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# Wonders and Healings at the Crossroads of Manichaeism, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism in Eastern Iran and Central Asia

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**ABSTRACT** The early Sasanian period witnessed a variety of religious beliefs in competition. The clash between Kirdīr and Mani represents just an episode of the triumph the Mazdean church over Manichaeism, as well as over the other religious formations listed in Kirdīr's inscriptions. Persian Zoroastrianism constituted a stronghold of power and religious hegemony at the heart of the Sasanian Empire. Yet, the peripheral Zoroastrianism of Eastern Iran and Central Asia featured aspects of regional Mazdeism, such as a wide variety of interactions between the Iranian and Indian cultures, and overt religious exchanges with Manichaeism, Buddhism and Islam. This article first examines the connotations of the word indicating 'wonder' and 'miracle' (Middle Persian *warz*, Parthian *warž*), and explores its thematic correspondences both within the shared Iranian language heritage (Avestan, Pahlavi, Middle Persian, Sogdian) and religious contexts (Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Buddhism). Its second aim is to extend this investigation into different Central Asian contexts of Sogdian Buddhism, taking into account specific Buddhist features. A close textual analysis finds that the interest in miracles is connected to healing. Thus, in the religious literature under analysis, miracles represent the medium of persuasion and conversion *par excellence*, but are also regarded as medical means to cure and save those in need, often through redeeming knowledge. The connections between medical healing and spiritual wisdom were generally associated with important religious personalities of the larger Indo-Mediterranean area, such as Buddha, Jesus and Mani, and with their messages of redemption. This article advances that 'wonders' and 'healings' represented efficacious notions employed to meet both primary needs of solace against suffering and angst and ardent searches for salvation. The article also highlights the link between the above binomial relation of wonders/healing and the political role of prophetical leaders, allegedly endowed with supernatural powers. As a case-study of this perspective, the article reviews the ideological and social developments of revolts, such as the Khurramiya movements in Islamic times, which exploited precisely this cultural baggage of practices of amazement and trickery for their own messianic propaganda.

**KEYWORDS** miracles, magic, healing, medicine, salvation, wisdom, conversion

## Introduction

In this paper I shall discuss the following points related to wonders and healings within a situation of cultural interactions: 1) religious wonders and amazement; 2) medical power of miraculous healings; 3) aesthetic wonders in dramatic experience; 4) political manipulation of wonders. [1]

A preliminary survey of the the cultural crossroads in which Manichaeism, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism came into contact should first take into consideration the relevance of their geographical situation: between the southwestern Iranian region of Persis (Fars), the broader area of northwestern Iran (Parthia) and the eastern Iranian regions concerning a peripheral Iranism.[1] Both geographical settings display the two different but related characteristics of centre and periphery: the religious hegemony of Mazdeism (in Sassanian times, in Fars) and the religious cohabitation of Mazdeism with other beliefs of the larger zone of the (so-called) Parthian Commonwealth[2] and of Eastern Iran and Central Asia.[3] With regard to the periphery, it will be shown that Eastern Zoroastrians, Buddhists and Manichaeans, belonging to the set of Iranian speakers, employed their languages and adapted them to religious subsets (Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Manichaeism) that sometimes allowed archaic Iranian (Pan-Iranian) traits to emerge.[4] [2]

The manifesto of Sasanian political and religious hegemony is patently noticeable in the well-known program of Kirdīr's inscriptions of the third century, which not only mention Manichaeism and Buddhism but other religions too, such as Hinduism, Judaism, Christians (inside and outside the Sassanian empire), Manichaeans and Baptists: [3]

> And Jews and Buddhists and Hindus and Nazarenes and Christians and Baptists and Manichaeans were smitten in the empire (*ud ǰahūd ud šaman ud brāman ud nāsrā ud kristiyān ud makdag ud zandīk andar šahr zad bawēnd*).[5] (§11 in MacKenzie 1989, 54 [text], 58 [translation]) [4]

Kirdīr's overall message points to 'confrontation' and 'clash' in the sense of opposition and competition between different beliefs, and of the internal struggle between different doctrines of the Zoroastrian church, rather than to a smooth 'crossroad.' Nonetheless, we need a more nuanced perspective, especially when dealing with the supposedly real conditions of persecution and violence, or probably with situation of polemical debate, as has recently been underlined by Oktor Skjærvø.[6] This situation was partly confirmed by parallel data on the [5]

1 In this essay I will focus on historical relations during and after the Achaemenid period, within Irano-Hellenistic times and ongoing. I will not deal with Indo-Iranian methodology such as linguistic, textual analysis of Vedic and Avestan corpora, common stylistic and phraseology, Indo-Iranian shared culture, mythology and religion here.

2 With regard to this vast cultural area, I follow here the definition of Albert de Jong (2013, 153–55).

3 Another opposite margin, that of western peripheral Iran, is related to Armenia (Russell 1987) or within Caucasian lands (Colchis, Iberia and Albania), but will be left out in this essay, except for a cursory mention of the important works of Stephen Rapp about ancient Georgia and his very stimulating book (Rapp 2014).

4 For example, see below: the Khotanese *urmaysde* (< Ahura Mazdā) "Sun" or the Sogdian Paradise of Light (*rγwšnʾγrδmnwh* < Avestan *raoxšna- dəmana-*) and Mithra's Sogdian attribute of Judge (echoing the Avestan background of *Mihr Yašt*) in the *Vessantara Jātaka*.

5 On the more accurate analysis of religions mentioned in this inscription, see de Blois (2002, 5–7): yḥwdy/*Jahūd* "Jews"; šmny/*Šaman* "Buddhist"; blmny/*Braman* "Brāhmaṇa" (Hindus); nʾslʾy/*Nāṣrāy*; klstydʾn/ *Kristiyān*; zndyky/*Zandīk* "Manichaeans"; mktky (Baptists?) remains problematic and conjectural. For the "Christians," *Nāṣrāy* and *Kristiyān*, inside and outside the Sasanian empire, see also Jullien and Jullien (2002).

6 With regard to the above quoted expression *zad bawēnd* ("were smitten") of Kirdīr's statement, Skjærvø (2011, 620), suggests for the verb *zad* ('struck down') a non violent meaning such as 'eliminating evil,' in

emergence of doctrinal debates in Sasanian late Antiquity and the Indo-Mediterranean area.[7] Aside from the Manichaeans, Kirdīr's inscription puts the blame on Buddhism, about which a few Pahlavi texts provide some information regarding the perception of this Eastern religious variety, after the Sassanian conquest of the Kušan empire around 265 AD (Frye 1984, 262) and then encompassing its Hindo-Buddhist, Iranian and Hellenistic cultural heritage.

> *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* 3, 26: (description of an apocalyptic vision of a tree with seven branches) "the one of brass is the reign of the Arsacid kings, who will rid the world of the heresy (*ǰud-ristagīh*) of the Buddha (*But*)." (Cereti 1995, 152) [6]
>
> *Bundahišn* [27, 43]: "The demon But is that which they worship in India and in his images a spirit is resident which is worshipped as Bōδāsaf." (Bailey 1931, 279)[8] [7]
>
> *Ayādgār J̌āmāspīg* 8, 6 (ethnographic description of China, Činīstān i.e. Turkestan): "China <is> a wide country with much gold, much musk (*mušk*) and many pearls. Men who are there are skilled, wise and perspicacious. They worship Buddha (*but*), and when they die, they are damned." (Agostini 2019, 456)[9] [8]

The above three texts display evidence of disparaging attitudes towards Buddhism and match Kirdīr's inscription, being substantially similar to later Pahlavi narratives about anti-idolatry trends[10] and using a derogatory language for alien religions. In this case, the polemics were directed against Buddha and his iconography, the latter sometimes being of gigantic size if we take into account the artistic remains from the Kušan period and especially Kaniška's colossal enterprises or the later architectural site of Bamiyan. Despite the tone of Kirdīr's inscriptions and of the Pahlavi texts, the archaeological and numismatic evidence of the Eastern Sasanian provinces displays a more tolerant attitude towards Buddhism and an activity of buildings (*stūpas*) through many centuries as proof of a royal politics different from the Zorostrian militance of the Magi.[11] [9]

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a doctrinal and verbal sense (trial procedure of questioning), and not necessarily pointing to kill. In this case, the dark connotation of the persecutor referred to the archimagus could be sensibly nuanced and limited to an attitude of inquisitor (polemics and accusations), notwithstanding the repression of Mani and his trial to death. Accordingly, the semantic fluctuation between speech acts (questioning, judgements) and punishment is an interesting topic of the Iranian linguistic area. See Filippone (2007) for a thoroughly investigation of Old-, Middle- and New Iranian data. Besides, in legal context the word *zadan* ("to strike, hit, slay") is used in its literal sense, while in other cases *bōz-* ("to win"), *srāxšēn-* ("to put to shame") or *andrenǰ-* ("to defeat, condemn") are employed.

7 The involvement of the Manichaeans in public disputation has been investigated by Lim (1995, 70–108). The recent studies on the *Kephalaia* of Dublin also describe the ambiance of the Sasanian royal court, wherein courtly disputations between different doctrines took place. See Gardner, BeDuhn and Dilley (2015, 15–51) and the edition and translation of these Dublin *Kephalaia* by gardner_chapters_2018.

8 Bailey's reference to *Bundahišn* is quoted according to the edition of Anklesaria (1956, 186, ll. 11–12). For a new translation of the whole corpus of the *Bundahišn*, see now Agostini and Thrope (2020, 146, for the translation of this paragraph 43, chapter 27).

9 See Agostini (2013, 101–2, 130–34), for a translation and commentary of this passage.

10 The polemical nuance of a religious and militant Zoroastrian ideology applied to different beliefs, which were interchangeably labeled as idol-worship (*uzdēs-parastīh*), demon-worship (*dēwēzagīh*), evil-religion (*duš-dēn*), sorcery (*ǰādūgīh*) and heretic/apostate (*ahlomōγ*), must be stressed. See the recent evaluation of Shenkar (2014, 183–85) and also his re-assessment of the alleged "Zoroastrian Iconoclasm" in Shenkar (2015, 474n20) (for Buddha/"idol").

11 See Staviski (1990, 169), for a chronology of building and re-bulding of *stūpas* in the territory of Merv; for the Sasanian royal attitude, also see Koshelenko (1966, 182). For a general survey about the Iranian facets of Buddhism, see Scott (1990).

## Indo-Iranian Borderlands and Relationships

[10] Moving from the official Zoroastrianism of Fars to those Eastern Iranian fringes of Khorasan and Transoxiana, we witness a more fluid religious environment outside the strict control of the Persian priesthood of Magi, whose vivid eclecticism indicates Indian or Central Asian influences. The artistic remains of the Gandhara style of Buddhist iconography indicate possible traces of Mazdean influence, such as fire altars represented in some sculptures.[12] With regard to Hindo-Mazdean relations, an interesting subject are the solar cults of Indo-Scythian tribes and the priestly category of the Maga Brāhmaṇa (or Śākadvipīya Brāhmaṇa), whose related texts, belonging to the genre of Purāṇa (*Sāmba Purāṇa* and *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*), present remarkable features of Zoroastrian/Indian syncretism.[13] Another example of this is the Bird-Priest carved in the sarcophagus of Wirkak at Xi'an, which seems to point to a remarkable overlapping of Irano-Mazdean, Indian and Central Asian features. This sarcophagus, belonging to Wirkak, a Sogdian caravan-leader and merchant professing an unidentifiable faith (Mazdean, Manichaean or even Muslim-Khurrami?), reflects multiple cultural traditions requiring a multidisciplinary approach in envisioning the iconographical data and its interpretation along the crossroad of Eastern Iranian and Central Asian borderlands.[14]

[11] Such a complex area—from an Iranian point of view, it includes Bactrian, Parthian and Sogdian—is clearly a pivotal zone of interactions, as documented by the presence of Indian (Sanskrit or Prakrit) elements in Manichaean Parthian and Sogdian (Sims-Williams 1983, 139–41) and, further, by linguistic variations inside the Bactrian documents themselves, with many loanwords from Indian-Buddhist languages as well as from Greek, Turkic, Tocharian, Chinese and Arabic.[15] Furthermore, the paradigmatic importance of Bactria for the history of Buddhism within the Indo-Iranian borderland is reflected by the episode of two Bactrian merchants, Tapussa and Bhallika, who fed Siddharta before his awakening.[16] Among the Bactrian documents published by Nicholas Sims-Williams there is a protective amulet (ραϰϸο) with formulas of Indo-Buddhist subjects: Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and other supernatural beings such as *yakṣas*, *rākṣasas*, *nāgas* and *kinnaras* (Sims-Williams 2007, 174–75, document *za*). The Bactrian language offers a stunning field of research of overlapping strata of cultural interactions and of its art, iconography and related epigraphical data. The case of the Bactrian inscription BODDOMOZDO, placed on a statue of a flaming Buddha (Stavisky 1980) from Kara-tepe, provides an interesting sample of hybridity, still awaiting a definitive historical explanation. Are we to surmise, in this case, a double divinity—"Buddha-Mazdā"—or the expression indicating "the favor (MOZDO < **mižd*wan?) of Buddha," according to Sims-Williams' explanation (Sims-Williams 1997)? Further research on the intriguing hapax of BODDOMOZDO and the flaming (or solar) features of Buddha's statue should also consider the Khotanese syntagma

12 The matter is controversial and ranges from the Zoroastrian fire cult to the Vedic cult (Agni's altar); see the well-balanced survey of different interpretations in Tadikonda (2007).

13 For a recent treatment about the Maga Brāhmaṇa, see Palladino (2018), and formerly Panaino (1996).

14 On Wirkak and the iconography of his sarcophagus, see Gulácsi and BeDuhn ([2016] 2012), de la Vaissière (2015), de la Vaissière (2015–2019). On Sogdian Zoroastrianism and the Magi's role, see Grenet and Azarnouche (2007).

15 See Sims-Williams (2002) for a sketch of this linguistic variety from Achaemenid times to the Islamic period.

16 See Allon (2009, 13–14), for stressing the role of the merchants in this episode and in different versions, among which Gāndhāri emerged as a very important Prakrit in vernacular linguistic interfacing. See Salomon (2007) for the versatility ('destiny') of Gāndhāri at crossroads of India, Iran and Central Asia.

*balysūñä urmaysde* (i.e., Buddha-Mazdā) "Buddha-Sun" which matches the Bactrian expression and recalls the identification of the sun with the higher god (*urmaysde* < Ahura Mazdā).[17]

## Epiphany and Wonders in Iranian Manichaean Texts

After the above brief examples, I will take into account those Manichaean subjects that partly mirror Buddhist aspects and are highly comparable with each other from a typological point of view and the Iranian languages that inherited an Indo-Buddhist vocabulary.[18] Manichaeism can be regarded as an illustrious example of a many-faceted religious system blending different messages of salvation: the Gnostic and Jews-Christian one of the Baptist community wherein Mani grew up; the Zoroastrian conceptions Mani encountered during his peregrination in the Sassanian empire, which are clearly discernible in many doctrinal aspects, for example in the *Šābuhragān*, the book dedicated to the king Šābuhr (see Colditz 2005) in which Mazdean and Christian themes (such as Gospel quotations) were interlaced according to eschatological needs;[19] and finally the version of Buddhism which Mani likely met during his first missionary travel to the Kušan lands, in the Eastern fringes of the Sasanian empire. These add relevant elements to the reconstruction of the cultural influences present in young Manis' life. The substantial presence of Indian thought, of Buddhist and Jaina expression[20] in his doctrine underlines the role the Indo-Iranian zone played for cultural transmission within the Indo-Mediterranean world that emerged after Hellenism. This network extended into the Near East, the Middle East and Central Asia and blended Indian and Iranian aspects, especially during Eastern Hellenism, from Aśoka to Kaniška, and promoted a wide circulation of ideas, doctrines of salvation, scientific lores and religious knowledge.[21] [12]

### Mar Ammō and Bagard

As a starting point, to illustrate the typical case-history of Manichaean-Buddhism interfacing let us consider the Middle Persian missionary text depicting Mār Ammō travels to Eastern Iran, and his encounter with the protector spirit of the Khwarasan, Bagard,[22] probably a personification of the Kušan goddess Ardoxšo—a variety of the Avestan Aši, mixed with Indian and Hellenistic features, namely Lakhṣmi and Fortune/Tyche. The text presents a debate between Mār Ammō and the 'spirit of the Khwarasan' in form of a doctrinal dialogue. When [13]

17 See Bailey (1979, 40, 272) for *urmaysde-* and *balysa-/ balysūñä-*.

18 The question of the chronology of Indian borrowings—entailing the difference between Parthian texts (Northeastern Iran) and Sogdian texts (Central Asia, Turfan region)—was approached by Sims-Williams (1983) and recently by Lurje (2021).

19 See Piras (2021a) for an evaluation of Gospel quotations in Manichaean texts.

20 On a possible impact of Jaina ideas on Manichaeism, see also Deeg and Gardner (2009) and Gardner (2005). On Mani's journey to India, see Pettipiece (2017). Buddhist and Zoroastrian aspects are also discernible in Coptic Manichaean texts such as the Dublin *Kephalaia*, recently studied by Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dilley (2015) and translated in gardner_chapters_2018. For these cultural interactions in Dublin *Kephalaia*, see Panaino (2019), Gardner (2020), Piras (2020).

21 This hub may be envisaged as a vector of diffusion of many Iranian elements, and with a strong legacy of the Achaemenid royal language as well. A comparative sight at the epigraphic corpora of Aśoka and Kaniška could easily reveal the continuity of this Achaemenid imperial language within the frame of texts imbued with concepts stemming from a common formulaic style, conveyed by the Aramaic language: See Scialpi (1984) for Aśoka, and Skjærvø (1998, 653–56) for Kaniška as well as for the role of Buddhism and the Bactrian scribal tradition echoing western Iranian features of the Achaemenid times.

22 On the identification of Bagard (Baγard / Vaγard) as a goddess or a toponym (related to northern Afghanistan), see Sundermann (1979).

Ammō arrives at the watchpost of Kušan lands, he encounters this mythological entity, who questions him: "What do you want? Where have you come from?"; Mār Ammō's response—"I am a believer, a disciple of the Apostle Mani"; the Spirit replies, "I will not accept you. Return to where you have come from"—and afterward the Spirit disappears before Mar Ammō. The text then presents Mār Ammō in meditation, praying to the sun and fasting for two days until Mani appears and advises him to recite the "Collecting of the Gates" from the book of *Treasure of the Living*. On the following day the Spirit again confronts Mār Ammō: "Why did you not return to your country?"—"I have come from afar because of the religion" (Mār Ammō)—"What is the religion you bring?" (Spirit). Mār Ammō says: "We do not eat meat nor drink wine. We (also) keep away from [women]"—"In my kingdom there are many like you" the Spirit says.[23] The story presents an audience of Buddhists, situated beyond the border of the East (Khwarasan) who followed moral prescriptions as well as diet and chastity very similar to Mani's teaching.

## Mani and the Tūrān šāh

The second text we present here belongs to the genre of missionary stories and conversions of high-ranking rulers, in this case the Tūrān šāh, the king of a small Buddhist kingdom in today's Baluchistan, west of the Indus Valley. A miracle of levitation precedes and provokes the conversion of the ruler, a feature identified by Skjærvø and other scholars as Buddhist (Skjærvø 1994, 244–52).[24] According to this Manichean text with Buddhist aspects, the dialogues between Mani and a Spirit (Ardāw, a Just) take place in the supernatural sphere and include questions and answers about the mysteries of the universe and about that which can be named as the highest and which coincides with the "wisdom of the Buddha" (*but žīrīft*). All that brings the king to finally acknowledge Mani and his wisdom:[25] "You are the biggest and the most luminous amid these things, for you are truly the Buddha itself [*tō wxad but ayy*]."[26] In consequence: "The lord Mani taught the Tūrān Šāh and the nobles much [insight] and wisdom. And [he showed him] Paradise and Hell, the [puri]fication of the [worlds], Sun [and Moon, soul and] body, the apostles that had come into the lands, righteous ones and sinners and the work of the elect and [the audi]tors." [14]

It must be noticed that Mani's teaching concerning Paradise and Hell is similar to Kirdīr's message in his inscriptions, a fact that underlines the religious confrontation that arose between two leaders[27] who promised their believers a Good or an Evil afterlife. [15]

## Mani and Mihršāh

The former act of 'showing' (verb *nimāy-*) Paradise closely points to the context of another dialogue between Mani and the ruler Mihršāh, probably the brother of the king of kings Šābuhr I. In this case, however, the act of 'showing' is not related to the display and explication [16]

23 M 2/I/R/I33-VII, Sundermann (1981, 17–18), translation of Klimkeit (1993, 204).

24 Further Buddhist elements recognized in this text are the distance in feet as a token of respect which enhances merit, the divine eyes and the wisdom.

25 M48+, Sundermann (1981, 21–24), English translation in Klimkeit (1993, 207); Parthian text in square brackets is my addition (from Boyce 1975, 35).

26 On the identification of Mani with Maitreya, see Hutter (2002) and Hutter (2017).

27 Skjærvø (1995, 276–82) provided a comparative-contrastive sketch of Mani's and Kirdīr's eschatologies. See Russell 1990 for his proposal of a 'shamanistic model of conflict,' namely a competition between ecstatic powers of these two religious personalities.

of Mani's teaching but is connected to a supernatural power of vision needed to persuade the skeptical ruler.

> Šābuhr the King of Kings had a brother, the Lord of Mesene, and his name was Mihršāh. He was a bitter enemy of the Apostle. He had a garden, very fine and wonderfully spacious, the like of which no other man had ever possessed. Then the Apostle knew that the time of (his [i.e. of the king's]) redemption had come. And he arose and went before Mihršāh who was in his garden, greatly enjoying his feast: […] Then he (the king) said to the Apostle: "In the paradise [*wahišt*] of which you speak, is there a garden [*bōδēstān*] such as mine?" Thereupon the Apostle realized that he had an unbelieving heart. In wondrous power he showed him the Paradise of Light [*aδyān pad warž nimād wahišt rōšn*] with all gods, deities and the immortal Air of Life, and a garden with all kinds (of things) and other desirable sights there. Then he (the king) fell down, unconscious, (lying there) for three hours. And he kept what he had seen in his heart. Then the Apostle put his hand on his head and he regained consciousness.[28] [17]

## Marvel and miracle: *warz / warž*

The above quoted text mentions the power of marvel, Parthian *warž* or Middle Persian *warz*, Sogdian *warz / warč*, Bactrian οαρσοχοδανο, New Persian *varj*. Marvel (or miracle, or wonder) is a very important notion attested by many Middle-Iranian texts and presents Ancient Indo-Iranian forerunners, such as Avestan *varəcah*—"power, energy" (Bartholomae 1904, 1367: "Kraft, Tatkraft, Energie") and Vedic *várcas*—"splendour" (Mayrhofer 1996, 2:516). The Avestan word is often related to the luminous power of the X$^{v}$arənah (Yt 19.9, 45, 72), of the Star Sirius (Yt 8.49, the "prodigious" Tištrya) or other deities. The vocabulary of Zoroastrian Pahlavi texts includes *warz* within a semantic network of expressions and words, stretching from *xwarrah* (splendor of glory) to *amāwandīh* (strength) and *pērōzgarīh* (victory). The epic nuances of *warz* are also discernible in the apocalyptical character of the hero Wahrām ī Warzāwand, the powerful Wahrām, the miraculous Zoroastrian Saviour that will be announced by a star and will arrive in the fulness of *xwarrah*, in the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* (7.5; 8.1) (Cereti 1995, 162, 165). [18]

Moreover, the Manichaean context registers a shift from Zoroastrian mythical and heroic features to more defined aspects of holy powers for holy men who are gifted with supernatural skills received by the gods, as illustrated by Mani and his gifts for healing and salvation. This holy power is a typical mark of Late Antiquity and of the Indo-Mediterranean area where Christian, Buddhist and Manichaean universal messages of salvation flourished. Similar nuances of 'holy power' can be recognized in those Christian Sogdian texts—and in Buddhism, as we will notice later—in which *warz* is a translation of Syriac *tdmwrtʾ* (*teḏmurtā*), usually employed for miracles accomplished by God, or revealing the holy power of Saints and Martyrs. For instance, the Christian Sogdian text C2 records the Passion of Saint Pethion who is thrown in the river by the Zoroastrian Magi. As soon as Pethion touches the water the river divides itself in two, leaving the saint in the middle of it yet on dry land: [19]

28 M 47/I, Sundermann (1981, 102–3), English translation, Klimkeit (1993, 211–12). Parthian text in square brackets is my additon (from Boyce 1975, 38). For a detailed analysis and careful historical and literary contextualization of this conversion episode, and for a close comparison with Kirdīr's inscriptions, see also Dilley (2015).

> And many people believed in the eternal God on account of this…miracle [*wr-cwny*ʾ] which they saw. And when the chief Magus saw this miracle he became still angrier and more enraged."[29] (Sims-Williams 1985, 43, 23 R 6-7) [20]

The presence of the Magi in this story indicates that the narrative about wonders and miracles also represented a remarkable tool in the charismatic competition and encounter between Christianity and Manichaeism vis-à-vis the official hegemony of Zoroastrianism. This clearly denotes a confessional struggle in the late antique Middle East. The Acts of Christian Persian Martyrs and the supernatural charisma of Saints, such as Mār Abā (died 552), represent examples of the ways in which the power of holiness could have affected the Sasanian king's court respect and kindled the anxieties of the Zoroastrian Magi. The saint's corpse further generated contradictions between Christianity and Zoroastrianism, especially within the context of the clashes between Mazdean funerary taboos and the Christian belief in the holy power of the dead body and of bones relics.[30] [21]

## Wonders of Ascension and Resurrection

The miraculous power of the Manichaean *warz* is attested in a series of supernatural events, such as Mani's death and ascension, depicted in a Parthian text that presents Mani as taking off the armor of the battle that is human existence: [22]

> [H]e [Mani] sat down in the Ship of Light (the Sun) and received the divine garment, the diadem of light and the beautiful garland. And in a great joy he flew up together with the bright gods that accompanied him on the right and the left, to the sound of harps and songs of joy, in divine miraculous power [*pad warž baγānīg*], like a swift (bolt of) lightning.[31] [23]

The Parthian Hymn on Crucifixion (*dārūbdagīft*) denotes a similar power of *warž*, drawing parallels between Mani and Jesus notwithstanding the doketic aspect of Gnostic-Manichaean Christology, focusing on appearence rather than bodily reality. Mani and first-generation Manichaeans used Jesus' passion and resurrection to shape the narrative about Mani's martyrdom. The fragments M 18+ M 2753 record the episode of Jesus' death and the coming of three women to the tomb to witness the miraculous power (*warž*) of resurrection, on the third day: [24]

> See the testimony of the miraculous power [*warž*] as did Mary, Salome and Arsinoe when the two angels said to them 'Seek not the Living One among the dead.' (Morano 2000, 406–7 (V/1-5)) [25]

In this Manichaean context, it is important to notice that the ascension or the resurrection from death are parallel to recovery from sickness. The connection to miracles, specific to Mani's power in life and afterlife, is also granted to his disciples, like Mār Addā, who is told to have made many conversions and many miracles in public confrontations and debates during his missionary journey in the Roman Empire. Persuasion and miracles: This seems to be the [26]

29 Sogdian word in square brackets is my addition.

30 Such interfacing perspectives related to Christian miracles and Mazdean understanding (between acceptance and rejection) has been approached in Gignoux (2000) and Jullien (2013, 344–49).

31 M 5569. Sundermann (1981, 30–31). English translation, Klimkeit (1993, 215). Parthian text in square brackets is my addition (from Boyce 1975, 47).

connection between the faculty to provoke amazement and conversion to the Manichaean belief, as a true *metànoia*, i.e., a mental shifting from skepticism to faith that is frequently produced by healing miracles.

### Wonders of Healing and Conversion

The story of Nafšā's conversion, the sister of Zenobia queen of Palmyra, deserves particular attention concerning the connection between miracle and healing: [27]

> [And the Lord Mani], the Apostle, descended in the presence of all, including Nafšā, and he laid his hand on her, and immediately Nafšā was healed, and she was completely free from pain [*xwych*]. All the people were amazed at the great miracle [*pr RBkʾ wrz*]. Then many people accepted the faith anew.[32] [28]

This story recalls the first text on *warz* that we discussed above, about Mani and Mihršāh: Both share a cluster of features, ranging from sickness/incredulity to astonishment, healing and the final conversion, provoked by the miraculous touch of Mani's hands. The imposition of hands (Greek *cheirothesía, cheirotonía*) is the charismatic action which conjures the spiritual energies of healing—we owe to the late Kevin Coyle a full treatment of the data pertaining to this thaumaturgical gesture of therapy (Coyle 2009, 89–99).[33] Although we do find the *cheirothesía* also in the Greek Cologne Manichaean Codex (*CMC* 20, 1-17; 64, 10; 70, 3)—as a heavenly gift granted from the angel Syzygos, together with other charismas—the Iranian texts show Buddhist features, such as Mani's recognition in Buddha's garb and the ensuing exclamation of respect ("you are Buddha!"). [29]

## Wonders and Miracles in Buddhist Sogdian texts

Let us now move to the Iranian Buddhist texts,[34] especially focusing on the Sogdian Buddhist texts. The Manichaean emphasis on marvel and its power of astonishing, with miracles of paradisiac visions, is very similar to other examples of amazement and healing—if we consider healing as a spiritual awareness—in Buddhist Sogdian texts. In this case the effect of *warz* entails the capacity to look at supernatural bodies and to provoke transformations, as we can notice by reading Benveniste's translation of Sogdian Buddhist texts dealing with miracle and its power of healing. [30]

> P2 (50) And with a pure heart the countless Buddhas of the 10 regions…miraculously make their bodies visible. (Benveniste 1940, 6)[35] [31]

> P9 (20-25) If in the eighth place he perfectly penetrates the miraculous transformation of the Buddha, this penetration is called the transformation of the Buddha. For whatever in space, in dharmadhātu to the end, he sees various living beings, who [32]

32 So 18222+ So 18223. Sundermann (1981, 41–45). English translation, Klimkeit (1993, 209). Sogdian words in square brackets are my addition.

33 For an updating revision of the medical aspects in Manichaeism, see Piras (2021d).

34 The recent volume of de Chiara, Maggi, and Martini (2013) is an important achievement of this topic, dealing with Khotanese, Sogdian and other non-Iranian sources (Tocharian, Chinese) on Buddhism among Iranian peoples.

35 Sogdian syntagma in square brackets is my addition. French original: "Et d'un coeur pur les Buddhas innombrables des 10 régions…rendent miraculeusement [*prw wrz*] leur corps visible."

> are born there and die there transforming their bodies, he (there) sees the miraculous transformation of Buddha. This is why he is called a man who perfectly penetrated the miraculous transformation of Buddha. (Benveniste 1940, 119)[36]

The Sogdian *Vessantara Jātaka* also mentions *warz* as a state of astonishment at the marvelous work of king Sudašan (21b) or the power of the supreme god Āδbaγ descending from the Paradise of Light (*rγwšnʾγrδmnwh*) to make wonders: [33]

> And he (= the supreme god) descended from the bright paradise and he came quickly to the great desert where Suδāšn was going around miserable. There (he created) by magic [*wrz*] a great town and many villages and a great river and many nourishing trees and all sort of flowers and many fruits and many men and animals [829–836]. (Durkin-Meisterernst 2009, 70–71)[37] [34]

## Transformation and Healing

The large amount of occurrences of *warz* is quoted in the Sogdian Dhyāna text of the *Buddhadhyānasamādhisāgarasūtra* (MacKenzie 1976, 53–77), wherein a specific kind of Buddha is attested, the *wrz pwty,* namely the Magic Buddha (MacKenzie 1976, 59, line 89, and related notes), a translation of the Chinese *huà fó* (化佛), corresponding to the Sanskrit *nirmita buddha* or *nirmāṇa buddha* (the Buddha of transformations). This quality of metamorphosis belongs to the *nirmāṇakāya*, the "body of transformation" by which the Buddha reveals himself to mankind. This Dhyāna text deals with meditation and states of consciousness that often are described by means of a medical imagery, according to a typical Buddhist conception that envisions the mental powers as a remedy to heal the existence affected by suffering:[38] [35]

> This samādhi of consideration of the Buddha is counted just like a good remedy and medicine [*ʾrwrh ʾt βycyʾkh*] […] Who(ever) can consume (*or*, has consumed) this medicine neither age nor death will befall him. (MacKenzie 1976, 67, lines 228-232)[39] [36]

The Sogdian expression "remedy[40] and medicine" (*ʾrwrh ʾt βycyʾkh*) is very similar to the Parthian expression "remedy/herb of medicine" (*rūrag ī bišehkih*) included in the Manichaean text belonging to the genre of *Hymns to the Living Soul* (M 8110 I). A few passages describe the care of the Father for his creatures, and the sending of heavenly remedies to bring the cures for salvation: [37]

> And in the hand(s) of the angel(s) and the redeemers he sent the herb(s) of [38]

36 Sogdian syntagma in square brackets is my addition. French original: "Si en huitième lieu, il pénètre parfaitement la transformation miraculeuse [*pr wrz prwʾyrt*] du Buddha, cette pénètration s'appelle transformation du Buddha. Car tout ce que dans l'espace, dans le dharmadhātu jusqu'à la fin, il voit d'êtres vivants variés, qui y naissent et y meurent en transformant leur corps, il (y) voit la transformation miraculeuse de Buddha. C'est pourquoi il est appelé un homme ayant pénétré parfaitement la transformation miraculeuse de Buddha."

37 Sogdian word in square brackets is my addition.

38 The suffering (*duḥkha*) is the focal concern of the Buddhist doctrine which motivates the yearning for salvation and its rich imagery of healing and medical metaphors (see Granoff 2011).

39 Sogdian words in square brackets: my addition.

40 The translation of Sogdian *ərwar* and Parthian *rūrag* with "remedy" or "herbs" depends on the vegetal nature of such a medicine (see Avestan *uruuāra-* and Pahlavi *urwar*: "plant").

> medicine
> (*u-š pad dast ī frēstagān ud zīndakkarān rūrag ī bišehkīh frēstād*)[41]

The miracle, regarded as an act of transformation, perfectly fits the Manichaean imagery of healing and the dynamics of purification and redemption of this antropology of salvation. The spiritual entity of the Light Self, who prompts within the Elect any form of spiritual transformation, is linked to miraculous souls realizing this condition of transfiguration: [39]

> Let there be a standing of the Light Self [γ*ryw rwxšn*] of the miraculous souls [*wrz rwʾnt*], shining, triumphant, victorious, without defilement, without impurity, without evil deed, without sin.[42] [40]

Another point of this Sogdian Dhyāna text, matching similar medical aspects common to both systems, is the Buddha's touch similar to Mani's gesture of hand-imposition (*cheirothesía*) as a means to convey the healings. A passage worth noticing in this Buddhist text is a dialogue between the man absorbed in the *samādhi* and the Buddha Śākyamuni himself, praising the man for his power of meditation: [41]

> Thereupon, the Śākyamuni Buddha will stretch his right hand [*δstw*] and touch the top of the head of the one considering and also all the magic Buddha [*wrz pwtʾyšt*] will stretch their right hands and touch the top of his head. (MacKenzie 1976, 76–77, lines 385-388)[43] [42]

## Mirages of Landscapes

In other passages, the power of magic transformation of *warz*, issuing from the mental exercise of meditation and concentration, entails the modification of landscape and points to a condition of illusion and mirage which overlaps reality and imagination.[44] [43]

> When his mental thought shall be completed, then he will see that in the regions of the 10 directions, with all earth, mountains and rivers and stones and walls, all have changed and by magic become diamantine earth [*prw wrz βẓʾyrynʾk zʾyh ʾβʾ*]. (MacKenzie 1976, 73, lines 323-326)[45] [44]

With regard to the landscape, let us return to the previous Manichaean phrasing of M 47/I (Mani and Mihršāh) to detect a similar literary composition focused on Paradisiacal places (the Paradise of Ligth): "then, in wondrous power he showed the Paradise of Light" (*aδyān pad warž nimād wahišt rōšn*). That is to say, by prodigious means an ambiance with deities and gardens is revealed. In both cases, it is always such a magical power of *warz* which produces an epiphany of heavenly dwellings, made of luminous (Manichaeism) or adamantine (Buddhism) substances. Let me highlight this diamond imagery (Buddhist Sogdian *βẓʾyrynʾk* or Manichaean Sogdian *ʾbjyrʿnc*) and underscore its Indo-Buddhist origin, too, stemming from [45]

41 Durkin-Meisterernst (2006, 156 (ll. 1596-1598), 157 (translation), 202 (commentary on note 473)).
42 Sogdian fragment M 6330 (= T II D 207): text and translation in Provasi (2011, 171–72, notes at the lines /v/11/ and related lemmata). Insightfully, Provasi noticed the links between the transfiguration/redemption and the miraculous power of the Sogdian *wrz*, often standing for Chinese *huà* (化).
43 Sogdian words in square brackets are my addition.
44 For the phaenomenology of mirage and mirroring, especially in Manichean texts, see Piras (2019).
45 Sogdian words in square brackets are my addition.

the word *vajra*: I refere to the well-known Sogdian fragment of Manichaean cosmogony (M 178) with a description of the Five Greatnesses of Paradise, and the Light Earth, eternal, miraculous (*wrcxwndqyʾ*) with divine pavement of diamond (*ʾbjyrʿnc*) (Henning 1948, 307, text: 18, 25, translation: 308).[46]

This comparative survey on Manichaean and Buddhist parallels in Iranian texts does not entirely solve the question of borrowings or reworkings. The Buddhicized Manichaean texts showcase a strong degree of assimilation and intercultural reshaping, due to a highly adaptive attitude for missionary purposes—an originally Mani trait as "interpreter" (i.e., of different religious teachings).[47] On the contrary, Buddhism seems to have been wary of Manichaeism, though certain doctrinal trends (asceticism, distrust of sexuality and of the world) of the Hīnayāna schools appear closer to Manichaeism than to Mahāyāna (see Scott 1995, 155, 162).[48] The common Middle-Iranian languages point to a shared heritage from which different religious cultures drew up, according to their linguistic and mental habits, regardless of their idiosyncratic confessional marks. Eastern Zoroastrians, Buddhists and Manichaeans, belonging to the set of Iranian speakers, employed their languages (vocabulary, syntactic structures, formulae) and adapted them to religious subsets (Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Manichaeism) that sometimes let archaic Iranian (Pan-Iranian) traits emerge, such as the Khotanese *urmaysde* (< Ahura Mazdā) "Sun" or the Sogdian Paradise of Light (*rγwšnʾγrδmnwh* < Avestan *raoxšna-dəmana-*) and Mithra's attribute as Judge (echoing the Avestan background of *Mihr Yašt*) in the *Vessantara Jātaka* (Durkin-Meisterernst 2009, 73). [46]

## The Aesthetic Wonders in Drama

The comparison between both setting of items and contexts points to a common imagery recognizable within a Middle Iranian vocabulary (Manichaean Parthian and Middle Persian, Bactrian, Manichaean Sogdian, Buddhist Sogdian) that can be approached through the comparative thematic-linguistic methodology mastered by Prods Oktor Skjærvø in many contributions dedicated to Iranian textualities.[49] In addition, we can also take into account a different perspective of comparison provided by the Buddhist heritage in multiple literary traditions, genres, languages, imageries and doctrines. From the point of view of oral textualities and their written forms, it should be interesting—as a propaedeutics—to compare the activities of Buddhist storytellers and the Iranian minstrels (Parthian *gōsāns*), also taking into account their common languages of Eastern Iran and a shared inclination for tales and epic.[50] The above-quoted samples of Iranian Manichaean texts showing strong Buddhist nuances provide us with remarkable evidence of this mixed approach that can be extended. I refer to interesting contributions of Georges-Jean Pinault, which distinguish between a superimposed level of textual elaboration and translation techniques in many Buddhist languages (Iranians, [47]

46 For an in-depth analysis concerning the diamond imagery of Paradise, see the painstaking contribution of Provasi (2013).

47 See the epiteth *tarkumān* ("interpreter"), addressed to Mani in the Bema Hymn M 73/V/5 (Reck 2004, 138 [695]), and the corresponding word ἑρμηνευτής (Coptic Homily III on Mani's death [60, 30-1]).

48 I leave aside the debate about the Buddhist and Manichaean confessional texts of the well-known scholarship of J. P. Asmussen, H.-J. Klimkeit and C. Weber.

49 Another scholar in this field worth mentioning is Josephson (2020), for her work on Middle Persian comparative Zoroastrian and Manichaean texts (rhetorical patterns, repetitions, spoken exchanges and tones of intensity at the beginning and the end of the story).

50 Remarkably, Bailey (1972, 64), did mention the Parthians together with the Saka within a broad ethnogeographical area of story-telling and storytellers (bards). See also Skjærvø (1998) for the traits of an Eastern Iranian epic tradition and its parallels with Buddhist stories.

Tocharian, Turkic, Tibetan, Chinese, Prakrit).[51] A recent essay of Pinault (2015b) analyzed the Tocharian terminology dealing with a refined Indo-Buddhist literary culture and with a rich phraseology of surprise, wonder and amazement, derived from aesthetic experiences and classified in treatises (*śāstras*). Tocharian narratives feature episodes describing the amazement of people, witnessing a marvellous vision or hearing an impressive speech of Buddha and Bodhisattvas. The expression of wonder or surprise belong to the stereotypes of Buddhist narrative literature of *Avadāna*s and *Jātaka*s going back to Pali or Sanskrit texts. Tocharian lexemes like *añumāski* ("astounding, amazing, wonderful") or *weyem* ("marvellous") denote the astonishing state of mind and joyous feeling, stemming from the knowledge of spiritual teachings. The Indian literary and theatrical culture are two important aspects to be considered in envisioning Tocharian culture and its interfacing with other subjects, such as Manichaeism and Buddhism and their literary and belletristic traditions.[52] The *Maitreyasamitināṭaka* text, in its Tocharian and Uyghur (*Maitrisimit nom bitig*) variants, is a remarkable subject of wide circulation, responding to an aesthetic taste, together with pedagogical intentions and needs for salvation by means of narrative and drama, very significantly centered around the coming of Maitreya and his epiphany. The Uyghur word *körünč*, denoting the manifestation and spectacle of the marvellous epiphany of Maitreya, can be ascribed to a noticeable semantic field, comparable—to a certain extent—to the Middle Iranian *warz/waršˇ*, notwithstanding their different etymologies and meanings[53]; and also comparable to further terminologies of happiness and surprise, in order to match the wonderful power of Mani with the marvels of Maitreya. A parallel between *Maitrisimit* and Mani's Bema liturgy can give a significant instance of textual similarities concerning two epiphanies of two resembling figures:

> All beings enjoy the spectacle of Maitreya's miracle.[54] [48]
>
> From Paradise the gate was opened and we were overcome with joy: the Lord Maitreya has come; Mār Mani, the Lord (has come) for a new Bema (*az wahišt bar wišād ō amāh būd šādīh sāstār maitrag āγad mār mānī xwadāy ō nōg gāh*).[55] [49]

The *Maitrisimit* agenda could then provide a fitting way of comparison with Manichean [50]
data concerning the epiphany of Mani, also called Messiah and Maitreya: For this reason the scenario of the Manichaean Bema festivity[56] may present interesting connections between this wide range of Indo-Buddhist and Manichaean topics and within this mixed linguistic area. Furthermore, it should also take into account those dramatic aspects of performative narratives in forms of oral representations and illustrations by paintings, from Eastern Iran to Samarkanda until the Turfan area,[57] shared by a composite audience wherein tales, doctrinal

51 For a comparative Buddhist stylistic, see Pinault (2015a).

52 A survey of the Buddhist contribution to the Indian belletristic aspects is Hahn (2010); for the Manichaean and the Iranian side of this topic, see Sundermann (2006).

53 Interestingly, it has to be noticed that Uyghur *wrš* was borrowed from Sogdian *wrz*. The Uyghur syntagma *wrš baγuluq* "miracle binding = working miracle" ("Wunder bindend = wunderwirkend") is referred to the medical powers of the Healer Buddha, in the *Bhaiṣajyagurusūtra* (Zieme 1989, 199). I gladly thank Jens Wilkens for this very important reference.

54 Maitrisimit (IV, 27/r/10-11) (in Wilkens 2013, 384n30). German original and Uyghur text: "Alle Wesen erfreuen sich an dem Spektakel des Maitreya-Wunders" (*alku tınl(ı)g Maitrilag yaŋı kün körünčintä mäŋiläyürlär*)."

55 M 801a, §54, Klimkeit (1993, 134, §6), Boyce (1975, 154, §7).

56 I fully agree with Wilkens (2013, 396) about this point, to pave future inquiries in the field of performative events and textualities belonging to Manichaeism and Buddhism in Central Asia.

57 Grenet (2015) provided a thoroughly investigation of mural paintings in Panjikent and related oral performances of a Sogdian repertoire (tales, fables). See also Pinault (2015a) for Buddhist performances and

needs and entertaining could play a role in confessional strategies and in social-cultural events (festivities, spectacles).

## Political manipulation of miracles

Let me conclude with a final remark for trying to network the most important points I have treated before: [51]

1. religious wonders and amazement; [52]
2. medical power of miraculous healings;
3. aesthetic wonders provoked by narrative/dramatic experience.

To add now a fourth point:

4. manipulation of wonders. [53]

I think it may be possible to put together all these aspects within a political frame, a sort of ideological knot for intertwining such a threefold cluster according to an agenda of political motivations and propaganda. This topic points to historical events and to the rise of charismatic figures claiming social vindications, and ethnical and religious revolts tinged with messianic tones for political renovations. Political and ideological tenets of propaganda obviously were dependent on practical needs of power and supremacy amid different groups, according to ethnic or religious identities, in alliance or conflicts. An alleged supernatural origin of the power—by means of trickery, demagogic allures and mind-manipulations—may explain a few historical phenomena of early Islamic Iran of the first centuries, in those politico-religious Khurramiya movements with messianic and prophetic flavors. Thanks to the last contribution of the late Patricia Crone (2012) we are provided with a massive documentation of analysis and interpretation about this phenomenon of religious irredentism. Among the large gallery of nativist prophets—such as Sunbadh, Bihafarid, Babak, Ustadhsis and Yusuf al-Barm—I would like to dwell on the figure of al-Muqannaʿ, the Veiled Prophet, a charismatic ruler of the Eastern Iranian regions of Sogdia, belonging to the cultural crossroads we have considered so far.[58] Al-Muqannaʿ was supposedly a man of some education, thus he received the surname of Ḥakīm (wise man, doctor); we are told that he had studied "sleights of hand and incantations" (*shaʿbadha wa nīranjāt*: *Tārīkh-ī Bukhārā*) and had acquired the skills of the Sogdian ability to work illusion, managing special effects of trickery and prestidigitation, for instance in provoking his shining epiphany in front of his disciples by means of sunlight reflected in mirrors; or in the case of the moon which rose at his behest and which is said to have been produced by means of quicksilver in a well.[59] [54]

Al-Muqannaʿ was very able to put together similes-sounding doctrines from different religious tradition (Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Manichaeism) of his time and homeland. He might have been a magician in the lesser sense of master of illusions, being also credited with healing charismas to revive the dead and of having the supernatural knowledge of concealed (*ghayb*) facts. Even his death, produced by burning himself jumping into the fire, was a final [55]

Pinault (2000) (for Kucha and Kizil). Many works of Zsuzsanna Gulácsi (among which, see Gulácsi 2015) are dedicated to the Manichaean use of images for teaching and performances with illustrations.

58 See Crone (2012, 106–43), for the chapter on al-Muqannaʿ. I recently dealt with al-Muqannaʿ to show a possible Manichaean influence in the narrative concerning his miracles (2021c).

59 See Edmonds (2019) for connections to practices and ideologies of ancient magic.

*coup de théâtre*, very significantly echoing Maitreya's *parinirvāṇa*, with fire emanating from his body.[60] With this figure we return once again to Maitreya. Maitreya was the divine entity including—from time to time—Buddhist, Manichean and Zoroastrian conceptions of salvation and longing for the arrival of a Redeemer. This deity was also a remarkable character for modeling propaganda and played a messianic role in the political eschatology of the Khurramiya movements of Tokharistan and Sogdiana, belonging to the vast cultural milieu of Khorasan and Transoxiana. Aspirations of vengeance and promises of paradisiacal bliss for Sogdians and Turks worked as a fuel for emotions, dissatisfactions, plunder and robbery. This last aspect of political manipulation of holy charismas, by embodying the powers of wonder and healing, can better highlight the religious elements within the social context of late antique Iran[61] and early Islamic Iran of the Abbasid period, with its strong emphasis on messianic and eschatologica ideas, common to a large Indo-Mediterranean and Central Asiatic apocalyptical mentality, shared by Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

## Abbreviations

*AAASH*: Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae
*AOASH*: Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae
*BAI*: Bulletin of the Asia Institute
*BSOAS*: Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
*JA*: Journal Asiatique.
*JAOS*: Journal of the American Oriental Society
*JIABS*: Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies

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60 Crone (2012, 132–33) pointed out the Maitreyans aspect of al-Muqannaʿs charismatic personality, and of the religious milieu of Sogdiana, blending different messianic characteristics.

61 I recently treated this subject related to the Sasanian period of Khusraw II, the Byzantine world and Early Islam, by the point of view of a common imagery (Piras 2021b).

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