīhā-ī Zādsparam*. The latter is an 'anthology' which includes a large section on the hagiography of Zoroaster, describing the attacks starting in childhood and from which he escaped, and his miraculous powers. The same stories appear in the *Dēnkard* (Books V and VII). Another topic concerns the rules of legal purity, dealt with at length in the *Vendīdād* or *Šāyist-nē-šāyist* (what is permitted and what is prohibited, with a list of the fines to be paid as reparation for transgressions) or the *Dādestān-ī dēnīg*. The *Mādayān-ī hazār dādestān*, a document of a more strictly legal nature, provides specific information on family law, the law of property and judicial procedures. Other texts concerned with correct ritual are the *Nērangestān*, which deals with liturgical expressions and headings, and the *Hērbadestān*, which is chiefly a manual for the use of Mazdean priests.

Manushcihr, the brother of the ninth-century priest Zadsparam, left three long letters in which he protests against the tendency to simplify the ritual, necessitated by the difficult conditions in which the community found itself after the Islamization of Iran. These conditions are described in numerous texts – though the Muslims are almost never mentioned – in particular, in the *Dēnkard*, an enormous compilation divided into nine books (the first two of which are lost) and intended to encompass all the knowledge of the Zoroastrians. This work makes much greater use of philosophical argumentation than do the other books, frequently using concepts borrowed from Greek or Indian science, in order to refute the tenets of Islamic philosophy, as de Menasce[27] has clearly shown, and hence belongs to the literature of apology. Faced with Muslim attacks concerning the problems of divine attributes and of divine causality with regard to evil, the Mazdeans wanted to defend their dualism and reject the patent determinism of certain schools of Islamic thought. The *Škand gumānīg wizār*[28] is even more of an apologia for Mazdaism, not only against Islam but also against Manichaeans, Jews and Christians.

The *andarz* (wisdom literature), later highly valued by the Persians, is represented in the *Dēnkard* (Book VI)[29] and in a few other scattered texts. The Mazdean *Apocalypse* was probably a late work,[30] and the events it predicts may be related to the troubles arising from the rebellion of Bahram Chobin (sixth century) and even more closely to the revolt of

[27] Menasce, de, 1958; 1973.
[28] Menasce, de, 1945.
[29] Shaked, 1979.
[30] Gignoux, 1986.

Mazyar (between 823 and 840), reported in the *Zand-ī Vahman yašt* (a so-called translation of an Avestan *yašt* which never existed).

The royal ideology – immortalized by Sasanian sculpture as its sole artistic expression, and associated with the glory of the ancient mythical Kayanian kings – occurs in numerous texts. It must have been the basis for the *Khwadāynāmag* [The Book of Lords], now unfortunately lost, which linked the history of legendary kings with that of historical kings and inspired the authors of epics, the most famous of whom is Firdausi. The alliance between royalty and religion, presented as two sisters or two twins unable to live without each other, is a recurring theme which, however, must not be taken literally. It seems to have represented an ideal which impressed Arabo-Persian writers and provided the inspiration for a literary theme.[31]

The palace revolutions which led to a whole succession of kings after the reign of Khusrau II (591–628), and the conquest of the empire by the Arab armies, must have rapidly disrupted the Mazdean Church. Wealthy supporters of the temples probably preferred to support the new power and Islam in order not to be ruined by the heavy taxes henceforth imposed on minorities, since the Mazdeans were held in even lower esteem than the Jews or Christians. The priests, as can be seen from certain chapters of the *Dādestān-ī dēnīg*,[32] faced serious financial difficulties in celebrating their offices. Many Zoroastrians later emigrated to India, where they are known as Parsees. Here they established flourishing communities and were able to safeguard the texts of the Sacred Canon which can still be read today.

Part Two

MANICHAEISM

(*B. A. Litvinsky*)

The founder of the Manichaean religion, Mani (216–274 or 277), was able to propagate his teaching without let or hindrance in Iran during the reign of Shapur I. After Shapur's death in 272, however, the opposition of the Zoroastrian priesthood became increasingly

[31] Gignoux, 1984*b*.
[32] Kreyenbroek, 1987.

active. Finally, the prophet of the new religion was imprisoned and tortured to death and Manichaeism became a persecuted religion in its birthplace, the Sasanian Empire.

Mani, who was acquainted with many religions, especially Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Mandaeism and Buddhism, proclaimed the foundation of a world religion to replace all existing religions. He borrowed much from their doctrines and practices, and therefore, for all its idiosyncrasies, Manichaeism is a syncretic religion. In consequence, it was partly familiar to Zoroastrians, Christians and Buddhists and the prophets of these religions were adopted by Manichaeism as its precursors. This encouraged the spread of Manichaeism and made it a universal religion, one that was easily propagated among the followers of other faiths.

The basic principle of the Manichaean religion was an all-embracing dualism, reflecting the dualism of the environment in an idealistic form. In working out his dualistic conception, Mani borrowed much from Iranian religion and the Gnostics. According to the Manichaean religion, the ‘ two principles’ (*dō-bun*), Good (= Light) and Evil (= Darkness), have existed from the beginning; they are uncreated and are the direct opposites of each other. The modern world as a whole, and man in particular, is a mixture of the two principles. At the same time, they are not equal – Good is the higher. In the world of light, the Father of Light (in Middle Persian, *pydr rwšn*) (also called the First Parent) sits enthroned. The Divinity of Light has a twelvefold Diadem of Light and is surrounded by twelve sons.

The good god is called the God of Light and acts more as an abstract principle than a personality. The God of Light has five ‘light elements’: Ether, Air, Light, Water and Fire. His kingdom reaches out limitlessly to the north, west and east.[33] In the south it borders on the kingdom of the Prince of Darkness (in Middle Persian, Ahriman). This kingdom is divided into five worlds (or caves). The Kingdom of Darkness is the source of eternal disturbance and agitation. Incursions are made from it into the Kingdom of Light. In outward appearance, the Prince of Darkness is a mixture of a number of different beings.[34] The origin of the universe is the junction or merging of the forces of light and darkness.

When the forces of the Prince of Darkness invaded the Kingdom of Light, the King of Light offered resistance. For this purpose he evoked two spiritual principles, or rather he ‘called up’ the Mother of Life, who in her turn called up Primordial (or the First) Man, her son (in the Central Asian texts, Ohrmazd, or Ahura Mazda). He entered the struggle and suffered a fatal defeat. The second part of the cosmogonic act was the liberation of captive Primordial Man. Although he was liberated, he left five elements, his sons, in captivity

[33] *Fihrist*, 1970, pp. 786–7.
[34] Ibid., p. 778.

when he returned to the heavens. Nevertheless particles of darkness penetrated into the light-bearing principle. With the aim of 'purifying' it, the Father of Light created the visible world: the earth, heaven and the heavenly bodies.

The earth and heaven were created from the bodies of the slain demons, 'from the generation [or line] of darkness' (Augustin, *Contra Faustin*, XX, 9), and the heavenly bodies from the liberated particles of light. In order that victory might be complete, a third messenger came into the world at the behest of the Father of Light – the Living Spirit. He had the attributes of the Iranian sun god Mithra (the name by which he is called in the Middle Persian work the *Shābuhragān*) and at the same time he prefigured Mani himself. The third messenger evoked the Maiden of Light (Twelve Maidens) and forced the demons of darkness to ejaculate the seed and embryos from which plants and animals were born. In answer to this, the forces of darkness gave birth to Adam and Eve in the form of gods, in an attempt to keep back particles of light so that the flesh would continue to absorb light elements. They passed on to the first human couple the particles of light which had been absorbed by the forces of evil that gave birth to them, and formed the souls of this couple. This was a dark or material soul, made up of such things as lust, greed and envy. Jesus, evoked by the Father of Light, aroused this couple, and they became 'new' people instead of 'old', able to distinguish between good and evil.[35] At this time a constantly operating mechanism was set up for the liberation of the light particles, which finally rose up into the Kingdom of Light.[36]

The elements of light were separated from the elements of darkness with the coming of Mani. Their complete separation will occur when the Last Judgment takes place – the Great War, when the spirit is freed from the body, the particles of light rise up to heaven and the carriers of darkness are cast down.[37] It will be a sign of the end of the world when the forces of evil prevail and a considerable part of the light is driven out of the world. This will be followed by the second coming of Jesus, who will sit in judgment and separate the righteous from the sinners. Then heaven and earth will collapse, a Great Flame will arise and all the particles of light will be liberated. A new paradise will come into being and evil will be fettered and incarcerated in a great stone: the Kingdom of Light will have arrived.[38]

Thus man is destined to work for the liberation of the light particles in his own being and in the world around him, and for their union with the principle of light; he must support the principle of light. Man should not kill his fellow men, nor should he kill animals; he should lead a moral life. Nevertheless, evil and the forces of darkness are very active, and

[35] Boyce, 1975, p. 7.
[36] *Fihrist*, 1970, p. 782.
[37] Polotsky, 1935; Puech, 1949; Widengren, 1961; 1983; Klima, 1962.
[38] Boyce, 1975, p. 8; for a detailed description in the *Shābuhragān*, see Mackenzie, 1979, p. 513.

man, because of his origin, is predisposed to evil. Man, who has free will, should struggle resolutely with evil (darkness) and choose good.

These precepts were addressed to the Manichaean laity, the ‘ hearers’, both men and women, who had to observe certain rules of conduct. For example, they were forbidden to kill animals, and they could eat only the flesh of animals that had died a natural death or been killed by others.[39] The main aim of their life was to do good and above all to provide food for the ‘ elect’ and to serve them. The task of the ‘elect’ was to pray and to spread the doctrine. In addition, they ate vegetable food (especially melons and cucumbers, in which light was supposedly concentrated) and bread, and let these foods pass through them. Thus their bodies served as a ‘filter’ for the liberation of the particles of light contained in the plants, which then ‘along the Column of Glory mount from Earth to Heaven’.[40] Although the ‘elect’ were allowed to eat only vegetable food, they were forbidden to pick the plants and fruits themselves – this was the task of the ‘hearers’. The preferred drink was fruit juice. All sexual life was forbidden.

The ‘elect’ who lived in the monasteries were required to journey on foot, spreading the doctrine. They ate once a day, after sunset, and were allowed to possess no more food than was necessary to feed them for one day and no more clothing than was needed for one year.

A pious layman ‘hearer’ could become an ‘elect’ and then attain paradise, but only after a cycle of reincarnations. (Mani’s doctrine included a belief in the reincarnation of souls similar to the Indian concept of *saṃsāra*.) The practice of repentance and absolution was widespread. An adherent could acquire the chance of salvation by devoting his life to the service of the ‘elect’, in which case he could hope to be born again as one of the ‘elect’ and attain paradise. The impious would go to hell. The lowest rank in the Manichaean hierarchy was that of the ‘hearers’, then came the ‘elect’; even higher were 360 Elders, then 72 Bishops and finally 12 Teachers. At the head stood Mani’s successor, whose seat was in Babylon.[41]

Manichaeism contained a considerable element of social criticism, declaring the world to be the incarnation of evil. Manichaeans rejected everything in the world around them, including social institutions, and this could be regarded as a form of social protest. Nevertheless, since they held that evil was eternal, they did not believe it was possible to destroy evil on earth. This explains their characteristic pessimism, their feeling that there was no solution. According to this doctrine, the rich would inevitably go to the Kingdom of

[39] Asmussen, 1975*a*, p. 27.
[40] Gershevitch, 1980, p. 282.
[41] Asmussen, 1975*a*, pp. 29–31; for a detailed analysis, see Schaeder, 1934, pp. 11–16; Van Tangerloo, 1982.

Darkness. The future of the adherents of the religion was seen as a liberation from all adversities – the Kingdom of Light. The element of social protest inherent in the Manichaean religion made it attractive to the oppressed masses.[42]

Manichaeism inspired a rich literature. Mani and his followers used a special 'Manichaean script' (supposedly invented by Mani himself), which was related to Syriac Estrangelo and even more closely to the Mandaean script. Mani used the East Aramaic language, for reasons which are clear: it was the language spoken over the widest area and could be used as a linguistic medium for the propagation of the new doctrine. All the earliest Manichaean religious works, with the sole exception of the *Shābuhragān*, were written in East Aramaic. Mani himself is said to have thought and spoken in Aramaic.[43]

For the study of the Manichaean doctrine, the Manichaean sources themselves are of the first importance, especially the seven canonical texts: the *Shābuhragān*, the *Living Gospel*, the *Treasure of Life*, the *Pragmateia*, the *Book of Mysteries*, the *Book of Giants* and the *Letters*. Only the first of these, the earliest work, is written in Middle Persian; the others were compiled in Syriac. Among the other Manichaean sources, the *Kephalaia* is important. Mention should also be made of the *Homilies* and a collection of illustrations of the most important aspects of the doctrines, the *Ārdhang*.[44]

In addition, in Manichaean circles in Egypt and East Turkestan, canonical Manichaean works were translated and original works written in various languages. Many Manichaean works have been found in East Turkestan; they are written in Middle Persian, Parthian, Bactrian, Sogdian, Ancient Turkic and Chinese. For example, there was a translation of the canon into Parthian by Mar Ammo (see below), an associate of Mani. There was an extensive Manichaean religious literature in Parthian, consisting of two cycles of hymns, prose works about the life and activities of Mani and his death, expositions of the doctrine and liturgical texts.[45] The canon was also translated into Sogdian, as were prayers, precepts and Manichaean prose works, including the history of the spread of Manichaeism in the east, and the text of the confession for the use of the leaders of a Manichaean community. Even letters have survived, addressed to various people, including a certain Manichaean teacher.[46] Old Turkic works include the penitential prayer of the Manichaeans, the *X^{u}āstvanīft*.

Much information (some of it valuable) can be found in Christian polemic works such as the *Acts of Archelaus* (*Acta Archelai*), the works of St Augustin, the Syrian Christian

[42] Kats, 1955; Sidorov, 1980.
[43] Schaeder, 1934, p. 11.
[44] Boyce, 1968, p. 70.
[45] Boyce, 1954; 1968; 1975; Asmussen, 1975*b*; Sundermann, 1973; 1979; 1981.
[46] Asmussen, 1975*b*.

chronicles, and the *Book of Commentaries* of the Syrian Theodor bar Konai. Especially valuable Islamic sources are the *Chronology* of al-Biruni and *al-Fihrist al-ᶜUlum* by Ibn al-Nadim.[47]

Mani's teaching spread far and wide even during his lifetime and he himself undertook a missionary journey to Sind. In the course of his journey, he also visited the town (and region) of Turan in Baluchistan. Here Mani was received as a true Buddha, and as a result of his preaching many were converted, including the ruler Turanshah and the nobility.[48] Although Mani claimed that he 'converted the whole country of India to the doctrine', in fact he meant the north-west part of India.[49] It is possible that he made other journeys to the east – the sources mention 'the Parthian state', 'Kushan' and other lands,[50] but this may be a reference to missionary travels undertaken by his disciples. Manichaean missionaries engaged in polemics with other religions. According to one Middle Persian text, they were especially vehement in their opposition to 'idols, idol priests, altars and their gods'.[51]

Mar Ammo was one of the main preachers of Mani's teaching in the east. He had a good knowledge of the Parthian language and script. On Mani's instructions, and in the company of the Parthian prince Ardavan and several scribes, Mar Ammo travelled to Abarshahr (Nishapur), whence he continued to Merv. According to the *Missionary History*, 'he ordained numerous kings and rulers, grandees and noblemen, queens and ladies, princes and princesses… He completed and fulfilled all orders and injunctions that [had been given] him by [Mani].' He then travelled further east into the lands of the Kushan Empire, where he set up a Manichaean community in one of the towns.[52]

Merv became one of the main centres of Manichaean propaganda in the east. After the death of Mani, the head of the Manichaean hierarchy came to Merv, where he found that 'all the brothers and sisters lived in piety'. He sent one of them, called Zurvandad, with two sacred books to Mar Ammo, who was preaching in the town of Zamb (according to Arab geographers, this was Zamm on the Amu Darya). In his accompanying letter, he wrote that other copies of these books would be made in Merv.[53]

In the east, in Middle Asia and later in East Turkestan, a distinct Manichaean sect arose. According to Ibn al-Nadim, it was called 'Dinawariyya', from the Middle Persian

[47] Flügel, 1862; Hegemonius, 1906; Alfaric, 1918–19; Polotsky, 1934; 1935; Säve-Söderbergh, 1948; Widengren, 1961, pp. 77–86; Klima, 1962, pp. 401–512; Abel, 1963; Rudolph, 1974; Adam, 1969; Heinrich and Koenen, 1975; Asmussen, 1975*a*, 1975*b*.
[48] Henning, 1977, 1, p. 385; Sundermann, 1971*b*, pp. 375–6.
[49] Sundermann, 1971*a*, pp. 88–91.
[50] Henning, 1977, 1, p. 386.
[51] Asmussen, 1975*b*, p. 13.
[52] Henning, 1977, 1, pp. 200–3; 2, pp. 225–30.
[53] Ibid., 1, p. 285.

dēnāvar, meaning 'giver [or carrier] of religion'. This sect – which constituted an independent church, having its own leader – came into being very early, either during Mani's lifetime or soon afterwards.[54]

The Eastern Manichaean Church used Middle Persian as its main sacred language. There were also Manichaean texts in Parthian; the Sogdians copied them, and added versions in Sogdian. Most of the Manichaean texts discovered in East Turkestan were the work of copyists in Sogdian Manichaean communities. Parthian was apparently supplanted as early as the fifth century, and was preserved in the Eastern Manichaean Church as a dead language. In the sixth century it was replaced by Sogdian in the region of Transoxania, although it remained in use in northern Khurasan. There were flourishing Manichaean communities in Merv and Balkh.

Buddhism and Manichaeism coexisted in Central Asia for a long time. Even the most ancient Parthian Manichaean texts (poems which can be attributed to Mar Ammo himself) contain some Indian Buddhist terms and the number of these increases in fourth-century Parthian texts. A Manichaean text on magic, which was probably written on the border of Iran and India, perhaps in Balkh, in the sixth century, indicates that there were very close contacts between Manichaeans and Buddhists. Sogdian Manichaean texts also include borrowed Buddhist terms and concepts connected with Buddhist tradition.[55]

Buddhism had a considerable influence on the pantheon, the terminology and even the concepts of Eastern Manichaeism, and also on its religious practice. For example, one of the central concepts of Eastern Manichaeism, that of the confession of sins, may have been borrowed from Buddhism or the reverse.[56] Under the influence of Buddhism, Manichaean monasteries (*mānistān*s) appeared in the east and later in the west. Information about them comes from documents found in East Turkestan, including one Old Turkic document of the tenth or eleventh century which mentions a monastery in Turkestan. The document even lists the provisions which were to be delivered: 'Every day 30 melons must be taken to a big monastery and 30 to a small monastery.' [57]

Manichaean worship included prayers, the singing of hymns, and preparations for the feast of the remission of sins. The 'elect' had to pray seven times a day and the 'hearers' four times. They prayed facing the sun during the daytime and facing the moon at night. Manichaeans had a religious ceremony which marked the imprisonment and death of Mani;

[54] Ibid., 1, p. 202, footnote 1; Sundermann, 1974, pp. 12–128, 131.
[55] Henning, 1977, 1, p. 383; 2, pp. 227–30, 283–4; Asmussen, 1965, pp. 136–47; Sims-Williams, 1983, pp. 132–40. For general issues concerning the relationship between Manichaeism and Buddhism, see Ries, 1980.
[56] Asmussen, 1965.
[57] Zieme, 1975, pp. 332, 334, 336.

it took place in spring and lasted the whole month. On the last day of this month (i.e. the thirtieth) there was the celebration of *Bema* ('the Throne'). An empty throne was set on a dais and a portrait of the prophet was placed on it.[58] The dais had five steps and was covered with rich draperies.

In the second half of the sixth century the Central Asian Manichaean community, then led by Shad-Ohrmazd (from Babylon), declared its independence. In the eighth century, however, the schism was healed, and during the period of office (710–740) of Mihr as head of the Babylonian community his jurisdiction was recognized also in Central Asia.[59]

Manichaeism played an important role in the ideological life of Central Asia right up to the time of the Arab conquest. In the year 719, for example, Tokharistan was among the countries that sent envoys to China. The embassy was headed by the Great Mu-shia, a Manichaean 'elect', and a man profoundly versed in the 'configurations of the heavens'. His name is a Chinese transcription of the Manichaean term *mōčag* (literally, 'the teacher'). The king of Chaganiyan (a region in Tokharistan) asked the Chinese emperor to confer with his envoy on the subject of the condition of the state and 'our religious teachings'.[60]

Following the Arab conquest, a more lenient attitude was adopted towards thebreak Manichaeans and many of them returned to Iran and Mesopotamia. Under the [c]Abbasids, however, savage persecutions began again. The head of the Manichaean Church lived in Baghdad until the tenth century, when his residence was transferred to Samarkand.[61] According to Ibn al-Nadim, during this century there were Manichaeans in Samarkand, Sogdiana and especially Tunkat (in the Tashkent region).[62]

There were many conversions to Manichaeism in East Turkestan. Its advance was encouraged when the Uighur ruler Bögü *kaghan* adopted Manichaeism in 762, after which it became the established religion of the Uighur state. According to a Uighur text, the ruler decided to become a convert after an inner conflict. After two days and nights of unceasing preaching by Manichaean missionaries, Bögü *kaghan* appeared before the assembly of the Manichaean 'elects', and 'falling before them on his knees and bowing, begged them to absolve him of his sins'. Then he said, 'When your "elects" give the command, I shall move [act] according to your words and your advice.'[63] Under normal circumstances, however, as can be seen from the Chinese version of the Karabalgasun inscription,[64] conversion required a long time and the participation of the highest echelons of the Manichaean

[58] Boyce, 1975, p. 3.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Chavannes and Pelliot, 1913, pp. 152–3, 197; Belenitskiy, 1954, pp. 44–5; Schafer, 1963, p. 50.
[61] Puech, 1949, pp. 64–5; Boyce, 1975, p. 3.
[62] *Fihrist*, 1970, p. 803.
[63] Bang and von Gabain, 1972, pp. 32–42. See also Marquart, 1912.
[64] Chavannes and Pelliot, 1913, pp. 190–5.

Church. It is possible that the stream of Manichaeans arriving from Mesopotamia, Iran and Central Asia as a result of the Arab conquest and the introduction of Islam contributed to Bögü *kaghan*'s conversion. As a result of his adoption of the new religion, the conflict between the two schools of Mesopotamian Manichaeism was transferred to East Turkestan, where their followers coexisted with members of the Eastern Manichaean Dinawariyya community.[65] The Patriarch and the upper hierarchy of the Eastern Manichaean Church resided in Kocho, the capital of the Uighur state of Turfan (850–1250).[66]

The importance of Manichaeism in the Uighur state gradually waned. As late as 983–984, however, the Chinese traveller Wang Yen-te remarked that, in addition to 50 Buddhist temples there were 'Manichaean temples', and that 'Persian monks pray according to their laws'. Manichaeism had also spread through East Turkestan to China as early as 672. Manichaean missionaries appeared at the T'ang court in 694; and in 732 an imperial edict allowed them to preach[67] to co-religionists, although the same permission was not granted to proselytes. Later edicts were more tolerant, but then persecutions began again.[68]

Manichaeism played an important role in the development of art. Mani was very fond of music, to which his followers ascribed a divine origin (Augustin, *De moribus manichaeorum*, II, V, 16). Even in Mani's lifetime, religious works were adorned with ornaments and illustrations to heighten the effect of the text. Splendidly illuminated manuscripts were common in the Hellenistic circles with which Mani and his followers were in contact. Mani himself was an exceptionally skilled artist (*Kephalaia*, CLIV, 2). Later, during the Islamic era, the name of Mani in Persian literature came to signify an artist of the first order. Even Mani's contemporaries were impressed by the size and magnificence of Manichaean manuscripts and Arab authors were later to comment on this. The scribes formed a special class among the 'elect'.[69] Texts were usually written in ink on paper, or on silk or leather.[70] Manichaean scribes paid special attention to the beauty of their calligraphy and, as Boyce states, the manuscripts are written in a 'clear and elegant' script. The headings at the beginning of a work and of each section were filled in with vignettes and the text was frequently framed with intricate ornamentation. Miniatures, however, were the most striking ornament of the manuscripts. They portray all the ranks of Manichaean society –

[65] On the subject of the two schools, see *Fihrist*, 1970, p. 393.
[66] Sundermann, 1980.
[67] Boyce, 1975, p. 3.
[68] Asmussen, 1975*a*, p. 24.
[69] Ibid., p. 62.
[70] Boyce, 1975, p. 14; 1968, p. 67.

Mani, the 'elect' (dressed in white) and the laity – and depict religious feasts and symbolic images.[71]

The Manichaeans had the reputation of being initiated into magic lore and did, indeed, engage in magic. They were, however, also well versed in astronomy (astrology), geography and other sciences.[72] They also produced theologians and poets.[73]

[71] Le Coq, 1973; 1979, Pl. 2–6.
[72] Asmussen, 1975*b*, pp. 44–5; Boyce, 1968, pp. 75–6.
[73] *Fihrist*, 1970, p. 803.