Encyclopædia Iranica

CHINESE TURKESTAN VII. MANICHEISM IN CHINESE TURKESTAN AND CHINA
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Published: December 15, 1991
Last Updated: June 11, 2013

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CHINESE TURKESTAN

vii. Manicheism in Chinese Turkestan and China

Historical survey. Manicheism was probably introduced into Inner Asia by Sogdian (Hu) merchants, though the process of its diffusion there is entirely obscure. It was certainly well established in Tokharistan and the Tarim basin before the 8th century c.e. (Henning, 1936, pp. 11-12). The earliest references to Manicheism in Chinese sources are of the 8th-9th centuries under the Tang dynasty (618-907), a period noted for active contacts between China and Central Asia (Schafer, pp. 407-09). According to a report in the early 17th-century *Min-shu* (7.32a) of He Qiao-yuan, however, the religion arrived in China during the reign of the Tang emperor Gao-zong (650-83; Pelliot, 1923, pp. 199, 203). It may be that it was formally introduced at court at that time, for in the same source there are hints that it was patronized by the empress Wu (684-704), who usurped the throne under the dynastic title Zhou (Pelliot, 1923, pp. 199-200, 203-04). Her unpopularity may have helped to stimulate conservative hostility to Manicheism. In 731 the Tang court ordered a summary translation of Manichean beliefs (see below), and in the following year the religion was banned by imperial edict (*Tong-dian* 44.229c).

Nevertheless, it persisted among foreigners in China, mainly Sogdians, until the end of the Tang period. During the chaotic years following the rebellion of An Lu-shan (q.v.; see also ii, above, and chinese-iranian relations i. in pre-islamic times) in 755 the *qaghan* of the Uighur-Turkish kingdom on the Orkhon river in Mongolia, who led a force against the rebels in 762-63, was converted to Manicheism by Sogdian missionaries. A terse account of his conversion is included in the trilingual (Chinese, Sogdian, and Uighur) inscription of Karabalghasun (Sogdian version ed. Hansen; for the Chinese version see Chavannes and Pelliot, 1913, pp. 177-99). In the Chinese version a *[mo]-xi-xi-de* (Mathews, nos. 4388, 2426, 2506, 6162; < Mid. Pers. *mahistag* "elder, presbyter," a term also found in the Compendium and designating a rank in the Manichean hierarchy; cf. Boyce, *Reader*, p. 11) is reported to have arrived as a pioneer missionary in the Uighur kingdom (Chavannes and Pelliot, 1913, pp. 192, 197; Pelliot, 1939, pp. 248-50).

Having gained the patronage of the Uighurs, supporters of the Tang dynasty, the Manicheans were able to establish temples in four major Chinese cities: Qing, Yang, Hong, and Yue (Chavannes and Pelliot, 1913, p. 262). They served as bases for missionary activity, and there is evidence that the religion gained converts among the indigenous Chinese (Lieu, 1985a, p. 195). Perhaps for that reason, after the Uighurs had been driven from Mongolia by the Kirghiz in 840 (see ii, above) and were no longer able to play a significant role in Chinese affairs, Manicheism was the first "foreign" religion to be banned, in 843; temples were closed and foreign priests expelled. According to the *Min-shu*, however, one Manichean priest escaped to Fu-tang (now Fu-qing) in southern China, whence he propagated the religion throughout Fukien province (Pelliot, pp. 206-08).

Meanwhile, the Uighurs established a new kingdom around the Turfan oasis in the eastern Tarim basin, and Manicheism continued to play an important part in Uighur religious life. According to surviving documents (Zieme; Geng), the monasteries there owned considerable landed property, from which they derived substantial rents, and they were also organized to conduct trade (Zieme). The monastic scriptoria seem to have been very active, and the quantity of fragmentary Manichean texts in Iranian and Turkish languages discovered by German archeologists at Qočo (Gao-chang) in the early 20th century belong to this period (Boyce, 1960, pp. ix-xxi). Nevertheless, Manicheism faced increasing Buddhist (See buddhism i) and Nestorian Christian (see christianity iii) competition for the favor of the Uighur rulers

(Lieu, 1985a, p. 201; Geng and Klimkeit; cf. Hamilton, 1955, p. 133), and there is little doubt that it was no longer of major importance by the Mongol period (1218-1370), when Islam began to spread through the Tarim basin (see iv, above; cf. Lieu, 1985a, p. 201; Pinks, p. 114).

In southern China it seems that Manicheism, though defined as an illegal religion during the Sung period (960-1279), reappeared in the guise of an esoteric Buddhist or Taoist sect known as the "religion of light" (*ming-jiao*; Mathews, nos. 4534, 719), in which vegetarianism was especially emphasized. The authorities believed the Fang La rebellion of 1120-22 had been instigated by such illegal religious groups and therefore closed down Manichean meeting places and seized Manichean writings (Lieu, 1985a, pp. 236ff.; Forte), but the sect nevertheless continued to enjoy a considerable following in the region, among both the educated and the common people. The Mongol (Yuan) dynasty (1271-1368) appears to have tolerated Manicheism, perhaps owing to the advice of Marco Polo and his uncle Maffeo, who counseled Qubilai Khan (658-93/1260-94) on foreign religions (Lieu, 1980, pp. 76-79). The only extant Manichean temple in China, near Quan-zhou (Ch'üan-chou, q.v.; see also chinese-iranian relations vii. persian settlements in southeastern china), was built during this period. After the final expulsion of the Mongols by the Ming (1368-1644), however, the sect was subject to severe persecution, from which it never recovered (Pelliot; Lieu, 1980; Bryder, 1988; Lin, 1989).

Chinese Manichean texts. Almost all present knowledge of the doctrinal aspects of Manicheism in the Tarim basin and China is derived from three texts in Chinese. All were found at Tun-huang and were compiled before the end of the 9th century; they are generally known as the *Traité*, the *Hymnscroll*, and the *Compendium* respectively. Although documentary evidence of the Manicheans in southern China is plentiful, especially from the Wen and Fu prefectures, details of doctrine and liturgical practices are extremely scant. One official document connected with the suppression of religious sects at the time of the Fang La rebellion (Forte) contains a list of scriptures seized from the *ming-jiao* in Wen prefecture; the titles of some are unmistakably linked to the earlier texts recovered from Tun-huang. Despite the Manicheans' self-protective adoption of Buddhist and especially Taoist elements, the inscriptions from their temple at Quan-zhou are unmistakably Manichean in content, though the building itself exhibits many Buddhist features (Lieu, 1985a, pp. 212-13).

The *Traité* is, despite its title (*Moni jiao cao jing*, lit. "fragmentary [Mathews, no. 6689] Manichean scripture"), a long text in an excellent state of

preservation, with only a few lines missing at the beginning. It was first fully published with a facsimile by Edouard Chavannes (q.v.) and Paul Pelliot in 1911 and is frequently known as *Traité Pelliot*. Their transcription (including typographical errors) was reproduced in the Chinese translation of the Buddhist *Tripiṭaka* (*Taishō*, no. 2141 B, LIV, pp. 1281a16-1286a29); that text was in turn reproduced with critical notes by Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer (1987b, pp. T. 81-86). A more accurate transcription was published by Chen Yuan in 1923 (pp. 531-44), and a new collation based on a reexamination of the original photographs of the manuscript has now been published by Lin Wu-shu (1987, pp. 217-29), with the photographs.

The *Traité* contains a number of discourses attributed to Mani. They consist of answers to questions on cosmogony, ethics, and other matters posed by his disciple A-to (perhaps Addā, who is known to have been sent as a missionary to the western part of the Persian empire; *Mir. Man.* II, p. 69 [360]). The first complete discourse is focused on the aftermath of the rescue of primal man by the powers of light and the subsequent attack by the demon of greed (i.e., the prince of darkness), which led to creation of the universe and the eventual victory of the light (see cosmogony and cosmology iii. manichean). A number of parallels with the *Traité* have been found in Manichean texts in other languages. For example, themes like the enumeration of nights and days and the symbol of trees are found in western, especially Coptic, Manichean texts (Lieu, 1985a, p. 206). Exact parallels can also be found in Turkish Manichean fragments (Le Coq, pp. 16-21; Taisho, pp. 1282a-1285c). Werner Sundermann (1983) has discussed fragments from approximately twenty-two Parthian manuscripts that contain parallels to almost every part of the *Traité*. One group of these fragments includes the running head “finished is the sermon of the light-nous.” He concluded that the work was originally composed in Parthian, translated into both Sogdian and Turkish, then from one of those languages into Chinese.

Linguistically the Chinese version is important for the interpretation of a number of Parthian terms of ethical and anthropological significance, which first became intelligible through comparison with their Chinese equivalents. For example, Parthian *wdyšn’sgyft*, literally “bad knowing,” is shown by its Chinese equivalent (*yu-chi*; Mathews, nos. 7624, 1025) to mean “folly,” rather than “sinful knowledge” or “evil intention,” as had previously been thought (Salemann, text 34 p. 11, glossary p. 72; Henning, 1943, pp. 58, 63, text *h* 1.156).

The Hymnscroll (Moni jiao xia-bu zan, lit. “the lower (second?) section of the

Manichean hymns"; text in Lin, 1987, pp. 234-65; *Taishō*, no. 2140, pp. 1270b21-1279c10; Engl. tr. Tsui; Ger. tr. Schmidt-Glintzer, 1987b, pp. 1167), now in the Stein collection of Tun-huang manuscripts in the British Library, London, contains about thirty hymns probably translated into Chinese from Parthian. Several are simply phonetic transcriptions of the original Parthian hymns and must have made little sense to the common Chinese reader; in one of them traces of Aramaic words have been detected (Yoshida). The first canto of the Parthian hymn cycle known as *Huyadagmān* (formerly read *Huwīdagmān*; Boyce, 1954, pp. 68-77; cf. Nyberg, *Manual* II, p. 225; MacKenzie; Sundermann, 1990, pp. 9-10) is also included, in Chinese translation. The scroll ends with an appeal for blessing, with the information that it was translated and compiled in Turfan (Schmidt-Glinzer, p. 74).

The *Compendium* (*Moni guang-fu jiao-fa yi-lüe*, lit. "outline of the teachings and rules of Mani, Buddha of light"; text in Lin, 1987, pp. 230-33; *Taishō*, no. 2141 A, pp. 1279c17-1281a11; Eng. tr. of pp. 1279c17-1280c12 in Haloun and Henning; Fr. tr. of pp. 1280c12-1281a11 in Chavannes and Pelliot, 1913, pp. 107-16; Ger. tr. of entire text in Schmidt-Glintzer, l987b, pp. 69-75). This manuscript has been divided; the main portion is in the British Library, and a large fragment, containing the concluding sections, is in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (Lin, 1988). According to the first paragraph, the work was translated in response to an imperial order issued 16 July 731. The *Compendium* contains a summary of Manichean doctrines, beginning with an account of Mani's birth that is clearly modeled on that of the Buddha and has no known parallel in Iranian or western Manichean texts. It also contains a long passage from the Taoist polemic *Lao-zi hua-hu jing* (Lao-tzu converts the barbarians; see, e.g., Schmidt-Glintzer,1987b, p. 71), in which Mani was depicted as an avatar of Lao-tzu, the traditional founder of Taoism; this "scripture" was a focus of controversy between Taoists and Buddhists in China and is unlikely to have been translated directly from one of the Central Asian language. The association of Mani with Lao-tzu was probably partly instrumental in the survival of Manicheism in China after the Tang period.

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