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# **BUDDHA AND ŚĀKYAMUNI IN CHINESE MANICHAEAN SCRIPTURES**

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BUDDHA AND ŚĀKYAMUNI IN  
CHINESE MANICHAEAN SCRIPTURES\*

GÁBOR KÓSA

*Abstract*

During his missionary journeys beginning around ca. 240, Mani (ca. 216–276/277), the founder of Manichaeism, visited regions where Buddhism had already been present, and thus he may have become familiar with certain Buddhist concepts. Mani's disciple, Mār Ammō (fl. 3rd c.) and subsequent generations of missionaries in Central Asia and China sought to accommodate the Manichaean message to the local Buddhist environment. This feature, to varying extent, characterised Parthian, Sogdian, Uyghur, and Chinese texts. In this paper, I focus on two fundamental terms, buddha and Śākyamuni, to show how they are used in early and later Manichaean sources.

*1. Introduction*

Ever since the burgeoning phase of research on Manichaeism, Buddhism emerged as a major source of inspiration for its founder, Mani (ca. 216–276/277). According to these early scholarly assumptions, Mani's visit to the easternmost part of the Sasanian Empire (224–651) in 240–241 may have provided him with some glimpses into the Indian, including Buddhist, cultural sphere.<sup>1</sup> This early familiarity with Buddhism, as scholars like Jes P. Asmussen claim, in turn provided the opportunity for

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<sup>1</sup> Early scholars include Ferdinand C. Baur (*Das manichäische Religionssystem nach den Quellen neu untersucht und entwickelt* [Tübingen: C.F. Olander, 1831]), Alexius Geyler ("Das System des Manichäismus und sein Verhältnis zum Buddhismus" [Phil. Diss., Jena University, 1875]), Isidor Scheffelowitz ("Is Manichaeism an Iranic Religion? Part I," *Asia Major* I (1924): 460–490), Abraham V.W. Jackson (*Researches in Manichaeism. With Special Reference to the Turfan Fragments* [New York: AMS Press INC 1932/1964]); for a summary, see Julien Ries, "Buddhism and Manichaeism. The Stages of an Enquiry," *Buddhist Studies Review* 3 (1986): 108–109.



the inclusion of monasticism, the practice of confession, the concept of non-violence (Skt. *ahiṃsā*) or the idea of reincarnation into Manichaeism, which thus must have previously lacked these characteristics.<sup>2</sup> Further characteristics, like the two-tiered church hierarchy (elects and auditors) or the five vs. ten commandments, were also mentioned as results of Buddhist influence. After two centuries of research, more recent studies tend to reject the earlier *communis opinio* and opt for a non-Buddhist origin of some of these early, formative traits.<sup>3</sup>

Whatever influence Buddhism may have exerted upon the formation of early Manichaeism, it definitely left its vestiges on the Manichaean missions of the subsequent centuries. Manichaean missionaries led by Mār Ammō undoubtedly encountered Buddhists in the eastern part of the Persian Empire, and so did subsequent generations of missions along the Silk Road and in Tang China (618–907, 唐), which made Buddhism an essential part of later Manichaean texts from fourth century Sasanian Empire through 8th–10th century Uyghur Kingdom to the 8th–19th century Chinese territories. Even if Manichaeism does not owe as many essential features to Buddhism as it had been previously assumed, Eastern Manichaean texts (especially Sogdian, Uyghur and Chinese) evidence a great variety of formal borrowings from Buddhism.<sup>4</sup>

In this study, primarily targeted at students of Buddhism, my aim is not to reexamine the significant questions about the possibly shared elements

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<sup>2</sup> Jes P. Asmussen, *Xuāstivānīft. Studies in Manichaeism* (Copenhagen: Prostant apud Munksgaard, 1965), 254, 260–261.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, “Manichäische und buddhistische Beichtformeln aus Turfan. Beobachtungen zur Beziehung zwischen Gnosis und Mahāyāna,” *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 29.3 (1977): 193–228; Bo Utas “Mānistān and Xānaqāh,” in *Papers in Honour of Mary Boyce*, vol. 2, ed. H.W. Bailey (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 655–664; Peter Bryder, “Buddhist Elements in Manichaeism,” in *The Notion of ‘Religion’ in Comparative Research. Selected Proceedings of the XVIth Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions, Rome, 3rd–8th September, 1990*, ed. Ugo Bianchi (Roma: “L’Erna” de Bretschneider, 1994), 487–490; Werner Sundermann, “Manichaeism Meets Buddhism: The Problem of Buddhist Influence on Manichaeism,” in *Bauddhavidyāsudhākara: Studies in Honour of Heinz Bechert on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. Petra Kieffer-Pülz and Jens-Uwe Hartmann (Swisttal-Odendorf: Indica-et-Tibetica-Verlag, 1997), 647–656; Werner Sundermann, “Manichaean Traditions on the Date of the Historical Buddha,” in *Werner Sundermann: Manichaica Iranica. Ausgewählte Schriften*. Vol. 1–2., ed. Christiane Reck et al. (Roma: Istituto Italiano per L’Africa e L’Oriente, 2001), 437–450; Jason D. BeDuhn, “The Near Eastern Connections of Manichaean Confessionary Practice,” *ARAM* 16 (2004): 161–177.

<sup>4</sup> Sundermann, “Manichaeism meets Buddhism,” 650–655.

in these two religions, or give a general overview of the later developments of their interaction; instead, I will limit myself to exploring the references to the word ‘buddha’ and the name Śākyamuni, thus both its historical (Buddha) and ahistorical (buddha) aspects. My predominant focus is on the Chinese-language corpus, but as a comparative material I will also survey the Central Asian background whenever necessary.

The Chinese Manichaean texts examined in this paper essentially comprise two corpora: (1) 8th-9th century manuscripts found in Mogao Cave 17 near Dunhuang (敦煌),<sup>5</sup> (2) and the newly identified southern Chinese corpus of manuscripts, mostly referred to by the contemporary names of their place of origin, i.e. Xiapu (霞浦), Pingnan (屏南) and Fuqing (福清) counties of Fujian (福建) province. The most important manuscript (83 pages) from Xiapu is entitled *Moni guangfo* 摩尼光佛 [Mani, the Buddha of Light, hence abbreviated as MGF]. It dates to late Qing or Republican times (late 19th to first half of 20th century) and is owned by ritual master Chen Peisheng (陈培生).<sup>6</sup> I first investigate the word ‘buddha’ as an epithet of Mani, then explore its occurrence in connection with the human envoys and divine beings in Manichaeism; next, I examine how Chinese Manichaeans viewed Śākyamuni as a member of their chain of prophets.

## 2. The Independent Use of the Word Buddha

A famous episode from Mani’s *vita*, as a Parthian text (M48+) reports, is an instructive ascent to the celestial realms with the help of an angel, after which Mani succeeds in converting Tūrān-šāh, the local ruler of Baluchistan, who then exclaims: “[...] you are yourself Buddha!”<sup>7</sup> The

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<sup>5</sup> *Monijiao xiabu zan* 摩尼教下部讚 also known as the *Hymnscroll*, hereafter H. (S. 2659), *Bosijiao canjing* 波斯教殘經 also known as the *Traité* (BD00256), and the *Moni guangfo jiaofa yilüe* 摩尼光佛教法儀略 also known as the *Compendium*, hereafter C. (S. 3969 and P. 3884). For a succinct overview, see Gunner B. Mikkelsen, “More Light on the Chinese Manichaean Texts from Dunhuang and Turfan: A Publication Overview and Some Comments on X. Tremblay’s *Sérinde*,” *Manichaean Studies Newsletter* 18 (2003): 25–32.

<sup>6</sup> On a recent summary of the Fujianese corpus, not yet including the Fuqing materials, see Gábor Kósa, “The Qing Corpus of Manichaean Texts from Fujian,” *Ming Qing Studies* (2020): 85–126.

<sup>7</sup> Jason D. BeDuhn, trans., “Parallels between Coptic and Iranian Kephalaia,” in *Mani at the Court of the Persian Kings. Studies on the Chester Beatty Kephalaia Codex*, ed. Iain Gardner, Jason D. BeDuhn, and Paul Dilley (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 60. Parthian



same narrative has also been preserved in Coptic, where the king of Touran (Cop. *p<sup>e</sup>rro* *ε**n-touran* πῤῥο πτοῦραν), in his modesty, says to Mani: “It is not fitting for me to sit with you; nor [also] am I worthy to sit upon (a) place spread before you because you are blessed Bouddas. You are the Apostle of God.”<sup>8</sup> In another Parthian hagiographical piece, after a long debate with Mani, the Indian sage Gundēš<sup>9</sup> (Parth. Gwndyš) says as follows: “Now I know in truth that you are the Buddha and apostle!”<sup>10</sup> As Michel Tardieu noticed,<sup>11</sup> Gundēš (Cop. *gundēš* ΓΟΥΝΔΗΨ) likewise appears in the Coptic sources, where the venue of the conversation, the court of Shapur I (r. 240–270), is also specified.<sup>12</sup>

Neither Tūrān-šāh nor Gundēš could have thought of the historical Buddha (Śākyamuni), so there seem to be two options: they either identified Mani with another buddha like Maitreya (and this is the usual explanation), or their bewildered exclamation may have simply expressed wonder, implying that Mani had extraordinary knowledge (omniscience)<sup>13</sup>

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M48+II/R/20: *tw wxd bwt* 'yy; Werner Sundermann, *Mitteliranische manichäische Texte kirchengeschichtlichen Inhalts* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1981), 21: “[...] bist du selbst der Buddha”. Despite being recorded both in Parthian and Coptic, the fragmentary narrative is ambiguous; on the problems, see Iain Gardner, Jason D. BeDuhn, and Paul Dilley, *The Chapters of the Wisdom of My Lord Mani: Part III: Pages 343–442 (Chapters 321–347)* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 31, note to lines 6–28.

<sup>8</sup> Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dilley, *The Chapters of the Wisdom of My Lord Mani*, 28–29. Partian original in 2Ke 354.7–10: πετεςυε αραι εμ πε αταρμεστ ρατηκ ογτε [αν] τηη εν πρμεστ αρη(ογ)μα εχπαρπυ ριτκερη επει[αη] πτακ πε βογδαλας πμακαριος πτακ παποστο[λος] μππογτε. See also Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dilley, *The Chapters of the Wisdom of My Lord Mani*, 33: “[...] because you are Bouddas, the Apostle of God” (Parth. original from 2Ke 356.8–9: επειδη πτακ ηε βογδαλας παποστο[λος] μππογτε).

<sup>9</sup> Sundermann (*Mitteliranische manichäische Texte*, 87, n. 3) mentions the possible proposals for the original Indian name: Govindeša or Guṇādhyeša. Jason D. BeDuhn suggests that it may be related to the fort Gund-dēz or the region Gundeisos. See BeDuhn, “Parallels between Coptic and Iranian Kephalaia,” 72.

<sup>10</sup> BeDuhn, trans., “Parallels between Coptic and Iranian Kephalaia,” 67. M6041/V/14–16: 'wd 'w's z'n'm [p]d r'styft kw bwt [']wd fryštg 'yy. See also Sundermann, *Mitteliranische manichäische Texte*, 89: “Und nun weiß ich [i]n Wahrheit daß du der Buddha und Apostel bist.” Cf. Sundermann, “Manichaeism Meets Buddhism,” 647.

<sup>11</sup> Michel Tardieu, “La diffusion du bouddhisme dans l’empire Kouchan, l’Iran et la Chine, d’après un kephalaion manichéen inédit,” *Studia Iranica* 17 (1988): 160–162.

<sup>12</sup> On Gundēš, see BeDuhn, “Parallels between Coptic and Iranian Kephalaia,” 52–74.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 69: “The series in 2 Ke demonstrates in detail the variety of topics suggested in the more succinct Parthian account, and has the overall effect of portraying Mani as omniscient, able to explain anything, however spiritual or mundane.” Cf. Buddhist ‘omniscience’ (Chin. *yiqie zhi* 一切智, Skt. *sarvajñatā*).

or supernatural abilities like a buddha. Although it seems to me that in the Gundēš episode, ‘buddha’ more likely refers to an omniscient person, the former interpretation is also supported by various textual witnesses that imply Mani’s identification with Maitreya:<sup>14</sup> “The Lord Maitreya has come; Mār Mani, the Lord, (has come) for a new Bema”;<sup>15</sup> “Buddha Maitreya has come, Mār Mani, the Apostle.”<sup>16</sup> Be it as it may, Mani is associated with the Buddha even in the Western polemical source of the Greek-Latin *Acta Archelai* [The Acts of Archelaus], where Mani’s predecessor was a certain Terebinthus, who is, in turn, equated with the Buddha.<sup>17</sup>

Manichaean texts, especially the Eastern ones (which in this paper comprise Middle Iranian, Uyghur and Chinese sources), frequently feature the word buddha. Iris Colditz reconstructs the transmission of the word buddha as first appearing in Bactrian (1st–3rd centuries), from which it was borrowed into Parthian, which then entered Middle Persian and Sogdian.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, the various Iranian forms include Bactrian (*bwt*), Parthian (*bwt*, *bwt̄*, *pwt*), Middle Persian (*bwt*) and Sogdian (*bwt-*, *bwt̄-*, *pwt-*, *pwt̄-*, *pwt-*, *pwt̄-*).<sup>19</sup> If we go further west, Manichaean sources provide us with Syriac (*bdws*), Latin (*Budda*), Greek (*βούδδαζ*, *βοῦδδαζ*, *βουδδᾶζ*, *βοδδᾶζ*) and Coptic (*bouddas* ⲃⲠⲎⲁⲤ) forms as well. Unsurprisingly, the word buddha is found primarily in Eastern Manichaean sources, in its Parthian and Sogdian forms (see above), as well as in Uyghur (*burxan*) or Chinese (*fo* 佛) versions. As Jan Nattier

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<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., Manfred Hutter, “Mani als Maitreya,” in *Religionsbegegnung und Kulturaustausch in Asien. Studien zum Gedenken an Hans-Joachim Klimkeit*, ed. Wolfgang Gantke, Karl Hoheisel, and Wassilios Klein (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), 111–119.

<sup>15</sup> Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, trans., *Gnosis on the Silk Road: Gnostic Texts from Central Asia* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 134. M801a/6: *mytrg 'gd m'ry m'ny xwd'y 'w nwg g'ḥ*. Originally published by Walter B. Henning, *Ein manichäisches Bet- und Beichtbuch* (Berlin: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1937), 19.

<sup>16</sup> Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road*, 134. M801a/90–92: *mytrg bwt 'gd' mrym'ny fryštg*. See Henning, *Ein manichäisches Bet- und Beichtbuch*, 20–21.

<sup>17</sup> Mark Vermes (trans.) and Samuel N.C. Lieu, *Hegemonius: Acta Archelai. (The Acts of Archelaus)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 142; Charles H. Beeson, ed., *Hegemonius, Acta Archelai* (Leipzig: J.C. Heinrichs, 1906), 91.

<sup>18</sup> Iris Colditz, “Buddhist and Indian Elements in the Onomastics of the Iranian Manichaean Texts,” *Entangled Religions* 11.6 (2020): 11.

<sup>19</sup> Colditz, “Buddhist and Indian Elements,” 11; Iris Colditz, *Mitteliranische Namen, Band II. Faszikel I: iranische Personennamen in manichäischer Überlieferung* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2018), 264–269.





noted, this Chinese form first appears with An Shigao (fl. ca. 148–168, 安世高), whose Parthian origin may partly account for this short form with the first syllable only, in contrast with the longer ones like *futuo* (浮陀), *futu* (浮圖), which, as Nattier proposed, were perhaps based on the Bactrian form BOΔΔO of two syllables.<sup>20</sup>

In the Manichaean sources, buddha, as an epithet or title, may denote a human being who is sent by the head of the Realm of Light, the Father of Greatness, and is therefore considered to be an apostle, i.e. an envoy,<sup>21</sup> equipped with the message from the Realm of Light;<sup>22</sup> in other cases, it qualifies divine beings, who are regarded as the emanations of the Father of Greatness.<sup>23</sup> Ultimately, both categories agree that a ‘buddha’ is someone arriving directly from the Realm of Light, who is commissioned to implement the instructions or deliver the message of the Father of Greatness, and who after doing so, returns to the divine realms. In the next pages, I present some examples of these two categories.

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<sup>20</sup> Jan Nattier, “The Ten Epithets of the Buddha in the Translations of Zhi Qian 支謙,” *Sōka daigaku kokusai bukkyōgaku kōtō kenkyūjo nenpō* 創価大学国際仏教学高等研究所年報 [Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhism at Soka University] 6 (2002): 230. This has already been proposed by Ji Xianlin (季羨林); for other possibilities (Pali, Sanskrit, Gāndhārī), see, e.g., Ye Xu. “Fó (佛), *Pwuche* (仏体), and *Hotoke* (保止氣).” *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies* 21.2 (2021): 237–238 with references.

<sup>21</sup> Based on M5794, Hans-Joachim Klimkeit opines that the Iranian background of this concept is not the word *fryštg*, which denotes both angel and an envoy, but the Middle Persian *’hyng’n*, which he renders as forerunners or prophets, though Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst gives it as ‘men of old’. See Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, “Der Buddha Henoch. Qumran und Turfan,” *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 32 (1980): 367 and Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst, *Dictionary of Manichaean Texts. Vol. III, Texts from Central Asia and China Part 1. Dictionary of Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 36.

<sup>22</sup> Iris Colditz further divides this category into the historical Buddha, Mani as buddha, the apostles as buddhas and the Manichaean church leaders as buddhas. See Iris Colditz, “Buddhist and Indian Elements,” 12–15, 17.

<sup>23</sup> Klimkeit, “Der Buddha Henoch,” 367, Colditz, “Buddhist and Indian Elements,” 16. The semantic associations of “envoys” and “emanations” both presuppose a superior entity who “sends” or “emanates” the beings in question, thus they are somewhat analogous in this respect. The seemingly Neoplatonic or Gnostic concept of “emanation” is sometimes also applied to the Buddhist idea of *nirmāṇakāya*, see e.g. Jeffrey Kotyk, *Sino-Iranian and Sino-Arabian Relations in Late Antiquity: China and the Parthians, Sasanians, and Arabs in the First Millennium* (Leiden: Brill, 2024), 127.



## 2.1. *Human Envoys*

Manichaeism recognised several former light envoys, whom the Father of Greatness, the supreme head of the Realm of Light, had sent with the same message that Mani himself delivered to humanity. Various lists contain different chains of prophets, the majority of whom fall into two basic groups:

(1) Antediluvian prophets (like Adam, Seth, Enosh, Enoch, etc.) appearing in Jewish scriptures, including various apocrypha;

(2) Founders of the three main religions preceding Mani: Zarathuštra, Śākyamuni and Jesus. As we will see, in the newly discovered Fujianese texts, a novel figure called Nārāyaṇa appears as well.

The epithet ‘buddha’ most frequently occurs in connection with the latter three envoys (plus the fourth Nārāyaṇa in China) and Mani himself; however, its usage is not restricted to them: from a Manichaean point of view, one of the most important antediluvian prophets, Henoah, for example, is mentioned in an Uyghur text, clearly deriving from the *Book of Giants* tradition: “In the south I heard the voice of Henoah buddha (*xonuğ burxan*).”<sup>24</sup> It is notable that a Middle Persian quotation from the *Book of Giants*, one of the scriptures attributed to Mani himself, refers to Henoah as a ‘messenger’ (MP. [*hwn*]wx prys[*tg*]).<sup>25</sup> Thus, in this case, the Uyghur version seems to substitute the original ‘apostle, messenger’ (*prystg*) with ‘buddha’ (*burxan*). Similarly, Seth, a figure appearing in various Gnostic texts and Jewish apocrypha, is referred to as one of the buddhas in a Sogdian text that defines Mani as a buddha after Seth (Sogd. *šytyl pš’bwtyy*, lit. ‘after-Buddha of Seth’).<sup>26</sup> Both cases suggest that Henoah and Seth were also regarded as buddhas, which, in these cases, for the Manichaeans must have meant a prophet with a message or an envoy with wisdom.

As for the second category, i.e. religious founders, they were termed as ‘buddhas’, and probably because in Buddhism itself there had already

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<sup>24</sup> Klimkeit, “Der Buddha Henoah,” 367: TM 423d: *birdin singlar xonuğ burxan ünin išidim*.

<sup>25</sup> Walter B. Henning, “The Book of Giants,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 11.1 (1943): 57, 61.

<sup>26</sup> Enrico Morano, “Manichaean Sogdian Poems,” in *Manichaeism East and West*, ed. Samuel N.C. Lieu (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 175–180.



been an established set of five buddhas,<sup>27</sup> this number had been frequently specified as five already before Manichaeism arrived in China.<sup>28</sup> In a Parthian and a Sogdian parable, these envoys are most probably likened to five brothers,<sup>29</sup> while the *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統記 [Chronicle of the Buddhas and Patriarchs, T. 2035.49] makes about Mani the following

<sup>27</sup> See some examples in Jason D. BeDuhn, “Nārāyaṇa Buddha: Adaptation of Manichaean Prophetology in South, Central, and East Asia,” in *Byzantium to China: Religion, History and Culture on the Silk Roads. Studies in Honour of Samuel N.C. Lieu*, ed. Gunner B. Mikkelsen and Ken Parry (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 10. There are various pentads, see, e.g., the five buddhas appearing in the present good or auspicious *kalpa*, *bhadrakalpa* (Chin. *xianjie* 賢劫), a motif explicitly mentioned in the *Moni guangfo* in connection with the five envoys of light (61/6, 68/5, 69/2, 69/6, 70/1). See Robert E. Buswell and Donald S. Lopez, ed., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 106. Ma Xiaohe (馬小鶴) and Wang Chuan (汪娟) connect the Fujianese pentad as well as a visual pentad of the prophets reconstructed by Zsuzsanna Gulácsi based on its fragments (III 4947+III 5d), and suggest that Esoteric Buddhism played an important role in these Manichaean textual and visual representations. See Ma Xiaohe 馬小鶴 and Wang Chuan 汪娟, “Monijiao wufu yu mijiao wufu 摩尼教五佛與密教五佛 [The Five Buddhas in Manichaeism and the Five Buddhas in Esoteric Buddhism],” *Guoji hanxue yanjiu tongxun* 國際漢學研究通訊 [Newsletter for International China Studies] 21 (2020): 85–105 and Zsuzsanna Gulácsi, *Mani’s Pictures. The Didactic Images of the Manichaeans from Sasanian Mesopotamia to Uygur Central Asia and Tang-Ming China* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 216–220, 356–364.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. note the Coptic references to seven buddhas in 2Ke plate 140.13–15, tr. Timothy Pettipiece, “The Buddha in Early Christian Literature,” in *Millennium. Yearbook on the Culture and History of the First Millennium C.E.*, ed. Wolfram Brandes et al. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter) 6 (2009): 138: “But, these Seven Buddhas (π̄βογδαδ[ς]) [and] / the Twelve [Aurentes(?)] (π̄ᾱγρ̄ρεπ̄τ̄ης) and the Twenty-four [Kēbulloī] (π̄ικ̄η[β̄γ̄λλος]) / ... [it is] a single spirit [that] [...]” And in 2Ke plate 139.2–11, tr. Pettipiece, “The Buddha in Early Christian Literature,” 138: “[...] Seven Buddhas (σᾱψ̄ϣ̄ π̄β̄ογ̄δαδ̄ς) ... each / one of them in the generation to which [he was sent(?)] / and in which he was chosen ... / ... he built it, strengthened it, (and) given [it] ... / ... through his leaders and his teachers and his / elders, along with the just and true / disciples. They were made his disciples ... / ... which were chosen for him ... / ... which each one of them established ... / Seven Communities were chosen. See also Christiane Reck, “Snatches of the Middle Iranian ‘Tale of the Five Brothers’,” in *New Light on Manichaeism. Papers from the Sixth International Congress on Manichaeism*, ed. Jason D. BeDuhn (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 250; BeDuhn, “Parallels between Coptic and Iranian Kephalaia,” 63–64. As for *kēbulloī* and *kebellos*, Iain Gardner suggests that they are equivalent to Jaina *kevali(n)*. See Iain Gardner, “Some Comments on Mani and Indian Religions from the Coptic Sources,” in *New Perspectives in Manichaean Research. Proceedings of the Vth International Conference of Manichaean Studies, Napoli 2001*, ed. Aloïs van Tongerloo and Luigi Cirillo (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 135.

<sup>29</sup> Reck, “Snatches of the Middle Iranian.”

statement: “They considered him the fifth buddha, and also called him Mār Mānī.”<sup>30</sup>

Since I will primarily scrutinise the Chinese sources, let us begin with the first member of the Chinese list, Nārāyaṇa,<sup>31</sup> unattested in any other Manichaean list of the prophets: Naluoyan (那羅延), though associated with Viṣṇu in Buddhist sources, is frequently complemented by the title *fo* (佛) in the most important Fujianese manuscript entitled *Moni guangfo* 摩尼光佛 [Mani, the Buddha of Light] [MG] (82 pages, late Qing (1644–1912, 清) or Republican times (1912–1949), owned by ritual master Chen Peisheng [陈培生]).<sup>32</sup> In the traditional chain of prophets, the earliest human envoy (and the second one in the new Chinese corpus) was Zarathuštra,<sup>33</sup> whom the Chinese and the Uyghur call Zarathuštra Buddha (Chin. Suluzhi fo 蘇路[支]佛<sup>34</sup> or Suluzhi fo 蘇魯支佛<sup>35</sup> and OU. *zrwšč*

<sup>30</sup> *Fozu tongji*, T. 2035.49, 431a: 以爲第五佛，又名末摩尼。In the Middle Iranian sources, Mār Mānī appears in several versions (*m'rm'ny*, *m'rwmm'ny*, *m'rym'ny*, *m'rym'ny*, *m'rymny*, *mrm'ny*, *mrym'ny*, *mrym'ny*), see Colditz, *Mitteliranische Namen*, 345, 354–359, 361.

<sup>31</sup> See Ma Xiaohe 馬小鶴. “Mingjiao zhong de Naluoyan fo—Fujian Xiapu minjian zongjiao wenshu yanjiu 明教中的那羅延佛——福建霞浦民間宗教文書研究 [Nārāyaṇa in the Religion of Light: A Study of the Popular Religious Manuscripts from Xiapu County, Fujian Province],” *Ou-Ya xuekan* 歐亞學刊 / *International Journal of Eurasian Studies* (new series) 2 (2015): 242–255; BeDuhn, “Nārāyaṇa Buddha”.

<sup>32</sup> MGF 2/1, 47/1, 57/8, 62/7, 70/5, 76/4, 76/5.

<sup>33</sup> On his role in Manichaeism, see Werner Sundermann, “Zarathustra der Priester und Prophet in der Lehre der Manichäer,” in *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context*, ed. Michael Stausberg (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2004), 517–530; more specifically in the Chinese Manichaean scriptures, see Gábor Kósa, “Zarathuštra in the Chinese Manichaean Manuscripts from Fujian,” *Quaderni di Studi Indo-Mediterranei* 12 (2019 [2021]): 135–171.

<sup>34</sup> MGF 2/2, 47/2, (47/7), 58/1, 61/6, 63/2, (65/2), (66/3), 70/5, 77/2, 77/7. Except for those in brackets, all forms, directly or indirectly, include the title buddha.

<sup>35</sup> *Jixiang daochang menshu* 吉祥道場門書 [Manual of the Auspicious Ritual Area]; Chen Jinguo 陈进国 and Lin Jun 林鋈, “Mingjiao de xin faxian—Fujian Xiapu xian Monijiao shiji bianxi 明教的新发现——福建霞浦县摩尼教史迹辨析 [New Manichaean Discoveries—an Analysis of the Relics of Manichaeism in Xiapu County, Fujian],” in *Bu zhi yu yi—Zhongyang meiyuan ‘yiwen ketang’ mingjia jiangyan lu* 不止于艺—中央美院‘艺文课堂’名家讲演录 [More than Art — Famous ‘Arts and Literature’ Lectures of the Central Academy of Fine Arts], ed. Li Shaowen 李少文 (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 2010), 376–377.



*burxan*,<sup>36</sup> respectively).<sup>37</sup> In the late Fujianese Chinese sources, Buddha Śākyamuni is called Shijiawen fo (釋迦文佛), while Jesus is named as ‘Jesus buddha’ (Chin. Yishuhe fo 夷数和佛), the latter also appearing as ‘Messiah buddha’ (OU. *mšixa burxan*) in Uyghur.<sup>38</sup>

Similarly to his predecessors, the epithet ‘buddha’ is also applied to Mani himself: The *Hymnscroll* from Cave 17 in Dunhuang, uniquely, uses the transcription Mangni (2) to render Mani, thus in this manuscript, we encounter forms like Mangni fo (忙你佛, e.g. *Hymnscroll* col. 84, col. 372) or Mangni zunfo (忙你尊佛, *Hymnscroll*, col. 358).<sup>39</sup> The most well-known example in the Chinese *Manichaica* is the title ‘buddha of light’ or ‘light buddha’ (Chin. *guangfo* 光佛) used in connection with Mani (Chin. Moni 摩尼) himself. In the *Compendium*, the expression *Moni guangfo* (摩尼光佛) appears seven times, it occurs in an inscription from 1445 from the Huabiao (華表) hill,<sup>40</sup> and the Fujianese manuscript *Mani, the Buddha of Light* also contains the same compound a couple of times.<sup>41</sup>

Among the seven occurrences in the *Compendium*, an interesting example is the quotation from the ninth chapter of the *Guanfo sanmei hai jing* 觀佛三昧海經 [The Sūtra on the Ocean-Like Samādhi of the Visualisation of the Buddha, T. 643.15],<sup>42</sup> which, in Buddhahadra’s

<sup>36</sup> U 4 (T II D 175); Albert von Le Coq, “Ein manichäisch-uygurisches Fragment aus Idikut-Schahri,” *Sitzungsberichte der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse* 19 (1908): 401; Aloïs van Tongerloo, “Buddhist Indian Terminology in the Manichaean Uyghur and Middle Iranian Texts,” in *Middle Iranian Studies. Proceedings of the International Symposium Organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 17th to the 20th of May 1982*, ed. Wojciech Skalmowski and Aloïs van Tongerloo (Louvain: Peeters, 1984), 244–245.

<sup>37</sup> Other names, where the epithet buddha is not mentioned, includes Manichaean Middle Persian *zrdwšt*, Manichaean Parthian *zrhwšt*, Manichaean Sogdian *zrwšc*, ‘zr’wšc and Coptic *Zaradēs*, *Zar[a]društ* (ⲪⲀⲠⲁⲗⲏⲥ, ⲪⲀⲠ[ⲁ]ⲗⲣⲟϥⲥⲧ).

<sup>38</sup> U 169 (T II D 173b2)/II/R/2; Albert von Le Coq, *Türkische Manichaica aus Chotscho. III* (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1922), 11.

<sup>39</sup> This usage seems to be limited to this particular manuscript, because one finds quotation from these hymns in the Fujianese corpus and they use the usual compound Moni (摩尼) (e.g., MGF 43/2, Pingnan ZKW.2/F21171–7).

<sup>40</sup> Wu Wenliang 吳文良, *Quanzhou zongjiao shike* 泉州宗教石刻 [Religious Stone Inscriptions at Quanzhou] (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1957), 44: 勸念: 清靜, 光明, 大力, 智慧, 無上至真摩尼光佛。

<sup>41</sup> MGF 2/3: [大聖]慈濟世尊摩尼光佛, MGF 19/4: 大聖摩尼光佛, MGF 22/7: 摩尼光佛, MGF 49/8: 大聖摩尼光佛, MGF 58/2: [真常]智慧[仲供養]摩尼光佛, MGF 61/7: 摩尼光佛, MGF 75/4: 大聖摩尼光佛, MGF 75/9: 啓慈濟世尊摩尼光佛。

<sup>42</sup> *Guanfo sanmei hai jing*, T. 643.15, 688a16–18: 摩尼光佛出現世時, 常放光明以作佛事度脫人民。如是二萬佛皆同一號, 名摩尼光。

(358–429) translation, is cited to support this epithet of Mani. This first section of the *Compendium* discusses Mani’s birth, also alluding to the miraculous birth of Laozi (老子) and Buddha (*Compendium*, cols. 13–14), which is reinforced by quotations from a Daoist and two Buddhist scriptures. *Mani guangfo* occurs in several Buddhist *sūtras*, mostly in scriptures about Buddha’s names, and this particular sentence was evidently chosen to present a Buddhist parallel to Mani’s birth.

To show how the word buddha is integrated into the newly identified manuscripts, I present two examples here. *Mani, the Buddha of Light* is unquestionably one of the most significant manuscripts within the new Fujianese corpus.<sup>43</sup> These manuscripts are the products of a local popular religious tradition, and have been preserved via family transmission by being copied from generation to generation. These ritual texts were primarily utilised in a funerary context to facilitate the afterlife of the deceased. Like other manuscripts of this kind, those with Manichaean content also exhibit a relatively simple calligraphy with several popular (‘vulgar,’ *su* 俗) characters. The present study focuses on the content of the text in question and does not explore its codicological features. The self-identity of the Fujianese believers is difficult to pin down: they seem to be aware of the uniqueness of their tradition, but do not explicitly claim to be Manichaeans or Buddhists. In Fuqing, for example, they call their faith the ‘White-Eyed Religion’ (Chin. *Baimu jiao* 白目教).<sup>44</sup>

*Mani, the Buddha of Light* contains several references to various Light Envoys, almost invariably described as a pentad.<sup>45</sup> The length of these descriptions varies from very short allusions to more complete accounts. The Light Envoys are sometimes visualised in a chart (see e.g. fig. 1), which partly follows the so-called post-*Šābuhragān* chronological order

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<sup>43</sup> E.g., Xiaohe Ma and Chuan Wang, “On the Xiapu Ritual Manual *Mani the Buddha of Light*,” *Religions* 9 (2018): 1.

<sup>44</sup> See Yu Lunlun 俞伦伦 and Yang Fuxue 杨富学, “Fuqing keyiben suo jian dongtu Monijiao shishi 福清科儀本所見東土摩尼教史事 [The History of Eastern Manichaeism as Mirrored in the Fuqing Ritual Manuscripts],” in *Zhongguo zhong-wai guanxishi yanjiu de jincheng* 中国中外关系史研究的进程 [The Progress of Research on the History of Sino-Foreign Relations in China], ed. Wan Ming 万明 and Feng Lijun 冯立军. (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 2023), 165–166.

<sup>45</sup> On the five, instead of four, envoys, see Reck, “Snatches of the Middle Iranian”; Gábor Kósa, “Mānī’s Religious Forerunners in a Chinese Manichaean Manuscript from Xiapu (Fujian),” in *Theories and Trends in Religions and in the Study of Religion*, ed. K. Bulcsú Hoppál (Budapest: L’Harmattan, 2015), 87–109.



of the envoys (from left to right: Naluoyan, Zarathuštra, Buddha, Jesus), and partly expresses the principal role of Mani, who is positioned in the central column, even if it is clear from other texts that he was considered to be the last envoy, thus the chronological logic would position him in the last column after Jesus. Thus, these charts clearly mix the viewpoint of chronology (the position of the four pre-Mani envoys) and that of significance (the position of Mani).



Figure 1. *Mani, the Buddha of Light 2*, owned by Chen Peisheng (陈培生), Xiapu County, Fujian, Late Qing or Republican time.

Lin Wushu 林悟殊. “Fujian Xiapu chaben Yuandai Tianzhujiào zanshi bianshi, fu: Xiapu chaoben Jingjiao ‘Jisi zhou’ kaolüe 福建霞浦抄本元代天主教贊詩辨釋—附:霞浦抄本景教《吉思呪》考略 [On the Hymn of Catholicism of the Yuan Dynasty in the Xiapu Manuscripts—Attached with Textual Research on the Incantation of Jisi

of Nestorianism in the Xiapu Manuscripts],” *Xiyu yanjiu* 西域研究 [Studies of the Western Regions] 4 (2015): 116.

The hymn entitled *Qing dasheng* 請大聖 [Asking the Great Saints], MGF 2), for example, has ‘great saint’ (Chin. *dasheng* 大聖) above, and this compound is then connected with five vertically written names with various modifiers, eight characters each (fig. 1).<sup>46</sup>

Great Saint (Chin. <i>dasheng</i> 大聖)	Primeval Heavenly Worthy, Nārāyaṇa [Naluoyan] buddha <i>Yuanshi tianzun Naluoyan fo</i> 元始天尊那羅延佛
	Miraculously Transforming World-Honored One, Zarathuštra [Suluzhi] buddha <i>Shenbian shizun Suluzhi fo</i> 神變世尊蘇路支佛
	Mercifully Rescuing World-Honoured One, Mānī [Moni], the buddha of light <i>Ciji shizun Moni guangfo</i> 慈濟世尊摩尼光佛
	Greatly Awakened World-Honoured One, Śākyamuni [Shijiawen] buddha <i>Dajue shizun Shijiawen fo</i> 大覺世尊釋迦文佛
	Living World-Honoured One, Jesus buddha <i>Huoming shizun Yishuhe fo</i> 活命世尊夷數和佛

Table 1. Detail of figure 1. ‘Great saint’ (Buddha) with five vertically written names and translation.

Thus, in this case, the five Light Envoys are all ‘great saints’ and, at the same time, each of them is a buddha as well. The former epithet is written only once, while the latter is written five times, but both are evidently meant to belong to each of the envoys. Moreover, except Naluoyan, who is called ‘honoured among *devas*’ (Chin. *tianzun* 天尊),<sup>47</sup> all other envoys

<sup>46</sup> Lin Wushu 林悟殊. “Mingjiao wufu chongbai bushuo 明教五佛崇拜補說 [Additional Explanations of the Cult of the Five Buddhas in the Religion of Light],” *Wenshi* 文史 [Literature and History] 100 (2012): 396.

<sup>47</sup> Although Naluoyan tian (那羅延天) is a frequent compound in Buddhist texts, *naluoyan* (那羅延) and *tianzun* (天尊) are paired only in a single text. See *Foshuo dasheng*





are ‘world-honoured ones’ (Chin. *shizun* 世尊).<sup>48</sup> In addition to these shared elements, only the names of the envoys and a compound of two characters after *dasheng* indicate the individuality of these envoys. In this chart, the historical Buddha is labelled as: “The Great Saint, the Greatly Awakened World-Honoured One, Śākyamuni buddha”. Greatly Awakened (Chin. *dajue* 大覺) is perhaps the most aptly fitting modifier among those attached to the five envoys.

Somewhat similarly, on page 47 of the manuscript *Mani, the Buddha of Light*, the characters *dasheng* (大聖), *shizun* (世尊), and *fo* (佛) occur only once, and various lines indicate that these expressions should be inserted in each case (fig. 2). The reference to the historical Buddha is identical to the previous characterisation.

Thus, the Fujianese manuscripts clearly associate all five envoys with the title buddha, and, as mentioned above, other Eastern Manichaean sources also do so. Interestingly, buddha is hardly used by Manichaean believers as a direct epithet of Mani himself in the Parthian and Middle Persian sources, it is usually the outsiders who liken him to a buddha (see, e.g., the Tūrān-šāh and Gundēš episodes).

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*zhuangyan baowang jing* 佛說大乘莊嚴寶王經 [The Mahāyāna Sublime Treasure King Sūtra, T. 1050.20, 52b20] (Skt. *Avalokiteśvaragunakāraṇḍavyūhasūtra*).

<sup>48</sup> The Pingnan text *Zhenming kaizheng wenke* 貞明開正文科 [Eternal Light New Year Celebration Manual] features Shijiawen (釋迦文) only once, though in both manuscripts of this text, and in all cases the epithet *shizun* is applied: “The first World-Honoured is Naluoyan Buddha, the second World-Honoured is Zarathuštra Buddha, the third World-Honoured is Śākyamuni Buddha, the fourth World-Honoured is Jesus Buddha, the fifth World-Honoured and head of the religion is Mani, the Buddha of Light.” See Wang Ding 王丁. “Monijiao yu Xiapu wenshu, Pingnan wenshu de xin faxian 摩尼教与霞浦文书, 屏南文书的新发现 [The New Discoveries of the Xiapu and Pingnan Texts and Their Relationship to Manichaeism],” *Zhongshan daxue xuebao* (Shehui Kexue ban) 中山大学学报(社会科学版) [Journal of Sun Yat-Sen University (Social Science Edition)] 58 [275] (2018): 125; (W28163:) 第一世尊那嚩延伏第二世尊蘇路支伏 (W28164:) 第三世尊釋迦文任第四世尊夷数和伏 (W28165:) 第五世尊教主摩尼光佛; the same in F25198–201.

*BuddhistRoad Paper* 3.3. Kōsa, “Buddha and Śākyamuni in Manichaean Scriptures”



Figure 2. *Mani, the Buddha of Light* 47, owned by Chen Peisheng (陈培生), Xiapu county, Fujian, Late Qing or Republican time.

Poster of Zhang Xiaogui's lecture on Zarathuštra, accessed March 13, 2023.  
<http://www.ha.cuhk.edu.hk/Posters%202015/AoE%20Seminar%202015-9-24%20Zhang%20Xiaogui.pdf>.

Later on, this kind of metaphorical comparison was inherited by the church leaders,<sup>49</sup> as can be seen in the Sogdian epistles about Aryāmānpuhr (MP. *'ry'm'n pwxr*), the 11th c. Teacher of the East in Kočo,<sup>50</sup> or an unnamed teacher in a Middle Persian hymn.<sup>51</sup> In the Parthian and Middle

<sup>49</sup> Colditz, "Buddhist and Indian Elements," 17.

<sup>50</sup> *Sogdian letters from Bezeklik B/1–2*: "To the one who is similar to gods, the deputy of the Buddhas, who himself (is) manifest as a Buddha granting favours [...] [*t βy'nw 'nywnw pwtysy 'pš'y rywy ywty wyn 'ncykw y'n βxšyn 'kw pwtly ...*]." See Yutaka Yoshida, *Three Manichaean Sogdian Letters Unearthed in Bāzāklik, Turfan* [ベゼクリク千仏洞出土のマニ教ソグド語手紙文研究] (Tokyo: Rinsen Book Co., 2019), 158–159; See also A/1–3 (Yoshida, *Three Manichaean Sogdian Letters*, 74–75), B/60–60 (Yoshida, *Three Manichaean Sogdian Letters*, 164–65).

<sup>51</sup> BT XL, 94: "The new bright sun over the Eastern Church, (and) the new full moon may shine in the new community of Elect. New Buddha and Envoy, the chosen one the new spirit" (M1863/V/12–21 (Middle Persian): *nwg xrxšyd* (recte: *xrxšyd*) *'spxyt 'br dym 'y*



Persian texts, Mani is usually designated as *mār* (lit. lord, borrowed from Syriac) or its Iranian equivalent, *xwd'y* (or *xwd'w(w)n*), a motif absent in the Chinese Manichaean sources.<sup>52</sup>

Unlike the Middle Iranian sources, the Uyghur texts hardly use *Mār Mānī*; they are replete with Mani Buddha (OU *mani burxan*).<sup>53</sup> A case in

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*xwr's:n* °° *nwg pwrw 'h t' b'd pd nwg wcydgy* °° *nwg bwt 'wd prystg wcynyhyst pd w'xš nwg*. A close comparison is likewise implied in the following excerpt: “You are now seated on the throne of the famous captain, may your good name be heard like the Buddhas and the Envoys” (BT XL, 144; M293/R/11–14 [Middle Persian and Parthian]).

<sup>52</sup> This statement requires some qualification: Chinese historical sources do use Mo Moni (末摩尼, *Mār Mānī*), and the Fujianese sources, surprisingly, also have a rather faithful rendering of this compound as Moluo Moni (末囉摩尼), but it is worth pointing out the emphatically foreign context of MGF 65:2–3 (Naluoyan, Suluzhi, Shijiawen, Moshihe, Moluo Moni, *zheyidan*, *qiedushi* 那羅延, 蘇路支, 釋迦文, 末尸訶, 末囉摩尼, 遮伊但, 伽度師), in which we encounter Moshihe for the Messiah (instead of the usual *Yishu* 夷數), and the transcription of the Middle Persian word *jāidān* (Chin. *zheyidan* 遮伊但, lit. forever) and the ultimately Syriac *kādūš* (Chin. *qiedushi* 伽度師, lit. saint); see Yutaka Yoshida, “The Xiapu 霞浦 Manichaean Text *Sijizan* 四寂讚 ‘Praise of the Four Entities of Calmness’ and Its Parthian Original,” in *Zur lichten Heimat. Studien zu Manichäismus, Iranistik und Zentralasienkunde im Gedenken an Werner Sundermann*, ed. Team Turfanforschung (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017), 728–731, 734. In the manuscript entitled *Zhenming kaizheng wenke* from Pingnan, we have the same form in the context of phonetically transcribed texts (W10057=F07056, W35208=F32242, W41247=F37285; see Wang, “Monijiao yu Xiapu wenshu,” 123, 126, 127). Thus, although *Mār Mānī* was used in non-historical sources, this name seems to have been regarded as a foreign honorific. If one asks what the Chinese equivalent of this honorific was, then one can speculate that regarding the frequency of its usage and its function as an honorific, it is precisely the word *buddha* that seems to have a similar role. Thus, while the Middle Persian and Parthian texts use *Mār Mānī* and hardly apply *buddha* as an epithet, the Chinese texts do it vice versa: they frequently use *buddha* and hardly apply *mār* as a constant element.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, the following ones: U 237 + U 296/R/4 (BT V, 50); M III 29 + Ch/U 6618/22 (BT V, 55); T III T 338/V/4 (Ch/U 6890) (BT V, 71); III 201 (T II D 176)/II/R/7 (von Le Coq, *Türkische Manichaica*, 15; Aloïs van Tongerloo, “Manichaean Female Deities,” in *Atti del terzo congresso internazionale di studi ‘Manicheismo e Oriente Cristiano Antico’, Arcavacata di Rende—Amantea, 31 agosto—5 settembre 1993*, ed. Luigi Cirillo and Aloïs van Tongerloo (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 371); III 8260/V/2 (T III D 260) (Willy Bang und Annemarie von Gabain, *Türkische Turfan-Texte. III.* (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1930), 184; Zsuzsanna Gulácsi, *Manichaean Art in Berlin Collections: A Comprehensive Catalogue of Manichaean Artifacts Belonging to the Berlin State Museums of the Prussian Cultural Foundation, Museum of Indian Art, and the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences, Deposited in the Berlin State Library of the Prussian Cultural Foundation* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 240); U 62 (TM 169)/R/5 (van Tongerloo, “Buddhist Indian Terminology,” 244, n.7).

point is the significantly Buddhicised *Great Hymn to Mani*.<sup>54</sup> The English translator of the text, Larry V. Clark, originally rendered the Uyghur word *buddha* (OU *burxan*) as ‘Prophet’,<sup>55</sup> though the latter word does not appear in Manichaean texts (albeit the concept does).<sup>56</sup> In his book published in 2013, Clark altered his translation in several respects and applied ‘buddha’ in these cases.

(2–3 [1–2]) My honored and renowned Father, Mani the buddha (*kañım manı burxa[n]*), whom one should worship with a reverent mind, We have prepared ourselves to worship with a humble mind. (...) (49–50 [28]) [those who were in fetters and who had pain, [were saved] from this *samsāra* / in order to see the Sun-God, a Buddha<sup>57</sup> (*burxanlıg kün täñrig*) like you (...) (65–67 [36]) You descended after the four Buddhas (*tör[t] burxanlarta ken entijiz*). / You attained the blessed state of the [un]surpassable Buddha (*[b]urxan kutın bultuğuz*). You rescued many myriads of mortals. You saved all of them from dark hell. (...) (107–109 [55–56]) As a consequence of [your eloquence] and your merit, [you] attain[ed] the blessed state of the unhindered buddha<sup>58</sup> (*ıdıgsız burxan kutın b[u]l[tuğuz]*). With your im[mortal] sacred tongue, you deigned to distribute unstintingly to suffering and [afflicted] mortals [the] doctrinal [jewel] that caused them to say “(It is) good”. (...) (3–13) [like the diadem of] the God, Primal Man (*[xormuzta] tängri[niğ]*), // [like the garland] of the [God], [Azruwā], // (you are) splendid to see, my Father, Mani the Buddha (*kañım Manı burxan*) [Toch.: Father Mani]. // Thus and therefore, [I praise and worship you]. // Like the *cintāmañi*-jewel / [you are] worthy to keep on the flat crown of the head. //

<sup>54</sup> The date of composition of this piece is controversial: Klimkeit says that it is rather late (13th–14th c.), while Jens Wilkens (email, 27 Feb 2023) informed me that he would date it to the first half of the 11th century. See Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road*, 280.

<sup>55</sup> The reason is briefly explained in Larry V. Clark, “The Manichean Turkic *Pothi-book*,” *Altorientalische Forschungen* 9 (1982): 191, n. 2. For the earlier translation, see Clark, “The Manichean Turkic *Pothi-book*,” 180, 182–184, 188. For another English translation, where *buddha* appears throughout, see Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road*, 280–284. The first editors, Willy Bang und Annemarie von Gabain (*Türkische Turfan-Texte. III*), also use the word *buddha*. For the Tocharian version, see Annemarie von Gabain und Werner Winter, *Türkische Turfan-Texte IX. Ein Hymnus an den Vater Mani auf ‘Tocharisch’ B mit alttürkischer Übersetzung* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1958); Clark, “The Manichean Turkic *Pothi-book*,” 174–175, 188; Georges-Jean Pinault, “Bilingual Hymn to Mani. Analysis of the Tocharian B Parts,” *Nairiku Ajia gengo no kenkyū* 内陸アジア言語の研究 / *Studies on the Inner Asian Languages* 23 (2008): 93–120; for its Uyghur translation, see Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road*, 285.

<sup>56</sup> BeDuhn, “Nārāyaṇa Buddha,” 1.

<sup>57</sup> Jens Wilkens’s interpretation (email, 27 Feb 2023): “Buddha-like Sun God”.

<sup>58</sup> Jens Wilkens’s interpretation (email, 27 Feb 2023): “the unhindered blessed buddhahood”.



O, you are worthy! // Just as you are gleaming with the holy splendor of the commandments, // just as [you are] shining among [ ], (in the same way, you are one) splendid to see my Father, Mani. // Thus and therefore, I praise and worship you. (...) (15–18) Having (your) origin in good *nirvāṇa*, [you] are worthy to be carried on the flat crowns of the heads of the former Buddhas (*[sō]ki burxanlarnıj*) [Toch.: omniscients of past time], of all of them. Thus, I [praise] and worship you.<sup>59</sup>

In the last part, the Tocharian-Uyghur bilingual, it is interesting to see that the epithet ‘buddha’ is not used in the Tocharian even when the Uyghur version has it (line 5) and that the Tocharian refers to the ‘omniscients of past time’ instead of the ‘former Buddhas’. These examples suggest that the Tocharian version was less Buddhicised than the Uyghur one. Moreover, it is worth pointing out that Mani is compared to the *cintāmaṇi*-jewel in both cases, which looks like a fortuitous coincidence of the Sanskrit word *maṇi* (jewel) and the Near Eastern name Mani. The Manichaean cave at Bezeklik (Cave 37) depicts a flaming *cintāmaṇi*-jewel flanked by two musicians; since the painting on the other wall is Manichaean,<sup>60</sup> one is tempted to identify this *cintāmaṇi* as a symbolic depiction of Mani himself.

One may naturally ponder what the original appellation of these envoys could have been that was later rendered as ‘buddha’ in the Uyghur and Chinese texts. In the West, Mani was probably addressed as a ‘messenger’ or ‘apostle’, frequently linked with Jesus. A Manichaean crystal seal, kept in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, bears the following inscription: “Mānī, apostle of Jesus the Messiah [Christ]” (Syr. *m’ny šlyh’ d-yyšw’ mšyh’* [*Mānī šēlīhā d-Īšō’ m’šīhā*]).<sup>61</sup> This seal is especially important because it may have belonged to Mani himself;<sup>62</sup> moreover, it is written in Syriac, which must have been the mother tongue of the founder of

<sup>59</sup> Larry Clark, *Uyghur Manichaean Texts: Texts, Translations, Commentary. Volume II: Liturgical Texts* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 153, 155, 156, 158, 183. Great Hymn to Mani, lines 2–3, 49–50, 65–67, 107–109, 245–262 [TochB – Uyghur bilingual].

<sup>60</sup> Moriyasu Takao 森安孝夫, *Uiguru Manikyō-shi no kenkyū* ウイグル=マニ教史の研究 [A Study on the History of Uyghur Manichaeism. Research on Some Manichaean Materials and their Historical Background] (Osaka: Faculty of Letters, Osaka University, 1991), Pl. IX, fig. 9, 6–34.

<sup>61</sup> Zsuzsanna Gulácsi, “The Crystal Seal of ‘Mani, the Apostle of Jesus Christ’ in the Bibliothèque nationale de France,” in *Manichaean Texts in Syriac*, ed. Nils A. Pedersen and John M. Larsen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 251.

<sup>62</sup> Gulácsi, “The Crystal Seal of ‘Mani’”.

Manichaeism. The fact that Mani regarded himself as the apostle of Jesus, and not merely as one of the messengers from the Realm of Light in general, is attested by several other sources as well.<sup>63</sup> The introductory sentence of Mani's *Epistula Fundamenti* [Letter of Foundation], quoted by Augustine, mentions "Mānī, the apostle of Jesus Christ, by the providence of God the Father."<sup>64</sup> As a matter of fact, Augustine claimed that Mani began all his letters with a similar Pauline introductory phrase.<sup>65</sup> Similar phrases likewise appear in the Iranian material: "I, Mani, the Apostle of Jesus, the Friend [Christ]";<sup>66</sup> "Mār Mānī, apostle of Jesus Christ";<sup>67</sup> "Mār Mānī, the apostle of Jesus, the Messiah";<sup>68</sup> "Mānī, the Apostle of Jesus, the Friend".<sup>69</sup> Thus, the messenger or apostle (Syr. *š<sup>el</sup>līhā*)

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<sup>63</sup> For the following examples, see Gábor Kósa, "Two Manichaean Judgment Scenes—MIK III 4959 V and the Yamato Bunkakan Sandōzu Painting," in *Mani in Dublin: Selected Papers from the Seventh International Conference of the International Association of Manichaeans Studies in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, 8–12 September 2009*, ed. Siegfried G. Richter, Charles Horton, and Karl Ohlhafer (Leiden: Brill, 2015b), 206, n. 27.

<sup>64</sup> Augustinus, *Contra Epistolam Manichaei quam vocant Fundamenti* [Against the Manichean Letter They Call 'The Foundation'] 5.6: *Manichaeus apostolus Iesu Christi providentia Dei Patris*.

<sup>65</sup> Augustinus, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* [Against Faustus the Manichaean] 13.4: *Omnes tamen eius epistulae ita exordiantur: 'Manichaeus apostolus Iesu Christi'*. For such an example in the Kellis material, see Iain Gardner and Samuel N.C. Lieu, ed., *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 167.

<sup>66</sup> David N. MacKenzie, "I, Mani...", in *Gnosisforschung und Religionsgeschichte. Festschrift für Kurt Rudolph zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Holger Preissler und Hubert Seiwert (Marburg: diagonal-Verlag, 1994), 184, 190–191. M17/v/i/12–14 (Middle Persian): 'n m'ny prystg 'yg yyšw 'ry m'n. This and the subsequent quotation derive from the canonical scriptures entitled the *Living Gospel* and the *Psalms*. On the equivalence of the term Friend and Christ, see Werner Sundermann, "Namen von Göttern, Dämonen und Menschen in iranischen Versionen des manichäischen Mythos," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 6 (1979): 103, n. 246 [99–103].

<sup>67</sup> Enrico Morano, "'MYN 'HYND: The Beginning of Mani's Psalm *Wuzurgān Āfrīwān* in Parthian and Middle Persian," in *New Light on Manichaeism. Papers from the Sixth International Congress on Manichaeism*, ed. Jason D. BeDuhn (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 217–218. Ch/So20501/V/ + Ch/U6546/V/12–13 (Parthian in Sogdian script): (*mrm*)'ny bry 'št'g cy 'yšw [mšyx](').

<sup>68</sup> Morano, "'MYN 'HYND,'" 217. Ch/So20501/V + Ch/U6546/v/12–13 (Parthian reconstructed from *Wuzurgān Āfrīwān* in the preceding footnote): *mrym'ny cy fryšt'g cy yyšw' mšyh'ḥ*.

<sup>69</sup> Reck, "Snatches of the Middle Iranian," 228. M1313/R/10–11/ (Middle Persian): *M'ny frystg yy[šw'] 'ry m'n*.





is analogous to Middle Persian *frystg* and Parthian *fryštḡ*, as well as to the Latin, Greek and Coptic forms of ‘apostle’.<sup>70</sup>

Middle Iranian texts repeatedly refer to the former founders of religions as messengers. In a famous Parthian abecedarian hymn (M42), for example, the Redeemer informs the Boy, the symbol of the soul suffering in the world, as follows: “I have instructed the Great Nous to send you messengers [Parth. *fryštḡ:n*] when needed, be patient, like the burdened beings of Light are.”<sup>71</sup> After promising the arrival of messengers, the text goes on with listing them individually: Zarathuštra (Parth. *zrhwšt*), Buddha Śākyamuni (Parth. *š’qm̄n bwt*) and Jesus (Parth. *yyšw*). Thus, in this case, *fryštḡ* is not an epithet *stricto sensu*, but it unambiguously defines the character of these figures.<sup>72</sup>

While the word *buddha* occurs in non-Chinese hagiographical texts and Parthian and Sogdian hymns,<sup>73</sup> it may also feature beside the word *apostle*, functioning as a hendiadys. At the end of a Sogdian parable about five brothers, the usual clue is given to the correct interpretation: “The five brothers are the Five Buddhas and apostles (Sogd. *pnc p(wt)yšt ZY p(ryš)t’ktw*), who guided the souls into the paradise during the seven periods.”<sup>74</sup> As Christiane Reck emphasises, “buddhas and apostles” are used as hendiadys here.<sup>75</sup> Another example is to be found in the Uyghur *Xwāstwānīft*, the confession for auditors, (IV): “on the former messengers of God, the Buddhas” (OU *sōki tāñri yalavači burxanlarka*)<sup>76</sup> or “the true messengers of God, the Buddhas” (OU. *kertü tāñri yalavači burxan*).<sup>77</sup> Although this unit discusses the sins against the elects, due to the word

<sup>70</sup> Gulácsi, “The Crystal Seal of ‘Mani,’” 354–355.

<sup>71</sup> Enrico Morano, “Manichaean Middle Iranian Texts Regarding Jesus. Edition of Middle Persian, Parthian and Sogdian Texts from the Berlin,” PhD diss., Università degli Studi di Roma ‘La Sapienza’, 2009–2010, 148, 150; M42/R/ii/3–10 (Parthian).

<sup>72</sup> M8171/V/ii/1 (Parthian): (*mry*) *m’ny fryštḡ*; M801a/p6/11–12 (Parthian): *m(ry)m’ny fryštḡ*.

<sup>73</sup> Colditz, “Buddhist and Indian Elements,” 13.

<sup>74</sup> Reck, “Snatches of the Middle Iranian”, 243, 245; So 18058 + So 18197/V/16–20 (Sogdian)

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 245. It seems to me that the case is the same with the following Middle Persian fragment: “the [Bu]ddh[as] and Light apostles” (M236/R/15: [bw](t)[n ](‘)wd *frystg nrwšn n*); See Sundermann, *Mitteliranische manichäische Texte*, 134, text 24.2; Colditz, “Buddhist and Indian Elements,” 14.

<sup>76</sup> Clark, *Uyghur Manichaean Texts*, 84, 90, 102.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 84, 90, 153. To express the equality of these phrases, Gulácsi even adds “[that is] the buddhas”. See Gulácsi, *Mani’s Pictures*, 355.



‘former’ (OU *söki*), it can hardly refer to the contemporaneous elects only.<sup>78</sup> Thus, in these two cases the ‘messenger’, which, if independently used, is more typical of Western usage, and the ‘buddha’, typical of the Eastern usage, are somewhat equated. These Sogdian and Uyghur texts thus both draw a parallel between these two concepts.

It is worth examining this question with regard to the most remote, substantial sources, i.e. Coptic. Here the word apostle (Cop. *apostolos* ἀποστολος) is used. For example, the Berlin *Kephalaia*, an elaborated narrative about Mānī’s life and teachings from ca. 3rd century Egypt, calls the religious founders “the earlier apostles” (1Ke 372.22: *n-šarp* *‘n-apostolos* *ⲛⲩⲩⲁⲣⲡ ⲛⲁⲡⲟⲩⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ*), while the more recently, partially edited Dublin *Kephalaia* (2Ke 423.1–13) first speaks of the apostles, then specifically mentions Zarathuštra, Buddha and Jesus, and after this again uses the phrase “[all] these apostles of God” (Cop. *ni-apostolos* [*de tērou*] *‘nte-p-noute* *ⲛⲁⲡⲟⲩⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ* [*ⲗⲉ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ*] *ⲛⲧⲉⲡⲏⲟⲩⲧⲉ*).<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, the whole Dublin *Kephalaia* refers to Mani as ‘the Apostle’ (Cop. *p-apostolos* *ⲡⲁⲡⲟⲩⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ*).<sup>80</sup> If one proceeds to the East, the Middle Persian *Book of Giants* applies the word *prystg’n* (*frēstagān*), ‘messengers, apostles’,<sup>81</sup> derived from the verb ‘to send’ (MP *fryst*, *pryst*)<sup>82</sup>: But God “in each epoch, sends apos[t](l)e[s]: Šīt[īl, Zarathushtra,] [B]uddha, Chris[t].”<sup>83</sup> It is worth noting that *prystg* also means an angel,<sup>84</sup> i.e. a non-human being, who is also sent with a certain message. The non-Manichaean Arabic authors, like al-Bīrūnī (973–1048), utilise the word messenger (Arab. *rasūlun*),<sup>85</sup> while Ibn al-Murtaḍā makes use of the word prophet (Arab.

<sup>78</sup> For an alternative view on *söki*, see Zekine Özertural, “Die innere Gliederung des alttürkischen Beichttextes Xuāstvānīft,” in *Der östliche Manichäismus. Gattungs- und Werksgeschichte Vorträge des Göttinger Symposiums vom 4./5. März 2010*, ed. Zekine Özertural und Jens Wilkens (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2011), 113–120.

<sup>79</sup> Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dilley, *The Chapters of the Wisdom of My Lord Mani*, 166–167.

<sup>80</sup> This usage likewise occurs in Middle Iranian texts, e.g., M48+, see Iris Colditz, *Zur Sozialterminologie der iranischen Manichäer. Eine semantische Analyse im Vergleich zu den nichtmanichäischen iranischen Quellen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000), 71.

<sup>81</sup> Durkin-Meisterernst, *Dictionary of Manichaean Texts*, 159–160.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 159–160.

<sup>83</sup> Middle Persian M101b/V/7–10: *ʔy(g) [zrw’n ?] by pd ’w’m ’ [w’m] prystyd<sup>oo</sup> šyt[yl zrdrwst] [b]wt<sup>oo</sup> msy[h’ prys[t](g) [n]*; See Henning, “The Book of Giants,” 63.

<sup>84</sup> Durkin-Meisterernst, *Dictionary of Manichaean Texts*, 159–160.

<sup>85</sup> Carl Eduard Sachau, trans., *The Chronology of Ancient Nations. An English Version of the Arabic Text of the Athâr-ul-bâkiya of Albîrûnî, or ‘Vestiges of the Past.’ Collected*



*nabiyyun*).<sup>86</sup> More specifically, Mani is called the Apostle of Light in Coptic (*p-apostolos m-p-ouaine* παποστολος υπογαϊνε),<sup>87</sup> in Middle Persian (*frystg rwsn*),<sup>88</sup> in Parthian (*fryštg rwsn*),<sup>89</sup> in Sogdian (*rxwšny βr 'yšt'kw*),<sup>90</sup> and in Uyghur (*varuq frišti*).<sup>91</sup>

After this excursus, we can return to the Chinese sources, where the motif of envoy, messenger, or apostle is also present. The author of the *Compendium* must have been aware of the significance of this title since he begins this text with a phonetically transcribed version of the original Parthian ‘envoy of light’ (Parth. *frēštag rōšn*, Chin. *foyisede wulushen* 佛夷瑟德烏盧誥),<sup>92</sup> to which he adds an exact Chinese translation (*guangming shizhe* 光明使者). The author then complements this with

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*and Reduced to Writing by the Author in A.H. 390–1, A.D. 1000* (London: William H. Allen, 1879), 190; François de Blois and Nicholas Sims-Williams ed., *Dictionary of Manichaean Texts. Vol. II, Texts from Iraq and Iran (Texts in Syriac, Arabic, Persian and Zoroastrian Middle Persian)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 48. A similar description is recorded in IKe 12.15–20, see later on. Both descriptions go back to the *Šābuhragān*; See Werner Sundermann, “Manichaean Traditions on the Date of the Historical Buddha,” in *The Dating of the Historical Buddha*, ed. Heinz Bechert (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 430.

<sup>86</sup> Ibn al-Murtadā, *Kitāb al-munya wa-l-amal fī sharḥ al-milal wa-l-niḥal* [The Book of Desire and Hope: A Commentary on Denominations and Creeds], 301, tr. John C. Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism* (Sheffield, Oakville: Equinox, 2011), 127; de Blois and Sims-Williams, *Dictionary of Manichaean Texts*, 79. Almost the same text appears in Abu'l-Ma'ālī, *Bayān al-adyān* [Explanation of Religions], 491, tr. Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism*, 183–184, and *Kitāb al-milal wa'l-niḥal* 1:629.10–630.5, translated by Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism*, 104.

<sup>87</sup> E.g., *Psalm-book* 33.10; IKe 24.30; 36.3, *Homilies* 54.12–13.

<sup>88</sup> E.g., M801a: 333–334; Henning, *Ein manichäisches Bet- und Beichtbuch*, 27; M325/V/14; Colditz, *Zur Sozialterminologie der iranischen Manichäer*, 307.

<sup>89</sup> E.g., M5569/R/4, M5569/V/15–16 (Mary Boyce, *A Reader in Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian. Texts with Notes* (Téhéran, Liège: Bibliothèque Pahlavi; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 48), M6032/R/14/ (Sundermann, “Namen von Göttern, Dämonen und Menschen”, 113).

<sup>90</sup> M18220/V/37–38; Sundermann, *Mitteliranische manichäische Texte*, 41.

<sup>91</sup> P. 3049. 2; see James R. Hamilton, *Manuscripts ouïgours du IXe–Xe siècle de Touen-houang*. Tome I. (Paris: Peeters, 1986), 38.

<sup>92</sup> Yoshida Yutaka 吉田豊, “Kanyaku Manikyō bunken ni okeru kanji onsha saretā chūsei irango ni tsuite (Jō) 漢訳マニ教文献における漢字音写された中世イラン語について (上) Remarks on the Manichaean Middle Iranian Terms Transcribed in Chinese Script (1),” *Nairiku Ajia gengo no kenkyū* 内陸アジア言語の研究 / *Studies on the Inner Asian Languages* 2 (1986): items 35, 76. This form has been surprisingly preserved in the recently identified manuscript titled *Zhenming kaizheng wenke* from Pingnan (W35208–9=F32243–4; Wang, “Monijiao yu Xiapu wenshu,” 126).

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several other titles, including ‘the omniscient Dharma-king’ and ‘Mani, the buddha of light’ (Chin. *Moni guangfo* 摩尼光佛). Thus, the author of the *Compendium* may have seen the second part of the latter (Chin. *guangfo* 光佛) as equivalent to the compound of ‘the envoy of light’ (Chin. *guangming shizhe* 光明使者), thus, light being a shared element, he may have equated envoy (Chin. *shizhe* 使者) with buddha (Chin. *fo* 佛).<sup>93</sup> The *Compendium*, submitted to emperor Xuanzong (r. 712–756, 玄宗) in 731, explains the compound ‘envoy of light’ by stating that Mani personally received the pure teachings and command from the Father of Greatness (here called *mingzun* 明尊) and was incarnated afterward.<sup>94</sup> The *Hymnscroll* tends to apply this phrase to refer to various divine beings (e.g. H131, H141, H150, H210, H216, H337, H371), but in one case it names Mani as a light envoy (H338: *Mangni mingshi* 忙你明使).<sup>95</sup> The *Minshu* 閩書 [The Book of Fujian], He Qiaoyuan’s (17th c., 何喬遠) work on Fujian, lists various epithets like ‘buddha’, ‘light buddha’ and ‘light envoy’:

On the ridge slope back of the [Huabiao] hill is a *cao’an* (lit. ‘thatched nunnery’) dating from the Yuan period. There reverence is paid to Buddha Mani. The Buddha Mani has for name ‘Brilliant Buddha Mo-mo-ni [Mār

<sup>93</sup> In the *Hymnscroll* (H265, H337, H346), “buddhas” (Chin. *zhufo* 諸佛) and “envoys of light” (Chin. *mingshi* 明使) appear together side by side as synonyms, without the text making clear that the former expression refers to divine beings and the latter to human ones.

<sup>94</sup> *Compendium* 008–009: 親受明尊清淨教命, 然後化誕, 故云光明使者。

<sup>95</sup> Another scripture from Cave 17 of Dunhuang, the so-called *Traité*, likewise applies ‘envoy of light’ in relation to divine entities, “[t]hen the Envoy of Light spoke to Atuo (i.e. Addā) thus” (*Traité* 0005: 余時明使告阿駄言; tr. Samuel N.C. Lieu and Gunner Mikkelsen (in association with N. Sims-Williams *et al.*), *Tractatus Manichaeicus Sinicus. Pars Prima: Text, Translation and Indices* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 3). Similar cases are the following: Chishi *mingshi* 持世明使 (*Traité* 109); Dizang *mingshi* 地藏明使 (*Traité* 110–111); Cuiguang *mingshi* 催光明使 (*Traité* 111), Jingfeng *mingshi* 淨風明使 (*Traité* 011). Although Light Envoy in *Traité* 0005 is considered to denote the Light Nous (Lieu and Mikkelsen, *Tractatus*, xxxv), the standard appellation of this divine being, Huimingshi (惠明使, *Traité* 057, 142, 154, 157, 170, 184, 201, 219, 321), only seemingly contains *mingshi* (明使); in fact, it should be understood as the ‘Beneficent (Wise) Light Envoy’, cf. “the great envoy of Wise Light” (*Traité* 64, 137: Huiming dashi 惠明大使). The Fujianese *Moni guangfo* uses *mingshi* predominantly in connection with angels; besides, Mani is said to have descended from the realm of great light to become a light envoy (MG 19/4–5: 我今以稱讚大聖摩尼光佛, 從彼大明國降下為明使) and twice he is mentioned as the “last light envoy” (MG 48/2: 一, 摩尼大法王, 二, 最後光明使; MGF 64/3: 五佛摩尼光, 最後光明使), see also MGF 70/6–7.



Mānī].’ He came from Sulin (i.e. Assuristan) and is also a Buddha, having the name ‘Envoy of the Great Light, Complete in Knowledge’.<sup>96</sup>

In sum, the epithet *fo* associated with human envoys from the Realm of Light, on the one hand, signals that all these envoys are equal since they achieved the same level of ‘sanctity’. The epithet *buddha* was widespread in China and indicated a chain of similar enlightened ones who successively arrive at different points of time (albeit not at different places, as in Manichaeism). However, the semantic field of the word *buddha* does not cover the meaning of envoy, messenger, apostle, prophet,<sup>97</sup> which,

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<sup>96</sup> *Minshu* 7.31b: 山背之麓有草庵，元時物也。祀摩尼佛。摩尼佛名末摩尼光佛，蘇鄰國人，又一佛也，號具智大明使。Samuel N.C. Lieu, trans., “Medieval Manichaeism and Nestorian Remains in the Zayton (Quanzhou) of Marco Polo,” in *New Light on Manichaeism: Papers from the Sixth International Congress on Manichaeism organized by the International Association of Manichaean Studies*, ed. Jason D. BeDuhn (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 182.

<sup>97</sup> A unique case is the Dunhuang manuscript S. 6551, which is a collection of notes written after 795 on the *Amitābhasūtra*. It makes the following remark: “With regard to refuge in the Buddha, in which buddha do we take refuge? It is not the buddha of Mani [Moni], nor the buddha of Persia [Bosi]; it is also not the buddha of the Fire God [Huoxian]; it is the pure *dharmakāya* [dharma body], the complete *sambhogakāya* [enjoyment body], and Śākyamuni Buddha of the trillions of *nirmāṇa-kāyas* [emanation bodies]. [...] Just as in India there are 96 kinds of heretics, in this place there are people like Bosi [Persia, i.e. “Nestorianism?”], Moni [Mani], Huoxian [Zoroastrianism] and Kushen 哭神 [Weeping gods, shamanism?], all saying that they have renounced secular life and have left behind life and death forever. These are all lies that deceive humans and gods. Only the disciples of Śākyamuni, once they have renounced secular life, are worthy of extensive reverence from humans and gods” (Chin. 歸仏者，皈依何仏？且不是磨尼仏，又不是波斯仏，亦不是火祇仏，乃是清淨法身，圓滿報身，千百億化身釋迦牟尼仏 [...] 且如西天有九十六種外道，此間則有波斯，摩尼，火祇，哭神之輩。皆言我已出家，永離生死，並是虛誑，欺謾人天。唯有釋迦弟子是其出家，堪受人天廣大供養。) (First part translated by Jeffrey Kotyk, *Sino-Iranian and Sino-Arabian Relations*, 121; second part by Rong Xinjiang [Flavia Xi Fang], “Jingjiao Christians as Heretics in the Eyes of Buddhists and Daoists of the Tang Dynasty,” in *The Silk Road and Cultural Exchanges between East and West* [Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2023], 538.) Jeffrey Kotyk (*Sino-Iranian and Sino-Arabian Relations*, 121) raises the possibility that Mani, written in two alternative forms (Moni 磨尼, Moni 摩尼), is here not only one of the foreign names, but that the whole concept described here in this collection of notes on the *Amitābhasūtra* (S. 6551, <https://idp.bl.uk/collection/62DC75B4B5ED4354B07818A249858904/>) may ultimately derive from Manichaeism, so that Śākyamuni buddha (釋迦牟尼佛) appears to be analogous to “Mani buddha” and the “Persian buddha” (波斯佛), meaning that the word *buddha* here denotes the main ‘prophet’ of any religion. Thus, the author of this passage intends to discourage Buddhist believers from blurring the differences between the buddhas, i.e. the prophets, of different religions and probably also attempts to dissuade the same believers to attend the temples of Iranian religions.

seen from the perspective of the Coptic, Middle Iranian, and Arabic analogies, was Mani's constant epithet and which indicated that the various religious founders were sent by the Father of Greatness and arrived at the world to transmit the message from the Realm of Light. This said, the Chinese texts also knew about the apostolic title (or 'light messenger', Chin. *mingshi* 明使, *guangming shizhe* 光明使者).

## 2.2. Divine Emanations

As previously mentioned, Manichaean texts apply buddhas to refer to the 'divine' beings of the Realm of Light in general. The Chinese part of the trilingual Karabalgasun inscription (9th c.) contrasts the Uyghurs' spiritual practice before and after their conversion to Manichaeism as follows: "(But) twice and thrice they begged and requested, saying: 'In the past we were ignorant and regarded (evil) spirits as deities [buddhas, GK]. Now that we have accepted the truth, we can no longer serve (these spirits).'"<sup>98</sup> The original for "deities" is *fo* (佛), though it obviously refers exclusively to the Manichaean divinities.

The Chinese manuscripts from Dunhuang and Fujian ubiquitously use buddha (*fo*) to refer to various members of the vast Manichaean pantheon. A case in point is a hymn from the *Hymnscroll*, which lists the most important twelve deities of the complex Manichaean 'mythology':

The first is the unsurpassable King of Light [Father of Greatness], the second is the wise Good Mother buddha, the third is the always-victorious First Thought [Primal Man] buddha, the fourth is the joyous and happy Five Lights buddhas, the fifth is the zealous Friend of Light [Enjoyer of Light] buddha, the sixth is the true Form-creator buddha [Great Builder], the seventh is the faithful Pure Wind buddha [Living Spirit], the eighth is the patient Sunlight buddha [Third Messenger], the ninth is Vairocana [Column of Glory] of upright thought, the tenth is the merciful Jesus buddha, the

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<sup>98</sup> Moriyasu Takao and Yoshida Yutaka. "New Edition of the Chinese Version of the Karabalgasun Inscription," *Nairiku Ajia gengo no kenkyū* 内陸アジア言語の研究 / *Studies on the Inner Asian Languages* 34 (2019): 28. *Karabalgasun inscription*, line 9: 再三懇請「往者無識，謂鬼爲佛今已悞真，不可復事」。See Moriyasu and Yoshida, "New Edition of the Chinese Version of the Karabalgasun Inscription," 19–20.



eleventh is the equanimous Lightning buddha [Maiden of Light], the twelfth is the embellished Wise Light [Light Nous] buddha.<sup>99</sup>

A similar list with identical names and titles occurs in H169–171 and some members of this list appear in themselves in other parts of this manuscript.<sup>100</sup> What is especially noteworthy is that ten out of twelve deities use buddha as an epithet, and there are only two members in the list without this title: one of them is the ninth figure, Vairocana, whose name, unlike the other figures' two-character names, consists of three characters (Lushena 盧舍那), thus the translator could not squeeze *fo* in the text and still preserve the seven-character pattern of the names; moreover, Vairocana is the only direct borrowing from Buddhism and he is evidently a buddha already, therefore it would have been superfluous to add *fo* to his name. Thus, in this case there are metric and semantic reasons to leave out *fo*.

The other exception is the first member of the list, where the last word “king” (Chin. *wang* 王) could have easily been substituted by *fo*, but it was not. Back in 1985, Peter Bryder already noted that “[i]n the Chinese texts the word *fo* is a translation of Middle Iranian *yzd*, ‘god’”,<sup>101</sup> which in the Gnostic-like system of Manichaean emanations involves that *fo* means ‘emanation’, thus the head of these emanations cannot be at the same level as the emanations themselves, and this is the principal reason that the Father of Greatness cannot be a buddha. The Dunhuang texts apply various other designations to refer to him, such as venerable (Chin. *zun* 尊),<sup>102</sup> father (Chin. *fu* 父),<sup>103</sup> king (Chin. *wang* 王),<sup>104</sup> lord

<sup>99</sup> H169–171: 一者无上光明王, 二者智慧善母佛, 三者常勝先意佛, 四者歡喜五明佛, 五者勤修樂明佛, 六者真實造相佛, 七者信心淨風佛, 八者忍辱日光佛, 九者直意盧舍那, 十者知恩夷數佛, 十一者齊心電光佛, 十二者惠明庄嚴佛。

<sup>100</sup> See, e.g., the Five Light Elements (H129: 五等光明佛; H236, H244: 五大光明佛) or Jesus (H029, H076, H382: 夷數佛).

<sup>101</sup> Peter Bryder, *The Chinese Transformation of Manichaeism. A Study of Chinese Manichaean Terminology* (Löberöd: Plus Ultra, 1985), 81, n. 1.

<sup>102</sup> *Mingzun* (明尊) H044, H047, H129, H145, H164–H165, H223, H250, H262, H320, H344, H352, H356, H374, *cizun* (慈尊) H233, *yuan shangzun* (元上尊) H376.

<sup>103</sup> *Fu* (父) H227, H244, H265, *cifu* (慈父) H146, H151, H210, H371, *cibei fu* (慈悲父) H062, *zhenshi fu* (真實父) H388, *guangming daci fu* (光明大慈父) H232, *changhuo mingzun fu* (常活明尊父) H223.

<sup>104</sup> *Zuishang guangwang* (最上光王) H373, *niepan wang* (涅槃王) H026, H309, *niepan qingjing wang* (涅槃清淨王) H252, *wushang guangming wang* (无上光明王) H169, H174.



(*zhu* 主),<sup>105</sup> saint (*sheng* 聖)<sup>106</sup> or ancestor (*zu* 祖),<sup>107</sup> but never *fo*.<sup>108</sup> Thus, in these cases, the word *fo* has the special meaning of a deity who is the emanation of the Father of Greatness, but never the supreme deity himself.<sup>109</sup> This rule does not apply to the newly identified Fujianese corpus, which, as a corpus, is much more recent (18th c. to 20th c.). Here all the twelve members of the pantheon are characterised as *fo* (MGF 48/5–49/2), thus the Father of Greatness is addressed as ‘the unsurpassable Light buddha’ (Chin. *wushang guangming fo* 無上光明佛). Although in several cases the Fujianese corpus has preserved elements that go back to forms that predate even those of the *Hymnscroll* (especially the phonetically transcribed hymns),<sup>110</sup> the subtle distinction between the emanator and the emanations seems to have been lost during the long centuries.

The above-cited list of the twelve major divine beings occurs in other languages as well, thus one can compare how these non-Chinese sources designate these members of the pantheon. A Middle Persian list gives the following names:<sup>111</sup> (1) *yzdm ’n bwr(zys)t* [Father of Greatness]; (2) *m ’dr ’y zyngd ’n* [Mother of the Living]; (3) *’whrmyzd* (Ohrmazd) [Primal Man];

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<sup>105</sup> *Da cibeizhu* (大慈悲主) H388, *zhu* (主) H251, *mingjie changming zhu* (明界常明主) H122, *zhenshi zhu* (真實主) H357, H373, H383.

<sup>106</sup> *Dasheng* (大聖) H262, H309, H352.

<sup>107</sup> *Ming zongzu* (明宗祖) H226; *ben zongzu* (本宗祖) H245.

<sup>108</sup> Bryder, *The Chinese Transformation of Manichaeism*, 81. The Middle Iranian titles of the Father of Greatness are also rather numerous and may partly reflect social ranks of Sasanian Iran, see Iris Colditz, “Titles of Gods and Kings in Iranian Manichaean Texts,” in *Il Manicheismo: Nuove Prospettive della Ricerca. Atti del Quinto Congresso Internazionale di Studi sul Manicheismo (Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici, Università degli Studi di Napoli ‘L’Orientale’; Napoli, 2–8 Settembre 2001)*, ed. Alois van Tongerloo and Luigi Cirillo (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 58–60.

<sup>109</sup> This feature may be analogous to the fact that in Parthian texts the word *yzd* (‘god’) is not used in connection with the Father of Greatness, while *by* is frequently used, see Benedikt Peschl, “*Bayān ud yzdān*: words for ‘god’ in Parthian” (paper presented at 9th Conference of the International Association of Manichaean Studies University of Turin and Museo di Arte Orientale (MAO), Turin, September 11th–16th, 2017), 4, 7. Peschl (p. 7) states as follows: “*yazad* as the newer term (A) competes with *bay* as generic term for gods, divine beings (B) but is not used for the Father of Greatness, so more precisely: ‘subordinate god’.”

<sup>110</sup> Yoshida, “The Xiapu 霞浦 Manichaean Text *Sijizan*,” 730–732.

<sup>111</sup> MIK4974, M798a, M738 et al., fragmented, Badri Gharib, “New Light on Two Words in the Sogdian Version of the Realm Light,” in *Studia Manichaica. IV. Internationaler Kongress zum Manichäismus, Berlin, 14.–18. Juli 1997*, ed. Ronald E. Emmerick, Werner Sundermann, and Peter Zieme (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000), 263–264.





(4) (*mhr'*)*spnd'n* [Five Lights]; (5) *rwšn'n xw'ryst* [Friend of Lights]; (6) *nwgšhr'pwr yzd* [Great Builder]; (7) *myhryzd* [Living Spirit]; (8) *nrys'h yzd* [Third Messenger]; (9) *srwšhr'y* [Column of Glory]; (10) *yyšw' 'spyxt'n* [Jesus the Splendour]; (11) *knygrwšn* [Maiden of Light]; (12) *whmn rwšn* [Light-Nous]. Only some of the gods (6–8.) in the Middle Persian list have the epithet 'god' (*yzd* [*yazad*]), and these names, as a matter of fact, do not appear in the list of twelve dominions and gods and were inserted from other sources (hence the brackets in the case of these items), thus in this particular list, none of the emanations have *yzd* as an epithet, the gods' name seems to suffice to express the meaning without ambiguity.

The Uyghur version of the twelve dominions and the respective divine beings follows a different internal logic:<sup>112</sup> (1) *äzrua täñri* ('Zurvān god') [Father of Greatness]; (2) *ög täñri* ('Mother god') [Mother of the Living]; (3) *Xormuzta täñri* ('Ohrmazd god') [Primal Man]; (4) *mrdaspant täñrilär* ('Mardaspand gods'); *biš täñri* ('Five gods') [Five Lights]; (5) *fri-rošan täñri* ('Fri Rōšān god') [Friend of Lights]; (6) *βam täñri* ('Vam god') [Great Builder]; (7) *Wešparkar täñri* ('Wēšparkar god'); *ariγ yil* ('Pure Wind'); *wadživanta täñri* ('Wād žīwandag god') [Living Spirit]; (8) *yaruq kün täñri* ('Bright Sun god') [Third Messenger]; (9) *sroš(a)rt täñri* ('Sraoša god') [Column of Glory]; (10) *ay täñri* ('Moon god') [Jesus the Splendour]; (11) *yašin täñri* ('Lightning god'), *k(a)nig(i) roš(a)n* ('Kanīg rōšān'; i.e. the Virgin of Light); *y(a)ruq qizi* ('Light Virgin') [the Virgin of Light]; (12) *whmn rwšn* ('Light Wahman') [Light-Nous].

Aside from the last item, the Uyghur list uses *täñri* throughout, including Zurvān (*äzrua*), the head of the pantheon, thus he has no distinguished position similar to the Chinese case, but he is simply placed at the same level as the other members of the pantheon.

Given the significant role that the Sogdians played in Uyghur culture,<sup>113</sup> and more specifically in the spread of Manichaeism, it is safe to assume that the Uyghur Manichaean terminology derives from the Sogdian one:<sup>114</sup>

<sup>112</sup> P. 3049; Hamilton, *Manuscripts ouïgours*, 38–44.

<sup>113</sup> For a recent summary of critical views, see Yukiyo Kasai, "Manichaeism and Buddhism in Contact: The Significance of the Uyghur History and Its Literary Tradition," *Entangled Religions* 14.2 (2023).

<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, there are some exceptions: *nryšnxβyy* ('Narisaf god'; M118/I/V) vs. Uyghur *yaruq kün täñri* ('Bright Sun god'; P.3049. 10; Hamilton, *Manuscripts ouïgours*, 39); *r'mr'twx βyyy* ('Joy god'; M172/I/R) vs. *ög täñri* ('Mother god').

Name of the God	Sogdian <sup>115</sup>	Uyghur <sup>116</sup>
Father of Greatness	<i>zrw'βγγy</i> ('Zurwān god')	<i>āzrua tāñri</i> ('Zurvān god')
Primal Man	<i>xwrmzt'βγγy</i> ('Ohrmazd god')	<i>Xormuzta tāñri</i> ('Ohrmazd god')
Friend of Lights	<i>fryy rwsn βγγy</i> ('Friend of Light god')	<i>fri-rošan tāñri</i> ('Fri Rōšān god')
Great Builder	<i>β'm βγγy</i> ['Bān god']	<i>βam tāñri</i> ('Bam god')
Column of Glory	<i>srwš'rt βγγy</i> ('Sraoša god')	<i>sroš(a)rt tāñri</i> ('Sraoša god')
Jesus	<i>m'x βγγy</i> ('Moon god')	<i>ay tāñri</i> ('Moon god')

Table 2. Sogdian and Uyghur terminology of the Manichaean pantheon.

Thus, it seems more than probable that the introduction of the word *tāñri* ('god') in the Uyghur version was inspired by the inclusion of *βγγy* ('god') in the Sogdian one.<sup>117</sup> Middle Persian (MP) and Parthian variants do not have this epithet, at least *by/bg* (MP *bay* / Parth. *baγ*) and *yzd* (MP/Parth. *yazad*), meaning 'god', are not constant elements in those divine names. Based on the data retrieved from this list of twelve dominions, one may even advance the hypothesis that the reason for including 'god' is somehow related to the fact that in the majority of the cases, the Sogdians already used a non-Sogdian name, taken from a West Iranian idiom, thus it was perhaps desirable to define more precisely what exactly was meant, and this attitude was likewise inherited in the Uyghur translation. This being said, one must add that Werner Sundermann's

<sup>115</sup> M583; Ernst Waldschmidt and Wolfgang Lentz, *Manichäische Dogmatik aus chinesischen und iranischen Texten*. (Sonderausgabe aus den *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Klasse*) (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1933), 545–546.

<sup>116</sup> P. 3049; Hamilton, *Manuscripts ouïgours*, 38–44.

<sup>117</sup> A Sogdian fragment (Ch/U 6827 [T II 2090]), published by Werner Sundermann, contains a short list of Manichaean divine names, all ending with *βγγy*. See Werner Sundermann, "Eine Liste manichäischer Götter in soghdischer Sprache," in *Tradition und Translation: zum Problem der interkulturellen Übersetzbarkeit religiöser Phänomene. Festschrift für Carsten Colpe zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Christoph Elsas (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 452–462.



seminal study on the Iranian divine names of the Manichaean pantheon shows a rather heterogenous presence of the epithet ‘god’.<sup>118</sup>

However, the question persists: why did Daoming (ca. 8th–9th c., 道明), the Chinese translator of the *Hymnscroll*, render god (MP *by/bg/yzd*, Parth. *bg/by/yzd*, Sogd. βγγγ, OU *tājri*) as *fo*, especially since this is likewise the epithet of the human envoys, who are rarely named buddhas in the Iranian sources? Chinese is the only idiom where both the human envoys and the divine beings are regularly called buddhas, that is, the two realms seem to completely merge.

Idiom	Human Envoys	Divine Emanations
<i>Latin</i>	[Name of the envoy]	[Name of the god]
<i>Greek</i>	[Name of the envoy]	[Name of the god]
<i>Coptic</i>	[Name of the envoy]	[Name of the god]
<i>Middle Persian</i>	<i>mry,xwd’y, prystg, frystg [by]</i>	<i>by, yzd</i>

<sup>118</sup> See Sundermann, “Namen von Göttern, Dämonen und Menschen” Sundermann distinguished four major categories, in which *by/bg/yzd* occur to different extent: First, there are only two divine names that go back to a Syriac original (Yyšw<sup>c</sup> [Jesus] and b’n [Builder]), and one of them, namely the Great Builder, has ‘god’ in his name: Parthian *b’myzd* and Sogdian β’m βγγγ (on Syriac Bān [‘builder’] and the phonetically similar Middle Iranian Bām [‘radiance, glory’], first pointed out by H. H. Schaeder, see e.g. Jackson, *Researches in Manichaeism*, 283–287). The second category comprises names that were translated from Syriac into a Middle Iranian idiom. This list contains 17 figures with several different names and only a few have god as an epithet: (1) The Sogdian form of the Friend of Lights (*frystg rwsn βγγγ*); (2) A rather unique Middle Persian case is a text in which Atlas is called the ‘god of deliberation (or thought)’ (*prm’ngyn yzd*); (3) The Sun and the Moon are called gods in certain Sogdian cases (*xwr βγγγ, m’x βγγγ*), while the Moon is also provided with this title in Middle Persian and Parthian (*m’h yzd*); (4) The Last Statue has the Parthian form *‘stwmynyzd* (lit. the last god). The 17 divine members altogether have a variety of ca. 75 names, from which two Middle Persian, two Parthian and three Sogdian forms contain the epithet ‘god’. The third category has designations that were created via identifying the original names with Zoroastrian figures. This group has 13 divine figures with ca. 40 variations, from which seven Middle Persian, four Parthian and five Sogdian names contain the respective title ‘god’. In the last category of names via definitions or other cases, 17 figures have ca. 34 variations, from which seven Middle Persian and five Sogdian cases occur. In sum, there are only seven Parthian, 14 Sogdian and 16 Middle Persian forms with ‘god’ appear among the ca. 150 different names. Thus the majority of the divine figures lack such epithets. Middle Persian mainly features in the third and fourth categories, when a Zoroastrian figure is equated with the Manichaean one or definitions are used. Sogdian inherits the Middle Persian and the Parthian form with ‘god’ in four cases, only the Parthian in two cases.

<b>Parthian</b>	<i>m'r(y), mry, xwd'y, fryštg, bwt, [bg / by]</i>	<i>bg / by, yzd</i>
<b>Sogdian</b>	<i>pwt [βγ']</i>	<i>βγγγ, yzδ</i>
<b>Uyghur</b>	<i>burxan, frišti, yalavač</i>	<i>tāñri</i>
<b>Chinese</b>	<i>fo (佛)</i>	<i>fo (佛)</i>

Table 3. Epithets of Manichaean envoys and gods.

Peter Bryder simply states the fact that *fo* translates *bg* and *yzd* (*yazad*), without explanation.<sup>119</sup> Samuel N.C. Lieu's solution to the first question stresses that "[t]here is no convenient non-Buddhist Chinese word for translating the Iranian term *yazd* ('god')", thus the lack of a more appropriate word is the reason; moreover, the groupings into tetrads and pentads also lends itself to Buddhicisation.<sup>120</sup> One may risk speculating in response to the double question posed above that *fo* was chosen precisely because of the indistinct boundaries between the human and the divine realm in China, which is true both for Buddhism<sup>121</sup> and the popular religious context. As for Buddhism, *fo* denoted both Śākyamuni, the historical Buddha, and a series of past and future buddhas,<sup>122</sup> thus this name seems to appropriately express the chain of similar yet slightly different human prophets, who nevertheless descended from the divine realm (Tuṣita heaven), a characteristic so often alluded to in the Manichaean sources (e.g., Chin. *jiang* 降, *xia* 下; Parth. 'wsn [ 'wsxt]; OU *en-* [*entiñiz*]). The same word can also refer to the divine buddhas (partly due to the *trikāya* teachings).

Yet, it seems that there might be a more specific reason: addressing, for example, Mani as a divine rather than a human being, a phenomenon already discernible in the Middle Iranian texts, might also be behind the translation strategy of rendering the human as an indistinct *fo*. Here I

<sup>119</sup> Peter Bryder, "Transmission—Translation—Transformation. Problems Concerning the Spread of Manichaeism from one Culture to Another," in *Studia Manichaica. II. Internationaler Kongreß zum Manichäismus. 6.–10. August 1989, St. Augustin/Bonn*, ed. Gernot Wiessner and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992), 338.

<sup>120</sup> Samuel N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1992), 25.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Gulácsi, *Mani's Pictures*, 355, n. 68.

<sup>122</sup> Bryder, "Transmission—Translation—Transformation," 339.



collected some Middle Iranian citations suggesting that Mani was addressed as a divine figure (*by/bg/yzd* [‘god’], rarely also as *yzd* [‘god’]) relatively early on, even if it may simply be a rhetorical and literary device.

We would praise your name, God, Lord Mani!<sup>123</sup>

We would praise the God Mani, the Lord!<sup>124</sup>

Savior, God Mār Mānī!<sup>125</sup>

[...] eighth Firstborn, powerful understanding, Lord God, Mār Mani, our loving Lord, who, out of mercy, took on a worldly form [...].<sup>126</sup>

Merciful Mār Mānī, God! Redeem me, oh God, Redeem me, [oh God] [...] Forgive my sins, God Mār Mānī!<sup>127</sup>

Teacher. Of Seth thou, O God, art, the After-Buddha, Zarathuštra’s disciple. Thou art Buddha Śākyamuni’s Arhant, O God.<sup>128</sup>

Lo, already 110 years have now passed, since you, (oh) God, ascended to the assembly of Peace.<sup>129</sup>

In these and other hymns Mani, the *par excellence* human envoy, seems to be approached as a divine being, although it must be added that Middle Iranian *by/bg/yzd* (‘god’, ‘lord’) can also function as an honorific epithet when referring to extraordinary individuals who elicit reverence, either because they are of noble descent and high rank, or because they are

<sup>123</sup> Klimkeit, trans., *Gnosis on the Silk Road*, 134; M801a/p3/4–5/ (Middle Persian): *pwr’ m ’w tw n’ m by xwd’ y m’ ny*.

<sup>124</sup> Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road*, 134. M801a/p3/11–12/ (Middle Persian): *pwr’ m ’w by m’ ny xwd’ wn*.

<sup>125</sup> M801a/p4/4/ (Parthian): *’nywg bg mrym’ ny*. See *ibid*.

<sup>126</sup> Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road*, 85. M6232+M6230/V/7–9/ (Parthian): *[h](š)twmyg nwxz’ d t’wg prm’ ng yzd [bg m]ry m’ ny xwd’ ym’ n fryhgwn ky’ xšd wsn’ d lwygy brhm’ st[d]*.

<sup>127</sup> M176/V/4–6, 10 (Parthian): *hw’ xšd m’ ry m’ ny bg’ [tw] mn bwj bg’ tw mn’ bwj [bg’] [...] mn’ (s)t’ r hyr(z’) bg’ m’ ry m’ ny*. English translation of German original, see Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Hymnen und Gebete der Religion des Lichts. Iranische und türkische liturgische Texte der Manichäer Zentralasiens: eingeleitet und aus dem mittelpersischen, Parthischen, Sogdischen und Uigurischen (Altürkischen) übersetzt* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1989), 203.

<sup>128</sup> Morano, “Manichaean Sogdian Poems,” 176. M5264/R/1–5 (Sogdian: Morano, “Manichaean Sogdian Poems,” 175): *šyʔyl (p)š’ (bw)ʔ(yy’ yš) βy’ kt zrwšcyy jwxškyy pwwʔš’ kmn rhnd’ y(š) βy’*. God (Sogd. βy’) is mentioned three more times in this fragment (M5264/R/7, R/9, R/11).

<sup>129</sup> M5/V/ii/11–17/ (Parthian): *tšyy wnwḥḥ bwd’ spwr sd’ wd ds s’ r’ ncy sd’ yy twbg’ w’ njmnr’ myšn’ w’ s*. See Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road*, 86.

prophets with unique wisdom.<sup>130</sup> Be that as it may, the Chinese translator of the Middle Iranian text may have seen the word ‘god’ associated with Mani, even if in the original context it was merely a honorific.<sup>131</sup> In sum, it was not necessarily the Chinese context that urged the translator to merge the human and the divine sphere, since this kind of amalgamation was already present in the original Iranian texts, from which the Chinese translations were made.

The visual portrayal of Manichaean deities in the so-called *Chinese Cosmology Painting*<sup>132</sup> likewise reflects the close association of Manichaean divine beings with the buddhas. For example, the Manichaean sources repeatedly mention three divinities associated with the Sun and the Moon, respectively, and in this relatively late painting, they are indeed visualised as small buddha figures seated on golden lotus thrones (figs. 3–4).

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<sup>130</sup> See e.g. Peschl, “*Bayān ud yazdān*”; Kinga Maciuszak, “On the Iranian honorific title *bag, bay, bay* ‘lord, prince’,” in *Studies on the Turkic World, A Festschrift for Professor Stanisław Stachowski on the Occasion of His 80th Birthday*, ed. E. Mańczak-Wohlfeld and B. Podolak (Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2010), 49–57.

<sup>131</sup> This being said, B. Peschl (“*Bayān ud yazdān*”, 6) emphasises that “[d]ue to the lack of instances in which *bay* addresses a being that is clearly not regarded as divine, it is impossible to ascertain to what degree *bay* functions as a mere honorific in cases such as (19)–(21)”.

<sup>132</sup> Colours on silk, 137.1 cm × 56.6 cm, ca. 14th–15th century, at present owned by an anonymous Japanese private collector, exact provenience unknown. For figs. 3–7, see Yoshida Yutaka 吉田豊 and Furukawa Shōichi 古川攝一, eds., *Chūgoku Kōnan Manikyō kaiga kenkyū* 中国江南マニ教絵画研究 [Studies of the Chinese Manichaean Paintings of South Chinese Origin Preserved in Japan] (Kyoto: Rinsen, 2015), plates 4–6.



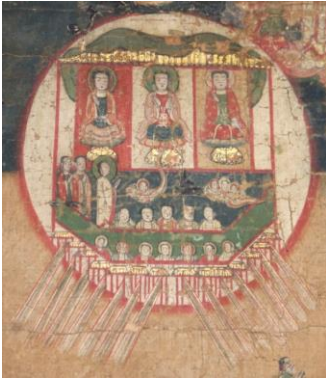


Figure 3. Moon in the *Chinese Cosmology Painting* (detail).  
© anonymous private collector.

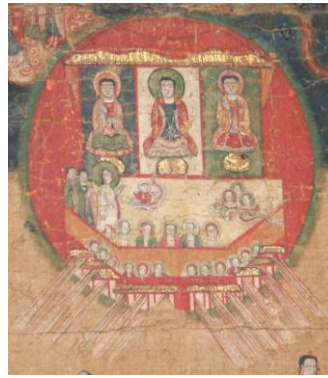


Figure 4. Sun in the *Chinese Cosmology Painting* (detail).  
© anonymous private collector.

Similarly, another deity in the seventh firmament, known as the King of Honour, is also depicted as a buddha figure seated on a golden lotus throne (fig. 5), and similar further, unmistakably divine figures appear in the same position.



Figure 5. King of Honour, *Chinese Cosmology painting* (detail).  
© anonymous private collector.



Figure 6. Former prophets, *Chinese Cosmology painting* (detail).  
© anonymous private collector.



As can be seen above (fig. 6), the former prophets are also depicted as being seated on golden lotus thrones and they also have a single green halo around their head, thus the *Chinese Cosmology Painting* conspicuously reflects the buddha-like features of both the human prophets and the divine beings, who are, moreover, placed at the same level of Buddhahood in the textual sources.

And now let us change our perspective from the title buddha, applied in Manichaeism to various human and divine figures, to one particular buddha, namely, Śākyamuni.

### 3. The Manichaean View of Śākyamuni

In Western texts, it is the word buddha that denotes the historical Buddha, without being preceded or followed by any other name or epithet. Clement of Alexandria's (ca. 150–215) *Strōmateis* [Miscellanies], not yet influenced by Manichaeism, follows this practice: “Some, too, of the Indians obey the precepts of Buddha (Grk. Βούττα); whom, on account of his extraordinary sanctity, they have raised to divine honours.”<sup>133</sup> The first Latin attestation of the name is from the (Ps.-)Marius Victorinus's (fl. 4th c.) *Ad Iustinum manichaeum* [To Iustinus, the Manichaean] (4th c.): “Now, then, do you see how much they are deceived by Mani, Zoroaster, or Buddha (Buddas), by teaching this?”<sup>134</sup> The reference to Buddha in Zacharias Mytilenensis' (ca. 465–ca. 536) *Capita VII contra Manichaeos* [Seven Chapters against the Manichaeans] is based on Hegemonius' (fl. 4th c.) anti-Manichaean *Acta Archelai*:<sup>135</sup> “I anathematize Scythianus and Bouddas, his teachers, and Zarades [Zarathuštra] [...]”<sup>136</sup> Even such a late source as the Greek Abjuration Formula from the 9th century uses the name of Buddha independently: “I anathematize those who say that Zarades [Zarathuštra] and Boudas and Christ and Manichaeus and the sun

<sup>133</sup> *Stromateis* 1.15; See Pettipiece, “The Buddha in Early Christian Literature,” 137.

<sup>134</sup> Pettipiece, “The Buddha in Early Christian Literature,” 135–136.

<sup>135</sup> Samuel N.C. Lieu, “An Early Byzantine Formula for the Renunciation of Manichaeism—The *Capita VII Contra Manichaeos* of ‘Zacharias of Mitylene’.” Introduction, Text, Translation and Commentary,” in *Manichaeism in Mesopotamia and the Roman East*, ed. Samuel N.C. Lieu (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 259.

<sup>136</sup> *Capita VII contra Manichaeos* 2: Ἀναθεματίζω Σκυθιανὸν καὶ Βούδδαν, τοὺς αὐτοῦ διδασκάλους, καὶ Ζαραδίην [...]; Lieu, “An Early Byzantine Formula,” 236.



are one and the same.”<sup>137</sup> Later on, I will cite some Coptic sources, here I refer only to one, in which Mani emphasises that former envoys of light did not record their teachings themselves.

Again, for his part, when Buddha came, [...] about him, fo[r] he too proclaimed [his hope and] great wisdom. He cho[se] his chur[ches, and] perfected his churches. He unve[iled] to them [his hop]e. Yet, there is only this: that he d[id not] write his wi[sdom in bo]oks. His disciples, who came afte[r] him, are the ones who re[membered] somewhat the wisdom that they had heard from Buddha. They [wrote it in sc]riptides.<sup>138</sup>

Thus, while the Western (Latin, Greek Coptic) Manichaean texts label the historical Buddha as ‘the Buddha’, the more Buddhisised “Eastern” sources (Parth. *š’qmn bwt*,<sup>139</sup> Sogd. *š’kmmw pwt*,<sup>140</sup> *š’kymwn*,<sup>141</sup> *pwwtš’kmm*,<sup>142</sup> OU *šakimun[i]*), especially the recently identified Chinese ones (see below), sometimes add various forms of Śākyamuni to specify him, since these latter sources, as we have already seen, regard all the other light envoys as buddhas as well.

While it does not feature in any Chinese Manichaean text from Dunhuang, Śākyamuni occurs as Shijiawen (釋迦文) several times in the manuscript *Mani, the Buddha of Light* from Fujian (MGF 2/4, 47/4, 58/3, 61/8, 63/5, 65/2, 70/6, 77/8, 78/4), in the majority of cases supplemented

<sup>137</sup> Long *Abjuration Formula*, 1465 A: Αναθεματίζω τοὺς τὸν Ζαράδαν καὶ Βουδᾶν καὶ τὸν Χριστὸν καὶ τὸν Μανιχαῖον, καὶ τὸν ἥλιον, ἕνα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν εἶναι λέγοντας.; See Lieu, “An Early Byzantine Formula,” 247.

<sup>138</sup> Iain Gardner, *The Kephalaia of the Teacher: The Edited Coptic Manichaean Texts in Translation with Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 13. 1Ke 7.34–8.8 (Polotsky und Böhlig, *Kephalaia I*, 7): πταρε βογδαδασ ρωϥ αν ει αν . . . [. . . . .] η ετβητηϥ χ[ε] αϥταμωαλιϥ ρωϥ αν η̄. . . . .] πογσοφια επαμωω αϥωτ[η] ηπεϥεκκλ[η]σια . . . .] ρωκ ηπεϥεκκλ[η]σια αϥω[λη] ηεγ αβαλ η̄[τεϥρελη]ηϥ αλλα η̄ε̄ μμετε ηε ξε ηη[εϥ]ερε̄ε̄ τεϥσοφια αϥω[με] ηεϥμαθητης εταγρει ηηη[εϥ]ωϥ ηεταγρ[η]ηεϥε̄ ηηπλαγε ησοφια εταγσατμεϥ η̄ηη βογδαδασ αγ[σαρϥ] ατ[ρα]φη.

<sup>139</sup> M42/R/ii/26; Boyce, *A Reader in Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian*, 171.

<sup>140</sup> So 18248 (T.M. 393), Walter B. Henning, “The Murder of the Magi,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1944): 138.

<sup>141</sup> So 14001a/V/hd, Nicholas Sims-Williams and Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst, *Dictionary of Manichaean Texts, vol. III, Texts from Central Asia and China Part 2, Dictionary of Manichaean Sogdian and Bactrian* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 182.

<sup>142</sup> M5264/R/4; Morano, “Manichaean Sogdian Poems,” 175–176, 182; on the various Buddhist forms, see Pavel Lurje, *Personal Names in Sogdian Texts* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010), 365. Most of the Iranian forms can be traced back to Gāndhārī Prakrit *Śakamuṇi* (Colditz, “Buddhist and Indian Elements,” 11).

by *fo* (佛 [伏]) (except 65/2 and 67/1), in three other instances in a shorter version (47/8, 70/6, 77/9: Shijia 釋迦). It appears only once in the manuscript from Pingnan, surviving in two versions.<sup>143</sup> One of the manuscripts from Fuqing, entitled *Xiangkong baochan* 香空寶懺 [Precious Confession of the Fragrant Air], features the most common form, Shijiamouni (釋迦牟尼).<sup>144</sup>

### 3.1. *The Historical Buddha as One of the Light Envoys*

As mentioned above, Mani attached special importance to the founders of the three main religious traditions: Zarathuštra, Buddha and Jesus. Unlike the antediluvian prophets, they, similarly to Mani himself, established an independent religion. Relevant for us here is this group of three religious' founders, who were greatly respected by Mani, even if from a Manichaean perspective, the religion they had founded ultimately proved to be inferior compared to Manichaeism, because their followers gradually falsified their originally pure teachings.

The Manichaeans assumed that these inferior aspects included, among others, not writing down their message (which could then be distorted by subsequent disciples) or not proselytising in many places in many languages (which limited the geographical scope of the founder's activity). As for the latter aspect, paradoxically, at least two of the above-mentioned religions (Buddhism and Christianity) ultimately spread to a much larger territory and survived for a much longer time than Manichaeism, which, despite all its theoretically rational missionary techniques, ultimately fell into oblivion relatively rapidly. These three envoys are typically presented according to an explicit spatial and an implicit temporal distribution, as, for example, al-Bīrūnī's following quotation from Mani's only Middle Persian work, the *Šābuhragān*, attests:

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<sup>143</sup> W28164: *disan shizun shijiawen fo* 第三世尊釋迦文伏; F25200: *di(=di)san shizun shijiawen fo* 弟(=第)三世尊釋迦文伏.

<sup>144</sup> Yu Lunlun 俞伦伦 and Yang Fuxue 杨富学, "Xiangkong baochan' yu huihu ben 'Monijiao tu chanhui ci' tongyuan shuo 福清本《香空宝忏》与回鹘本《摩尼教徒忏悔词》同源说 [On the shared origin between the Fuqing version of 'The Xiangkong Precious Repentance' and the Uighur Version of 'The Manichean Confessions (Xuāstvánift)]," *Dongfang luntan—Qingdao daxue xuebao (Shehui kexue ban)* 东方论坛—青岛大学学报 (社会科学版) [Eastern Forum—Journal of the Qingdao University (Social Science Edition)] 2024/2 (2024): 152.



Wisdom and deeds have always from time to time been brought to mankind by the messengers of God. So in one age they have been brought by the messenger, called Buddha, to India, in another by Zarādusht (= Zarathushtra) to Persia, in another by Jesus to the West. Thereupon this revelation has come down, this prophecy in this last age, through me, Mānī, messenger of the God of truth to Babylonia.<sup>145</sup>

As in all the other cases, Buddha is thus naturally linked to India; however, what is not evident is his first position in the implicit chronological order. Buddha's primary role is referred to in some other sources as well, which most probably also go back to the Middle Persian *Šābuhragān*.<sup>146</sup>

Buddha to the east, and Aurentes,<sup>147</sup> and the other who were sent to the orient; from the advent of Buddha and Aurentes up to the advent of Zarathustra to Persia, the occasion that he came to Hystaspes the king; from the advent of Zarathustra up to the advent of Jesus the Christ, the son of greatness.<sup>148</sup>

Yazdānbakht<sup>149</sup> asserted in his book that Adam was the first prophet, then Seth, then (and) Noah. Then He (i.e., God) sent the Buddha to India, and

<sup>145</sup> Sachau, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, 190.

<sup>146</sup> Sundermann, "Manichaean Traditions on the Date of the Historical Buddha," 430.

<sup>147</sup> Though not unproblematic, it is widely accepted that *aurentēs* is the Coptic form of *arhant*. See, e.g., Werner Sundermann, "Manichaean Traditions on the Date of the Historical Buddha," 441, n. 28: "Certainly *arhant*, as suggested by H.H. Schaeder [1936: 95, n. 1]." See also Nicholas Sims-Williams, "Aurentes," in *Studia Manichaica. IV. Internationaler Kongreß zum Manichäismus, Berlin, 14.–18. Juli 1997 (Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berichte und Abhandlungen, Sonderband)*, ed. Ronald E. Emmerick, Werner Sundermann, and Peter Zieme (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000), 560–563. Michel Tardieu ("La diffusion du bouddhisme," 173, n. 31) raises the possibility, while Max Deeg and Iain Gardner argue extensively that ultimately it rather derives from a Jaina, and not a Buddhist, background. See Max Deeg and Iain Gardner, "Indian Influence on Mani Reconsidered. The Case of Jainism," *International Journal of Jaina Studies (Online)* 5.2 (2009): 15–19.

<sup>148</sup> Gardner, *The Kephalaia of the Teacher*, 18; Gardner and Lieu, *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire*, 263. 1Ke 12.9–20:  $\text{BOY}\Delta\Delta\text{AC ATANATONH MH AYRENTHC MH NKE. [...]TE ETAYTINHAYCOY APCANHPPE XH NTBHN[EI] NBOY}\Delta\Delta\text{AC MH AYRENTHC YAZPHI ATBINEI NZ[A]P\Delta\text{NHC ATPERCIC PCAH ETAYEI YA ZYCTACPHC [HP]PO XH NTBINEI NZAP\Delta\text{NHC YAZPHI ATBINEI NIHC [N]XPC} \text{PWHPRE NTMHNTNAB.}$  See Hans Jacob Polotsky und Alexander Böhlig, ed. and trans., *Kephalaia I, 1. Hälfte (Lieferung 1–10)* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1940), 12.

<sup>149</sup> The Manichaean Yazdānbakht's source again was the *Šābuhragān*; on Carsten Colpe's view cited by Sundermann, "Manichaean Traditions on the Date of the Historical Buddha," 431.

Zarādušt to Persia, and Jesus to the West, and then Mānī the Paraclete, ‘seal of the prophets.’ (Q 33:40) and guide of the attested prophets. Thus also has Mānī related in his book.<sup>150</sup>

Thus, in the relatively early *Šābuhragān*, so goes the scholarly consensus, Mani followed the chronological order Buddha, Zarathuštira and Jesus, therefore every source that is based on this work presents the same order.<sup>151</sup> However, in some later Manichaean scriptures (such as the *Book of Giants*, the Parthian hymn M42, or the Dublin *Kephalaia*, as well as some later Muslim descriptions or Christian abjuration formula), the envoys’ order underwent a minor change, and consequently, Buddha became the second member in this list.<sup>152</sup>

For my sake Zarathushtra descended into the realm of Persia. [...] My suffering ceased at the time when I was heard by Buddha Śākyamuni. [...] Then Jesus had mercy for a second time.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism*, 127; *Kitāb al-munya wa-’l-amal*, 301. Practically the same text appears in *Bayān al-adyān*, 491; translated by Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism*, 183–184, and *Kitāb al-mūlal wa-’l-niḥāl* 1, 629.10–630.5, translated by Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism*, 104.

<sup>151</sup> Werner Sundermann notes that Šahrastānī (1086–1135) places the Buddha (Arabical-Budda) between Ibrāhīm (Abraham) and Zarādušt, while Ibn al-Murtaḍā (1363–1436) and Abu l-Ma’ālī (fl. second half of 11th c.) places him between Noah and Zarādušt; thus, all the three authors think that the Buddha predates Zarathuštira. See Werner Sundermann, “Manichaean Traditions on the Date of the Historical Buddha,” 442. Carsten Colpe (*Der Manichäismus in der arabischen Überlieferung* (Phil. Diss., Göttingen University, 1954), 81–82, 147) states that the source of Šahrastānī’s and al-Murtaḍā’s knowledge was the Manichaean Yazdānbaxt, who in turn relied on the *Šābuhragān*.

<sup>152</sup> Tardieu, “La diffusion du bouddhisme,” 165; Sundermann, “Manichaean Traditions on the Date of the Historical Buddha,” 431–435; Ma Xiaohē 馬小鶴, *Xiapu wenshu yanjiu* 霞浦文書研究 [Studies on the Documents from Xiapu] (Lanzhou: Lanzhou daxue chubanshe, 2014), 248–249. On the Dublin *Kephalaia* excerpt, see Tardieu, “La diffusion du bouddhisme,” 163–164. If we accept that the polemical *Acta Archelai* is the parody of an original Manichaean work, then Mani’s predecessors, Scythianus (Zarathuštira) and Terebinthus (Buddha), also follow the non-*Šābuhragān* order. See Wassilios Klein, “The Epic Buddhacarita by Aśvagoṣa and its Significance for the ‘Life of Mani’,” in *New Perspectives in Manichaean Research. Proceedings of the Vth International Conference of Manichaean Studies, Napoli 2001*, ed. Alois van Tongerloo and Luigi Cirillo (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 224.

<sup>153</sup> Morano, “Manichaean Middle Iranian Texts,” 150–151 (Parthian M42/R/ii/10–13, M42/R/ii/24–M42/V/i/1, M42/V/i/13–14), cf. Lodewijk J.R. Ort, *Mani. A Religio-Historical Description of his Personality* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 119–120.



The first whom God Most Exalted sent with knowledge (*'ilm*) was Adam, then Seth, and then Noah. Then he sent Zarādusht (i.e., Zoroaster) to Persia, the Buddha to India, Jesus the Christ to the countries of the West, and then, Mānī, ‘seal of the prophets’<sup>154</sup> (Q 33:40).<sup>155</sup>

This modification of the positions is commonly attributed to Mani’s becoming better acquainted with the traditions concerning these prophets’ successive temporal order.<sup>156</sup>

By adding new figures, other sources, like the next one quoted here, represent a slightly more complicated structure, nevertheless preserving the fundamental concept of Zarathuštra in Persia, Buddha in India and Jesus in the West:

Behold, I will [tell] you about each one of the apostles by name, they who came (and) appeared in this world. Zarades was sent to Persia, to Hystaspes the king. He revealed the truly-founded law in all of Persia. Again, Bouddas, the sage (psovos),<sup>157</sup> the blessed, he came to the land of India and Kushan. He also revealed the truly-founded law (nomos) in all of India and Kushan. After him again, Aurentes came with Kebellos to the east. They also revealed the truly-founded law in the east. Elchasai (?) came to Parthia. He revealed the law of truth in all of Parthia. Jesus the Christ came to the west. He (also ?) revealed the truth in all of the west. [Now, all] these apostles of God [...]<sup>158</sup>

<sup>154</sup> This expression occurs only in Muslim testimonies and does not go back to Mani. See Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, “‘Seal of the Prophets.’ The Nature of a Manichaean Metaphor,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7 (1986): 61–74; Timothy Pettipiece, “A Church to Surpass All Churches: Manichaeism as a Test Case for the Theory of Reception,” *Laval théologique et philosophique* 61.2 (2005): 249, n. 5.

<sup>155</sup> Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism*, 102. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Kitāb al-Mughnī* [The Book of Plenitude], 5:15.

<sup>156</sup> See, e.g., Sundermann, “Manichaean Traditions on the Date of the Historical Buddha,” 446–447; Manfred Hutter, “Buddha in Iranian Manichaean Writings,” in *Zur lichten Heimat. Studien zu Manichäismus, Iranistik und Zentralasienkunde im Gedenken an Werner Sundermann*, ed. Team Turfanforschung (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017), 222–223; Colditz, “Buddhist and Indian Elements,” 12. Cf. Sundermann’s statement about Mani’s knowledge of the historical Buddha: “It is impossible to tell how much Mani ever knew about the historical Buddha. The very date he attributed to his life-time shows that it must have been minimal. (...) ... Mani’s knowledge about the Buddha and his time was and remained insignificant, although he could improve on his chronological ideas.” See Sundermann, “Manichaean Traditions on the Date of the Historical Buddha,” 440, 448.

<sup>157</sup> This has been left out from the English translation; it is not clear whether this Coptic ‘sage’ is related to the historical Buddha’s other name, the sage (‘muni’) of the Śākyas, cf. Tardieu, “La diffusion du bouddhisme,” 167–168.

<sup>158</sup> Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dille, *The Chapters of the Wisdom of My Lord Mani*, 165, 167, cf. Tardieu, “La diffusion du bouddhisme”; Gardner, “Some Comments on Mani and



The same, new order is mentioned in a Sogdian fragment (So 18248 I [TM 393]),<sup>159</sup> which furthermore lists the evil forces (‘calumniators’ and ‘sinners’) who attempted to disqualify and destroy the original envoys of light.<sup>160</sup> The list is as follows:

- (1) Adam: Eve (Martēn) was the first calumniator and sinner; the first murderer was Cain;<sup>161</sup>
- (2) Zarathuštra: the first calumniator was Žāmāsp (Jāmāsp) and King Naksintar (= Alexander), who murdered the Magi, and Kūyūne, the son of Ahriman;
- (3) Buddha Śākyamuni: here Upagupta (?) and King Šoka act as calumniators, and the sinner was Devadatta, see the quotation below;
- (4) Christ and Christian religion:<sup>162</sup> the first calumniator was Iscariot, and the sinner was Satan.

Here we merely examine the statements about the Buddha more closely: “The third calumniator was WPR’TT (= Upagupta?), the *śramaṇa*,—and King Šoka (= Aśoka), who slandered buddha Śākman, and further the sinner Devadatta who spoils the Buddha’s religion.”<sup>163</sup> The reason for the reference to Devadatta is obvious, his negative role is similarly mentioned in a Parthian dialogue (M42) with the same post-

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Indian Religions from the Coptic Sources,” 130–131. Gardner was the first to propose that *kebellos* should be matched with the Jaina concept of *kevali(n)*. See *ibid.*, 135. Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dilley, *The Chapters of the Wisdom of My Lord Mani*, 164, 166 (2Ke 422.28–423.13): εἰ[σ]ϱητε φη[τα] μακ απογ(ε) πογε π̄ναποστολος κατανοηρεν πεταγει αγ̄ωλῑ αβαλ ε̄πικμοσ φαθ αγ̄αγζαραδνε απερσις ψαγ̄σταςπνε π̄ρο αφογω̄η̄πνομοσ [αβ]αλ ετсман̄т̄ м̄не ρ̄ηтπεрсис т̄η̄р̄с vac βογ̄δδас [α]η πмакаριос а̄чеи апкаρ̄ м̄пρ̄η̄тоγ̄ м̄п̄гоγ̄ӯан [α]χογω̄η̄ αν αβαλ м̄п̄номоσ εтсман̄т̄ м̄не ε̄μ̄ρη̄η̄тоγ̄ т̄η̄р̄ц̄ м̄п̄гоγ̄ӯан φαθ м̄п̄сωγ̄ ан (α)αγ̄ρη̄π̄т̄не ει м̄п̄ κ̄ν̄β̄η̄λλοσ ατανατολη αγ̄ογω̄η̄ αν αβα[λ] м̄п̄номоσ εтсман̄т̄ м̄не ρ̄η̄т̄анаτολη φαθ αελ . . [ . . ] ει ατπαρ̄θ̄ια αφογω̄η̄π̄ноμοσ π̄т̄м̄не α[βλ]η ρ̄η̄т̄παρ̄θ̄ια φαθ т̄η̄р̄с̄ ᾱӣс̄ п̄χ̄ρ̄с̄ ει апсаη̄ρω̄т̄п̄ αφογω̄η̄п̄ε̄ . [.] π̄т̄м̄не ε̄μ̄п̄саη̄ρω̄т̄п̄ т̄η̄р̄ц̄ φαθ π̄наποστολος [δε т̄η̄ρογ̄]̄ π̄т̄επ̄ноγ̄те.

<sup>159</sup> See Henning, “The Murder of the Magi.”

<sup>160</sup> Prods Oktor Skjærvø quotes a parallel from the *Dēnkard* (7.7.4–8). See Prods Oktor Skjærvø, “Iranian Epic and the Manichean Book of Giants. Irano-Manichaica III,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 48 (1995): 195.

<sup>161</sup> This same part also mentions the Brahmanical religion.

<sup>162</sup> Mani naturally does not appear in this list, since Manicheans, evidently, did not consider their religion as a distorted one.

<sup>163</sup> Henning, “The Murder of the Magi,” 141. So 18248/IR1/29–33: ZY ’št’ykw ’ps’yypw w’b’k ’yw wpr’tt šmny wm’tw rtyw šwk’ MLK̄y<sup>sic</sup> ky prw š’kmmw pwt’y ’ps’yypw w’tw δ’rt ZY ms ’yw tyβō’ty ’krt’nk’r’y ky [Z]Kw pwt’y d̄ynh nštwd’rty.



*Šābuhragān* order, which lists Zarathuštra's, Buddha's and Christ's enemies as Satan, Devadatta,<sup>164</sup> and Iscariot, respectively:

My suffering ceased at the time when Šākyamuni Buddha (*š`qmn bwt*) [...]. He opened the door of liberation for the fortunate souls who were saved among the Indians (*hndwg`n*). Because of the means and wisdom that you, great virgin, had received from Buddha, Devadatta (*dybt*) envied you. When he (the Buddha) entered into Nirvāṇa, he commanded you: 'Await Maitreya (*mytrg*) here!'<sup>165</sup>

However, the first two names in the Sogdian passage above pose serious difficulties. While Eve and Cain, Alexander, Iscariot and Satan are self-evident opponents of these religious founders, the figures appearing as Šākyamuni's calumniators are definitely puzzling. For *wpr`tt*, Henning proposed Upagupta, and explained the strange form with several distortions of the Prakritic Upagutta.<sup>166</sup> To the best of my knowledge, no other proposition for this identification has been put forward. With Upagupta being closely associated with Aśoka,<sup>167</sup> it was logical that King *šwk`*, despite the missing initial *aleph*, was identified by Henning as Aśoka.<sup>168</sup> If this is correct, then this is either gross misinformation, or it reflects the Manichaean tradition, which focuses on his pre-conversion personality (Kāmāśoka, 'Aśoka, the voluptuous' and Caṇḍāśoka, 'Aśoka, the fierce') and ignoring the subsequent generous patron of Buddhism

<sup>164</sup> The text has, which was formerly identified as Dībat, i.e. Venus, but Prods Oktor Skjærvø realised that Dībat (Khotanese Dīvata) is identical with Devadatta. See Prods Oktor Skjærvø, "Venus and the Buddha, or How Many Steps to Nirvana? Some Buddhist Elements in Manichean Literature," in *Iranian and Indo-European Studies: Memorial Volume of Otokar Klīma*, ed. Petr Vavroušek (Prague: Enigma Corporation, 1994), 243.

<sup>165</sup> BeDuhn, "Nārāyaṇa Buddha," 4; cf. Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road*, 125.

<sup>166</sup> Henning, "The Murder of the Magi," 141, n. 3; repeated *apud* Lurje, *Personal Names in Sogdian Texts*, 412.

<sup>167</sup> See John S. Strong, *The Legend and Cult of Upagupta: Sanskrit Buddhism in North India and Southeast Asia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 145–167 and various parts in John S. Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka. A Study and Translation of the Aśokāvadāna* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).

<sup>168</sup> Henning, "The Murder of the Magi," 141, n. 4; repeated *apud* Lurje, *Personal Names in Sogdian Texts*, 374. In a conference talk Jason BeDuhn mentions that Max Deeg, in private communication, opined that this description rather fits King Ajātaśatru, who, before his conversion, supported Devadatta in his various plots against the Buddha. See Jason D. BeDuhn, "Manichaean Evidence for Kushan Buddhism," Tang Center for Silk Road Studies Annual Conference, UC Berkeley [May 3–4, 2019], min. 01:16; last accessed November 6, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9Av2cyEIIw>; Wu Juan. "Ajātaśatru," in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism. Volume II: Lives*, ed. Jonathan A. Silk (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 51.

(Dharmāsoka).<sup>169</sup> In contrast with the *Mahāvamsa* [The Great Chronicle], the *Aśokāvadāna* [The Story of Aśoka] draws a complex portrait of Aśoka, which includes several negative traits, like his appalling physical appearance and his multiple cruel acts, including his tricking and killing his brother, his finding pleasure in torturing people in his prison, decapitating five hundred ministers and burning five hundred concubines.<sup>170</sup> Strangely enough, these types of ferocious deeds do not cease with his conversion,<sup>171</sup> though this time these violent deeds are not targeted against Buddhists. Following the observation made by Pradeep P. Gokhale, John S. Strong elucidates this phenomenon by emphasising the inherently evil aspect that Indian traditions ascribed to kingship.<sup>172</sup>

Similarly, an analogy for a unique Manichaean tradition may be drawn with Jāmāsp, who is otherwise described as Zarathuštra’s faithful disciple, as evidenced, for example, in the *Jāmāsp Nāmag* [Story of Jamasp].<sup>173</sup> Although Aśoka’s later hagiographies may have distorted his originally more balanced attitude towards contemporary religions, and thus Buddhism was not necessarily his sole focus,<sup>174</sup> there is no manifest reason to call him a slanderer from a Buddhist point of view.<sup>175</sup>

### 3.2. *Śākyamuni Buddha in Manuscript Mani, the Buddha of Light*

As mentioned earlier in connection with two charts of envoys, as well as all other enumerations in the entire Fujianese corpus, these lists clearly follow the so-called post-*Šābuhragān* order (i.e. Zarathuštra precedes Śākyamuni), which is somewhat strange, since the *Šābuhragān*, under the

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<sup>169</sup> I thank Jens Wilkens for this suggestion.

<sup>170</sup> Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka*, 40–41, 210–211.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 41–42.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 42–43.

<sup>173</sup> Sundermann, “Manichaean Traditions on the Date of the Historical Buddha,” 443. For an overview and further references, see Domenico Agostini, “Rediscovering the Jāmāspi: A Walk in Four Steps,” *Iranian Studies* 45.2 (2012): 169–180.

<sup>174</sup> Jason D. BeDuhn, “Mani and the Crystallization of the Concept of ‘Religion’ in Third Century Iran,” in *Mani at the Court of the Persian Kings. Studies on the Chester Beatty Kephalaia Codex*, ed. Iain Gardner, Jason D. BeDuhn, and Paul Dilley (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 259.

<sup>175</sup> Unlike the historical Aśoka, the legendary figure in *Aśokāvadāna* was hostile towards Ājīvikas (a group related to the Jains), see Strong, *The Legend and Cult of Upagupta*, 232–233.

title *Erzongjing* 二宗經 [The Scripture of the Two Principles], was probably well known among Chinese Manichaeans.<sup>176</sup>

As mentioned above, the *Chinese Cosmology Painting* visualises Mani's four forerunners with a green halo as seated on golden lotus thrones in the so-called New Paradise (fig. 6). Recognisable by his 'turban, protuberance' (Skt. *uṣṇīṣa*), Śākyamuni can be seen second to the onlooker's right. This tetrad of envoys on the right is supplemented by Mani's figure on the left side of the same colourful abode receiving a new revelation from three angels. This scene thus depicts the four former envoys of light who have already returned to the New Paradise, together with Mani who is about to leave this realm to take the same message to humankind (fig. 7).<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Cf. Christiane Reck, "Šābuhragān," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sabuhragan>, accessed March 11, 2023.

<sup>177</sup> Zsuzsanna Gulácsi (*Mani's Pictures*, 367–368) opines that the four seated figures represent Mani, Zarathuštra, Śākyamuni and Jesus from left to right; however, given that Mani is consistently visualised as a person clad in a white robe and white cloak with a red hem, the figure on the left can hardly be identical to the founder of Manichaeism. As for the fragmentary depiction of III 4947 + III 5d, Gulácsi gave several reconstructions and interpretations: she assumed a central deity (the Father of Greatness or the Light Mind) surrounded by Mani and his three predecessors (Zarathuštra, Buddha, Jesus), or a central Mani surrounded by four Primary Prophets (Seth, Zarathuštra, Buddha, Jesus), for all the relevant quotations, see Gábor Kósa, "The Manichaean 'New Paradise' in Text and Image," *Crossroads* 13 (2016): 91, n. 304. Back in 1923, Albert von Le Coq already expressed the view that Mani may have been in the middle with the acknowledged prophets around him: "Das ursprünglich ziemlich große Bild zeigte augenscheinlich eine größere Figur in Nimbus (und Mandorla?), deren Reste wir erblicken. Sie war umgeben von kleinen Figuren ähnlicher Art und es sei, vermutungsweise, ausgesprochen, daß die Mittelfigur vielleicht die des Mani war, während die anderen Figuren die übrigen vom Manitum anerkannten Erlöser dargestellt haben mögen." See Albert von Le Coq, *Die buddhistische Spätantike im Mittelasien. II. Die manichäischen Miniaturen* (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1923), 45. This view was also embraced by Christiane Reck; see Reck, "Snatches of the Middle Iranian", 247.



Figure 7. Mani receives revelation  
from three Angels. *Chinese  
Cosmology Painting* (detail).  
© anonymous private collector



In the following I will present some lines or passages about the Buddha biography in the MGF, also adding a brief analysis of their content.

The third: Śākya[muni] was incarnated in a royal palace.<sup>178</sup>

As mentioned above, MGF 47/1–5 has a chart, which is then followed by very brief references to the life of the Light Envoys. The last column of this page stresses Śākyamuni's (here abbreviated as *Shijia* 釋迦) royal origin, a motif recurring in MGF 77/9. The verb *tuo* (托) is here obviously equivalent with *tuo* (託),<sup>179</sup> and refers to an important person's incarnation (Chin. *tuosheng* 託生), which 'biographical' emphasis is somewhat different from the other Light Envoys' short presentations, which rather highlight other features, like time in the case of Nārāyaṇa (Chin. *chushiren* 初世人) and supernatural attributes in the case of Zarathuštra (Chin. *shenmenbian* 神門變) and Jesus (Chin. *shenguangxian* 神光現).<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> MGF 47/8: *San, Shijia tuo wang gong* 三, 釋迦托王宮.

<sup>179</sup> Cf. *Da fanguang ru rulai zhide bu siyi jing* 大方廣入如來智德不思議經 [Mahāvaiṣṭya Sūtra of Entering a Tathāgata's Inconceivable State of Wisdom, T. 304.10, 928a19–20]: 釋迦如來現託王宮.

<sup>180</sup> Mani's subsequent (MGF 48/2–3) 'short bio', which is as long as the preceding bios of the four envoys, offers both a spatial (Chin. *Sulin* 蘇隣) and a temporal ('the final light envoy', Chin. *zuihou guangming shi* 最後光明使) definition.



3.2.1. MGF 63/5–7 (fig. 8)

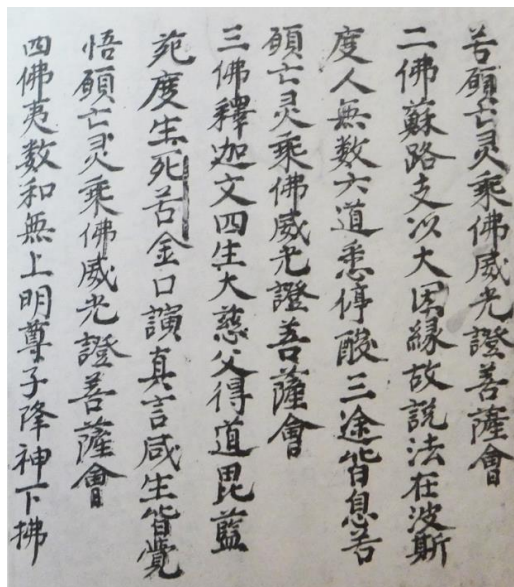


Figure 8. MGF 63 owned by Chen Peisheng (陈培生), Xiapu county, Fujian, Late Qing or Republican time.

Bao Lang 包朗 and Yang Fuxue 杨富学, *Xiapu Monijiao wenxian 'Moni guangfo' yanjiu* 霞浦摩尼教文献《摩尼光佛》研究 [Studies on the Manichaean Document 'Mani, the Buddha of Light' from Xiapu] (Lanzhou: Gansu wenhua chubanshe, 2020), 321.

This short 'biography' contains general, eulogical statements with very little concrete information:

MGF [63/5] 三佛釋迦文，四生大慈父，得道毘藍 [63/6] 苑，度生死苦。金口演真言，咸(=含)<sup>181</sup>生皆覺 [63/7] 悟。[願亡靈乘佛威光，證菩薩會。]<sup>182</sup>

<sup>181</sup> Wang Chuan 汪娟 and Ma Xiaohe 馬小鶴, "Xiapu wenshu 'Moni guangfo' kece chongding ben 霞浦文書《摩尼光佛》科冊重訂本 [A re-edited Version of the Xiapu manuscript entitled 'Mani, the Buddha of Light']," *Dunhuangxue* 敦煌學 37 (2021): 38.

<sup>182</sup> This prayer is present due to the funerary character of the entire manuscript and is repeated after each invocation; consequently, it is not part of the biography proper.



First, it has Śākyamuni (Chin. Shijiawen 釋迦文),<sup>183</sup> which form is almost invariably used in the Fujianese corpus, often supplemented with the word *fo*. Although the expression “the great affectionate father of the four (kinds of) beings” (Chin. *sisheng dacifu* 四生大慈父) as a whole does not occur in the Buddhist Canon, an abbreviated version (without *da* 大) does appear several times:

As for the Buddha, he is the Dharma King of the three realms, the affectionate father of the four [kinds of] beings.<sup>184</sup>

As for the Buddha, he is the great teacher of the three realms, the affectionate father of the four [kinds of] beings.<sup>185</sup>

Our Buddha Tathāgata is the Medicine King of the three realms and the affectionate father of the four [kinds of] beings, who heals the mental diseases of all the sentient beings.<sup>186</sup>

The only specific information in this short text is the following statement: “He attained enlightenment in the Lumbinī park” (Chin. *dedao*

<sup>183</sup> On this form, see, e.g., Karashima Seishi 辛嶋靜志, *A Glossary of Lokakṣema's Translation of The Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā/Dōgyō hanniyagyo shiten* 道行般若經詞典 (Tokyo: The International Research Institute of Advanced Buddhology, Soka University, 2010), 447–448.

<sup>184</sup> *Qinzunsheng tuoluoni jing shu* 錢尊勝陀羅尼經疏 [Commentary to the *Uṣṇīṣa Vijaya Dhāraṇī Sūtra*, T. 1803.39, 1019a11–12]: 佛者三界法王, 四生慈父.

<sup>185</sup> *Nian fo jing* 念佛鏡 [Buddha-recitation Mirror, T. 1966.47, 121b05]: 夫佛者三界大師, 四生慈父.

<sup>186</sup> *Zimen jingxun* 緇門警訓 [Admonitions for Monastics, T. 2023.48, 1071b19–20]: 我佛如來為三界醫王, 四生慈父, 醫一切眾生心病. The 12th century *Mi'an chanshi yulu* 密庵禪師語錄 [Recorded Sayings of Chan Teacher Mi'an, T. 1999.47], recording Chan master Mi'an Xianjie's (1118–1186, 密庵咸傑) words, calls both Śākyamuni and Laozi “the affectionate father of the four (kinds of) beings” (T. 1999.47, 960b05–6: 釋迦老子為四生慈父, 三界醫王[...]); the same in the *Liezu tigang lu* 列祖提綱錄 [Record of the Essential Sayings of the Patriarchs, XZJ 1260.64, 138a23]; moreover, in the *Blue Cliff Record* (*Biyantu* 碧巖錄, full title: *Foguo Yuanwu chanshi Biyanlu* 佛果園悟禪師碧巖錄, The Blue Cliff Record of the Chan Master Yuanwu, the ‘Fruition of Buddhahood’) the same message is expressed in a somewhat more abstract way (T. 2003.48, 209a08–09: 道佛是三界導師四生慈父). In another *sūtra*, the Buddha narrates a former life of his, in which a former Buddha (Dajue Shizun 大覺世尊, “The World-honoured One of the Great Enlightenment,” a title later applied to the historical Buddha as well) in Vaiśālī encourages him to become enlightened, and predicts that he will become Śākyamuni Buddha, the affectionate father of the four (kinds) of sentient beings, the guide in the six ways of reincarnations, and transmit the Teachings. See *Foshuo dabian xiezhen jing* 佛說大辯邪正經 [Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on the Great Distinction between False and True], T. 2893.85, 1411b27–c01: 大覺世尊言: 『願汝當來成道, 號為本師釋迦牟尼佛, 常為一切眾生為四生慈父, 六道導師, 恒居三界, 接引群迷, 流傳此法。』

*pilanyuan* 得道毘藍苑). Theoretically, the motif of the Lumbinī park could belong to the next phrase (“in the Lumbinī park he saved [them] from the sufferings of *samsāra*”), but the parallels in the other short biographies point to a specific structure of the characters (5+5+5+4+5+5)<sup>187</sup> that does not make this option probable. Neither *dedao* (得道) nor *pilanyuan* (毘藍苑) appears elsewhere in the MG; for that matter, the name of the place in this form (Pilanyuan 毘藍苑) does not appear in any Buddhist scripture,<sup>188</sup> but, as Wang Juan and Ma Xiaohu note in their commentary, it must refer to the Lumbinī park.<sup>189</sup> The problem is, however, that Lumbinī is the famous park where Māyā gave birth to Śākyamuni, and it is not identical to the traditional place of enlightenment, to which *dedao* seems to refer. I did my best to find Buddhist passages where the compound *dedao* and any of the numerous forms of Lumbinī are mentioned together, but to no avail: this park is invariably associated with the place of the Buddha’s birth.<sup>190</sup> Thus, at first glance, unless we surmise that the Manichaean author regarded the Buddha’s birth as a potential for his later enlightenment, it is hard to reconcile it with the traditional accounts.

This being said, Huilin’s (737–820, 慧琳) *Yiqie jing yinyi* 一切經音義 [Pronunciation and Meaning in the Complete Buddhist Canon, T. 2128.54] nevertheless associates the park (Chin. Liumi 流彌, Lanpi 嵐毘) with the place of liberation (Chin. *jietuo chu* 解脫處), albeit

<sup>187</sup> Kōsa, “Mānī’s Religious Forerunners,” 97–98.

<sup>188</sup> However, almost the same form does appear in *Fanyi mingyi ji* 翻譯名義集 [A Collection of Names and Their Explanations in (Buddhist) Translations, T. 2131.54, 1100b04]: 毘藍名苑.

<sup>189</sup> Wang Chuan 汪娟 and Ma Xiaohu 馬小鶴, “Xiapu wenshu ‘Moni guangfo’ kece de yiwen fuyuan 霞浦文書《摩尼光佛》科冊的儀文復原 [The Restored Text of the Xiapu Manuscript Entitled ‘Mani the Buddha of Light’],” *Dunhuang xue* 敦煌學 [Dunhuang Studies] 32 (2016): 32, n. 140: 「毘」通「毗」。指毗藍園, 釋迦牟尼佛誕生之處。亦稱毗藍尼園; 或作藍毗尼園, 嵐毗尼園, 簡稱嵐園等。The same in Wang and Ma, “Xiapu wenshu ‘Moni guangfo’ kece chongding ben,” 38, n. 197. See also Yang Fuxue 楊富學 and Bao Lang 包朗, “Xiapu Monijiao xin wenxian ‘Moni guangfo’ jiaozhu 霞浦摩尼教新文獻《摩尼光佛》校注 [Critical edition of ‘Mānī, the Buddha of Light’, a new, Manichaean document from Xiapu],” *Hanshan si foxue* 寒山寺佛學 [The Buddhism of Hanshan Temple] 10 (2015): 107, n. 2; Ma, *Xiapu wenshu yanjiu*, 263.

<sup>190</sup> Buddha’s victorious return to Lumbinī after his enlightenment (Skt. *lumbinīyātrā*) seems to be a more recent development in Newar Buddhism, and thus could hardly influence this description. See Gudrun Bühnemann, “The Buddha’s (Return) Journey to Lumbinī (*lumbinīyātrā*),” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens/Vienna Journal of South Asian Studies* 54 (2011–2012): 121–150.



on semantic and not on historical grounds, claiming that Lumbinī means the place of liberation in Sanskrit,<sup>191</sup> but even in these cases it is often remarked that this was the place of Buddha's birth, not his enlightenment. Thus, the following possibilities emerge: (1) The author of the text had no idea at all about the most fundamental bits of the standard biography of the Buddha, and thus he took Lumbinī as the place of enlightenment; (2) *Dedao* 得道 does not mean enlightenment here, but refers to the would-be Buddha's incarnation; (3) *Pilanyuan* 毘藍苑 does not designate the Lumbinī park here; (4) In the local, Fujianese tradition, Lumbinī park was associated with the act of enlightenment; (5) They followed a tradition similar to that recorded in the *Yiqie jing yinyi*; (6) Liberation counts from the moment of the Buddha's appearance in the world (see his famous first words).

In any case, without definitively choosing one of these options, the passage in question can be translated as follows:

The third buddha was Śākyamuni, the great affectionate father of the four (kinds of) beings, who attained the way, in the Lumbinī park, he saved [them] from the sufferings of *samsāra*, with his diamond mouth, he preached the words of truth<sup>192</sup>, all the living beings became enlightened. [We wish that the deceased spirit would ride the buddhas' majestic brilliance, and bear witness to the community of bodhisattvas!]

As seen from the subsequent sentence, the author of the Manichaean passage, nevertheless, must have thought of the Buddha's sermons (perhaps the first one[s]), since the power of the Buddha's sermon is emphasised. The 'golden mouth' (Chin. *jinkou* 金口) with which the Buddha expounds (Chin. *yan* 演) his teachings is again a Buddhist expression: it is usually followed by the word explanation *shuo* (說), 'to explain,' in the Buddhist *sūtras*, to cite two examples:

The *tathāgata* explained the *dharma* with his golden mouth, the wonderful sound subdues the humans and the gods [...]<sup>193</sup>

<sup>191</sup> See *Yiqie jing yinyi*, T. 2128.54, 433a12; other similar places: *Fanyi mingyi ji*, T. 2131.54, 1167c24–25; *Yiqie jing yinyi*, T. 2128.54, 433a12, 678c13–14.

<sup>192</sup> *Zhen yan* 真言 literally means "true words" and it often designates a mantra.

<sup>193</sup> *Jin guangming zuisheng wang jing* 金光明最勝王經 [Sūtra of Golden Light, T. 665.16, 436b25]: 如來金口演說法, 妙響調伏諸人天[...].

When the Buddha was present in the world, he was teaching with his golden mouth, only his voice was the explanation and the argument, the hearers became enlightened, thus (they) considered (his) sermon as a scripture.<sup>194</sup>

If one compares the above description with the four other envoys' short biographies preceding and following it, it is noticeable that the general tone used in Buddha's biography greatly resembles those of the others. Each bio of the four messengers preceding Mani applies a fundamentally Buddhist terminology,<sup>195</sup> and almost all of them mention at least one place name: Nārāyaṇa: the brāhmins' (Chin. *boluomen* 波羅門) country; Zarathuštra (Chin. Suluzhi 蘇路支): Persia (Chin. Bosi 波斯); Śākyamuni (釋迦文): Lumbinī; Jesus (Chin. Yishuhe 夷數和): the Eastern Roman Empire (Chin. Fulin 拂林)<sup>196</sup>.

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<sup>194</sup> *Miaofa lianhua jing xuanyi* 妙法蓮華經玄義 [The Mysterious Meaning of the Lotus Sūtra, T. 1716.33, 776c16–17]: [...] 如佛在世, 金口演說, 但有聲音詮辯, 聽者得道, 故以聲為經。

<sup>195</sup> E.g. MGF 63/3: “On all the six ways [of rebirths] he [i.e., Zarathuštra] stopped distress, on all the three [evil] paths he ceased the sufferings.” (Chin. *Liudao xi ting suan, santu jie xi ku* 六道悉停酸, 三途皆息苦).

<sup>196</sup> Fulin (拂林, Middle Persian *hrwm*, Parth. *frwm*) was the name of the Eastern Roman Empire from the Tang Dynasty on, see Lieu, “Medieval Manichaean and Nestorian Remains,” 238; Antonino Forte, “On the So-called Abraham from Persia. A Case of Mistaken Identity,” in Paul Pelliot: *L'inscription nestorienne de Si-ngan-fou. L'inscription nestorienne de Si-ngan-fou*, ed. Antonio Forte (Kyoto: Scuola di Studi sull'Asia Orientale and Paris: Collège de France/Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1996), 391–394.

3.2.2. MGF 67/1–6 (fig. 9.)

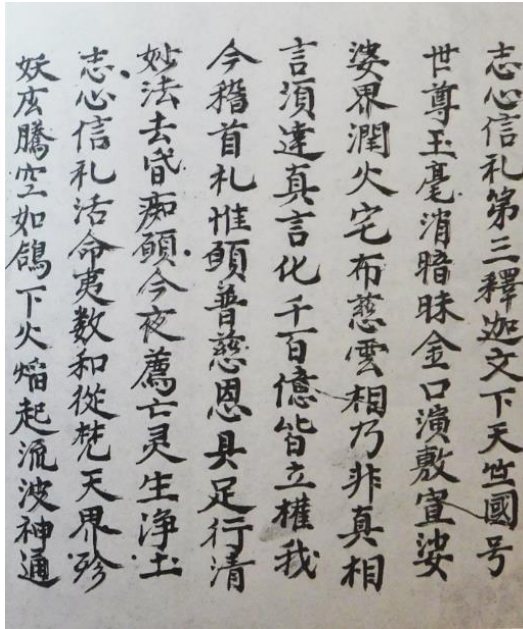


Figure 9. MGF 67, owned by Chen Peisheng (陈培生), Xiapu county, Fujian, Late Qing or Republican time.

Bao Lang and Yang Fuxue, *Xiapu Monijiao wenxian 'Moni guangfo' yanjiu*, 325.

The following extract, deriving from the MGF, is a Manichaean encomium on and prayer to Śākyamuni buddha, the third light envoy.

MGF [67/1] 志心信礼: 第三釋迦文, 下天竺國, 号 [67/2] 世尊. 玉毫消暗昧, 金口演敷宣; 娑 [67/3] 娑界, 潤火宅, 布慈雲, 相乃非真相, [67/4] 言須(須)達真言, 化千百億皆立權. 我 [67/5] 今稽首礼: 惟願普慈恩具足, 行清 [67/6] 妙法去昏痴. [願今夜薦亡灵生淨土!]

With sincere heart and faith do we worship<sup>197</sup> the third [buddha], Śākyamuni, who descended to India, was called the World-Honoured One. [His] *ūrṇā* [jade hair] destroyed darkness, [his] golden mouth expounded the preachings. In the *sahā* world, he drenched the houses on fire, he spread the

<sup>197</sup> The phrase 志心信礼 appears in a few Buddhist scriptures as well, often associated with the *Triratna* (e.g. T. 1320.21, 0484a08,12,18; X. 1080.59, 0257c07,11,15).



clouds of compassion, [he explained that] concepts are not the true reality<sup>198</sup>, that words should attain the words of truth<sup>199</sup>, and he converted millions by establishing authority. Now bowing head, we worship: we only wish that you share your universal grace and perfection, practice the pure and wonderful Law, and remove confusion and ignorance. [We only wish that this night [should] advance the diseased soul to be (re)born in the Pure Land!]<sup>200</sup>

Upon comparing this passage with the previous one, one can notice a few shared motifs, like the name of Śākyamuni and his golden mouth preaching the Buddhist message; however, novel elements outnumber the common ones.

Here we first learn that Śākyamuni descended (Chin. *xia* 下) to the country of India (Chin. *Tianzhu guo* 天竺國).<sup>201</sup> A good analogy is, for example, the *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶紀 [Records of the Three Treasures Throughout the Successive Dynasties, T. 2034.49.], which says that

Śākya[muni] Tathāgata was incarnated and born in the city Kapilavastu of India, in the palace of King Śuddhodana. At this time, he emitted a light that universally irradiated the worlds of the chiliocosmos, all becoming greatly illuminated.<sup>202</sup>

As mentioned before, in the non-Chinese sources, the historical Buddha, unsurprisingly, is also connected with India, although while the Chinese text refers to descent from an elevated place, the Coptic simply says ‘came’ (Cop. *afei* ἀφει):

Bouddas the blessed, he came to the land of India and Kushan [...].<sup>203</sup>

Then he sent Zarādusht (i.e., Zoroaster) to Persia, the Buddha to India [...].<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> I based my translation of this expression on the analogy of the *Avatamsakasūtra*, T. 278.9, 0584a21: 佛子善明達, 了相非真相.

<sup>199</sup> *Zhen yan* 真言 literally means “true words” or “words of truth” and it often designates a mantra.

<sup>200</sup> Bao and Lang, *Xiapu Monijiao wenxian*, 325.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. Ma, *Xiapu wenshu yanjiu*, 262–263.

<sup>202</sup> *Lidai sanbao ji*, T. 2034.49, 24a08: 釋迦如來降神託生中天竺國迦毘羅城淨飯王宮。是時放光普照三千大千世界, 皆悉大明。

<sup>203</sup> Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dilley, *The Chapters of the Wisdom of My Lord Mani*, 167. 2Ke 423, 2–12: ΒΟΥΔΔΑΣ [Δ]Η ΠΙΛΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ ΑΦΕΙ ΑΠΚΑΖ ΜΗΡΗΠΟΥΓ ΜΠΕΡΟΥΨΑΗ [...]. For the full text and translation see Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dilley, *The Chapters of the Wisdom of My Lord Mani*, 166–167.

<sup>204</sup> Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism*, 102. Kitāb al-Mughnī 5:15.



So in one age they have been brought by the messenger, called Buddha, to India, in another by Zarādusht (= Zarathushtra) to Persia [...].<sup>205</sup>

Even though the expression “(His) *ūrṇā* destroyed darkness [...]” (Chin. *yuhao xiao’anmei* 玉毫消暗昧) *verbatim* does not appear in any Buddhist text, the idea behind it that the spiral *ūrṇā* (or *ūrṇākeśa*), which is the Buddha’s 31st *lakṣaṇa* or physical mark of Buddhahood (also called *baihao* 白毫), emits a brilliant light that can annihilate demonic darkness in all realms, is ubiquitous in Buddhist sources<sup>206</sup>:

At that time the Buddha emitted light from his white *ūrṇā* between his eyebrows. [The light] illuminated the eastern 18,000 worlds, there was nothing that it did not pervade, down to the Avīci hell and upwards to the *akaniṣṭha* heaven.<sup>207</sup>

After this thought, [the Buddha] emitted the light from his white *ūrṇā* between his eyebrows, that light was called ‘conquering Māra,’ it illuminated the demonic palaces of the great chiliocosmos [*trisaḥasra-mahāsahasra-lokadhātu*].<sup>208</sup>

At the time after the Bodhisattva made this thought, from his white *ūrṇā* between his eyebrows, he emitted light, which was called ‘subduing the demonic army’. After emitting this light, it immediately arrived at Māra’s palace, and hid all karmic light of the old, demonic palaces, and this light also pervaded the great chiliocosmos, creating such a light that everything was filled [with it].<sup>209</sup>

The golden light of *ūrṇā* dissipates night and destroys darkness [...].<sup>210</sup>

<sup>205</sup> Sachau, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, 190.

<sup>206</sup> Buswell and Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 944: “In many sūtras, the Buddha sometimes emits a ray of light from his *ūrṇākeśa* in order to illuminate distant worlds.”

<sup>207</sup> *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經 [Scripture of the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sūtra, T. 262.9, 2b16–18]: 爾時佛放眉間白毫相光, 照東方萬八千世界, 靡不周遍, 下至阿鼻地獄, 上至阿迦尼吒天。

<sup>208</sup> *Fanguang da zhuangyan jing* 方廣大莊嚴經 [Extensive Merriment, Skt. *Lalitavistara*, T. 187.3, 590b13–15]: 作是念已放眉間白毫相光, 其光名爲降伏魔怨, 遍照三千大千世界傍耀。

<sup>209</sup> *Foben xingji jing* 佛本行集經 [Sūtra of the Collection of the Past Deeds of the Buddha, Skt. *Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra*, T. 190.3, 775a04–08]: 爾時菩薩思惟是已, 從於眉間白毫相中, 放一光明, 名能降伏散魔軍眾。放此光已, 應時即至魔之宮殿, 翳彼一切諸魔舊宮本業之光, 又復斯光傍遍三千大千世界, 作大光明, 一切皆滿。

<sup>210</sup> Guanding (561–632, 灌頂): *Guoqing bailu* 國清百錄 [Hundred Records of the Guoqing (Monastery), T. 1934.46, 813b12]: 玉毫金光分宵破闇 [...]. With a minor orthographical difference, also see GA. 89.0659a01; Youxi Chuandeng (1554–1628, 幽溪

Ūrṇā and the subsequent metaphors (‘drenching houses on fire, spreading clouds of compassion’) have a relatively good parallel in Daoxuan’s (596–667, 道宣) *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 [Continuation of the Histories of Famous Monks, T. 2060.50] (ch. 24: in Falin’s (572–640, 法琳) biography, but referring to the Buddha): “He showed his body of golden hue, displayed the *lakṣaṇa* of *ūrṇā*. He spread the clouds of compassion on the Vulture Peak [Skt. *Ḡṛdhrakūṭa*], and thus the flames of the burning house were extinguished.”<sup>211</sup> The latter motif (the burning house, *huochai* 火宅) clearly goes back to the famous parable in the third chapter of the *Lotus sutra*.

The longer Chinese version of the *Lalitavistara* (Chin. *Fanguang da zhuangyan jing* 方廣大莊嚴經 [Extensive Merriment, T. 187.3]) contains similar metaphors (though that of the house is missing here):

As the fire of *kleśas* increase, we wish that you spread the clouds of compassion, shower the rain of Dharma universally and remove the ferocious flames; the former buddhas are already gone, and the present Buddha is the healing king.<sup>212</sup>

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傳燈): *Tiantai shan fangwai zhi* 天台山方外志 [Gazetteer of Those Who Lived Beyond the Secular World on Mt. Tiantai] ch. 18: 玉毫金光分宵破暗 [...].

<sup>211</sup> *Xu Gaoseng zhuan*, T. 2060.50, 637b05–06: 示金色之身, 吐玉毫之相, 布慈雲於鷲嶺, 則火宅焰銷. The same text occurs in Daoxuan’s *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集 [Great Collection of the Elucidation of the Dharma, T. 2103.50, 0167c21–22], Falin’s *Poxie lun* 破邪論 [Essay on the Refutation of Evil (Paths), T. 2109.52, 487a10–11] and Xu Changzhi (1582–1672, 徐昌治) *Gaoseng zhaiyao* 高僧摘要 [Essential Selections from the Biographies of Eminent Monks, XZJ 1626.87, 310a13] with the graphic variant of *yan* 燄 for *yan* 焰.

<sup>212</sup> *Fanguang da zhuangyan jing*, T. 187.3, 541b06–8: 煩惱火增盛, 願為布慈雲, 普雨於法雨, 滅除諸猛焰, 前佛已過去, 今佛作醫王.

*BuddhistRoad Paper* 3.3. Kōsa, “Buddha and Śākyamuni in Manichaean Scriptures”

3.2.3. MGF 77/8–78/4 (fig. 10.)

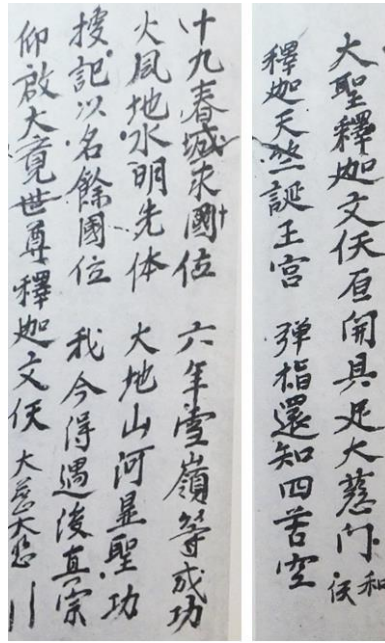


Figure 10. MGF 77–78, owned by Chen Peisheng (陈培生), Xiapu county, Fujian, Late Qing or Republican time.

Bao Lang and Yang Fuxue, *Xiapu Monijiao wenxian 'Moni guangfo' yanjiu*, 335–336.

This is another eulogy in the MGF manuscript that praises Śākyamuni and mentions several specific details from the third light envoy’s hagiographic narrative.

MGF [77/8] 大聖釋迦文佛，願闢具足大慈門。{和伏} [77/9] 釋迦天竺誕王宮，彈指還知四苦空。 [78/1] 十九春城求國位，六年雪嶺等成功。 [78/2] 火風地水明先体，大地山河顯聖功。 [78/3] 授記以名餘國位，我今得遇後真宗。 [78/4] 仰啟大覺世尊釋迦文佛，大慈大悲！

Great holy one—Śākyamuni buddha, we wish that you open the gate of great mercy of perfection! {Join in at ‘buddha’}. Śākya[muni] was born in a royal

palace in India, he very quickly<sup>213</sup> came to know the four sufferings and emptiness, while [he] was awaiting the royal position in Kapilavastu for nineteen years, [but later on] was accruing merits for six years in the Himālayas [with asceticism]. Fire, wind, earth, and water were realized [by him] as the original [elements of the] human body, the whole earth with mountains and rivers displayed [his] saintly merits. [He] made predictions in which he named [the would-be buddha's] other country and position, (that's why) we now can meet this later school of truth. [We] venerate the greatly enlightened World-honoured One, Śākyamuni buddha: great mercy, great compassion!<sup>214</sup>

Similarly to the previous one, this passage also mentions the country of birth as India (Chin. *tianzhu* 天竺), but additionally also specifies being born in the royal palace (Chin. *dan wanggong* 誕王宮), as in the above-mentioned MGF 47/8 (Chin. *tuō wanggong* 托王宮).

For the Manichaean audience, the reference to the prediction in MGF 78/3 probably meant that Manichaeism is the heir of Buddhism, since in several Manichaean testimonies, including the Chinese ones, Mani, as the last envoy of light, was also born in a royal palace as a crown prince<sup>215</sup>, who resigned from this position at the age of four<sup>216</sup>. The compound alluding to this royal position (Chin. *guowei* 國位) is used only three times in the MG: twice above to describe the historical Buddha's life and once in the case of Mani. At the same time, from a Buddhist perspective, this reference, using the *terminus technicus vyākaraṇa* (MG 78/3: *shouji* 授記), must have sounded like a prophecy about Maitreya,<sup>217</sup> with whom Mani, as previously explained, was identified in Central Asia.

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<sup>213</sup> *Tanzhi* (彈指, Skt. *acchaṭā*) expresses 'a very short period of time that can be plucked with a finger'. It contains sixty-five moments (Skt. *kṣaṇa*, *chānā*, Chin. *chana* 刹那).

<sup>214</sup> Bao and Lang, *Xiapu Monijiao wenxian*, 335–336.

\* Wang and Ma and Lin Wushu write *sou* (搜); See Wang and Ma, "Xiapu wenshu 'Moni guangfo'," 40 and Lin Wushu, *Monijiao huahua bushuo* 摩尼教華化補說 [Additional Explanations of the Sinification of Manichaeism] (Lanzhou: Lanzhou daxue chubanshe, 2014), 484; however, Bao and Yang (*Xiapu Monijiao wenxian*, 90) give *shou* (授). I follow the latter.

Cf. Ma Xiaohe's and Wang Chuan's similar, though not identical, translation. See Ma Xiaohe and Wang Chuan, "The Xiapu Document Mani the Buddha of Light and Buddhist Worship and Repentance Rituals," *Eurasian Studies* (English Edition) 7 (2019): 393.

<sup>215</sup> See, e.g., MGF 64/3–4: *Wu fo Moni guang, zui hou guangming shi, tuohua zai wanggong, shi wei taizi* 五佛摩尼光, 最後光明使, 托化在王宮, 示為太子.

<sup>216</sup> MGF 75/7: *Si sui chujia ci guowei* 四歲出家辭國位.

<sup>217</sup> Ma, *Xiapu wenshu yanjiu*, 273.



Between his birth and the prophecy of a future buddha, several fragmented allusions are inserted from the Buddha's life, which, I assume, are presented in chronological order. The second part of 78/1 is clear enough to serve as a reference point for the sections preceding and following it: here the Himālaya (Chin. Xueling 雪嶺) is named where the Bodhisattva was accruing merits with his well-known ascetic practices for six years (Chin. *liunian* 六年).<sup>218</sup>

Thus, first, his rapid understanding of the four sufferings (i.e. birth, age, disease and death, Chin. *shenglao bingsi* 生老病死) must be a reference to the 'four sights' (i.e. to the first three ones), since this is immediately followed by a hint to his being nineteen when he gave up the position as the crown prince. If the character *qiu* (求) is not a scribal mistake,<sup>219</sup> then the text *verbatim* claims that for nineteen years he was waiting to be the king, which indirectly must imply that this situation changed at this age, and he gave up these ambitions of his, left his home, and that is why this is immediately followed by a reference to the Buddha's six-year-long asceticism. The expression 'spring city' (Chin. Chuncheng 春城) must refer to the walls of Kapilavastu since several texts mention that on the eighth day of the second lunar month at night, he crossed the walls of Kapilavastu (Chin. Yuchuncheng 逾春城) and settled himself in the Himālaya to practice austerities for six years.<sup>220</sup>

<sup>218</sup> See, for example: *Xu chuandeng lu* 續傳燈錄 [The Continued Transmission of the Lamp, T. 2077.51, 549c20]; *Chanmen zhu zushi jisong* 禪門諸祖師偈頌 [The Gāthā of Various Chan Patriarchs] XZJ 1298.66, 735a14; *Shijia rulai chengdao ji zhu* 釋迦如來成道記註 [Commentary on the Record of the Tathāgata Śākyamuni's Attainment of the Way, XZJ 1509.75, 4b15]; 棲雪嶺於六年, *Zadu hai* 雜毒海 [Mixing with the Poisonous Ocean, XZJ 1278.65, 55a23]; 六年雪嶺, *Qingyuan fu Ruiyan shan Kaishan chansi yulu* 慶元府瑞巖山開善禪寺語錄 [Recorded Sayings from the Kaishan Monastery of the Ruiyan Mountain in Qingyuan Prefecture, XZJ 1389.70, 405a06]; 栖六年雪嶺 or *Chanrong song gu lianzhu tongji* 禪宗頌古聯珠通集 [Precious Collection of Ancient Appended Verses in the Chan Tradition] XZJ 1295.65, 483a16: 雪嶺六年修苦行.

<sup>219</sup> Based on the usual phrasing with *guowei* (國位) in this context, one would rather expect *she* (捨) or *qi* (棄, 'discard') instead of *qiu* (求).

<sup>220</sup> E.g. *Chanmen zhu zushi jisong*, XZJ 1298.66, 735a13–14: 逾春城於八夜, 棲雪嶺於六年; see also *Xu chuandeng lu*, T. 2077.51, 549c20; *Shijia rulai chengdao ji zhu*, XZJ 1509.75, 4b12; *Jianzhong Jingguo xu denglu* 建中靖國續燈錄 [Record of the Succession of the Lamp for Establishing the Center and Bring Peace to the Nation], XZJ 1556.78, 728c06–7].



Number 19 at first seems to be a mistake for 29, but several Chinese texts specify the Buddha's age being 19 when leaving the palace, as shown by the following quotations:

When the crown prince became nineteen years old, on the eighth day of the second lunar month, at night, on a horse he left through the northern gate.<sup>221</sup>

When the Buddha was a crown prince, he wanted to leave his family at the age of nineteen.<sup>222</sup>

At that time the crown prince became nineteen and thought the following: 'It is time for me to leave my home now.'<sup>223</sup>

[Asita] then saw that the bodhisattva will leave his home at the age of nineteen, after practicing asceticism for six years, he will obtain the nectar fruit [of enlightenment].<sup>224</sup>

This inconsistency in the Buddha's age of the great departure and the enlightenment among the various sources must have posed a problem for the Buddhists themselves, as it is clear from the lengthy passages analysing and discussing the issue.<sup>225</sup>

Although the enlightenment itself is not mentioned, the allusion to asceticism also seems to include it, and thus what follows in MGF 78/2 thus must be a reference to the insights during the enlightenment after finding asceticism an inappropriate method, as well as nature also manifesting the importance of his awakening (see, e.g., an earthquake).<sup>226</sup> The section ends with the prophecy regarding a future envoy and a prayer.

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<sup>221</sup> *Shishi jigu lue* 釋氏稽古略 [An Outline of Historical Research into the Śākya Family Lineage, T. 2037.49, 752b07–8]: 太子時年十九歲。二月八夜。乘馬出自北門。

<sup>222</sup> *Lengyan jing zhizhang shu* 楞嚴經指掌疏 [Commentary to the Pointer of the Śūraṅgama Sūtra, XZJ 308.16, 170b06–7]: 準普曜經佛為太子時。於十九歲願求出家。

<sup>223</sup> *Guoqu xianzai yinguo jing* 過去現在因果經 [Sūtra on Past and Present Causes and Effects, T. 189.3, 632a15–16]: 爾時太子年至十九，心自思惟：『我今正是出家之時。』

<sup>224</sup> *Genben shuo yiqie youbu pinaiye posengshi* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶破僧事 [Chapter on Division of Community in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, T. 1450.24, 109c08–9]: 即觀菩薩十九出家。六年苦行獲甘露果。

<sup>225</sup> See, e.g., *Miaofa lianhua jing xuanzan* 妙法蓮華經玄贊 [Profound Panegyric to the Lotus Sūtra] T. 1723.34, 827b25–c21, *Fozu lidai tongzai* 佛祖歷代通載 [The Annals of Buddha and His Patriarchs Under Successive Dynasties] T. 2036.49, 495b12.

<sup>226</sup> See Eugen Ciurtin, "'Thus Have I Quaked': The Tempo of the Buddha's Vita and the Earliest Buddhist Fabric of Timelessness [The Buddha's Earthquakes II]," in *Figurations of Time in Asia*, ed. Dietrich Boschung and Corinna Wessels-Mevissen (Munich, Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2012), 27.



These late texts are definitely Manichaean in origin; however, they are replete with Buddhist references and metaphors, and not only in the passages describing the historical Buddha's life but also in the biographies of the other light envoys as well and apparently reveal a community immersed in its Manichaean tradition. From the perspective of Manichaean studies, the fundamental question is whether these short biographies originate from a much earlier period or are informed by local representatives of Zoroastrianism and Christianity, and were composed in Ming and Qing dynasties Fujian. Although there are some Chinese Buddhist texts, like the *Gaofeng Longquanyuan Yinshi jixian yulu* 高峰龍泉院因師集賢語錄 [The Assembled Sages Discourse Record of Master Yin of Longquan Temple on Mount Gaofeng] from the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368, 元),<sup>227</sup> that resemble, for example, the Buddha's biography in its Manichaean version, nevertheless as a structural whole, these short descriptions are not dissimilar to such early texts as the Parthian M42. It is thus not impossible that these short bios were, with time, updated, while the structural unity of the whole message about the five light envoys remained unchanged. Yet, based on the inconsistencies of these short texts, one can wonder to what extent local Manichaean communities assimilated the mainstream Buddhist (and Zoroastrian, Christian, etc.) tradition around them and to what extent they perpetuated older traditions about the main religious founders.

#### 4. Summary

Although we are aware that religions actively interact with one another, it is still not typical that an independent religious tradition would adopt both the terminology and the various figures of another one. To obtain a foothold in new territories during the missions, Manichaeans famously appropriated the local religious traditions: Christian terms recur in the Western Manichaean sources, Zoroastrian ones in Middle Persian ones, and, last but not least, Buddhist terminology was widely applied by the

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<sup>227</sup> *Gaofeng Longquanyuan Yinshi jixian yulu* 高峰龍泉院因師集賢語錄 [Master Yin's Collected Records of Sagely Sayings, from Dragon Spring Cloister at Mount Gaofeng], XZJ 1277.65, 15c09–13: 稽首歸依佛。初降誕摩耶藍園裏，十九逾城去向雪嶺修持，蘆芽穿膝朝夕嗽一麻并一麥，修苦行。六年滿，證大覺菩提。我佛慈悲放毫光，照三途離苦迷。

missionaries who translated and produced Manichaean texts in Central Asia and China.

The presence and unique application of Buddhist terms in the Chinese Manichaean scriptures from the Eastern Central Asian oasis of Dunhuang and southern Chinese Fujian is beyond the scope of this paper, which merely endeavoured to examine two basic terms: *fo* and Śākyamuni. In the first part of the paper, I sought to summarise the internal logic of the usage of Chinese *fo* as human envoys and divine emanations, also demonstrating the differences and similarities between the Chinese and non-Chinese examples. Yet, it remains unclear whether such a distinction between the human and divine realms was to any extent relevant for medieval Manichaeans, especially since the representatives of the two realms resembled each other so much. According to the Manichaean imagination, during the cosmogonic phase, various divine emanations were dispatched by the Father of Greatness to implement specific tasks to create and arrange the universe, while after the cosmos had been established, various envoys were successively sent by the same head of the Manichaean pantheon to impart knowledge about cosmogony and ethics. Both the divine and human envoys were thus commissioned by the same figure; they both originated from the Realm of Light and, after their mission had been completed, returned to its provisional equivalent, the New Paradise.

In the second part of this study, I presented some idiosyncratic passages from the manuscript *Mani, the Buddha of Light* which late medieval and early modern Manichaeans produced and preserved in Fujian, also revealing their perplexing inconsistencies. Given the intricate nature of the Chinese Manichaean texts, clear-cut deductions are hardly possible either in the case of the two notions under scrutiny and the much larger pool of Buddhist terms yet to be more thoroughly analysed.

Rather than trying to settle all existing problems, my aim here, once again, was to share with scholars of Buddhism the distinctive Manichaean adoption of the terms *buddha* and Śākyamuni. Even in this small corpus of texts, the complex question of translation from various Central Asian languages into Chinese still poses problems that await more precise solutions. Nevertheless, this study, hopefully, will contribute to our understanding of a unique chapter in the history of religions and demonstrate that the powerful narratives and concepts of Buddhism reached an audience far beyond religious boundaries.



*Abbreviations*

1Ke	Berlin <i>Kephalaia</i> , Coptic Manichaean codex titled <i>The Chapters of the Teacher</i> kept in the Staatlichen Museen Berlin (Berlin P. 15996).
2Ke	Dublin <i>Kephalaia</i> , Coptic Manichaean codex titled <i>The Chapters of the Wisdom of My Lord Mani</i> , kept in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (CBL Pma 1).
B	Chinese Manuscripts in the Kharakhoto Collection of Kozlov in The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.
BT V	Zieme, Peter. <i>Manichäisch-türkische Texte. Texte, Übersetzung, Anmerkungen</i> . Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1975.
BT XL	Leurini, Claudia. <i>Hymns in Honour of the Hierarchy and Community, Installation Hymns and Hymns in Honour of Church Leaders and Patrons: Middle Persian and Parthian Hymns in the Berlin Turfan Collection</i> . Turnhout: Brepols, 2017.
CH/U	Chinese/Uyghur Manuscripts in the Turfan Collection in Berlin.
GA	Gazetteer texts in the CBETA edition, 2014.
H	<i>Hymnscroll</i>
M	Manuscripts in Manichaean script in the Turfan Collection in Berlin.
MGF	<i>Moni guangfo</i> 摩尼光佛 [Mani, the Buddha of Light] late Qing or Republican time, owned by ritual master Chen Peisheng (陈培生), Xiapu (霞浦) county, Fujian (福建) province.
MP	Middle Persian
Pa	Parthian
So	Manuscripts in Sogdian script in the Turfan Collection in Berlin.
T.	<i>Taishō shinshū daizōkyō</i> 大正新脩大藏經 [Taishō tripiṭaka], edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 et al. Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–1935.
TM	‘Turkistan Manuscripte,’ Manuscripts from Turkestan in the Turfan Collection in Berlin.

- TT III Willy Bang and Annemarie von Gabain, “Türkische Turfan-Texte III.” *Sitzungsberichte der preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse* 17 (1930): 183–211.
- U Uyghur Manuscripts in the Turfan Collection in Berlin.
- XZJ *Xuzang jing 續藏經* [Extension to the Tripiṭaka]. CBETA edition, 2014.
- ZKW *Zhenming kaizheng wenke 貞明開正文科* [The Eternal Light [Temple’s] New Year Celebration Manual], a manuscript from Pingnan 屏南 county, Fujian province.

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Ch/So20501/V/.  
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*Long Abjuration Formula.*

M5.

M17.

M42.

M48+.

M101b.

M176.

M236.

M293.

M583.

M801a.

M1313.

M1863.

M5264.

M6041.

M8171.

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So 14001a.

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Sogdian letters A, B from Bezeklik

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U 4 (T II D 175).

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