



MANICHEISM V. MISSIONARY ACTIVITY AND TECHNIQUE

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The main primary sources on the beginning of Manichean missionary work are the *Cologne Mani Codex* (henceforth *CMC*), especially pp. 107-91, ed. Koenen and Römer, pp. 76-119, and *Kephalaia* 1 and 76, ed. Polotsky and Böhlig, pp. 9-16, 183-88; tr. Gardner, pp. 15-22, 193-97. More information may be expected from the still unpublished Dublin *Kephalaia*.

The Manichean *Missionary History*, strictly speaking, consists of Middle Persian, Parthian, Sogdian, and Old Turkish fragments of a hagiographic description of the beginnings of the missionary journeys of Mani and his first disciples (published or indicated by Sundermann 1981, pp. 17-28, 34-49, 55-57 under nos. 1, 2.2-7, 3.1-4, 4a.1). These texts are parts of a comprehensive hagiographic and homiletic description of Mani's life and the beginnings of the Manichean church preserved in Middle Persian, Parthian, Sogdian, and Old Turkish and also in the Third Coptic Homily (ed. Polotsky, 1934, pp. 42-85; cf. Sundermann 1986a, 1986b, 1987). Some additional texts add more information on the Manichean missionary activities, such as MP. 5.1, 5.2 (Sundermann, 1981, pp. 93-95); these belong to Mani's *Šābuhragān*. Original Manichean traditions are also faithfully rendered in Ebn al-Nadim's (d. ca. 995) *Fehrest*



(ed. Flügel, pp. 51-52, 84-85; Ebn al-Nadim, tr. Dodge, pp. 774-75). An exhaustive collection of source material on the spread of Manicheism in the Roman empire was compiled by Lieu (1988, pp. 383-99).

The beginning of Manichean missionary activities. Hardly any other religion has undertaken its missionary activities with a view to winning the world for the truth of its faith in a better designed and more systematic way than the Manichean church. According to its hagiographical tradition, as attested in the *CMC* (pp. 17-19, 73; ed. Koenen and Römer, pp. 10-13, 50-51; Cameron and Dewey, pp. 18-21, 56-57) and in Ebn al-Nadim's *Fehrest* (ed. Flügel, pp. 50.15-51.7, 84; tr. Dodge, p. 775), the missionary work is based on a command given to Mani by his *Sysygos* (spiritual Twin) when he had completed his 24th year of life. According to the *CMC*, the command was: "You have not only been sent to this religion [of the Baptists], but to every people, every school, every town and place; for [by you this] hope will be explained and proclaimed in all [zones] and regions [of the world]. [Men] in great numbers will accept your word. So step forth and walk about; for I shall be with you as your helper and protector at every place where you are proclaiming all that has been revealed to you. So do not worry and do not be distressed" (*CMC*, pp. 104-05; ed. Koenen and Römer, pp. 74-75). Therefore, the worldwide mission is inseparably tied with the separation of Mani and his followers from their paternal, Elkhasaite community and with the foundation of the Manichean church. What really happened is that Mani himself came to be the first missionary of his community.

The time of Mani's first public appearance was connected by the Manichean tradition with one of the coronations of the Sasanian king Šābuhr [Šāpur] I (r. 241-72) which is dated, on the strength of the Manichean dates, to 18 or 19 April 240 (on these two dates, see with further literature Sundermann, 1990, pp. 295 = 2001a, pp. 103-4). This synchronism may reflect more or less exactly the actual time of the beginning of the Manichean world mission.

Characteristic methods of the Manichean missionary activities. Three main methods of Manichean missionary work can be distinguished. The first was the recourse to already existing diaspora groups of Mani's paternal Elkhasaite community. The second method was to turn first to the ruler of a territory or to members of its ruling class, in order to win them over or get their permission to conduct a mission among their subjects. The first method was naturally restricted to the beginnings of Manichean history and to areas where pockets of baptists had settled. The second method, even if it failed often



enough, yielded Manicheism's best gains. There was also a third method: Christian polemicists in the Roman world report that in the 4th century Manichean preachers liked to attract the attention of the general public by making spectacular appearances in the forum, in public baths, in front of the Christian churches, etc. (Brown, 1969, pp. 100-101). Such actions were meant to attract people by public disputes but bore the risk of involving the preachers in arguments with representatives of the naturally hostile clerical or secular authorities, and sometimes also with philosophically trained opponents like [St. Augustine](#) (354-430). The outcome was therefore often doubtful, as in the case of the discussion of the Manichean *electa* Julia with the Christian bishop Porphyrios of Gaza (346-420), as reported by Marcus Diaconus (Burkitt, 1925, pp. 8-11). Evidently, women too played their part in Manichean missionary activities (Scopello, 2001). A map of the missionary journeys of Mani and his disciples is given in *Il Manicheismo* (pp.

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I).

MANI'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

Two nearly identical descriptions of early missionary journeys are ascribed to Mani himself in the Coptic *Kephalaia*. According to the first *Kephalaion* the route was India, Persia, Babylon, Mesene, Susiana. Here he met king Šābuhr, who allowed him to extend his journeys to Persia, Parthia, [Adiabene](#), “and the borders of the provinces of the kingdom of the Romans” (Polotsky and Böhlig, pp. 15.24-16.2; Gardner, p. 21). In the 76th *Kephalaion*, the stations are India, Persia, Mesene, and Babylon, and the lands of the Assyrians, Medes, and Parthians (Polotsky and Böhlig, pp. 184-87; Gardner, pp. 194-96).

This route is not confirmed by the heavily mutilated last pages of the *CMC*, which must be understood to describe missionary journeys of Mani in western Iran (Römer, 1994). Places mentioned there are Ganzak (in [Atropatēnē](#) [cf. Römer, p. 2], or rather Ganja in [Arrān](#)), an unidentified, raw mountainous area, an unknown place (near Paradise!) where Mani meets a hairy hermit, another distant region where Mani converts a local king and his retinue, a village S[...] or E[...], where people of a “synagogue” try in vain to outdo Mani with their witchcraft (see also Lieu and Lieu, 1991), the town of Pharat at the estuary of the Euphrates and Tigris, where Mani met Baptists and evidently embarked for an unknown destination, which Römer convincingly assumed to



have been India (Römer, 1994, pp. 147-52). If that was indeed so, then the *CMC* would describe missionary journeys which preceded Mani's mission to India. One must not forget, however, that precisely these parts of the *CMC* are heavily fragmented, and much of what is recognizable is completely legendary. Mani's locomotion itself is often effected by way of supernatural air travel. The sequence of the stories need not be the historical course of events. The episode of the conversion of an anonymous king of an unknown country, for instance, was compared with Mani's conversion of the Tūrānšāh during the Indian mission (Sundermann, 1986b, pp. 262-63 = 2001a, pp. 298-99; differently Römer, 1994, p. 73 with n. 2).

The early mission to India is clearly confirmed by the Parthian hagiographical tradition (Sundermann, 1981, pp. 55-57, text 4a.1). Therefore, the question is: Did Mani, contrary to the testimony of the *Kephalaia*, missionize in the west of the Sasanian empire already before he went to India, or did the *CMC* transfer some later events to an early date? In any case, Mani's missionary journey to India was his first important, far-reaching one. Mani started, according to the first *Kephalaion* (Polotsky and Bohlig, p. 15.24-28; Gardner, p. 21), "in the last years of Ardašir (I)". He remained in India until the year of Ardašir's death and Šābuhr's succession to the throne, which was, according to the chronology of the Sasanian dynasty as established by Theodor Nöldeke and the assumed date of the death of Ardašir in the *CMC*, 241/242 CE. The beginning of his journey cannot have been before his split from the Elkhasaites, that is, before April 240.

Mani's journey to India was by sea, and he probably went to the harbor of *Dēb* (Ar. al-Daibul, al-Daiwul, Armen. Debuhl, etc., NPers. Dib; see Sundermann, 1971, pp. 84-85, n. 31) at the mouth of the Indus river. We do not know which parts of India Mani may have visited during the short period of his travel. The only place mentioned in Manichean hagiography—because it seems to have been the highlight of the mission—was Tūrān west of the Indus in northern Baluchistan (around modern-day Quṣḍār or Quzdār, etc.) where Mani is said to have converted the local ruler, the Tūrānšāh (Sundermann, 1981, pp. 19-22, text 2.2 II; p. 101, text 9). The assumption that Mani advanced as far as the Kushan border in the area of Bagard (Sundermann, 1974, p. 131) is hypothetical, and W. B. Henning gave a different explanation of the relevant text (Henning, 1945, pp. 85-90 = 1977, II, pp. 225-30). On his way back, again by sea, Mani interrupted his journey in Rēw-Ardaxšīhr, a harbor in the province of Fārs, where he met followers from Khorasan.



In Rēw-Ardaxšīhr, Mani stayed with the local baptists, the adherents of his paternal community. Thus, Mani evidently followed the method of St. Paul who on his missionary journeys used to turn first to the Jewish communities in the diaspora and then to the gentiles (Tardieu 1994, p. 69).

From Rēw-Ardaxšīhr, Mani may have gone (again by ship?) to “the city” of Mesene (i.e., Karkā dMaišān or Pharat?), as *Kephalaion* 76 (Polotsky and Böhlig, p. 186, 6-7; Gardner, p. 195) has it. Manichean hagiography reports about Mani’s conversion of the Mēšūn-xwadāy Mihr-šāh, but the historicity of this event is questionable (Sundermann, 1981, pp. 101-3, text 10; 1987, pp. 47, 61-62 = 2001, pp. 363, 377-78). Before or after Mesene, Babylon is mentioned, and after Mesene also Susiana. After mentioning Susiana, the first *Kephalaion* (Polotsky and Böhlig, p. 15. 31-32; Gardner, p. 21) says that Mani was honorably received by Šābuhr I. The most likely conclusion would be that Mani met the king in Bēt Lāpāt. Otherwise, if it was from Babylon that Mani went to the court, the meeting would have rather taken place in [Ctesiphon](#).

The king gave Mani permission to missionize in his empire. This must have happened after some years which Mani spent in the king’s retinue (*Keph.* 1, Polotsky and Böhlig, p. 15. 33-34; Gardner, p. 21). The *Kephalaia* single out as later fields of Mani’s work Persia, Parthia, Adiabene, “and the borders of the provinces of the kingdom of the Romans” (Polotsky and Böhlig, pp. 15.34-16.2; Gardner, p. 21). Therefore, Mani cannot have been the first Manichean teacher to preach his gospel in Parthia. At an earlier time, he had sent his disciple Mār Ammō to that region. So Mani may have gone to the northeast of Iran in order to support Ammō’s work. The Parthian fragment M 502d may possibly be understood to describe Mani’s stay in Marw (Sundermann, 1981, pp. 124, 126).

An early mission of Mani’s to Georgia and his conversion of its king *hbz’* was assumed by me in 1974 (Sundermann, 1974, pp. 131-32; 1981, pp. 24-25, text 2.3). This hypothesis is based on the explanation of Parthian *wrwc’n* as Georgia. Henning, however, had explained *wrwc’n* as Gharchistan in modern Afghanistan and regarded the story as an episode in Mār Ammō’s mission (Henning, 1945, pp. 85-90 = 1977, II, pp. 225-30). In 1952, however, he took the possibility of *wrwc’n* being Georgia into consideration (Henning, 1952, p. 206, n. 9).

We know next to nothing about Mani’s further missionary journeys. His last journey, which took him from his Mesopotamian home country to Bēt Lāpāt, where he suffered death, was hardly a missionary journey. It gave him the



chance to pay farewell visits to some of his adherent communities (Henning, 1942, pp. 941-49 = 1977, II, pp. 81-89, where the route is determined as exactly as possible).

MISSIONARY JOURNEYS OF MANI'S DISCIPLES

Continuation of the mission to India. In Rēw Ardaxšīhr, where Mani had stopped off on his way back from India, he met the presbyter (Parth. *ms'dr*) Pattī (*ptyg*) and a brother Ḥannī (*hny*) and sent them to India, where he had interrupted, rather than finished, his work (Sundermann, 1981, pp. 55-57, text 4a.1). My suggestion that the presbyter Pattī is the same person as the *oikodespotēs* Pattikios of the CMC, i.e., Mani's father, is still possible (Römer, 1994, p. 148). Pattī and Ḥannī went to Dēb, where they started their missionary journey not later than 242. The existence of a Manichean community in India is attested by a letter of Mani's to India (Ebn al-Nadim, ed. Flügel, pp. 73.12, 103; tr. Dodge, p. 799; cf. also MPers. M 1221 /ii/8/ *prwrdg* [y] (*h*)ynd[wg'n] "the Indian Epistle").

Missions to Syria. From Weh-Ardaxšīhr, a place in the Sasanian urban complex of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, Mani sent the teacher Pattī, Addā the bishop, and some book-writers to the Roman empire. He commissioned them to teach the world up to Egypt, and this is described in general words in the Middle Persian, Parthian, and Sogdian versions of the Manichean *Missionary History* (MPers.: Andreas and Henning, 1933, pp. 301-02 = Henning 1977 I, pp. 198-99; cf. Sundermann 1989, pp. 17-18, text 1; Parth.: Sundermann, 1981, pp. 25-27, text 2.5-2.6; Sogd.: Sundermann, 1981, pp. 34-39, text 3.1-3.2). One substantial piece of information is that Pattī only stayed abroad for one year and returned to Mani in the second year (Sundermann, 1981, p. 36, 11. 352-55). The mission was subsequently led by Addā.

I identified the Pattī of the western mission with the Pattī who in about 242 CE went to India, and this led me to date the beginning of the mission to the west to the years 240/41, i.e., before the outbreak of the first Roman war of Šābuhr I (Sundermann, 1971, pp. 94-95). But it is difficult to explain the fact that the Pattī of the western mission was a teacher, while the Pattī of the mission to India continued his work as a presbyter, so that the assumption of two different Pattīs seems more plausible than the complicated solution previously offered (in Sundermann, 1981, p. 56, n. 4). This allows for a later beginning of the mission to the west, as other scholars have indeed assumed (see Tardieu, 1982, p. 9: about 262 CE; Koenen, 1983 [1988], pp. 100-01, with n. 52: 244-62 CE,



less likely from 240 CE on; Lieu, 1992, pp. 103-04: no precise date, but either after 244 CE or after 260/61, which is, according to Lieu, the date of Addā's activities in Karkā d̄Bēt Slōk; Tubach 1996, p. 196: at least two missionary journeys of Addā to the west: one before, one after 260/61 CE).

One argument for an early beginning of Addā's mission to the Roman empire and Ammō's to Parthia has hitherto been overlooked. In Rēw Ardashīr, on his way back from India, Mani met three brethren from Abaršahr, the magnate Dāryāw and the brethren Walāš and Xusrow (Sundermann, 1981, p. 57). By that time (241/42 CE), the missionary work in Parthia must already have begun and borne its first fruits. According to the *Missionary History*, the mission to the west would have started even earlier than Ammō's mission (Andreas and Henning, 1933, pp. 301-06 = 1977, I, pp. 198-203; Sundermann, 1981, pp. 34-41).

Concerning Addā's achievements in the west, the brief Middle Persian version of the *Missionary History* says that he extended his journey to Alexandria (in Egypt). The text continues by mentioning the conversion of a certain Nafšā (Andreas and Henning, 1933, p. 302 = 1977, I, p. 199). This was a noticeable success, for the more detailed Sogdian version of the *Missionary History* explains that Nafšā was the sister of Tadi/Tadai (*tdy*), who was the wife of the "emperor" (Sundermann, 1981, p. 42, text 3.3). I explained the name Tadi as an abbreviation of the place name Thadmor (1974, p. 137), that is, Palmyra. But in the Coptic church history (unfortunately lost at the end of World War II), Thadamor is also the name of its famous queen, Zenobia (r. 267/68-72; Schmidt and Polotsky 1933, p. 28; Schaeder, 1933, p. 344), and this is also true of the Sogdian *tdy*. The conversion of Nafšā, therefore, means a penetration of Manicheism into the society and even the court of Palmyra. It was certainly this success, which made Syria "the bridgehead of Manicheism in the Roman world" (Brown, 1969, p. 96).

According to the Christian *Chronicle of Karkā d̄BētSlōk*, a Manichean missionary named Addai and a second person 'brkn' ('Abd-Zakyā?) became active in this town (modern Kerkuk) in 261/62 CE (Hoffmann, 1881, p. 46). If that Addai is the same person as the Addā of the Manichean history, then Addā's mission to Syria and Egypt must have ended before that date. But it is quite possible that the conversion of Zenobia's sister happened after that date during a second journey of Addā to Syria (Sundermann, 1987, p. 66 = 2001a, p. 382). In support of this possibility one might mention that the description of Addā's activities in Palmyra is separated from the description of his (first) journey in the detailed Sogdian version of the *Missionary History* (Sundermann, 1981, pp. 39, 41-45).



Palmyra became, it seems, the pivot of further Manichean missionary work in Roman Syria and perhaps further afield in the Arabian peninsula and in Egypt. This is documented by a unique fragment P 15997, still preserved, of the Coptic church history, edited by M. Tardieu (1992, pp. 15-24). The text relates that at the court of queen Thadamor (i.e., Palmyra), the teacher Abiēsou (Syr. Abī-Yešūʿ) installed himself and enjoyed the protection of the queen, which must have been after Addā had first missionized in Palmyra. Abiēsou then sent (according to Tardieu) the deacon (bishop) Sēthel and Abizaxias to an unknown place, “the tower of Abīran.” There they attracted the attention of “Amarō, k[ing of the sons of La]him,” who treated them in a friendly manner and allowed them to stay in his realm.

It has long since been suggested that the Coptic Amarō is the Lakhmid king of [Hira](#) ‘Amr b. ‘Adi (Schaeder, 1933, pp. 344-45), whose name is also mentioned in the Paikuli inscription of King Narseh (r. 293-302). Since, however, the Paikuli inscription also mentions a second Amarū, just after the Lakhmid king, who evidently belonged to the [Abgar](#) dynasty (Skjærvø, 1983, p. 79), F. de Blois proposes that the protector of the Manicheans was rather a king of [Edessa](#) (de Blois, 1995).

Manicheism in Arabia. The emergence of Manichean communities among the Arabs already in the third century is proved by a letter of Mani to (Syr.) Ḥaṭṭā (Ar. al-Ḳaṭṭ), on the coast of either Oman or Bahrain or a particular settlement in the gulf of Bahrain (Tardieu, 1994, pp. 66-69; Grohmann, 1978, pp. 1130-31). The letter is attested in MPers. M 733 /10/ as *pr [wrd]g ʿy htʿ* (Müller, 1904, p. 31) and in Ebn al-Nadim’s *Fehrest* (ed. Flügel, pp. 76.1, 104; tr. Dodge, p. 801). That Manicheism went further on to the Arabian peninsula, up to the Hejaz and Mecca, where it could have possibly contributed to the formation of the doctrine of Islam, cannot be proven. A detailed description of Manichean traces in the Arabian-speaking regions is given by Tardieu (1994).

Missions to Egypt. It is certain that Manicheism spread in Egypt already in the 3rd century CE (see [ALEXANDER OF LYCOPOLIS](#)). But the route it took, the place where it first arrived, the names of the missionaries who first preached Manicheism on Egyptian soil, and the time of its arrival are disputed. Each solution put forward so far is no more than a theory. Two main theories can be singled out. They are of some consequence for the question how the original Manichean texts were transmitted to the Coptic-speaking communities, directly from Mani’s Syriac idiom or through the mediation of Greek translations.



According to the first theory, Manicheism came to Egypt by the land route from Syria and Palestine. Its first main destination was Alexandria. According to the second theory, it arrived in Egypt by ship via some port on the Red Sea coast. Its first destination was Upper Egypt, the area of Asyut (Lycopolis). In support of the “North Egyptian theory” one may cite the Middle Persian version of the Manichean *Missionary History*. It says that Mani’s apostle to the west, bishop Mār Addā, went as far as Alexandria (the Sogdian version of the history precisely calls it “the Great Alexandria,” thus distinguishing it from the Alexandria between Asia Minor and Syria (Sundermann, 1986b, p. 302 = 2001, p. 338). He evidently did not travel beyond Alexandria, and the next remarkable event, the conversion of Nafšā, took place in Syria. There is no compelling reason to doubt the historicity of this piece of information. It purports that Manicheism arrived in Egypt very early, possibly for the first time, from the adjacent Asian region. An argument for the “South Egyptian theory” is the circumstance that all the Coptic Manichean texts we know of are written in the so-called Sub-Akhmimic dialect of Asyut/Lycopolis, that is, of southern Egypt (Schmidt and Polotsky, 1933, pp. 9-13). The natural conclusion is that southern Egypt was the first center of the Manichean mission in the country of the Nile. If that was so, the northern part of Egypt must have been bypassed and was visited only later.

So far, neither theory can be proven. Both had and have their adherents. A few examples may be quoted: According to Sundermann (1971, p. 95), Addā was not the first missionary to have reached Egypt. Before him, Papos was there, and he arrived no earlier than 244 (following Puech, 1949, p. 134, n. 191). But the claim that Papos was the first to missionize in Egypt may have concerned Upper Egypt only. In the view of Tardieu (1982), Addā’s mission to Egypt was the final part of his western journey. Before that, he had successfully worked in Palmyra, and, when in 268 CE queen Zenobia started her invasion of Egypt, Addā joined her army. He arrived in Alexandria in the first months of 270 (pp. 9-10). Already ca. 285-90 the letter of a Christian bishop preserved in the papyrus Rylands 469 warns of the Manichean heresy, and about 297 the Roman emperor Diocletian (r. 284-305) ordered its persecution (pp. 10-11). The Manichean headquarters in Alexandria was closed down, and Manicheism found a new home and a publishing center in Asyut and Hypsēlē, where the pressure of the political and clerical authorities on the “Persian” sect was less oppressive than in the north (pp. 12-13). Thus, the Sub-Akhmimic dialect became the language of Manichean literature in Egypt.



The major problem of Tardieu's theory is the rather late arrival of the Manichean missionaries in Alexandria. His theory goes against the sequence of events as given in the Middle Persian version of the *Missionary History*. This text mentions Addā's arrival in Alexandria first and only after that his conversion of Nafšā. Thus, Addā's arrival in Egypt should be dated before his successful work in Palmyra. Gardner's thesis (1995, p. XV), according to which Manicheism first arrived in (northern) Egypt about 260 fits better, although the date is hypothetical.

The theory of a Manichean infiltration into Egypt from the south has had many supporters (see the summary in Tardieu 1982, p. 18, n. 34). The most recent one may be L. Koenen (1983 [1988], pp. 93-108). Koenen's argument is based on some pieces of evidence he gathers from the admittedly legendary biographical frame of the *Acta Archelai* and from *Epiphanius's* (d. 403) *Panarion*. These are: the arrival of Mani's forerunner Skythianos in Egypt via the Red Sea and his marriage with an Egyptian prostitute from Hypsēlē in Upper Egypt (p. 96). The conclusions drawn from these details are far-reaching: Addā, on his first mission (between 244 and 262 CE), went, perhaps via Palmyra, to Petra, to the Gulf of Aqaba, and then by ship to Myos Hormos or Albus Portus in Upper Egypt. Then, proceeding down the Nile, he finally reached Alexandria (p. 97).

The problem to be solved is the testimony of Alexander of Lycopolis from about 300 CE, who states that the first Manichean missionaries who came "to us" were a certain Papos "the *exēgētēs*," after him Thomas, and after them some other people (ed. Brinkmann, 1895, p. 4.17-19; van der Horst and Mansfeld, 1974, p. 52). There is no reason to doubt the reliability of this statement. Addā is missing in this list, unless one identifies him with Papos, as Vergote did but not Koenen.

The theory that Manicheism came to Egypt both by the northern land route and via the Red Sea has gained many defenders. Besides J. Vergote, G. Stroumsa, and A. Villey, one may cite S. N. C. Lieu and I. Gardner. According to Lieu, Addā reached Alexandria on the land route, but he was not the first to missionize in Egypt. Before him, Papos and Thomas had turned up in Upper Egypt. This may have happened, depending on the beginning of the mission to the west, either after 244 or after 260 (which is, according to Lieu, pp. 102-3, the date of Addā's activities in Karkā d̄Bēt Slōk). In the view of Gardner (1995, p. XV), Manicheism "reached the Thebaid not only via Alexandria and along the Nile valley, but also directly by sea from Mesopotamia to the coast



(Berenice).”

What follows are other possible solutions. A variant of the “North Egyptian theory” would be: Mār Addā brought Manicheism to Egypt during his missionary journeys to the Roman empire which took place between the years 240/41 and 261/62, when Addā may have appeared in Karkā dBēt Slōk. Addā may have gone straight to Alexandria, where he established the first Manichean community in Egypt. It may have flourished there for up to half a century before it was suppressed and possibly extinguished in consequence of the anti-Manichean decree and persecution of Diocletian. Before that happened, however, Manicheism spread from Alexandria to Upper Egypt, where Papos and Thomas continued what Addā, for some reason or another, had been unable to complete, and to North Africa west of Egypt. Thus the community of Alexandria came to be a strategic starting point for the further spread of Manicheism towards the west and the south.

In any case, it was in Middle and Upper Egypt that Manicheism stood its ground for at least a century. That follows from the discovery of the main Coptic Manichean manuscripts in Medinet Madi in the Fayyum oasis, from the recent archeological work in Ismant el-Kharab in the Dakhleh [Daḳla] Oasis (the ancient Kellis), and last but not least from the testimony of Alexander of Lycopolis.

Manicheism in Africa beyond Egypt and in Europe. Manicheism must have penetrated North Africa beyond Egypt already in the 3rd century, because the anti-Manichean decree of Diocletian (issued probably in 297 CE) was addressed to Julianus, the governor of Africa Proconsularis (present-day Tunisia and Libya). The great name of Manichean evangelism was Adimantus, who is reported to have written a polemic treatise against Moses and the other prophets of the Old Testament. As early as St. Augustine, he was identified with Mani’s disciple Addās, and this opinion is now largely accepted (Merkelbach, 1984, pp. 51-52; 1985, pp. 57-58; Tubach, 1995, pp. 170-74; presupposed in Sfameni Gasparro, 2000, pp. 546-59; sceptical is Drijvers, 1983, p. 176; Decret accepts the identity of Adimantus and Addās but distinguishes between this African Addās and Mani’s apostle to Syria and Egypt; 1994, cols. 94-95).

The methods, means, and limits of the Manichean missionary technique in the western part of the late Roman empire have been retraced in an exemplary way by Brown (1969, pp. 92-103). Manicheism must also have advanced into



Italy and certainly to other parts of western Europe, which is proven by the presence of Manicheans and their high-ranking sympathizers in the city of Rome in 383/84 CE, when Augustine lived there (Brown, 1967, pp. 69-70).

St. Augustine encountered Manicheism in Carthage and Hippo Regius in the 370s, and he confessed later that he had been its lay follower for nine years. He became the determined adversary of the Manicheans and competed with the most ardent propagators of Manicheism in North Africa, the bishop Faustus, the presbyter Fortunatus, and Felix “the doctor,” in public disputations in 392 and 404 (see Decret, 2002, cols. 1252-55, 1263-65). St. Augustine’s activities essentially contributed to the decline and disappearance of Manicheism in North Africa at the turn of the 4th to the 5th century.

A mission to Armenia? The Sogdian fragment of the Manichean *Missionary History*, So 18224 (ed. Sundermann, 1981, pp. 45-49), reports about the conversion of a king of *ryb’n* by Mani’s disciple Gavryahb (Gabriabios). I have tried to explain *ryb’n* as the name of modern Erevan and its ruler as a local petty king in Armenia (Sundermann, 1974, p. 138; 1981, p. 45). J. Russell argued in favor of “Arebanos in Armenia” and against Erevan, which was unimportant at that time (1998, pp. 22-23). He further maintained that the Manichean legend was coined on the Christian *Vitae Thaddaei et Bartholomaei*, but the story of a spectacular conversion after the marvelous healing of a young girl is also an old, familiar motive of the Manichean hagiography (Sundermann, 1981, pp. 23-24; Römer 1994, pp. 1-26), and the existence of a Manichean community in Armenia already in the 3rd century is proven by Mani’s “letter to Armenia” (Sogd. M 915 /13/ *’rmyn* (f)[*rwrt̃yy*], cf. Henning, 1952, p. 206, with n. 9; Ar. *resāla arminiya* in the *Fehrest*, ed. Flügel, pp. 73.14, 103; tr. Dodge, 1970, p. 799).

Manicheism in Byzantium. We simply do not know by whom, when, and by which route Mani’s gospel was taken to Asia Minor and to Byzantium, which from 330 CE was the capital of the Roman empire. We can only state that by that time Manicheism was already present there, more or less tolerated until the end of the 4th century and even supported by adherents and sympathizers in the ruling class, such as the *dux*, *comes*, and *magister peditum* Sebastianus (d. 378) who was supposed to be a Manichean *auditor* (which was, however, sheer calumny, according to Tardieu, 1988, pp. 494-500); the pagan rhetor and literate Libanius (d. 393?), who intervened in favor of the Manicheans (de Stoop, 1909, p. 70); and also the liberal Christian *comes*, *proconsul*, and *praefectus praetorio* Strategius Musonius (d. 371) who informed and advised the emperor Constantine the Great (r. 305-37, sole ruler from 324) on



Manichean affairs. All these personalities have a Syriac background (Brown, 1969, pp. 96-97), and that points to Syria as the immediate starting point of the Manichean mission to Byzantium.

In the late 4th century, a leading figure of Manicheism in Asia Minor seems to have been Agapius the “doctor,” known to us through Photios (d. ca. 900) as an exegete who tried to outwardly adapt Mani’s doctrine as much as possible to the Christian dogma. An oeuvre of 23 volumes is ascribed to him (de Stoop, 1909, pp. 66-69). Manicheism advanced beyond the capital Byzantium to the Balkans, where it is attested by a tombstone in Salona (in Dalmatia, near present-day Split, Croatia) which dates, according to F. Cumont, about 300 CE (see Adam, 1969, pp. 106-7).

Missions to northeastern Iran and Central Asia. According to the Manichean *Missionary History*, Mani sent from Ḥulwān (MPers. *hlwn*), a town at the western fringe of the Iranian plateau, on the way from Ctesiphon to Parthia, a group of missionaries under the teacher Mār Ammō and a prince Ardavān to Abaršahr, that is, Khorasan (Andreas and Henning, 1933, pp. 302-3 = 1977 I, pp. 199-200; Sundermann, 1981, pp. 27, 39-41). Ammō was familiar with the Parthian script and language, which may have made him fitter than others for that task. Ammō is regarded as the founding father of the particular East Manichean church later known as the community of the *dēnāwarān* (see [DINĀVARIYA](#)), and he paved the way farther east to the territory of the Uighurs, where Manicheism was to gain its greatest missionary success in their conversion.

Ammō preached his gospel in Marw, and he crossed the frontier to the Kushan realm, probably at Ṭāleqān (Henning, 1945, p. 88 = 1977, II, p. 228). Mani himself may have followed him and visited Marw at a later time (see above). Ammō’s crossing the border was regarded as leaving Iran and entering that vast Central Asian territory which the Manicheans themselves used to call *Kwarāsān*, that is, “the Orient.” Ammō’s work in this part of the world was exalted by an impressive legend (Andreas and Henning, 1933, pp. 303-6 = 1977, I, pp. 200-203).

There is no need to doubt the credibility of Ammō’s passing the Kushan watch post. That means that from the northeastern part of the Sasanian empire Ammō first advanced to the Kushan dominions, not to Sogdiana. An early origin, in the 3rd century, for Manichean communities in the Bactrian area may therefore be assumed. This is confirmed by the report of the Chinese



chronological and geographical works *Ce fu yuan gui* and *Tai ping huan yu ji* that in 719 CE a king of Čagāniān sent a (Manichean) teacher (*mōžak*), well-versed in matters of astronomy and other sciences, to the Chinese imperial court, where he was supposed to display his great erudition (Chavannes and Pelliot, 1913, pp. 152-53). It may also be mentioned that a Manichean magical text, M 1202, still in the Parthian language, was composed, according to Henning, in the Indo-Iranian frontier area, “probably in or near Balkh” (Henning, 1947, p. 50 = 1977, II, p. 284). A unique Manichean text, M 1224, in Manichean script and Bactrian language (Gershevitch, 1984, pp. 273-80), attests to a Bactrian-speaking Manichean community either in its home country or in the Turfan oasis, where the text was found.

Sogdiana also must have been reached by the end of the 3rd century. This follows from the Parthian letter of a Manichean *archegos* (probably Mār Sīsin) to Mār Ammō (M 5815, Andreas and Henning, 1934, pp. 857-60 = 1977, I, pp. 284-87). The letter was written in Marw and sent to the addressee in Zamb on the Oxus near Āmol (Andreas and Henning, 1934, p. 858, 1.8, with n. 2 = 1977, I, p. 285) on the route from Marw to Bukhara and Samarkand. But hardly any traces of a Manichean presence in Sogdiana have been found. An inscription on a bulla from Tashkent contains, according to V. A. Livshits, the Manichean title *’spsk* “bishop” in its Parthian form, and on the rim of a pot he reads *sps’y* “bishop” (in an unpublished communication at the Turfan Conference [Berlin, 2002]).

Until the 8th century, Manicheism must have spread along the northern Silk Road (Marazzi, 1979, pp. 239-52), for the colophon of the *Mahrnāmag* (M 1), finished either between the years 808-21 or 824-32 (MacKerras, 1990, p. 322, n. 13), mentions Manichean communities in Uč, Qarašahr, Aqšu, Kāšgar, Kučā, Qočo, and Bišbaliq (Henning, 1938, p. 566), and the *Mahrnāmag* itself, in an unfinished state, was kept after 762/63 in the monastery of Arg, that is, Qarašahr. Thus, Manicheism existed already in Central Asia when the Manichean church gained its greatest success in history, the conversion in 762/63 of the ruler of the Uighur steppe empire, Bögü or Bügü Khan. This happened, according to Chinese sources and the Chinese version of the Qarabalğasun inscription, in the Chinese town of Loyang, and it was the result of the instruction of the Uighur Khan by some Manichean clerics (Chavannes and Pelliot, 1913, pp. 190-99). However, since Manicheism was already present in Central Asia, it is possible that the conversion actually happened, or was at least initiated, in Central Asia before the epochal year 762/63 (cf. Clark. 2000,



pp. 83-123). The conversion of the Khan entailed the organized adoption of the Manichean faith by his people and by the Uighur aristocracy in particular (Marazzi, 1979, p. 241). The multilingual Uighur inscription of Qarabalğasun (soon after 821) reports how that was effected. According to the inscription it was not done without some coercive measures (the burning of “idols,” etc.; Chavannes and Pelliot, 1913, pp. 190-98).

Why did Böğü Khan make the Manichean doctrine the official religion of his state? A possible explanation is that he chose a religion already present in Central Asia but not yet professed by any political power of the time, as Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and (briefly later) even Judaism were. The idea may have been to strengthen and consolidate the establishment of the Uighur state with a religion of its own (Sundermann, 2001b, pp. 160-61).

The Uighur steppe empire collapsed in 840 under the onslaught of the invading Kirghiz tribes. Some of the Uighur tribes settled in the Turfan oasis and established there the kingdom of Qočo. Manicheism continued to be their religion, but it was unable to proselytize the Buddhist majority of the country, and so it was, by and by, superseded by Buddhism from the tenth century on. This process has been studied in detail in T. Moriyasu’s *Uiguru Mani-kyō-shi no kenkyū* (Osaka, 1991; German tr., *Die Geschichte des uigurischen Manichäismus an der Seidenstraße*, Wiesbaden, 2004; see also Moriyasu, 2000a, pp. 345-47).

It is more than doubtful whether certain rock drawings in the upper Yenissei valley are traces of a Manichean presence in Siberia (Maenchen-Helfen, 1951, pp. 311-26).

Biruni’s (973-1048) statement that in the East “most of” Tibet adhered to Mani’s law and doctrine is certainly an exaggeration, no less so than his assertion that Mani himself went to Tibet (Biruni, *Ātār*, pp. 191-92). An isolated report in the Chinese chronicle *Song she* maintains the existence of Manicheans in the kingdom of Khotan for the year 961. Chavannes and Pelliot expressed their skepticism (1913, pp. 310-12, 316) and also uncompromisingly refuted fanciful speculations on Manicheism in Tibet (ibid., pp. 312-14). The occasional mention of *Mar Ma-ne*, that is, Mār Mānī, in some Tibetan inscriptions and in a manuscript is no proof to the contrary (Stein, 1980, pp. 329-37). The Manichean character of wall paintings at Alchi (West Tibet) as presenting the “Cross of Light” (Klimkeit, 1979, pp. 357-99) is not impossible but is hard to prove. The same applies to Hummel’s observations on Manichean motifs in the ancient Bon religion (Hummel, 1990, pp. 21-32).



Missions to China. Early Manichean missionaries to China presented themselves first at the imperial court. This was an application of the second of the three methods of proselytization (see above). The first relatively safe attestation of Manicheism in China is for the year 694 (for earlier dates, see Lieu in *EIr.* V, 1991, p. 478), when, according to the admittedly late (13th cent.) Chinese history *Fo zu tong ji*, a “bishop” (*fu-do-dan*, i.e., MPers./Parth. *aftādān*) arrived at the court and proclaimed the “wrong religion” of the “Book of the Two Principles” (Chin. *Er song jing*). In 719, a Manichean teacher sent by the East Iranian ruler of Čagāniān appeared at the court (see above, under “Missions to Northeastern Iran and Central Asia”). Schaeder thought that it was he who introduced the western-style planetary week of seven days in China (1948, p. 12). In 731, a *Compendium of the Doctrines and Styles of the Teaching of Mani, the Buddha of Light* was composed by the Manichean bishop **Mihr Ohrmezd* and then translated into Chinese (see otherwise Lin Wushu, 1991, pp. 225-32) on behalf of the emperor, in order to help him better appraise the alien faith (Haloun and Henning, 1952, p. 188). Already in 732, Manicheism was acknowledged by the Chinese authorities as an admissible religion for the western barbarians living in China, that is, for the Sogdians and Uighurs, but it was declared a prohibited religion for the Chinese subjects of the empire (Lieu 1992, p. 231).

Manicheism had another chance in China after the conversion of the Uighur Khan Bögü in 762/63, and during some 70 years between that date and 840 when Uighur influence on Chinese politics was strong enough to protect their coreligionists in Tang China (Lieu 1992, pp. 235-37). However, the situation deteriorated after the downfall of the Uighur steppe empire. The Manichean communities lost their powerful protectors. The Manichean religion, among others, was forbidden and persecuted, and it disappeared in the capital of the Tang empire and the neighboring regions, except for some late, isolated adherents.

Manicheism found a new refuge in the southern Chinese coastal province of Fujian, where it may have survived until about 1600 (Lieu, 1992, p. 301) and where a Manichean temple in Buddhist disguise exists to this day in Quanzhou (P. Bryder, 1988, pp. 201-8). The question as to how Manicheism arrived in Fujian has been no less disputed than that of the arrival of Manicheism in Egypt (see above). Two solutions seemed possible: Fujian was a refuge of the persecuted Manicheans from north China, or Manicheism came by sea to China independent of the earlier north Chinese communities. T. Moriyasu was



able to prove that the first option is the correct one. He explained the first two syllables of the title *hu-lu fa-shi* of a Manichean teacher who went to Fujian in order to instruct his co-religionists as being the Turkish word *uluḡ* “great.” This points to the ultimately Central Asian origin of south Chinese Manicheism (Moriyasu, 2000b, pp. 432-37).

It is only natural that Manicheism must have had its adherents in the western Chinese frontier town of [Dunhuang](#). Its presence there is attested by a moderate number of Manichean, mainly Chinese texts (the *Hymn Scroll*, the *Traité manichéen*, that is, the “Sermon on the Light Nous, and the Compendium of the Doctrine of Mani”) discovered in the book deposit in cave 17 (Sundermann, 2002, p. 201).

THE ADAPTABILITY OF THE MANICHEAN MISSIONARY TECHNIQUE

The worldwide range of Manichean missionary activities entailed the problem of what may be called the acculturation of Mani’s message to the ambience of many different religious traditions. A well-balanced adaptation to the languages and ideas of the peoples beyond the Mesopotamian homeland of Manicheism was inevitable.

The solution for the Iranian part of the Sasanian empire was designed by Mani himself and imitated by his pupils (Sundermann, 1979, pp. 95-133 = 2001a, pp. 121-63). Mani self-confidently gave some of the deities, demons, and mythological figures of his complicated doctrine the names of Zoroastrian mythological persons (see [MANICHEAN PANTHEON](#)). This did not mean an adaptation of Manichean to Zoroastrian theology, let alone a derivation of Manichean from Zoroastrian theological ideas. It was simply meant to give Manichean mythological names a familiar Zoroastrian ring. Moreover, since the Manichean figures had, of course, some similarity with the Zoroastrian ones, Mani’s aim was to teach non-believers what their gods and demons had actually been charged with and what they were still doing.

Similar but not completely identical systems of theological names were created in Parthian (perhaps by Mār Ammō) and in Sogdian (by Mār Šād Ohrmezd?). The Sogdian system became a model for the Old Turkish (van Tongerloo, 1988, pp. 215-16) and, in a less direct way, the Chinese one (Bryder 1985, pp. 120-23).

The terminological adaptation of Manichean theology to local patterns



remained a particularity of eastern Manicheism. It had no parallel in western Manicheism, whose missionary weapons may have been forged by Mār Addā (and perhaps by Mār Pattī). The only exception is the frequent use of Christian names and terms. But this practice is based on the Christian roots of Manicheism. It is more than an outward adaptation to the local belief of those people who became the object of Manichean missionary work.

It seems that the Manichean missionary technique found effective means to overcome the gap between the Manichean and alien worldviews, linguistic traditions, and literary means. The gap was uncommonly wide and deep in the case of the Chinese-speaking Buddhist and other denominations. In a religious ambience where terms for “god” or “soul” did not exist or were meaningless, it must have been hard work to make the Manichean doctrine understandable. This has been pointed out repeatedly by P. Bryder (1992, esp. pp. 338-41; 1993). According to him, the word replacing “god” is *fo*, literally, “the Buddha.” Perhaps the somewhat enigmatic *da sheng* “great Saint” was used in the same sense (Sundermann, 1996, p. 111).

Success and failure of the Manichean missionary work. Mani’s message of self-knowledge, god-knowledge, and world-knowledge was addressed to every human being. It was successfully spread over the orbit of the ancient world from the Atlantic Ocean to the China Sea. Yet, wherever Manichean communities were established, they remained small minority groups. Living in the diaspora was the never-ending, universal fate of the Manicheans, and that must have been true even in the kingdom of Qočo, where Manicheism was for at least one century and a half the religion of the ruling class. Even so, it was outnumbered by the local Buddhist community. Both in the Roman empire and in the countries of the Silk Road, the merchant was the backbone of the Manichean missionary activities (Brown, 1969, p. 102; Lieu, 1992, pp. 228-29), and Manichean monasteries, it seems, were actively involved in the banking business (Lieu 1992, p. 238; see also Sundermann, 1996b, p. 111 = 2001a, p. 737). Since, according to the Manichean ethics, the businesses of the merchant and the moneylender were the only immaculate worldly professions, it is imaginable that to win over traders and dealers for the new religion was easier than to convert people with any other social background. According to the Sogdian version of the *Missionary History*, people converted to the Manichean faith were integrated in the lay community by a kind of anointment (Sundermann, 1981, pp. 48-49, lines 577-84).

Ethical problems of the Manichean missionary work. “[The elect] does not like to



remain always at the same place. He is like a king, depending on nobody, who does not always stay at the same place, but makes his way with his armed and completely equipped forces. He can cause all the wild creatures and the enemies seething with hatred to hide,” the Chinese *Sermon on the Light Nous* says (Chavannes and Pelliot, 1911, pp. 572-73). The movement of the elect in the service of the church, be it in order to missionize the “infidels,” or to comfort and strengthen the belief of the co-religionists, lay people or clergymen, constituted a serious problem for Manichean missionary work. Movement meant treading the soil, walking, riding or driving on it and thus tormenting and hurting the Living Soul cast into the prison of the earth. That was, strictly speaking, a violation of the third commandment for the elect, “Not to hurt” (Sogd. *pw’zrmy*).

Was, then, the ambulant lifestyle of the elect necessarily of a conflicting ethical nature? Was it both meritorious and sinful? This problem is discussed at great length in the *Kephalaia* chapter 85 (Polotsky and Böhlig, pp. 208-13; Gardner, pp. 216-21). The movement of the elect, say the *Kephalaia*, only *seems* to clash with the commandment of not hurting and killing the *Cross of Light* (the Living Soul) by marching over the earth. In fact it does no harm to the Living Soul. It is done in the service of God, the *Kephalaion* says (Polotsky and Böhlig, 1940, pp. 209.13-19; Gardner, p. 217), and the text compares the permanent journeys of the elect with the beneficent service a doctor renders to a patient (Polotsky and Böhlig, pp. 209-11; Gardner, pp. 217-19). J. Ries (1977) has analyzed these and other passages from the perspective of missionary work. It seems, however, that the ambulant lifestyle of the elect remained a genuine dilemma for Manichean ethics, because (contrary to what the 85th *Kephalaion* states) the Sogdian *Xwāstwānīft*, written for the elect, contains a passage asking forgiveness for “walking or riding, ascending or descending, quickly or slowly” and thus hurting the earth (Henning, 1937, p. 33 = 1977, I, p. 447; Klimkeit, 1993, p. 139).

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