
A study of Christian, Manichean and Buddhist Religious Orders based on Several Sogdian Texts in Ancient Iran

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Abstract

Sogdian was the Language of the people of the Land of Sogd. The center of Sogd was Samarkand and their most important city was Bukhara in the present-day Republic of Uzbekistan. Sogdian was the administrative, commercial and cultural Language in other areas, such as the Turfan oasis in East Turkestan. Sogdian, as one of the Iranian Languages in Central Asia, has been widely used to express and reflect the religious precepts and traditions of some pre-Islamic religions. Sogdian is the most important Language of Middle Eastern Iran in terms of diversity and volume of literature, and from a geographical and linguistic point of view, the written works of this Language, from near Samarkand to one of the inner towers of the Great Wall of China, and from northern Mongolia to the upper valley of the Sand River in north of the Pakistan is discovered and shows its geographical extent in central Asia and the cultural influence of this Language from the second to the thirteenth century AD. Sogdian art loving merchants, of whom were Manichaeans, Christians and Buddhists, in addition to the transfer of goods, culture and art between the East and West World, (China, Iran, India and Rom) also promoted Manichaeans and Christian, Buddhism among the people of Central Asia and China. The main question in this research is how the Manichaean and Buddhist, Christian religious precepts are reflected in the Sogdian texts, and was Sogdian a suitable language for the preservation and dissemination of Manichaean and Buddhist, Christian teachings? The hypothesis of the present article is that the Christian, Buddhist and Manichaean religious teachings are well reflected in the Sogdian language in terms of the linguistic commonality of their followers. This research

has been done by descriptive -analytical method based on the sources of library texts and documents, and the results of the research show that the symbol of confession of sins and seeking forgiveness in the religious tradition of the Buddhists in the Sogdian language is presented to the religious people in almost the same original form but with a new literature. Manicheans texts indicate that the teachings of the two Manichaeans have well preserved their original structure in Sogdian culture and language and Sogdian Christian texts indicate that the religion of confession at the beginning of the emergence of Christianity was a group, but in later periods it was performed in person and in secret, and the symbol of the Lord's Supper or the rite of thanksgiving in all Christian denominations is celebrated in the biblical tradition, the Last Supper.

Keywords: Religious Teachings, Christianity, Mani Ritual, Buddhism Sogdian Language.

Introduction

Sogdian was one of the Persian languages of the northeastern branch and the language of the fertile Sogdian region Located in the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya. The center of the Sogdians was Samarkand located on the Silk Road, which connected China to the West. The Sogdian language was originally spoken in the valley of the Zarafshan River and surrounding areas and later became the mediating language on a large section of the Silk Road. (Oranski, 1378: 12) This language has been the most important Iranian languages in present-day Turkistan and the commercial language of the Silk Road for ten centuries, from the second to the twelfth centuries AD and has long been a means of communication and linking part of the cultures of East and West Asia. Sogdian was active as a spoken and written language until the ninth century AD and its decline began after the 11 century. The Sogdian language became obsolete due to the gradual influence and development of Middle Persian, which enjoyed the support of the Sassanid government, as well as the Turkish Language, which was invaded by Turkic -speaking tribes, and the course of its destruction from the fifth century, AH onwards, simultaneously with the spread of the Persian Language on the one hand and the Arabic and Turkish Languages on the other hand accelerated. (Zarshenas, 1378: 42). Today, the only surviving Sogdian dialect is Yaghnabi, spoken in the mountains of Tajikistan. (Oranski, 1378: 12) Sogdian Language is the most important Eastern Iranian Language in terms of variety and volume of writings and religious texts make up a large part of this writings material (Zarshenas, 1376: 89-112). Despite the

fact that ancient Persian inscriptions mention the land of Sogd as a region with its own characteristics, there are no traces of the older form of the Sogdian language namely “Ancient Sogdian”.

The Sogdian Language has preserved most of the older forms of the Persian Language compared to Middle Persian (Pahlavi).

Research Questions: How Manichaean and, Buddhist, Christian religious orders are reflected in Sogdian texts? Was Sogdian a suitable Language for preserving and disseminating Manichaean and Buddhist Christian religious precepts?

Hypotheses: 1- By studying and analyzing Sogdian texts, some Manichaean, Christian and Buddhist religious orders can be obtained.

2- Manichaean, Buddhist and Christian religious teachings are well reflected in Sogdian in term of linguistic commonality of their followers.

Research Method: collection of information and data in this research has been done by descriptive-analytical method using book documents and library data. Therefore, the original texts in Sogdian language are not available in this article and only their translations are given.

Research Background

The Sogdian Language in Iran is known as Dr. Badralzaman Gharib.

She has taken a big step in introducing the Sogdian language by compiling the Sogdian dictionary in Persian. Dr. Zohreh Zarshenas has also published several articles about the Sogdian language in scientific and research journals. Among the works done and the works available in the Sogdian language, the following can be briefly mentioned. Sogdian Manuscript, Zohreh Zarshenas, Tehran Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies Publications (1390).

This book is known as the first Sogdian grammar book in Iran. The contents of this book are categorized in to three discourses: the first part includes the introduction of Sogdian language and its history and position among Iranian Languages, second part: grammar including phonetics, grammar, word formation is presented. The third part introduces three Sogdian Buddhist, Manichean and Christian stories as a sample text along with transliteration and mentioning grammatical modes, etymology and Persian translation. Essays in Middle Eastern Persian languages, Zohreh Zarshenas, Fravahar Publications, 1380. This book includes a collection of articles on Sogdian language and literature, as well as books and articles on other Middle Eastern Iranian languages. Khatoon Argi and one hundred and nineteen pieces of Sogdian writing, Zohreh Zarshenas, Leila Asgari,

Academy of Persian language and Literature, Asar Publication. In this book, four Buddhist Sogdian pieces from “khwastwanift” are presented. The pieces have been translated in to Persian after transliteration and have been reviewed. Sims Williams presented the sequence of the Khwastwanift parts in an article with its Turkish text in an independent article. These pieces are mentioned in the same way in the book *Khatoon Argi*. This book contains a collection of articles on Sogdian Language and literature, as well as books and articles on other Middle Eastern Iranian languages.

- Sogdian Dictionary (Sogdian–Persian–English). Badrolzaman Garib Farhang, Tehran, 1374. This glossary, which is unique in the word of historical linguistics, provides a huge treasure trove of words and combinations of Sogdian language to scholars of this language and other ancient Iranian language in related fields, which can be used as a main tool. Used to study Iranian languages.

Other western scholars such as Riechelt, Rosenberg, Benveniste, Gershevitch, Sims-Williams, etc, have written valuable articles and books on the Sogdian language.

Theoretical Foudations

Sogdian was the language of the land of Sogd, the center of Sogd in Samarkand and its most important city was Bukhara. Sogdian was the administrative, commercial, cultural, and religious language in other areas, such as the Turfan oases in East Turkestan and the artifacts that were discovered about a hundred years ago in the Middle Ages are divided into religious and non-religious groups according to the subject. The religious work of the Sogdian Language, which belong to the followers of the Buddhist, Christian and Manichaeon religions, constitute the most important part of the literature of the Middle Eastern Iranian language in terms of diversity and volume. Buddhist Sogdian literature is the most voluminous literary work of the Sogdoan language and is a kind of translated literature full of philosophical terms and ruling of Buddhism. Sogdian Christian literature is also a type of translated literature that includes translations of part of the Bible and it also includes the lives and deeds of saints, sermons and commentaries, the deeds of the martyrs of Christianity, the opinions of church elders, and acronyms and instructive phrases. Due to the geographical dispersion of the followers of the Buddhist, Christian and Manichaeon religions in Central Asia as well as their location along the Silk Road, many religious teachings and instructions in the form of religious texts have been written and preserved in the Sogdian language.

Studying Sogdian religious texts can facilitate access to religious instruction and teachings related to these religions. Given the importance of Sogdian language, the question arises as to how the Christian, Manichaean and Buddhist religious percepts and teachings are reflected in Sogdian text? And whether Sogdian texts are reliable sources for extracting and studying religious injunctions? By studying and linguistically analyzing some selected religious texts in Sogdian, we show that Sogdian texts have the ability to reflect religious orders in the field of Christian, Manichaean and Buddhist religions.

Introducing the Texts

The texts discussed in this article are about some of the Buddhist Manichaean, and Christian religions and orders. Of course, in these texts, there is no mention of jurisprudence and theology of these religions, and more texts are about confession, repentance and seeking forgiveness. In the Sogdian Buddhist texts, some laws and the necessity of observing them by the believers, as well as in the Christian text, refer to the Lord's Supper, the last Supper and the Ascension of Jesus. Confession of the chosen ones are also quoted in the Manichaean text. By studying these texts after transliteration and Persian translation, some of them are referred to as Buddhism, Manichaeism and Christianity respectively.

History of the Land of Sogd

The scorching sands of china's Turkestan region in the Turfan region, the 9-century hidden library of one the millennial Buddha caves in china's Don Huang (Tun Huang), the ruins of a fort on Mount Mogh near the ancient city of Panjkand in Tajikestan, and the ruins of a tower The Grate wall of china has kept the treasures of Sogdian literature for more than a millennium and the secret of the urban people, the culture-loving merchants of the artist and the propogandist of the religion and knowledge of Sogd, was revealed to the astonished eyes of the scientists and researchers of the twentieth century. (Gharib, 1388: 11). The first historical source is the name of Sogd, Avestan texts and Achaemenid inscription. In both Avestan and ancient Persian, Sogd is used to mean both the land and the people who inhabited it. In his book, *The Aveston Hymm*, Gershevitch suggested two meanings for Sogd, one "dwelling Place" and the other "absolute dwelling", from which Sogdian was also called. In this way, Sogd is synonymous with "housing or residence of urban and settled people" in front of the desert people living in tents in

the northern Steppes. (Gharib, 1383: 11). In Greek source, the name Sogd and Sogdian are mentioned. Herodotus lists Sogd in the list of nations under the rule of the Achaemenid kings and Sogdians in the list of Xerxes's armies. According to Strabon the area around Sogd was the Jeyhun River in the south and the Sihon River in the north.

One of the characteristic of Sogd that has attracted the attention of Greek writers is the presence of large cities there. In Sassanid sources and Pahlavi texts of the Parthian Kaaba of Zarathushtra, which remains of Shapur1, and in its Greek translation, the name Sogd is mentioned among the states of the Sassanid Empire along with the Letter of Kushanshahr, Kashgaf and Tashkent. (Gharib, 1388: 13). With the collapse of the powerful Achaemenid states by Alexander and the Sassanid at the hands of the Arabs over a period of more than 900 years, the governments and territories of these empires were affected politically, socially and culturally, so that sometimes some cities and their people are not mentioned in the limited resources of later periods. In the case of the Sogdian language, occasionally and only in the context of historical events, we encounter this name when Alexander the Great conquered Sogdian in the fourth century BC and when the Arabs conquered it in the eighth century AD. What has happened to the land of Sogd in the meantime, and which happened to be the heyday of its political independence, is unknown and ambiguous. (Zarshenas, 1380: 1) Samarkand, the capital of the land of Sogd, has played a very important strategic role in the silk Road, the trade route between China and the west world. Sogdian merchants built numerous settlements along the road, this is confirmed by Arabic source and the writing of Islamic historians who speak of the migration of the Sogdian before the Arab invasion as well as their commercial activities. The result has been the rise of the Sogdian Language as a mediating language along the silk Road (Zarshenas, 1380: 1).

In addition, the Manichaeans and Christians, who apparently from the third century AD onwards, had to stay for a while in Central Asia and learn the Sogdian Language and then to the east, even to the easternmost part. Chinese Turkestan fled across Mongolia. (Gharib, 1383: 12).

Also used in Chinese sources as "Sotah". It is also possible that the name "Sohi", which appears in ancient Chinese text to refer to the area "Kush" and its old pronunciation was "Sogit", is actually derived from the same name as Sogd. From this point of view, the role of the Sogdians in Central Asia can be compared with the role of the Greeks in the ancient world, Albeit on a more limited scale.

In the Light of this role is the Sogdian Language that most of its manuscripts have been found in this area, especially in “Don Huang” and the area around Turfan (Zarshenas, 1380: 2).

Buddhist Texts

Then that Buddha (Buddha name) (=He stood up) because when (=Buddha?) Like

- The saints (in) their hearts believed that a pious man or a pious woman (=believer) for a while.

He and other rulers (=Baghan) did not serve and on this thought Amen (=Buddha)

And the Law (=Buddhist Law) he took refuge with his followers, so those seven laws, or those five

The laws, or those ten Laws, or that Buddha flame with four.

One hundred rules that make it a monk (=shaman), two hundred and fifty rules.

(24) or a nun (counts) five hundred rules, so he who follows those rules

(25) Accept or disobey or weaken it, then everyone from

(26) Fear the bad way and when he dose so

(27) one right thought, put it on the shining crystal teacher

(28) Name the Buddha and worship him(=serve)

(29) And it will not go bad.

- (1) [...] - [...]

- (2) [...] be [...]

- (3) [...] we ask for forgiveness [...]

- (4) [...] whenever a bad thought

- (5) [...] we say the wrong thing

- (6) [...] and suffering in

- (7) Time, future? The Buddha family gave that light.

- (8) [...] commander and body

- (9) [...] And come instead of bad

- (10) [...] To forgive sins [this] God [...]

- (11) [...]

- I regret it.

- I asked for forgiveness

- At all times (from) Buddhists.

- (4)what now land it [...]

- (1) [...] Tenth, again to our four praises that

- (2)Every day four Gods must be dedicated to purity

- So whoever is not afraid of that soul sows seeds.

- (4) [to...] Holy covenant
- Texts related to Manichaeism
- (476)The book said so...
- (477)whoever is [in] that world
- (478)will calm down (=whoever seeks peace for that world)
- (479)From here (=this world) your existence
- (480)Because God (=bag)
- (481) Be heaven
- (482)And I in each
- (483)I get annoyed and annoyed
- At times
- (484) five Amshaspand
- (485)Rising in the light
- (486)[and from]wet and dry that
- (487)Is the earth, heavy body
- (488)Hurt yourself that
- (489)I am wearing, on the horse
- (490)who was rushing up and down, again
- (491)You can cut the dried fissures
- (492)Make the ground split
- (493)compressed (=Mashed) ripped out. command, (inviolable order)
- (1)I hurt the glory [...] Daily on the way 1
- (2)The section was destroyed [...] for all this
- (3)I asked for forgiveness
- (4) [...] The third command of the selection command
- (5) Do not look at any thing
- (6)I was with great desire
- V= behind the sheet
- (7) The tree was cut down and planted
- (8) At dawn on Sparqam flower
- (9) Element (=death) [and] misery
- (10) I do not pay attention anymore.[and] cultivation, sowing
- (11) I want my paternal inheritance. garden (=form)[...]
- (12) [...] second, Man, Woman, body
- (1) [...]
- (2) [...] the least
- (3) [...] for great forgiveness[from](all)
- (4) I ask forgiveness of sin, God, my sin
- (5) Kneeling confession.....
- (6) This (=stone) confession
- (7) my sin, O God, the short for which I am guilty

- (8) and again such a submissive, I am guilty. [and] full of g(9)
Must be born .I am constantly thinking of words and deeds. and
(10) Seeing eyes, hearing, speaking, hand.
(11) Touching, Walking, whatever at any time
(12) I get annoyed and annoy five elements.
(13) And the Buddhist gem on the wet and dry earth
(14) I am guilty of such a shortcoming (failure to do my duty).on
all seven commands.
(15) I put three gifts[and] three seals on the listener's name, but I
do not do the wrong thing .for the Gods of light.
(16) [...]
(17) [...]
(18) [...] fasting
(19) Praise the command .I do not take care of fasting.
(20) Anything completely at any time.
(21) Day, month, year of
(22) It was my shortcoming.to ...me(?) [almost seven]
(23) So I will confess to the shining hand
(24) The Gods of religion and pious, on the first Farr .and [Farr]
Jamshid
(25) I forgive sins
(26) I ask.my sin

Texts related to Christianity

- (1) This is a dead creature that said it was chosen [and] received
this and that baptism
(2) And he said that I wound baptize someone [and]it was shown
that it was not (possible) to see him.
(3) It is great, but it's good for the day
(4) Thanksgiving for the ascension, which is a sign of baptism,
the ascension of Jesus.
(5) who rose from the grave with a scarf and pointed his head
(6) Originality, and they accepted Christ with a white robe that
looked like that
(7) It was heavenly glory, that of the baptized
(8) He showed the heavenly blessing like a lamp and was accepted
with full knowledge by baptism
(9) In the name of the Father, the son and the Holy Spirit, the lord
Jesus.
(10) He asked for strength on three names and got up from the
grave and went up to
(11)Heaven appeared to the baptized, they went to the church

with baptism and appeared.

(12) On him is a spiritual bridegroom, written word, heard(like) bread

(13)The water with which they are fed, the chosen people learned by baptism.

(14) They did not baptize, that he was the secret power of those who promised, in capable[and]

(15) Dose not need, with peace, his baptism, and they forgave the believers one [and] two (?) and he moved

(16) And again he turned away the enemy who is in the alter .Christ from the place of the grave.

(17) Hi brought us bread and wine from the lord Jesus.

(18) Which is a symbol of blood

(19) The cape is over, which is small mark

(20) In that monastery Buddhism is placed and on the gate of the tomb of the Lord Jesus.

(21) A heavenly place was accepted to the three chosen ones, the Spirit of the Lord Jesus.

(22) Where he [is], then he fought the devil, then he [went] to heaven with a baptism

(23) And the second is the tongue of the church and the third is the painter

(24) It is the painter who painted the menus and came to symbolize charity, the second being with the alter

(25) The messengers (angels) are similar and our Lord

(26) And the commandment of the hears appeared, this time he was the ruler.

(27) And he cried out to the people which is a sing of return, and with this.

(28) [symbol...that] that foreshadowed

(29) [...] guards [...] it is similar.

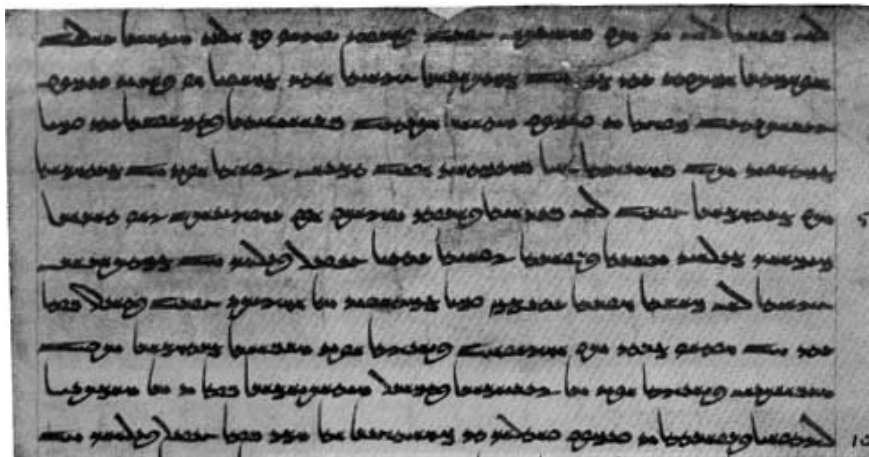
(30) ... The Ascension of Jesus.

Discussion and analysis

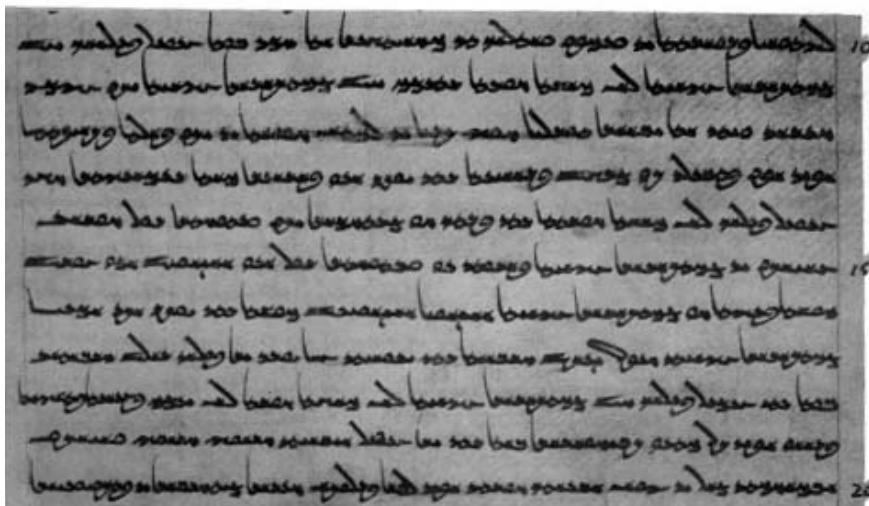
A: Buddhist Sogdian texts, which are in fact remnants of Buddhism in the Sogdian Language, are a kind of translated texts full of Buddhist terms.

Sogdian Buddhist texts in Central Asia monasteries have been translated from Chinese and Indian originally into Sanskrit, the diagram of Lexical features is the term of the original Chinese and Indian versions from which them were translated.

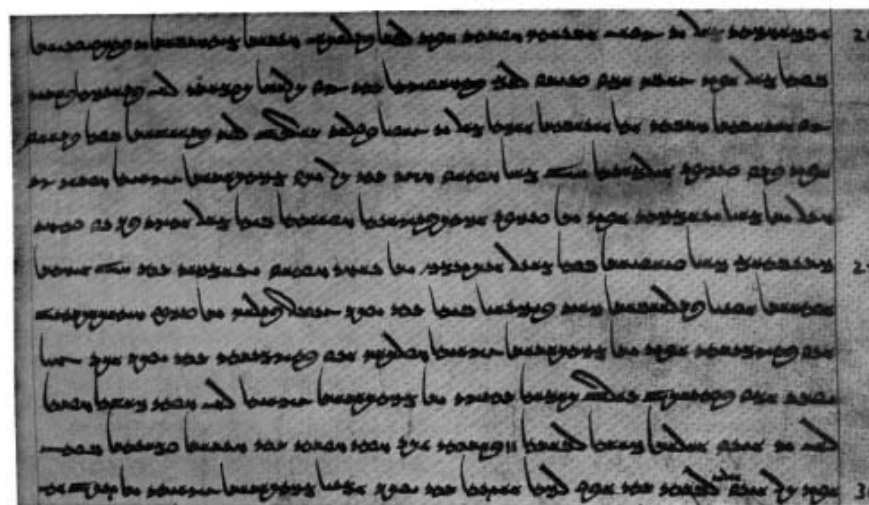
Hence the existence of specific term of Buddhism, especially the



Handwritten Sogdian text in cursive script, consisting of approximately 10 lines. The script is dense and characteristic of the Sogdian language. A small number '5' is visible on the right side of the page.



Handwritten Sogdian text in cursive script, consisting of approximately 10 lines. The script is dense and characteristic of the Sogdian language. A small number '10' is visible on the right side of the page.



Handwritten Sogdian text in cursive script, consisting of approximately 10 lines. The script is dense and characteristic of the Sogdian language. A small number '20' is visible on the right side of the page.

◀ Fig 1. samples of Sogdian texts studied (Zarshenas, 1380).

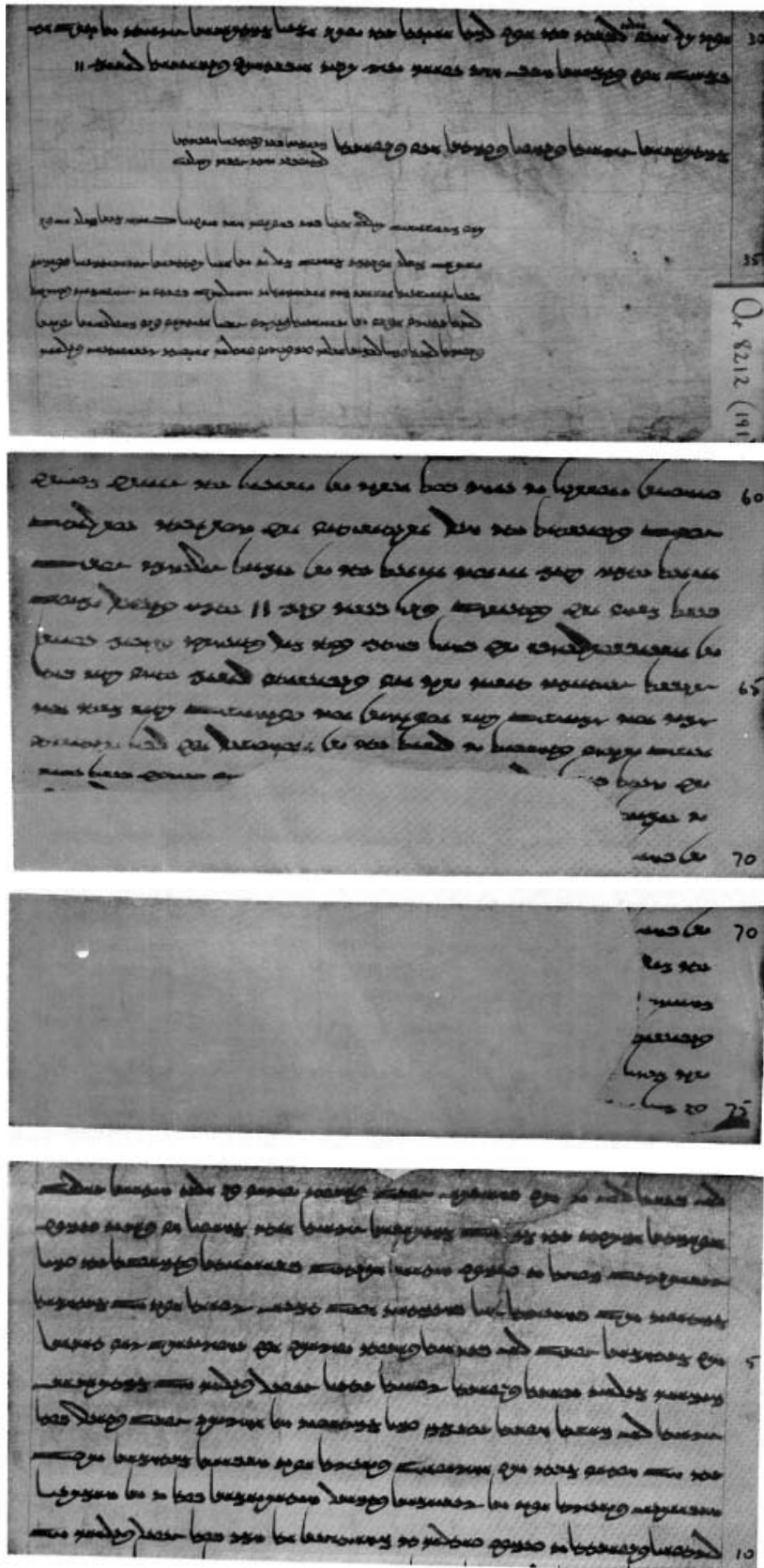


Fig 2. samples of Sogdian texts studied (Zarshenas, 1380). ▶

Mahayana sect, in these texts is obvious and significant. Examining these passages, it seems that the symbol of confession, praise of God and adherence to the hypothesis of universal suffering in the religious tradition of Buddhists in Sogdian Language is presented in almost the same original form but with new Literature. The popularity and pervasiveness of the Sogdian Language is has been able to update the teachings of Buddhism along the Silk Road and the eastern borders of Iran and northern India, and to add new passionate followers to the religion.

B. Manichaeism

The Sogdian Manichaeism played an important role in transmitting myths and stories from, east to west and from west to east.

Manichaeism Sogdian literature is a living language of the time and full of beautiful similes and metaphors and provides researchers with a clear and vivid picture of the structure and manner of the Sogdian language.

This feature is more evident in Sogdian Manichaeism stories than in any other text. The Manichaeism had both writing skills and very skilled translators. The language of the texts they have translated into Sogdian is fluent beautiful and complete, and is distinguished from the complex and in complete translations of Christian and Buddhist Sogdian Language translators.

The existing Sogdian Manichaeism texts include the Sogdian translation of hymns and texts related to the Manichaeism religious books from Middle Persian and Parthian origin or works that were originally in the Sogdian Language. These texts are Linguistically very important and remarkable but there is no complete text left from the Sogdian Manichaeism texts. Examining the above passages, It appears that the teachings of Manichaeism have well preserved their original structure and identity in Sogdian Culture and Language. We know that the basis of Manichaeism is the negation of life, and that material life itself is a symbol of evil.

Observance of strict and pious instruction also Show contempt for the material Life that is evidence in the Manichaeism parts.

Taking care of the tongue, eyes, ears and other organs, avoiding Junk food, wine, cutting down trees, harming animals, all reflected the Value and austerities of the Manichaeism people in the culture of the Manichaeism people. Also, the tradition of continued in the writing in these pieces indicated that this feature has continued in the writing of Manichaeism religious text in this period. In some text, the five virtues are called the five gifts and they are considered the fruit of the tree is Love. The fruit of the tree of the heart is faith. The tree

of intelligence is perfection. The fruit of the tree thought is patience, and the fruit of tree is the perception of science and knowledge. So we have five elements of darkness against the five element of light. For five light limbs, we have five dark limbs, also have five limbs for the body. On the other hand, the five eternal virtues fight against the first five sins, but at the end of this cosmic show, Light triumphs over darkness. using these familiar symbols to the taste of the people in this vast geographical area, they have been able to update the teachings of Manichaeism and attract more Manichaean audiences.

Christianity

More than two thousand years after the inauguration of Christianity, this monotheistic religion has spread to the east and west of the world with the efforts of Christian Missionary. A study of Sogdian Christian texts shows that the teachings of the Eastern Orthodox Church, such as Central Asia and Sogd along the Silk Road, about the symbols of confession and baptism were the same as the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

Today, these symbols are held in ceremonies with Slight differences in Eastern and Western Christianity. Over time, some elements, such as prayers and devotions, have undergone changes in Christianity, both East and west. Of course, the components of public and private worship are not much different from each other except the glory and grandeur that is felt in group prayers. At the beginning of the emergence of Christianity, the confession was held in groups, but in Later preserving the dignity of individuals. The tradition of confession, in turn, reduced public crime in Christian society. The symbol of baptism has also evolved in both Eastern and Western Christianity. Yahya the Baptist confessed to people at his baptism, but in later times the baptism was performed separately and with little change and the confession was held individually and privately. The Lord's Supper or the rite of thanksgiving is celebrated in all Christian denominations under the names of the Lord's Supper, the baking of bread, the thanksgiving, and participation in the Jewish Passover night, or in the tradition of the Bible, the Last Supper. Followers of all three religions were able to establish their own religious symbols and places of worship and engage in activities such as translating their religious works from Syriac, Indian, Chinese and other Iranian Languages into Sogdian.

Conclusion

Religion and Language seem to have been two inseparable factors.

In ancient Iran, due to the multiplicity of religions and the freedom of people to convert to different religions, the existence of Languages has given them durability and consistency. Significant role in the continuation of religions such as, Zarathoshism, Christian, Buddhist and Manichaeism. Sogdian, which is one of the Middle Eastern Iranian Languages, has been important in expressing the religious teachings of Buddhist, Manichaeism and Christian. The Sogdian Language has been able to add to the followers of these religions in different periods because it has been the commercial and cultural administrative Language. Iran's location on the Silk Road and the spread of this Language caused merchants, in addition to the transfer of goods, culture and art between the East and the West, to propagate Manichaeism, Christian, and Buddhist among the people of Central Asia and China. The texts discovered in the China's Turfan, that contain the Manichaeism, Buddhist and Christian religious precepts in the Sogdian Language and studied in this article show that the followers of these religions were able to teach their teaching in the Sogdian Language to other and preserve during history.

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