

# MANICHEISM v. MISSIONARY ACTIVITY AND TECHNIQUE

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 More information may be expected from the still unpublished Dublin Kephalaia.

The Manichean Missionary History, strictly speaking, consists of Middle Persian, Parthian, Sogdian, and Old Turkish fragments of a hagiographic description of the beginnings of the missionary journeys of Mani and his first disciples (published or indicated by Sundermann 1981, pp. 17-28, 34-49, 55-57 under nos. 1, 2.2-7, 3.1-4, 4a.1). These texts are parts of a comprehensive hagiographic and homiletic description of Mani's life and the beginnings of the Manichean church preserved in Middle Persian, Parthian, Sogdian, and Old Turkish and also in the Third Coptic Homily (ed. Polotsky, 1934, pp. 42-85; cf. Sundermann 1986a, 1986b, 1987). Some additional texts add more information on the Manichean missionary activities, such as MP. 5.1, 5.2 (Sundermann, 1981, pp. 93-95); these belong to Mani's Šābuhragān. Original Manichean traditions are also faithfully rendered in Ebn al-Nadīm's (d. ca. 995) Fehrest (ed. Flügel, pp. 51-52, 84-85; Ebn al-Nadīm, tr. Dodge, pp. 774-75). An exhaustive collection of source material on the spread of Manicheism in the Roman empire was compiled by Lieu (1988, pp. 383-99).

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

The time of Mani's first public appearance was connected by the Manichean tradition with one of the coronations of the Sasanian king Šābuhr [Šāpur] I (r. 241-272) which is dated, on the strength of the Manichean dates, to 18 or 19 April 240 (on these two dates, see with further literature Sundermann, 1990, pp. 295=2001a, pp. 103-4). This synchronism may reflect more or less exactly the actual time of the beginning of the Manichean world mission.

## Manicheism in Byzantium.

We simply do not know by whom, when, and by which route Mani's gospel was taken to Asia Minor and to Byzantium, which from 330 AD was the capital of the Roman empire. We can only state that by that time Manicheism was already present there, more or less tolerated until the end of the 4th century and even supported by adherents and sympathizers in the ruling class, such as the dux, comes, and magister peditum Sebastianus (d. 378) who was supposed to be a Manichean auditor (which was, however, sheer calumny, according to Tardieu, 1988, pp. 494-500); the pagan rhetor and literate Libanius (d. 393?), who intervened in favor of the Manicheans (de Stoop, 1909, p. 70); and also the liberal Christian comes, proconsul, and praefectus praetorio Strategius Musonius (d. 371) who informed and advised the emperor Constantine the Great (r. 305-337, sole ruler from 324) on Manichean affairs. All these personalities have a Syriac background (Brown, 1969, pp. 96-97), and that points to Syria as the immediate starting point of the Manichean mission to Byzantium. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/manicheism-iv-missionary-activity-and-technique->

While in exile in Cappadocia, the Arsacid Tiridates received a Roman education and acquired a good knowledge of Greek and Latin (Life of St. Gregory, Gk. version 159, 183=Ar. version 145, 176=G. Garitte, Documents pour l'étude du Livre d'Agathange, Vatican, 1946, pp. 97, 110). His restoration appears to have been the result of a compromise agreed by Vahram II and Diocletian at some uncertain date around 286-287.

Under its terms the Persians must have kept possession of the greater part of Greater Armenia, because in 293 the Sasanian Narseh was still in residence in Armenia as its "king" (Humbach and Skjærvø, op. cit., and W. B. Henning, BSOAS 14, 1952, pp. 517f.). It was only after the defeat of Narseh, now the king of kings, by the Caesar Galerius at Osha (Oskik' in the canton of Całkotn) in Armenia that the whole of the territory passed out of Persian control and the Arsacid dynasty was definitely reinstated in Armenia under Roman suzerainty. Under another clause of the treaty signed at Nisibis in 297, the five old "Provinces" or districts of southern Armenia – Sophene, Ingilene, Arzanene, Gordyene, and Zabdicene – were ceded to the Romans (Petrus Patricius, fragment 14=Dindorf, Hist. Gr. Min. I, p. 434; cf. Ammianus Marcellinus 25.7.9; see below).

#### The Christian Arsacids

Tiridates III and his successors until the partition.

The reign of Tiridates II was marked by an event of far-reaching importance for Armenia's future, namely this king's adoption of Christianity as the state religion at the urging of St. Gregory the Illuminator (i.e. Baptist). The latter was probably a Greek from Cappadocia (Life, Gk. version 40=G. Garitte, Documents, p. 37) rather than a nobleman of the stock of the Suren family, as Armenian tradition maintains. At the king's behest, Gregory went to Cappadocia with an escort of naxarars to receive consecration as bishop. (The Armenian church remained dependent on the see of Caesarea until the reign of King Pap). The chronology of Armenia's conversion presents a problem. The event used to be dated about 300, but more recent scholars (notably P. Ananian "La data e le circostanze della consecrazione di S. Gregorio Illuminatore," Le Muséon 84, 1961, pp. 43-73, 317-60) tend to change the date to 314/315 – a surmise which seems probable but cannot be proved. B. MacDermot's arguments for 294 (in Revue des études arméniennes, N.S., 1971, pp. 281-358) are ingenious but not convincing. The war of Maximinus Daia in 311-312 (Eusebius, Historia ecclesiastica 9.66.3) might provide a terminus ante quem if it could be proved that "the Armenians allied to the Romans" were subjects of King Tiridates.

#### Nisibis

Considerable improvement must therefore have been made to its fortification under Diocletian and Constantine. Ammianus (XXV.9.1) mentions a citadel (arx) from which flew the Persian flag after the disgraceful surrender of the city in 363. Malalas (XII, p. 336.14-15) calls it "one of the towers" implying that there were several. Ammianus who knew the city well echoes the views of many in remarking that "the entire Orient might have passed into the control of Persia, had not this city with its advantageous situation and mighty walls resisted him (i.e. Šāpur II)" and the city was undoubtedly "the strongest bulwark of the Orient" (XXV.8.14). Besides the strengthening of her defenses, the morale of Nisibis' citizens was greatly raised by the growth of Christianity in this region after the conversion of Constantine. Jacob, one of the city's first bishops, was active in raising the morale of the garrison in the first siege. As Christians in Persia came to be suspected as a pro-Roman fifth-column and openly persecuted, the war between Rome and Persia acquired a new religious dimension; it was no longer a conflict of Romans versus "barbarians," but of the faithful against persecuting "heathens".

<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/nisibis-city-in-northern-mesopotamia>

When Hormizd II died in 309, he was succeeded by his son Adur Narseh, who, after a brief reign which lasted few months, was killed by some of the nobles of the empire. They then blinded the second, and imprisoned the third (Hormizd, who afterwards escaped to the Roman Empire). The throne was reserved for the unborn child of Hormizd II's Jewish wife Ifra Hormizd, which was Shapur II. It is said that Shapur II may have been the only king in history to be crowned in utero, as the legend claims that the crown was placed upon his mother's womb while she was pregnant.

However, according to Alireza Shapour Shahbazi, it is unlikely that Shapur was crowned as king while still in his mother's womb, since the nobles could not have known of his sex at that time. He further states that Shapur was born forty days after his father's death, and that the nobles killed Adur Narseh and crowned Shapur II in order to gain greater control of the empire, which they were able to do until Shapur II reached his majority at the age of 16.

In 337, just before the death of Constantine the Great (324-337), Shapur II, provoked by the Roman rulers' backing of Roman Armenia, broke the peace concluded in 297 between emperors Narseh (293-302) and Diocletian (284-305), which had been observed for forty years. This was the beginning of two long drawn-out wars (337-350 and 358-363) which were inadequately recorded.

After crushing a rebellion in the south, Shapur II invaded Roman Mesopotamia and

captured Armenia. Apparently, nine major battles were fought. The most renowned was the inconclusive Battle of Singara (modern Sinjar, Iraq) in which Constantius II was at first successful, capturing the Persian camp, only to be driven out by a surprise night attack after Shapur had rallied his troops (344-or 348?). The most notable feature of this war was the consistently successful defence of the Roman fortress of Nisibis in Mesopotamia. Shapur besieged the fortress three times (in 338, 346, 350), and was repulsed each time.

Although victorious in battle, Shapur II could make no further progress with Nisibis un-taken. At the same time he was attacked in the east by Scythian Massagetae and other Central Asia. He had to break off the war with the Romans and arrange a hasty truce in order to pay attention to the east (350). Roughly around this time the Hunnic tribes, most likely the [...]

In any case, Christian communities had unquestionably existed in Armenia before the official conversion. In a passage in the church history of Sozomenus (*Historia ecclesiastica* 2.8.2) it is stated that the Persians began to become Christian as a result of their contacts with the Armenians and the Osrohenians; but as far as the Armenians are concerned, this is not wholly true, because the first penetration of Christianity into Iran was definitely not by way of Armenia (see M. L. Chaumont, *La diffusion du christianisme en Iran au IIIe siècle*, in Temporini and Haase, op. cit., II, forthcoming). Christianization tended to strengthen Armenia's links with the Roman empire and to set back the Iranian cultural influence.

Tiridates III, the St. Tiridates of the Armenians, worked closely with St. Gregory to spread Christianity through his kingdom and to suppress the pagan cults (described below), which nevertheless did not disappear altogether. While remaining a loyal ally of the Roman emperor, Tiridates did not break off all links with the Sasanians. Presumably he was on good terms with the prince Hormizd, who after the death of his father Hormizd II in 309 had been excluded from the throne and kept in prison until he escaped to the Armenian court (Zosimus, *Historia nova*, [ed. Mendelssohn, 1887] 2.27; see P. Peeters, in *Bulletin de l'Académie Royale de Belgique* 17, 1931, p. 37). Tiridates is said to have been killed in a plot hatched by his adversaries (text published by Alishan=Langlois, pp. 193-94; Movsēs Xorenac'i 2.92=Langlois, I, p. 131). From the sources, his death would appear to have occurred not later than 320 (see Peeters, op. cit., pp. 17, 37), but some (Markwart, *Untersuchungen* I, p. 220; R. Grousset, *Histoire de l'Arménie des origines à 1071*, 2nd ed., Paris, 1947, p. 120; Ananian, op. cit., p. 353) hold that his reign lasted until 330 or even later (Asdourian, op. cit., p. 143, places his death in 337). The view of H. Manandian reiterated by K. Toumanoff (in *Revue des études arméniennes*, 1969, pp. 263f.) that Tiridates III was succeeded by another king of the same name, Tiridates IV, seems unfounded.

Information about the successors of Tiridates, namely his son Khosrov Kotak (Kosrow the Lesser) and his grandson Tiran, is available only from the Armenian sources. Khosrov chose a site north of Artaxata on which to build a new capital, Dvin, and an aparank' (Parthian apadān) or royal palace (P'awstos 3.8=Langlois, I, pp. 216-18; Movsēs Xorenac'i 3.8=Langlois, II, pp. 136-37). The statement of Movsēs Xorenac'i that dvin was a Persian word meaning "hill" was generally doubted until V. Minorsky ("Transcaucasica," *JA*, 1930, pp. 41f.) drew attention to the use of dovīn with the sense of "hill" in Persian place names. Khosrov Kotak had to contend with an invasion by the Massagetae of Balāsagān, whose king, named Sanesan or Sanatruk is said to have been related to him (P'awstos 3.7=Langlois, I, pp. 215-16; Movsēs Xorenac'i, 3.9=Langlois, II, pp. 137-38). Another problem is said to have been the defection of the vitaxes (bdeašx) of Arzanene, who sought to become a vassal of the Persian king (P'awstos 3.9=Langlois, p. 216; Movsēs Xorenac'i 3.4=Langlois, II, p. 135); but this defection, the date of which is unclear, cannot really have affected the king of Armenia because Arzanene had not been Armenian for many years, having been annexed to the Roman empire under the treaty of Nisibis. King Tiran (incorrectly called Tigranes VII) seems to have had serious conflicts with the Christian clergy and is said to have put St. Gregory's successor, the catholicos Yusik, to death. In his foreign policy he was mainly concerned to placate Šāpūr II of Iran. The latter made no secret of his designs on Armenia (Libanius, *Orationes* 59.71-72; Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.56), where he could count on support from some of the naxarars. Probably ca. 334/335 or perhaps a little later, Šāpūr succeeded in capturing King Tiran, his queen, and the crown prince Aršak (according to the rather picturesque account given by P'awstos 3.20=Langlois, I, pp. 229f.). Tiran is said to have been betrayed by his chamberlain (senekapet) Phisak, who delivered him to the satrap of Arzanene, Šāpūr-Varāz (on the chronology of these events, see N. H. Baynes, "Rome and Armenia in the Fourth Century," *English Historical Review* 25, 1910, pp. 627-28; E. Stein, *Histoire*

205 du Bas-Empire I, Paris, 1959, p. 130). In 338, however, Šāpūr after his first reverse  
outside Nisibis agreed to the release of the royal family of Armenia and to the  
enthronement of Aršak, apparently at the special request of the emperor Constantius  
II; the matter is the subject of oracular comments by Julian (Orationes 1.20d; ed. J.  
Bidez, p. 34 in which the personal name of the king of Armenia is not mentioned).

210 <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/armenia-ii>  
The trilingual inscription of Šābuhr at "Kaaba i Zardušt"  
Res Gestae divi Saporis

215 Kidarites, whose king was Grumbates, make an appearance as an encroaching threat upon  
Sasanian territory as well as a menace to the Gupta Empire (320-500). After a  
prolonged struggle (353-358) they were forced to conclude a peace, and Grumbates  
agreed to enlist his light cavalrymen into the Persian army and accompany Shapur II  
in renewed war against the Romans, particularly participating in the Siege of Amida  
220 in 359.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shapur\\_II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shapur_II)

Manichaeism's views on Jesus are described by historians:  
Jesus in Manichaeism possessed three separate identities:

225 (1) Jesus the Luminous, (2) Jesus the Messiah and (3) Jesus patibilis (the suffering  
Jesus).

(1) As Jesus the Luminous... his primary role was as supreme revealer and guide and  
it was he who woke Adam from his slumber and revealed to him the divine origins of  
his soul and its painful captivity by the body and mixture with matter. Jesus the  
230 Messiah was a historical being who was the prophet of the Jews and the forerunner of  
Mani. However, the Manichaeans believed he was wholly divine. He never experienced  
human birth as notions of physical conception and birth filled the Manichaeans with  
horror and the Christian doctrine of virgin birth was regarded as equally obscene.  
Since he was the light of the world, where was this light, they asked, when he was in  
235 the womb of the Virgin?

(2) Jesus the Messiah was truly born at his baptism as it was on that occasion that  
the Father openly acknowledged his sonship. The suffering, death and resurrection of  
this Jesus were in appearance only as they had no salvific value but were an exemplum  
of the suffering and eventual deliverance of the human soul and a prefiguration of  
240 Mani's own martyrdom.

(3) The pain suffered by the imprisoned Light-Particles in the whole of the visible  
universe, on the other hand, was real and immanent. This was symbolized by the mystic  
placing of the Cross whereby the wounds of the passion of our souls are set forth. On  
this mystical Cross of Light was suspended the Suffering Jesus (Jesus patibilis) who  
245 was the life and salvation of Man. This mystica cruxificio was present in every tree,  
herb, fruit, vegetable and even stones and the soil. This constant and universal  
suffering of the captive soul is exquisitely expressed in one of the Coptic  
Manichaean psalms.

250