

## Report of BuddhistRoad Guest Lecture

15 June 2022 Gábor Kósa (Budapest)

### **THE REFINED ART OF MANICHAEAN UPĀYA: HOW CHINESE MANICHAEANS USED BUDDHISM FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES**

invited lecture at the BuddhistRoad project, CERES, Ruhr-Universität Bochum

The team of the *BuddhistRoad* project invited Gábor Kósa (ELTE University, Budapest) to give a lecture on various interfaces between Chinese Manichaeism and Buddhism. In the first part of his talk entitled “The Refined Art of Manichaean Upāya: How Chinese Manichaeans Used Buddhism for Their Own Purposes”, he gave a succinct overview of the history of Manichaeism, emphasising certain aspects where Mānī (216–277 CE) came or at least could have come into contact with Buddhism. One important instance was Mānī’s visit to northwest India in ca. 241–242, or when he converted the Tūrān-šāh, the local Buddhist king of Baluchistan, on his way back to Sasanian Iran.

Whatever influence these early contacts exerted on the early formation of Manichaeism (e.g., on the monastic system, the practice of confession or the importance of non-violence), the subsequent centuries surely brought about important encounters between these two religions. The historical sources already note that Buddhists at Wu Zetian’s (625–705, 武則天) court were envious of the Manichaean priest who arrived there in 694, and thus labeled the Manichaean scriptures and teachings as false, especially because they pretended to be Buddhists and could thus mislead the people.<sup>1</sup> The Huichang (會昌) persecution in 843–845 connected the history of these two groups again, in this case by both of them being persecuted by Emperor Wuzong (r. 840–846, 武宗).

In the second part of his talk, “Buddhist Terminology in Manichaean Textual Sources”, Gábor Kósa first introduced a classification system of the Buddhist terminology appearing in the Chinese Manichaean scriptures, especially in the *Hymn scroll* and the *Traité* from Mogao Cave 17 of Dunhuang. This classification is based on the semantic distance between the Buddhist and

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<sup>1</sup> *Tongdian* 通典 [Comprehensive Institutions], 40.11b; *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀 [Chronicle of the Buddhas and Patriarchs], T. 2035.49, 474c15–17.



Manichaeen meanings of these expressions. After this part, Kósa presented three brief case studies on the textual sources:

(1) The first hymn of the Manichaeen *Hymn scroll* addressing Jesus (Chin. Yishu 夷數) contains several implicit references to the Avalokiteśvara chapter of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* [Lotus Sūtra], which thus strived to make the protagonists of these two relatively short texts identical.

(2) As Ma Xiaohe convincingly argued, the four heavenly kings (Chin. *siwang* 四王) of Buddhism recurring in the newly found manuscripts of Xiapu (霞浦, presentday Fujian province 福建) are ingeniously equated with the four archangels Raphael (Chin. Lumuoyi 嚧嚧逸 [LMC: luə-fha`-jit]), Michael (Chin. Miheyi 弥訶逸 [LMC: mji-xa-jit]), Gabriel (Chin. Yeluoyi 唵囉逸 [LMC: ŋiap-la-jit]) and Sarial (Chin. Suoluoyi 娑[=娑]囉逸 [LMC: sa-la-jit]).

(3) Various charts and descriptions in the new texts from Fujian contain the concept of five buddhas (Chin. *wufo* 五佛), who are the four light envoys preceding Mānī combined with Mānī himself, all of whom are designated as buddhas: Buddha Nārāyaṇa (i.e., Viṣṇu, Chin. Naluoyan fo 那羅延佛), Buddha Zarathuštra (Chin. Suluzhi fo 蘇魯支佛), Buddha Śākyamuni (Chin. Shijiawen fo 釋迦文佛), Buddha Jesus (Chin. Yishuhe fo 夷數和佛) and Mānī, the Buddha of light (Chin. Moni guangfo 摩尼光佛).

In the third part of his online presentation, Gábor Kósa turned to the Buddhist iconography of the Manichaeen paintings identified during the past 12 years in various Japanese collections. After showing the paintings themselves, the speaker again concentrated on three case studies:

- (1) The various types of Buddha figures in the Manichaeen paintings,
- (2) The Buddhist motifs in the so-called ‘Birth of Mānī painting’,
- (3) And the consciously applied motifs of the ‘Ten Kings of Hell’ iconographical tradition in the judgment scene of the so-called ‘Cosmology painting’.

In his summary, Kósa emphasised again that the Buddhist vocabulary permeates Chinese Manichaeen scriptures, Manichaeen translators used them whenever they could find a Buddhist term that roughly corresponds to the Manichaeen expression. This process resulted in the presence of various levels of semantic proximity between the two religious vocabularies; similarly,



Chinese Manichaean paintings abundantly apply Buddhist motifs. A closer analysis of the textual and the visual remains reveals, the speaker argued, that Manichaeans used Buddhist vocabulary and visual motifs in a rather sophisticated, refined way to convey their own religious message.

Gábor Kósa plans to publish a *BuddhistRoad* paper on the use of the word 'Buddha' in Manichaean manuscripts.

