POLEMICS AGAINST MANICHAEISM AS A SUBVERSIVE CULT IN SUNG CHINA
(A.D. c. 960–c. 1200)¹

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THE religion of Mani is best remembered for its explanation of the origin of evil through the idea of a primordial struggle between good and evil and for its ability to combine elements of other historic religions into a unified whole. A “Manichee” is defined in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary as “an adherent of a religious system widely accepted from the Third to the Fifth Century, composed of Gnostic Christian, Mazdaean and pagan elements and representing Satan as co-eternal with God”. Such a view of Manichaeism is of long standing in the literary and philosophical tradition of the West. A Byzantine scholiast commenting on the term “Manichaean” which occurs in a law against heresies in general (Basilica 21,1,45 = Codex Justinianus 1,5,21) says:

Manichaean are disciples of the Mad [Μανήστος]² Persian who preach a doctrine of two principles and two gods, the one good and the other evil. They disregard every form of religious observance, attributing it to the evil deity, and they irreverently empty it of significance. They possess certain spurious gospels which are attributed to Philip and Thomas. They worship the sun and the moon together with the stars and they assert that the Incarnation was illusory.³

¹ I should like to acknowledge the help which I have received in writing this article from Dr. C. Dudbridge and Dr. S. P. Brock as well as from my wife Judith.
² A favourite pun on the name Mani in Greek, especially in its genitive case, as Μάνηστος is very close to Μάνιος.
POLEMICS AGAINST MANICHAЕISM

Such a definition is formulated in the light of the Byzantine Church's subsequent experience of heresies rather than the genuine teaching of the sect. Hence it magnifies those aspects of heresy which the Church found to be particularly pernicious, namely sorcery, dualism, docetism and iconoclasm. Similarly in Islamic lands where the brunt of religious controversy was on the question of whether the Godhead could be pictorially represented rather than on the nature of the Trinity, Manichaeans were derided as the followers of the magical leader of the "Chinese School of Painters".1

In China, Manichaeism was also attacked as a foreign religion when it first began to attract local converts in the seventh and eighth centuries. Its interest in astrology and divination gave rise to some concern as the first Manichaean missionaries to China were regarded by the local populace as sorcerers endowed with extraordinary skills.2 However, as China was at once a multi-religious and polytheistic society, dualism did not pose such a threat as it did in Byzantium and the medieval West. Although Manichaeism flourished in China for almost a millennium, it made little impact on her literary and philosophical life and left no lasting impression. After its official expulsion in 843, few officials were aware that remnants of the sect had survived in South China and were gaining in numbers. When it became necessary to take action against them in the course of the Sung Dynasty, hardly any officials bothered to consult their history books to find out for themselves that the followers of Mo-ni, the Envoy of Light, in South China were in any way connected with the Manichaeans of Central Asia. The memory of Manichaeism as a foreign religion was kept alive only by Buddhist heresiologists. However, as Buddhism was not the state religion of China, few officials would have recourse to Buddhist writings. Even then the entries on "Mo-ni" or the

1 Firdausi, Shâhnâmeh, cited in K. Kessler, Mani. Forschungen über die Manichaéische Religion, i (Berlin, 1889), 375.
Light Sect in Buddhist catalogues of heresies are very brief and seem to be applicable to a number of foreign religions. It was not until the discovery of genuine Manichaean scriptures from the ruins of Manichaean monasteries in Central Asia and from the caves of Tun-huang at the turn of this century that scholars were fully convinced that they describe a sect which shared a common origin with the Manichaeans of the Late Antiquity in Europe. As late as 1897 Edouard Chavannes, who was to become a pioneer in Chinese Manichaean studies, could still write: "Pour ma part, je crois que sous l'expression 'Mo-ni' les Chinois désignent les Musulmans.", and "...l'existence de manichéens chinois ne me paraît pas démontrée."

Manichaeism flourished in the Sung Dynasty as a secret religion with an elaborate organization and very strict rules of asceticism. Its followers were accused by the government of anti-social behaviour, demon worship and fermenting rebellion. The philosophical or theological implications of its beliefs are hardly ever mentioned in the extant polemical works. The supreme irony was that Chu Hsi who was undoubtedly the most important philosopher of the Sung and an ardent exponent of monism, was accused by his enemies of being a "Vegetarian and Demon Worshipper ", a derogatory term which was commonly applied to Manichaeans. The charge was made on the grounds that he was over-ascetic and that his philosophical circle could become the nucleus of rebellious activities.

In this article an attempt will be made to follow the transformation of Manichaeism from a foreign religion which was associated with foreign merchants and mercenaries into a Chinese secret society and to examine the writings against it by officials who had to deal with its followers in the course of their public duty. These polemical writings will furnish an interesting comparison with the anti-Manichaean works of the Church. Fathers in the West and a comparative study of the two will

1 E. Chavannes, "Le Nestorianisme et l'inscription de Kara-Balgassoun " Journal Asiatique, 9e ser., ix (Jan.-Feb. 1897), 76 and 85.
2 Szu-ch'ao chien-wen, 4, cited in Wu Han, "Ming-chiao yü ta-ming-ti-kuo " ("Manichaeism and the Great Ming Empire "), reprinted in Tu-shih cha-chi (Peking, 1956), p. 252. (The article was originally published in Ching-hua hsüeh-pao, xiii (Peking, 1941), 49-85.)
have much to tell us about the similarities and differences in the relationship between state and religion in these two civilizations.

(I) The Hui-chang Persecution of Manichaeism and Other Foreign Religions

In 840 news reached the T'ang court at Chang-an that Karabalghasun, the capital of the Uighur Turks, had fallen to the Kirghiz as a result of a fratricidal war between the Turkic tribes and that the Khaghan of the Uighurs was killed when the city was stormed. The Uighurs had been the chief patrons of Manichaeism in China. It was at their insistence that Manichaean temples were established in the two capital cities of Chang-an (768) and Lo-yang (807), in the provinces of Ching, Yang, Hung and Yueh (771) as well as in the strategic town of T'ai-yüan (807).¹ For many Chinese these temples were a symbol of foreign arrogance and a reminder of their military weakness. Now that the Uighurs were no longer a major foreign power, the time had come to remove this thorn in the flesh. In 843 several of the temples were closed. Li Te-yü, an administrator of great distinction, who was responsible for translating the imperial will into action, gave in a letter to the new Khaghan a very guarded explanation of the closure of the temples:

The teaching of Mani was proscribed prior to the T'ien-pao Era [742-756]. Its dissemination has subsequently been permitted because it is practised by the Uighurs. Hence, Manichaean temples were established in Chiang, Huei and several other prefectures. Recently, news has reached us of the collapse of the Uighur Kingdom and because of this, the followers of the sect are apprehensive. Their priests, being foreigners, are bereft of all help and support. To make matters worse for them, the people of Wu and Ch'u² are mean and uncharitable by nature. If a religion loses its credibility, its propagation is unlikely to be successful. Even as great a teacher as Buddha would maintain that a religion should be propagated according to the needs of the times. When there is neither need nor reason to propagate a religion, it will be futile to force it on the masses. We are deeply worried about those foreign priests who are far away from home and wish to see them settled safely. We therefore decree that only the Manichaean temples in the two capital cities and in T'ai-yüan should continue

¹ Chavannes/Pelliot, Textes historiques, pp. 263-9.
² Wu and Ch'u are ancient names for southern and central China.
to celebrate the rites of the sect. The other temples in the prefectures of Chiang
and Huei should be closed for the time being. Once the conditions of the
Uighur homeland seem more settled, we shall revert to the former arrangements.1

The temples in the provinces were never reopened, nor did
the ones in the capital cities remain open for long. The Minister
of Merits (Kung-te-shih) and his assistants were ordered to take
an inventory of the possessions of the temples.2 This Valor
Ecclesiasticus was the precursor of the complete prohibition of
the sect and the confiscation of its property. The latter might
have resulted from financial considerations. As foreign
merchants were notorious for being extortionate money lenders
Manichaeans could well have been used by them as storehouses for goods and money.3
Public hostility gathered momentum once it was realized that the Uighurs had no power
to resist. Idols and images were burnt in the streets and the
Uighur priests were ordered to wear Chinese dress.4 It was at
the height of the campaign against the Manicheans in the late
spring of 843 that Ennin, a pilgrim from Japan, arrived at
Chang-an. In his well-kept diary covering the period of mid-
May 843 he recorded:

An imperial edict was issued ordering the Manichaean priests of the Empire to
be killed. Their heads are to be shaved, and they are to be dressed in Buddhist
robes and made to look like Buddhist shamans before being executed.5

We are not fully informed as to the extent of the massacre.
Chih-p'an, the great Buddhist chronicler of the Sung Dynasty,
recorded that seventy-two women priests perished.6 The other
priests were rounded up and exiled to the border provinces of

1 Huî-ch'ang i-pien chi, ed. Li Te-yü (CFTS edition), 5, p. 4a, 4-10; cf.
Chavannes/Pelliot, Textes historiques, pp. 291-3.

2 Hsin T'ang-shu, 217 ; cf. Chavannes/Pelliot, Textes historiques, pp. 296-8.

3 P. Zieme, “Die Uiguren und ihre Beziehungen zu China ”, Central Asiatic
Journal, xvi (1973), 285-6; see also D. C. Twitchett, Financial Administration

4 Hsin T'ang-shu, 217 (v. supra n. 2).

5 Ennin, Nittô guhô junrei gyôki no kenkyû, ed. Katutoshi Ono, iii (Tokyo,
1968), 491. See also E. O. Reischauer, Ennin's Travels in T'ang China (New York,
(“The Persecution of Uighur Manicheans”), Tôhô Gakuhô, xi/l (1940), 223-32.

6 Chih-p'ân, Fo-tsü t'ung-chi (hereafter referred to as FTTC), 42, in Taishô
shinshu daijôkyô (hereafter referred to as T), 2035, xlix, p. 385c, 26-28; cf.
Chavannes/Pelliot, Textes historiques, pp. 301-2.
Kan-su where remnants of the Uighur tribes had established themselves. Chih-p’an added that about half of the priests died from the hardships of the journey.¹

The proscription of Manichaeism in 843 paved the way for a full-scale onslaught on Buddhism two years later. The nature of this attack was very different from that of the persecution of the Christians in the Roman Empire. It was not an attempt to stamp out Buddhism but drastically to limit its spread. A total of 4,600 monasteries was destroyed, 260,500 monks and nuns were returned to lay life and more than 40,000 temples and shrines were destroyed.² The government also felt that as Buddhism, the chief foreign religion, was under censure, other minor foreign sects should not be exempt. About three thousand Nestorian and Zoroastrian priests were defrocked. Those of Chinese origin were told to return to their place of origin and restart their payment of taxes, while the foreign ones were exiled on the grounds that they refused to wear Chinese dress and adopt Chinese habits.³

The events of 843-5 marked the end of an era of about five hundred years during which China experienced an unprecedented amount of contact with foreign peoples and their cultures and religions. The turning point had begun with the Rebellion of An Lu-shan in 758 which had occasioned widespread dislocations and social upheaval. Foreign religions and culture had become a ready scapegoat and the presence of foreign mercenaries in major cities had led to a chorus of discontent against everything foreign. In the following centuries Chinese society turned in upon itself and the Chinese intelligentsia became intensely introspective and xenophobic. A direct corollary of the attack on Buddhism was a revival of Confucianist learning which was to blossom in the Sung Dynasty (960-1278). It is against this background that we have to place the writings of the Confucianist officials against the Manicheans when they re-emerged in South China under the Sung as a secret religion.

¹ Ibid.
³ Chiu T’ang-shu, ed. cit. pp. 605, 6-8 and 606, 6-7.
Manichaeism survived the persecution of 843 by the skin of its teeth. A priest who held the title of "Hu-lu" (Middle Persian: "xrwhxw'n"; Latin: "electus") managed to slip away to the port of Ch'üan-chou in South China. The cosmopolitan nature of the port with its proliferation of foreign cults no doubt afforded an ideal cover for his missionary work. However, the position of foreigners was never secure in China after the persecution of Buddhism in the Hui-tsang period. The Arab historian Abu Said gives a frightening account of the slaughter of 120,000 Muslim, Jewish and Christian merchants and their families by rebel troops under the command of Huang Chao at the siege of Canton in 878. It was therefore unsafe to seek converts among the foreign settlers in South China and the Hu-lu directed his missionary effort to the Chinese with conspicuous success, which may well imply that he himself was of Chinese origin. Despite the political unrest, Manichaeism gained a lasting foothold in South China and began to spread into the neighbouring provinces. In the Tse-tao period a follower of the sect found a statue of Mani in a soothsayer's shop in the Sung capital of Kai-feng. He bought it for 50,000 cash pieces and brought it back to Fukien. The statue probably came from a Manichaean temple which was closed in the Hui-tsang period. "And thus", says a local historian, "his [sc. Mani's] false image began to be circulated in the Province of Min".

In the course of the tenth century Manichaeism became thoroughly Sinicized. So much so that few people were aware of the fact that it was once the religion of the detested Uighurs. Manichaeism found ready entry into popular religious life, which

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3 Ho Chiao-yüan, Min Shu, 7, ed. cit. p. 199.
was steeped in superstition and magic, because its followers were skilled sorcerers and astrologers. Already in the T'ang they had established their reputation in such activities and, at least on one occasion, the court requested their priests to pray for rain.¹ We have a story of how, in the period of the Five Dynasties, a Manichaean priest armed with his scriptures was able to exorcise a house from the spells of a particularly pugnacious evil spirit which had defied the efforts of Taoist priests to be rid of it.²

The Buddhist chroniclers accused the Manichaeans of playing an important part in a rebellion led by Wu I in 902 in the prefecture of Chen.³ Our knowledge of this rebellion is extremely meagre and the extant secular sources do not suspect any Manichaean connection.⁴ However, the fact that contemporary Buddhist writers were ready to pin the blame for the rebellion on the Manichaeans is a clear attestation to the growing importance of the sect as a secret society. It also indicates a growing trend in Buddhism towards a more rigid definition of orthodoxy. Although Buddhism also enjoyed a revival in this period, the memory of the Hui-tsang persecution was never too distant. To prevent a recurrence of the events of 845, Buddhist authorities endeavoured to prove to the government that Buddhists were loyal and law-abiding citizens. In so doing they had to clamp down on the more nefarious off-spring of their religion like the White Lotus and White Cloud sects which indulged in strict ascetism and magical practices. Manichaeism came under the same censure. It is interesting to note that Buddhist heresiologists made the most of the foreign connections of the sect in their polemical writings and stressed the fact that it was proscribed by the T'ang Emperors. By so doing they no

² Tai-ping huang-chi, 355 (KSSC edition, iv. 2812). Chavannes/Pelliot, Textes historiques, pp. 324-5, gives only a very brief summary of this fascinating story.
³ FTTC, 54 (T 2035, XLIX, p. 385c, 26-28).
⁴ Chiu Wu-tai-shih, 10 (Po-na-pen edition, vol. 2, 4a, 1-b1); see the important discussion on the sources of the rebellion in Ch'en Yüan, "Mo-ni-ch'iao ju Chung-kuo kao" ("The Diffusion of Manichaeism in China"), Kuo-hsiueh chi-kan, i/2 (1923), 221.
doubt hoped to draw attention away from the fact that Buddhists too were followers of a foreign religion which had been proscribed on more than one occasion.¹

(3) THE REVIVAL OF MANICHAEISM IN THE NORTHERN SUNG DYNASTY (960-1126)

The Emperors of the Northern Sung were mostly patrons of Taoism, which was fortunate for Manichaeism as Taoism was less exclusive than Buddhism and more syncretistic in its approach to other religions. In the hey-day of Manichaeism as a foreign religion under the T'ang, the Taoists circulated a legend that Mani, like Buddha, was merely a manifestation of Lao-tzu, the traditional founder of Taoism. Although the Manichaeans in the T'ang might have taken this as an affront, in the Sung they treasured it as a vital link with a major Chinese religion.² Armed with this they were able to build their own places of worship and register them as Taoist temples. In 1016 Manichaeans in Fukien even managed to induce the compilers of the Taoist Canon to accept some of their scriptures into the Canon, which was the most effective way of preventing them from being confiscated and burnt by the secular authorities.³

Manichaeans in the Sung called themselves the followers of Mo-ni (Mo-ni-chiao) or members of the Light Sect (Ming-chiao). However, they were known to their enemies by the derogatory title of "Vegetarians and Demon Worshippers" (Shih-ts'ai shih-mo). Its use was not exclusive to the Manichaeans as it was also applied to several other esoteric Buddhist and Taoist sects. However, it is safe to assume that it was first coined to deride the Manichaeans. The Chinese word for a devil is

¹ I intend to collect together for a future article all the major Buddhist writings against Manichaeans in China. On the long-standing rivalry between the two sects see H.-J. Klimkeit, "Manichäische und buddhistische Beichtformeln", Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte, xxix/3 (1977), 222.

² On this see my article "A Lapsed Chinese Manichaean’s Correspondence with a Confucian Official in the Late Sung Dynasty (1265)", in vol. lix (1976-7) of this BULLETIN, esp. pp. 412-13.

³ Yün-chi ts'i-ch'ien (SPTK edition), Preface, pp. 1a, 6-2a, 3; Chavannes/Pelliot, Textes historiques, pp. 326-7.
“mo” which has the same sound as the “mo” of “Mo-ni”, the Chinese transliteration of Mani’s name. This pun on the name of Mani in Chinese reminds one of the fate of his name in Greek (Μάνης) which is close in sound and spelling to the word for a mad man (μανής). As Epiphanius says, it was providential that he should call himself Mani. Indeed, few Christian fathers could resist this heaven-sent opportunity to make fun of their opponents. A very early instance of this is to be found in a circular letter by a bishop of Alexandria in the late third century which is now in the papyrus collection in the Rylands (P. Rylands Greek 469). Augustine tells us that in order to avoid being called the followers of a mad man, the Manichaeans doubled the “n” in “Manichaeus” to make it sound like someone who pours out manna, as χεος in Greek means to pour. The Chinese Manichaeans were anxious to escape from the stigma of Demon Worship. From a hostile source we learn that they sometimes preferred to call their leaders “Ma-huang” instead of “Mo-huang” (King Devils). The Manichaeans were clearly trying to make a tonal variation on the word “mo” of “Mo-ni” to lessen the charge of Demon Worship. However, the word “ma”, though it is a more accurate transliteration for the first syllable of Mani, is also the name for a common plant ephedra vulgaris and Ma-ni in Chinese.

1 The characters for Mani’s name in Chinese are the same as those which are usually used for translating the Buddhist Sanskrit word for a jewel, mani. On the various meanings of the name see O. Kflma, Manis Zeit und Leben (Prague, 1962), pp. 260-77.


4 Augustinus, De haeresibus, 46 (Migne, Patrologia Latina, xlii, col. 34): “Unde quidam eorum quasi doctiores et eo ipso mendaciores geminata N littera Mannichaeum vocant, quasi manna fundentem.”

5 Ch’ing-ch’i k’ou-kuei (“The Suppression of Bandits at Ch’ing-ch’i”) in Shou-tsuan, ed. Fang Shao, 1646, ts’e 12, p. 13a, 6-7. The Ch’ing-ch’i k’ou-kuei (hereafter referred to as CCKK) is an extremely important source for the history of Manichaeism in the Sung. A translation of the complete treatise is given by Kao Yu-kung in “Source Material on the Fang La Rebellion”, HJAS, xxvi (1966), 211-25 [hereafter referred to as Kao Yu-kung, Sources].
simply does not have the same effect as "Mannichaeus" in Latin.

(4) MANICHAEISM AND THE FANG LA REBELLION (1120-1122)

The revival of Manichaeism in South China coincided with a rising tide of popular discontent against the government. The Emperor Hui-tsung (reigned 1101-26) was noted more for his gifts as a scholar and artist than as a ruler. He was given to stylish living and entrusted the government of his realm to rapacious ministers who were bent on self-aggrandizement. The peasants were subjected to burdensome taxation and onerous forms of corvée. Of the many imposts, one which was resented by all was the provision of rare plants and fine rockery for the imperial gardens and of lacquer wood for furnishing the palace. The Emperor had a special fondness for stately gardens and at his instigation a new imperial garden was built on an artificial hill called Ken-yü. It was designed to give an exuberant Taoist atmosphere and it featured paradise-like landscaping. For the building of this garden the search for rare plants, fine stones and high quality lacquer wood was intensified. Officials were empowered to dig up graves and pull down houses in their search for hidden treasure.¹ This soon became licensed profiteering, as bribery was the only means of avoiding the confiscation of one’s treasured possessions.

Fang La was the owner of a lacquer grove who had good reason to feel resentful towards the government. He was a popular figure in the locality and he won the loyalty of many poor people through his generosity. In 1120 he and his retinue rose in revolt. His immediate aim was to win local autonomy and to put an end to the debilitating taxes. In hostile sources he was portrayed as having strong pretensions to the throne.² The revolt quickly spread from its base in the prefecture of Mu to other parts of south and south-east China. At one stage it came near to toppling the Sung government completely. Two years of bitter fighting was needed before the government forces

¹ Kao Yu-kung, "A Study of the Fang La Rebellion", HJAS, xxiv (1962-3), 41-44 [hereafter referred to as Kao Yu-kung, Study].
² CCKK, p. 8b, 5-6 ; Kao Yu-kung, Sources, p. 219.
gained the upper hand and forced the rebels into hiding. Our sources reckon that almost two million people perished in the resulting wars and famine.\(^1\)

Support for Fang La’s uprising came mostly from the prefectures of Wen, Tai and Yüeh, where Manichaeism had considerable following, and the timing of the revolt coincided with a growing concern on the part of the officials regarding the popularity and ubiquity of the sect. They were handicapped by a lack of clear directive from the central government as to how to deal with the practice of Vegetarianism and Demon Worship. As early as 1019 a law was issued banning the wearing of white dress, a Manichaean practice, in attending religious meetings and people were encouraged to inform on the leaders of such gatherings.\(^2\) However, this law must have fallen into disuse by the twelfth century. Even after the outbreak of the rebellion we find one official remarking in a memorial that, although there were laws prohibiting the dissemination of books on witchcraft and sorcery, he could not find anything which dealt specifically with the practice of Vegetarianism and Demon Worship.\(^3\) In actual fact an important edict proscribing the practices of the followers of the sect was issued in 1120, a few months before the outbreak of the rebellion. It gives a detailed description of the activities of the sect and a long list of their scriptures.\(^4\) It was possible, however, for some officials not to realize that the Light Sect to which the edict referred practised Vegetarianism and Demon Worship, as the edict was not sufficiently explicit as to how to identify the sect. It is interesting to note that the Index Librorum attached to the Edict of 1120 contains titles such as The Sutra on the Coming of the Prince Royal (T’ai-tzu hsia-sheng ching), The Sutra on the Beginnings (Ch‘i-ssu ching), The Portrait of Sanghan (Sung-hui-yao chi-kao) [hereafter referred to as SHYCK], ts’e 165, ch. 21778, p. 4a, 10-11.

\(^{1}\) CCKK, p. 3b, 2-3; Kao Yu-Kung, Sources, p. 215.

\(^{2}\) SHYCK, ts’e 165, ch. 21778, p. 22b, 7-11.


\(^{4}\) Forte (art. cit. p. 239) translates Ch‘i-ssu ching literally as Livre sacré de l’arrêt des pensées, but admits that it can be transcriptions of the title of a foreign work. My view is that Ch‘i-ssu is an abridgement of Ho-ssu-na, an important Manichaean liturgical term which is a transcription for the Middle Persian word
of Jesus the Buddha (I-shu-fo cheng) and The Portrait of the Four Kings of Heaven (Ssu t'ien-wang cheng),¹ which readily remind one of the foreign origins of the sect.

The authorities were quick to pin the blame of the Fang La Rebellion on the popular religious sects. Since the followers of these sects had always gathered to practise their religions under the shadow of illegality, it was easy to see in their organization the platform from which rebellions could be launched. The officials held the view, too, that the widespread use of magical charms, divination and faith-healing by these sects was the means by which their leaders gained the devotion of their followers, thus creating a potentially rebellious situation as people flocked to join them for material benefits. In the eyes of the government the sectarian leaders could not have held sway over their followers by any rightful authority or proper means of government. Magical practices, therefore, must have been their only source of power. In the legislation the leaders of the sects were accused of ku-hou, which literally means that they used magic and sorcery to confound and pervert the masses. The laws also make clear that the reason for burning books on magic and divination was not only to uphold the ethical standards of society but to prevent the masses from being tricked into participating in rebellious activities.²

The part which popular religious beliefs played in Chinese peasant rebellions is a complex issue and one which cannot be adequately discussed in the context of an article which is solely devoted to Manichaeism.³ The fact that Manichaeism was a


² On the Manichaean use of the Hindu motif of the Four Kings of Heaven, see H.-J. Klimkeit, art. cit. pp. 226-7. I am grateful to Professor Klimkeit for sending me his unpublished article on “Hindu Deities in Manichaean Art”.

persecuted religion in China does not imply that its tenets were subversive and that people joined it as a form of social protest. The assumption that the Manichaesians might have used their belief in the polarity of good and evil as a justification for revolt is certainly not borne out by the sources.¹

The Manichaesians did not preach any doctrine of earthly Utopia or social reform. They did, however, adhere to a very distinctive life-style which was necessitated by the food taboos imposed by their beliefs. The Manichaean electi were not allowed to prepare their own food because the act of harvesting and cooking was regarded as murdering the light particles in the earth and the fruit.² Food for the electi was prepared for them by their Hearers. The author of P. Rylands Greek 469 tells us that before an electus could sit down to his meal he had to deny his part in its preparation by saying: “Neither have I cast it [sc. the bread] into the oven: another hath brought me this and I have eaten it without guilt.”³ A Manichaean conventus would normally consist of several electi who were ministered to by their retinue of Hearers. Germane to the original teaching of the sect was that their electi should not remain in one place but assume the role of the wandering preacher. This was a feature of Syriac monasticism and the young Mani too considered himself an ἐθίδαγα (ἔθιδαγα) when he was a member of a Baptist sect.⁴ It is possible that in some cases the electi might have travelled with their whole retinue but, as persecution mounted, it is more likely that

¹ Kao Yu-kung, e.g. Studies, p. 53, maintains: “From its beginning Manichaeism was considered subversive in nature because of its doctrine of dualism and its hostile attitude toward authority.” Such a view, I believe, is based on a complete misunderstanding of Manichaean ethics.

² Augustinus, Ennaratio in Ps. 140, 12 (PL, xxxvii, col. 1823): “dei membra vexat, qui terram sulco discindit.”


they would have moved from one conventus to the next with the Hearers carrying on with their normal occupation. In China Manichaens were noted for the elaborate cell-structure of their sect. A believer could move with exceptional ease from one place to another, relying on his co-religionists in each to provide him with food and shelter.\(^1\) The call to wander was laid down in the *Peking Treatise*, which was translated into Chinese from either Middle Persian or, more probably, Parthian in the seventh century. It says: “A true believer is likened to a king who does not remain forever in one place but has occasion to go on a tour of inspection. His guards and soldiers should have all their weapons and equipment ready so that they can subdue all fierce beasts and jealous enemies.”\(^2\)

The Manichaean cells in China soon became self-help societies with important social consequences. From a hostile source we learn that the Devil Mother [i.e. electa] collected from each of the members forty-nine cash pieces as incense money on the first and fifteenth of each month as a form of monthly subscription. Thus it was commonly alleged that one became rich by joining the sect, as those members who were very poor when they first joined became men of some means through these small gifts and contributions from other members of the sect.\(^3\) According to a memorial which was submitted towards the end of the century (1198), the Vegetarians and Demon Worshippers, who pretended to be Taoists, built local shrines and repaired local roads and bridges as a sign of merit. If any of their members got involved in a legal suit the others would contribute towards the necessary bribes to win the case. They had many skilled artisans within their ranks and also kept caches of food and equipment.\(^4\)

Throughout the Sung period Manichaean cells were the nuclei around which new social ties were forged and economic

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\(^1\) *CCKK*, p. 12a, 4-8; cf. Lieu, art. cit. p. 409.


\(^3\) *CCKK*, p. 13a, 1-2; Kao Yu-kung, *Sources*, pp. 223-4.

\(^4\) *SHYCK*, vol. 166, ch. 19392, p. 30a, 7a-b, 4b.
links established at the expense of the traditional structure of the society and economy. At times of political crisis their organization, which was originally designed for the preservation of the religion and for looking after the welfare of its members, could take on the appearance of a state within a state. The sect prospered on the social breakdown of the last years of the Northern Sung Dynasty and its growing popularity hastened the process of disintegration. Its twice-monthly subscriptions no doubt came to have the same significance for its members as official taxation, and the repair work which the sect carried out on local bridges and roads became an alternative form of imperial corvée. The sect, in short, gave its members incentive for association and community living which inevitably challenged the authority of the state. As one official investigating the causes of the Fang La rebellion and its horrific aftermath points out to the Emperor, the Manichaeans had inherited the art of government from the Sage Kings of the bygone past but had corrupted it for their own selfish ends:

Your humble servant has heard that those who practise Vegetarianism and Demon Worship have at each village or hamlet one or two gang leaders whom they call Demon Chiefs [mo-tao]. They keep a record of all the names of the inhabitants of the village or hamlet and form them up into groups and swear them into illegal societies for the purpose of Demon Worship. Those who follow the sect do not eat meat and, whenever one of the families in their midst gets into trouble, other members of the sect will make every effort to help. Since they do not eat meat, they make substantial savings and therefore they are easily satisfied. Furthermore, the members of the sect regard each other as relatives. They are willing to help each other and so they do well economically. Your humble servant believes that the Sage Kings of old exercised their rule by bringing the people closer to each other and encouraging them to help each other. The simple life-style and thriftiness of the followers of this sect therefore have ancient and celebrated precedence. Now that the lawful leaders of the people do not govern according to the right precepts, the Demon Chiefs have usurped them for their own ends and used them to mislead their followers and caused them to sing their praises. They then proceed to impart to them their pernicious and dangerous teachings. The common people are not very sophisticated. They claim that since joining the sect they have enough to eat and are doing well in life. Hearing this others begin to pay heed to the teachings of the Demon Chiefs and rush to join the sect. Although the laws against them are increasingly harsh, they are nevertheless not succeeding in eradicating the problem.¹

¹ Li Hsin-chuan, Hsi-nien yao-lu, 76 (CHSC edition, ii. 1248, 13-1249, 6).
We are exceptionally well-informed as to the activities of the sect at T'ai-chou, where it clearly had substantial following. A few years prior to the outbreak of the rebellion, an official by the name of Hung sentenced a rich man to jail for possessing a copy of the *Sutra of Two Principles*. The culprit was implicated by an informer who joined the sect under false pretences. At that time the *Sutra of Two Principles* was still listed in the Taoist Canon and was thus theoretically immune from confiscation. The fact that a man could be sentenced to jail for possessing it is a good indication of the general feeling of uneasiness, and that conscientious officials like Hung were ready to take matters into their own hands.

Soon after Fang La raised his "standard of righteousness", which signalled the beginning of his revolt, his forces were joined by Lu Shih-nang, who was a leader of secret religious sects from T'ai-chou, and his retinue. Lu's decision to throw in his lot with Fang La drew T'ai-chou into the maelstrom of the revolt and because he was a leader of the cult of Vegetarians and Demon Worshippers he strengthened the already existing link between sectarianism and revolt in the minds of the officials.

Sources hostile to the rebels allege that the teaching of the secret sects condoned killing. One could even attain Buddhahood through it because death was the ultimate form of deliverance from earthly suffering. Those who adhered to such a view inevitably found themselves to be at loggerheads with the Buddhists, who preached the opposite view on the subject of killing. This allegation, if true, would cast considerable doubt on Lu Shih-nang's connection with Manichaeism. The latter's prohibition of killing was quite unequivocal. According to a Manichaean Confessional Manual in Turkish, the Hearers had to atone for their crimes if they had damaged or killed any living organism:

If we ever, my God, somehow should have inspired with fear or scared these five kinds of living beings [i.e. men, beasts, birds, fishes and reptiles] from the biggest

2 *CCKK*, pp. 13b, 7-14a, 2; Kao Yu-kung, *Sources*, p. 225.
to the smallest, if we somehow should have beaten or cut them, somehow have pained and tortured them, indeed, somehow should have killed them, then we to the same degree owe life to living beings. Therefore we now, my God, pray that we may be liberated from sin. Forgive my sin.\

In the West Manichaeans were known to adhere unflinchingly to the precept of non-violence. One of the most frequently discussed passages from Augustine’s *Contra Faustum* is that concerning the “Just War” in which the Bishop of Hippo tries to persuade the Manichaean leader whom he once admired that it is no sin to bear arms for righteous causes. The literal understanding with which the Manichaeans viewed the prohibition against killing is borne out by a story from the *Acts of the Persian Martyrs*. A Manichaean was once captured by Persian authorities. Under torture he renounced his allegiance to Mani and his religion. The officials brought him to Aeithala, a Christian holy man, and requested him to verify the genuineness of his renunciation. Aeithala gave the prisoner an ant and told him to kill it, as he knew that if he had not truly recanted of his beliefs he would not harm it. Much to Aeithala’s pleasure, the Manichaean killed the ant without the slightest hesitation.

If the followers of Fang La and Lu Shih-nang in fact believed that one could attain Buddhahood through wanton killing, they certainly did not derive this from the teachings of Mani. Even as staunch an opponent to Manichaeism as Chih-p’an, the most important Buddhist chronicler of this period, admits that Manichaeans were very strict in their prohibition of killing and of the eating of meat and drinking of wine. It has been argued

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2 An exception to this rule, however, is Anna Comnena’s comment in *Alexiados*, 6.14.2 (ed. B. Leib, ii (Paris, 1967), 82, 13-15): Πένθος γὰρ οἱ Μανιχαῖοι φύσει μαχαίρισαν καὶ αἴμας ἀνθρώπων λαφύσανεν καθαμείρει κόνεις ἀριθμόμενον. However, by Anna’s time (twelfth century), the term “Manichaean” has taken on a number of perjorative meanings and Anna is here using it to describe a tribe of Barbarians rather than an heretical sect.
5 Chih-p’an, *FTTC*, 39 (T 2035, xlix, p. 370a, 23); Chavannes/Pelliot, *Textes historiques*, p. 361.
that as Manichaeism was syncretistic in nature, it could have assimilated new ideas in the attempt to adjust itself to new social and religious conditions. However, our growing body of evidence concerning the activities of the sect in the Sung seems to suggest that the Manichaeans, although masquerading as Taoists and Buddhists to deceive officials, did their utmost to preserve the original teachings of the sect. Of the nineteen titles of Manichaean works brought to the notice of the officials in 1120 which we have mentioned earlier, at least fifteen remind us of works which were translated from Central Asian languages in the T'ang Dynasty. The official who actually confiscated the books added that they were neither Taoist nor Buddhist in nature, as most of them spoke of "The Envoy of Light at this moment", which incidentally is an introductory formula of the Peking Treatise, one of the earliest Manichaean works to be translated into Chinese.

It is more probable that rebel leaders like Lu Shih-nang derived their doctrine of salvation through killing from some other esoteric sects. The Great Vehicle Sect (Ta-ch'eng-chiao), for instance, which was founded in the sixth century, preached that for each person one kills one would advance one stage in one's Buddhahood. The followers of the sect dabbled in magic and attacked the monasteries of the more orthodox Buddhists. An extreme sect like this would, by the Sung Dynasty, have become a secret religious society and practised vegetarianism and other forms of asceticism which could make it indistinguishable from the Manichaeans in the eyes of the government.

The rebels at T'ai-chou were dealt with severely by the authorities after the collapse of the revolt. Several hundred "Vegetarians and Demon Worshippers" were brought before Hung. He tried to show leniency towards them but his law officers and police chiefs insisted on wholesale execution. Hung protested to no avail and the prisoners were eventually all

3 SHYCK, vol. 165, ch. 21778, p. 19b, 7-8; Forte, art. cit. p. 239.
4 Po-su-chiao ts'an-ching, ed. cit. p. 1281a, 23; Chavannes/Pelliot, Traité manichéen, p. 509.
5 Tzu-chih t'ung-chien, 148, cited in Wu Han, art. cit. p. 248.
executed. 1 In the minds of most officials there could be no doubt that "Vegetarians and Demon Worshippers" were bandits intent on overthrowing the rightful government and as such they were the successors of Chang Chüeh, one of the most famous rebel-bandits in Chinese history (fl. latter half of second century A.D.). There is a story that a Prefect (shou-kuan) of T'ai-chou by the name of Ho Chih-chung devised an ingenious method of extracting confessions of duplicity from prisoners which was based on their alleged connection with Chang Chüeh. He displayed in front of the accused hundreds of different objects and asked them to name them. Among the objects to be named was the horn of a sheep. The Chinese word for horn is chūeh which happens to be the same word used in Chang Chüeh's name. According to the story the accused named every article except the horn, thus proving to the prosecution the connection between them and the rebels of old. 2 

(6) TEN POEMS AGAINST THE MANICHAEANS BY LI SHOU-HSIEN

The severe punishments which were meted out to those who practised "Vegetarianism and Demon Worship" served as a strong warning to members of secret religious societies and the officials did not hesitate to remind the common people of the fate of rebels in their effort to bring those societies under control. One official, by the name of Li Shou-hsien, put his warning against joining secret religious societies in general and Manichaens in particular in ten short and poignant poems. We know very little about Li Shou-hsien. His poems are found in the local gazetteer of Ch'ih-ch'eng in the commandery of Chia-t'ing (Chia-t'ing Ch'ih-ch'eng-chih) which was not far from T'ai-chou. We learn from other local sources of an official by the name of Li Hsien who was admired for his learning and thriftiness and who died in 1208. 3 If he were the same person as the author of the poems, then it would place their date of

1 Hung Hao, Pen-chou wen-chi, ed. cit. ch. 74, p. 1b, 6-7.
2 CCKK, p. 13b, 3-6; Kao Yu-kung, Sources, p. 225.
3 Chia-t'ing Ch'i-h-ch'eng-chih, 9, p. 22a10-b, 1 (hereafter referred to as CTCCC), cited in Mou Jun-sun, "Sung-tai mo-ni-chiao" ("Manichaeism in the Sung Dynasty"), reprinted in Sung-shi yen-chiu che, i (Taipei, 1958), 93 (originally published in Fu-jen hsüeh-chih, 7, 1/2 (1938), pp. 125-46).
composition in the second half of the twelfth century. The memory of the Fang La Rebellion was still fresh in the minds of most people and Li Shou-hsien makes frequent reference in his poems to the fate of the rebels. His reason for putting his polemics against the Manichaean in verse was no doubt the same as that of Augustine, who wrote an *Abecedarian Psalm* against the Donatists in order “to reach the attention of the humble masses and of the ignorant and unlettered, and to fix the matter in their memories as much as we can”. The use of poetry for didactic purposes in China was not limited to preventing the common people from joining secret religious societies. Li’s poems against the Manichaean are found together with a collection of ten poems of similar length urging the common people not to neglect their agricultural duties.

1 I implore you, common people, not to follow the wiles of the Demon. Countless troubles will befall you if you become a Demon Worshipper: You will lose all your earthly possessions and be branded as a criminal. You should learn from the example of Wu Chung and Kuei Chi-wu.

Wu Chung and Kuei Chi-wu were probably inhabitants of Ch’ih-ch’eng who were singled out for severe punishment for being “Vegetarians and Demon Worshippers” as a warning to others. Li Shou-hsien, like many other officials, did not hesitate to use the threat of corporal punishment to give added weight to his polemical writings. Although laws against Manichaean in the Later Roman Empire were in many ways just as harsh, we seldom find the Church Fathers referring to them in their anti-Manichaean works. For Augustine the error of the Manichaean was not merely a secular offence. The state could threaten the electi with exceptionally harsh punishment but the extremum supplicium which was most to be feared would be that of the Final Judgement.

1 Augustine, *Retractiones*, 1, 20 (*PL*, xxxii, col. 617): “*Psalms contra partem Donati.* Volens etiam causam Donatistarum ad ipsius humillimi vulgi et omnino imperitorum atque idiotarum notitiam pervenire, et eorum quantum fieri posset per nos inhaerere memoriae, Psalmum qui eis cantaretur, per latinas litteras feci.”

2 *CTCCC*, 37, p. 20b, 8-9.

3 Augustine, *Contra epistulam Manichaei quam vocant “Fundamenti”*, 1, (CSEL 251/1, p. 193, 12-16): “Et quicquid divinitus ante illud ultimum iudicium vindicatur, sive per improbos sive per justos sive per nescientes sive per scientes
Meeting at night in white dress to listen to profane teaching, and fleeing in every direction at day-break; these are the hall-marks of the unorthodox and pernicious teaching of the Devil.

If you were to take part in such activities, you would certainly end up in jail and your children would be left uncared for. If Manichaean sect members met at dusk because the rules of the sect prescribed seven sets of prayers which they had to begin reciting after sunset. Darkness provided ideal cover for the persecuted sect but it also enhanced the secretive nature of their gatherings, which led to charges of immorality. Authorities in China were particularly disturbed by the fact that the meetings were attended by members of both sexes, which was a serious act of impropriety. Contemporary laws forbade the holding of unsegregated religious meetings and this prohibition even applied to properly ordained monks and nuns. The Manichaens vehemently denied this charge of impropriety. They maintained that unsegregated meetings were a sign of "Demon Worship," but the followers of the Light Sect (Ming-chiao) observed such strict rules of propriety that their leaders would not even accept food which was cooked for them by their womenfolk.

In the West the Manichaens were often accused of immoral behaviour during their secret meetings, an accusation which was once levied against the Christians by the Pagans. Augustine speaks of a young girl by the name of Margarita who was violated by the electi while attending a Manichaean meeting at Hippo. A Byzantine formula of abjuration calls for anathema on those who have illegitimate intercourse with one's sister or one's mother-in-law or daughter-in-law; who manifestly assemble...
on the First of January and indulge in every form of revelry after sunset to satisfy their physical desires, sparing neither sex, kinship nor age". Some of the accusations against the immoral behaviour of the Manichaeans border on the fantastic. The author of P. Rylands Greek 469, for instance, warned the faithful in his diocese that the Manichaeans extracted menstrual blood from the electae for sacramental use. This, however, seems to be a charge which the Church authorities were accustomed to hurl at more than one heretical sect. Epiphanius, the heresiologist of Salamis, claimed that this was also practised by the "Barbelognastics" of Alexandria.

The elusive nature of the sect imposed considerable strain on the police forces of both Rome and China. Consequently, the anti-Manichaean legislation in both Empires permitted people to inform on those joining the sect. In China the inducement for people to come forward and give information which could lead to the capture and indictment of Manichaeans was as much as half of the confiscated property of the accused. In the Later Roman Empire the laws against the Manichaeans granted informers special immunity from prosecution. The Emperor Justinian decreed that those Manichaeans who had been converted to orthodox Christianity should inform on their former co-religionists as an indication of the genuineness of their conversion. The laws of Rome are less explicit on the nature of

1 The Greater Greek Abjuration Formula (Migne, Patrologia Graeca, 1, col. 1469c): Ανάθεμα τοῖς συμβεβηρομένοις ἁδελφή καὶ πενθερή καὶ νήπιοι καὶ τοῖς κατὰ τὴν πρώτην τοῦ Ἱσλαμικοῦ μηνὸς εἰς ἑστρεφὴν ἀδριαζομένοις, μετὰ δὲ τὴν ἑστρεφὴν μέθην ἀποσβεβηκόντος τὰ ἄθικα σαρκικά καὶ τὴν μὲν εἰσαυγαρίσαν καὶ μηδεμίας ὁλος φειδομένης φύσεως ἑς συγγενειάς ἓ ἠλιξιάς.

2 P. Rylands Greek, 469, ed. cit., lines 33-35: ἰδιὸς ἐχοῦσιν διὰ τὸ δηλοῦσθαι χρῆσειν αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀφεδροῦ αἵματος αὐτῶν εἰς τὰ τῆς μανίας αὐτῶν μυσώματα.


4 SHYCK, vol. 165, ch. 21778, pp. 53b, 9-54a, 3.

5 CT 16.5.9 (Edict of 382): “Sublimitas itaque tua det inquisitores, aperiat forum, indices denuntiatoresque sine invidia delationis accipiat.”

6 Codex Justinianus, 1.5.16 (Edict of 527/9): διὰ τούτου γὰρ μόνον δεξιούσιν ἀπασὶν, ὡς οὐ κατὰ τινα δυσσεβὴ προσποίησιν, ἀλλ’ ὑμᾶς διανοίᾳ τῷ ἀγίῳ καὶ προσκυνήτῳ δόγματι προσκεχωρίκασιν.
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rewards for informers. The emperors were, after all, hailed as suppressors of delatores by the Senate. If, however, the practices of the High Empire were still in vogue by the fourth century, the informer could expect about a quarter of the confiscated property.

"The Golden Needle pierces through the White Lotus Pond."
Sayings like this deceive both the speaker and the listener. How can one compare them with sayings like: "Mulberry trees should be planted in homesteads of five acres and the breeding times of children, pigs, dogs and swine be not neglected."

The "White Lotus Pond" is obviously a reference to the White Lotus Sect, which was one of the most important secret religious societies in Sung China and in the fourteenth century played an important part in the expulsion of the Mongols from China. As for the saying about the Golden Needle piercing through the White Lotus Pond, there is little in contemporary Manichaean and non-Manichaean literature which can throw any light on its real meaning. The term "Golden Needle" occurs in the Peking Treatise but in a totally different context and with a somewhat different meaning. There it is used to mean a gold ingot which requires refining (an imagery which strongly echoes 1 Peter i. 7 in the New Testament) and is translated by Chavannes and Pelliot as "mineral d'or". Wu Han, the only modern scholar to have commented on this poem, believes that Li Shou-hsien was trying to warn his readers that becoming a Manichaean could lead to one being accused as a member of the White Lotus Sect. However, it is equally possible that Li Shou-hsien conjured up this saying from a host of esoteric terms and phrases associated with secret religious societies in order to compare it unfavourably with traditional Confucianist ethical sayings. The exhortation to tend to one's mulberry trees was derived from the writings of Mencius

3 CTCCC, 37, p. 21a, 2-3.
4 Po-su-chiao ts'an-ching, ed. cit. p. 1282a, 13; Chavannes/Pelliot, Traité manichéen, p. 537.
5 Wu Han, art. cit. p. 257.
(Meng-tzu), which form part of the Confucianist Canon.\(^1\) The accusation that monks and nuns, by renouncing the normal way of life, caused hardship for others through their resultant neglect of the essential occupations of farming and weaving, was an age-old one and features prominently in the Edict of Persecution against Buddhist monks in 845.\(^2\) The government evidently chose to overlook the fact that Buddhist monasteries were important centres of economic activities, as were the Manichaean cells which we have already noted.\(^3\) A frequent complaint in the laws of the Sung Dynasty was that common people became self-ordained monks in order to avoid their fiscal duties. A law of 1209 recommends that all those monks who could not produce a certificate showing that their ordination was approved by the state should be deprived of their monastic status and sent back to their former occupations.\(^4\)

[4]

You must not recite the *Sutra of Dual Principles and Two Sacrifices*.\(^5\)

The government edicts are manifestly clear on this matter.

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\(^2\) *CTS* 18, ed. cit. p. 605, 13-14.

\(^3\) On the economic activities of Buddhist temples in China see the fundamental work by J. Gernet, *Les aspects économiques du Bouddhisme dans la société chinoise du v\(^e\) au x\(^e\) siècle* (Hanoi, 1956).

\(^4\) SHYCK, ch. 19392, p. 136b, 1-2.

\(^5\) The title of the sutra is given as *Shuang-tsung erh-hui-ching* in the poem whereas the work to which it is referring is normally called the *Erh-tsung-ching* ("The Sutra of Two Principles"). The confusion is caused by the fact that the Manichaeans called themselves the "Erh-hui-tzu" ("the Followers of the Two Sacrifices"). Although the character "hui" is translated as "sacrifice" here, it must be pointed out that the word can also mean "to pay one's respect".

For your crime you will be exiled at least three thousand li away.
How will the White Buddha [po-fu] be able then to come your rescue?¹

By the *Sutra of Dual Principles and Two Sacrifices*, Li Shou-hsien clearly implies the *Sutra of the Two Principles [Erh-tsung-ching]*, one of the most important Manichaean scriptures in the East. Its original title was *Sābuhragan* and in it Mani summarized his teaching in Middle Persian for Shapur I.² It was not known to the Fathers in the West because only Mani's writings in Syriac were translated into the languages of the Roman Empire. The lengthened version of the Chinese title in the poem is not attested elsewhere and is evidently an artificial crasis of two Chinese Manichaean terms necessitated by the demands of the poetic meter. The *Sutra of Two Principles*, as we have already noted, was received into the Taoist Canon in 1016, but clearly by the 1120s it had come under proscription as a result of the alleged Manichaean involvement in the Fang La Rebellion. The Buddhist chronicler Chih-p'an begins one of his sections on Manichaeism with the reminder that the laws of the Sung decree the banning of all scriptures which are not in either the Buddhist or Taoist Canons, but the *Sutra of Two Principles*, though canonical, comes under the proscription.³

Manichaean scriptures played an important part in the dissemination of the religion and both Chinese and Roman authorities advocated their consignment to the flames. In China the spread of the scriptures was aided by printing, and officials had to try to seize the printing blocks as well as the finished books.⁴ The Church Fathers did their utmost to prevent their congregations from reading Manichaean literature and Ephraim of Nisibis who, like Li Shou-hsien, found verse an ideal medium for exhortation, wrote several hymns concerning the dangers of reading heretical books. One of them reads:

¹ *CTCCC*, 37, p. 21a, 4-5.
³ *FTTC*, 39 (T 2035, xlix, p. 370a, 9-11).
Your Lord will exalt you, \(^1\) Oh, faithful Church!  
For you are not concealing the Book of the insane Marcion,  
nor the writings of the mad Mani \(\text{σάνθα' Μάνι} \) \(^3\)  
nor the Book of the Horrible Mysteries of Bar Daisan.  
The Two Testaments of the King and his Son  
are placed in your ark. \(^8\)

This poem, when juxtaposed with that of Li Shou-hsien, reveals  
a subtle but important difference between what the two societies  
saw as the reason for banning the books of Mani. In the West  
they were proscribed because they contained views on the  
Creation and the nature of Christ which were at variance with  
the doctrines of the Church on such matters. In China,  
however, the main reason for proscribing Manichaean scriptures  
was that they would turn their readers into criminals and  
rebels.

To be exiled to a place at least three thousand \(li\) from one’s  
home was the normal punishment in Sung law for those who  
were accused of dabbling in magic and causing panic by spreading  
false rumours of impending disaster. \(^4\) A similar fate awaited  
Manichaeans who were apprehended in the City of Rome, as  
they would be exiled beyond the hundredth milestone, \(^5\) which  
in the days of the Republic would signify the loss of one’s rights  
as a citizen. Augustine, however, had serious doubts about the  
effectiveness of exile as a means of dampening the zeal of the  
heretics. He was indignant when he heard that Faustus, the  
Manichaean \(\text{electus} \) of Milevis, was merely sentenced to exile on  
an island by the secular authorities, \(“\text{for it is what God’s} \)  
servants do of their own accord everyday when they wish to  
retire from the tumult of the world. Besides, earthly sovereigns

\(^1\) The phrase \(\text{σάνθα' Μάνι} \) literally means \(“\text{The Lord will lift up your} \)  
horn.”

\(^2\) The phrase \(“\text{σάνθα' Μάνι} \), which occurs frequently in anti-Manichaean  
literature, is clearly a Syriac adaptation of the Greek pun on Mani’s name.


\(^4\) \textit{SHYCK}, vol. 165, ch. 21778, p. 53a, 9-b, 4 (Edict of 1141).

\(^5\) \textit{CT}, 16,5,62 (Edict of 17 July 425): \(“\text{His conventione praemissa viginti} \)  
dierum condonavimus indutias, intra quos nisi ad communiosis redierint unitatem,  
expulsi usque ad centesimum lapidem solitudine quam eligunt macerentur.”
often by a public decree give release from this punishment as an act of mercy".

[5]
When you have sons, just send them to work in the fields.
If they are intelligent, you should order them to make an early start with their studies.
You must not let them be misled by men like Wu Hui—people such as he are liable to be jailed and flogged.

As one who had gained his officialdom through his knowledge of the Confucianist Classics, Li Shou-hsien strongly advocates in this poem the traditional virtues of hard work and good learning as the best means of safeguarding young people from drifting into the ranks of "Vegetarians and Demon Worshippers". This was also expressed in contemporary laws which, like the famous edict of Diocletian against the Manichaeans (A.D. 302), reason that excessive idleness ("otia maxima") caused people to turn to newfangled religions and ideas. As the central theme of Confucianist teaching was propriety, Li Shou-hsien and other officials no doubt hoped that those who were well brought up in it would not turn to such unsocial activities as meeting at night and indulging in extreme forms of asceticism and dabbling in magic. However, in an earlier article, I have shown that Manichaeism and Confucianist learning were not always seen as utterly incompatible extremes. Chang Hsi-sheng, a much admired Confucianist scholar of the Sung, was for many years the superintendent of a Manichaean shrine. During the

1 Augustinus, Contra Faustum, 5, 8 (ed. cit. p. 280, 15-22): "Faustus autem convictus... in insulam relegatus est: quod sua sponte cotidie servi dei facient se a turbulento strepitu popularum removere cupientes, et unde publica terrenorum principum vota per indulgentiam solent relaxare damnatos." On this see T. Mommsen, Römisches Strafrecht (Leipzig, 1899), p. 600.
2 CTCCC, 37, p. 21a, 6-7.
Yüan Dynasty (1280-1368) we find a Confucianist scholar taking residence and practising the religion in a well-secluded shrine.\(^1\)

The womenfolk are too simple-minded:
Why make life so unpalatable by eating only vegetables?
Just think: once A-tung has been well and truly flogged, though penitent, he (she) can hardly amend his (her) wrongs.\(^2\)

Manichaeism had considerable following among women in China. As we have already noted, the women-leaders were classed by the opponents of Manichaeism as "Devil Mothers (or Matrons)" (mo-mu) who acted as treasurers of the sect. In the West women, too, played an important part in the dissemination of Manichaeism. Mark the Deacon gives a lively account of the visits of Julia the electa to Gaza, where she was completely out-classed in a debate with the bishop Porphyry.\(^3\)

The only identifiable Manichaean monument in the Roman Empire is the tombstone of a Manichaean \(\gamma\eta\varphi\beta\\varepsilon\nu\sigma\) by the name of Bassa.\(^4\)

Ephraim of Nisibis also rebuked female Manichaean initiates for their idleness for the sake of righteousness and for neglecting their household duties.\(^5\)

The District of Hsien-chü formerly had a hall for ancestral worship.
It was situated in the village of Pai-ta [White Stupa].
As many witnessed the beheading of the Chief Vegetarian, nowadays people speak unfavourably of Lu Shih-nang.\(^6\)

Lu Shih-nang, as we have already mentioned, was one of the leaders of the Fang La Rebellion and it was through his connection with the secret religious societies that the rebellion took on a distinctively religious character. The poem seems to

\(^2\) CCCC, 37, p. 21a, 8-9.
\(^5\) Ephraim's \textit{Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion and Bardaisan}, ed. C. W. Mitchell, i (1912), 128, 3-6:

\(^6\) CCCC, 37, pp. 21a, 10-21b, 1.
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imply that Lu used a hall of ancestral worship for the purpose of "Vegetarianism and Demon Worship". It is possible that he masqueraded the meeting place of his sect as a hall for ancestral worship to prevent it from being seized by officials. In the local gazetteer of Chia-ting there is no mention of a village by the name of Pai-ta, but the author was probably referring to a market-town with a similar name which is situated about ten miles west of Hsien-chü.¹

Every family, rich or poor should revere its ancestors. Why, therefore, desert them and turn to the worship of demons? Consider how hard it is to repay the kindness of your parents, you should swiftly return to your filial duties.²

Filial piety is one of the cardinal virtues of Confucianist teaching on morality. The accusation that by joining a religious order or by involving oneself with a secret religious society one would neglect one's filial duties, was frequently mentioned in imperial edicts against Buddhism.³ The secular authorities assumed that once a person became a monk his monastic vows would cause him to sever his ties with his family. We have no clear information about the Manichaean attitude towards filial piety in China, but since members of the Light Sect called each other "Righteous Friends" (shan-yu) it can be safely assumed that the ties of the society were very strong. The opening words of a document recovered from Tun-huang which describes the formation of a lay Buddhist religious society (A.D. c. 959) give us some idea of the dilemma which each initiate had to face with regards to his devotion to his parents and his duty towards the sect. The prologue reads:

Our parents give us life, but friends enhance its value; they sustain us in time of danger, rescue us from calamity.⁴

However, as Buddhism became more Sinicized it placed more stress on filial piety and tried to minimize the domestic upheaval which was entailed when one became a monk. The Manichaeans, too, seem to have followed a similar course in this respect. In the courtyard of a Manichaean shrine on Hua-p’iao Hill which was built in the thirteenth century, visitors can still see an inscription recording the gift of a statue of Mani the Buddha of Light by a believer in the hope that his deceased mother would soon attain Nirvana.¹

Vegetarianism was regarded as anti-social by more conservatively minded scholars and officials in China and was often used as a justification for banning sects which practised it. Such a manifestation of asceticism was harder to condemn in the West since those who led a vita solitaria were expected to fast regularly and to eat only very simple food. However, Christian ascetics were not necessarily vegetarians and the Patriarch Timotheus of Alexandria was able to ferret out some Manichaean monks among a group of monks by administering a food test.³ Augustine found it necessary to admonish his congregation to distinguish between true Christian asceticism and that of the Manichaean. He points out that the so-called vegetarian meals of the Manichaeeans were in actual fact gastronomical occasions with a fine display of non-meat dishes and delicious food drinks.⁴ On the other hand,

¹ Wu Wen-liang, Ch’üan-chou tsung-chiao shih-ko (“Religious inscriptions on stone from the prefecture of Ch’üan”), (Peking, 1957), p. 44. See my article, “Nestorians and Manichaeans on the South China Coast”, Vigiliae Christianae (forthcoming).

² CTCCC, 37, p. 21b, 4-5.


⁴ Augustinus, De moribus Manichaeorum, 29 (PL xxxii, col. 1357): “alius vero ex alia parte nihil gustans carnium, nihil vini, exquisitas et peregrinas fruges multis ferculis variatas et largo pipere aspersas nona hora libenter assumat, noctis etiam principio talia coenaturus.”
Christian monks in the Egyptian desert took to fasting and abstinence so seriously that some people thought that they should be restrained.¹

The duty of the government is to care for the common people. Officials have therefore been dispatched to correct your errors. Our wish is that you should know the ancestral teachings and our fear is that you may become a Demon Worshipper.²

This is not the first time that the Manichaeans were confronted with the claim that they were persecuted for the sake of the common good. The Emperor Diocletian asserted in his edict of 302 that it was necessary to burn Manichaean books and execute their leaders so that the general peace and tranquility of the reign would not be infected by the poison of their teachings.³ He also regarded Manichaeism as an enemy of the ancestral religion ("vetus religio") of the Empire.⁴ The Emperor Justinian proclaimed in his edict of 527 that to make every provision for enabling his subjects to be orthodox Christians was the most important duty of the government,⁵ words which are strikingly similar to those of Li's poem.

Li Shou-hsien's remarks and observations on the customs and practices of the Manichaeans in South China are corroborated by the writings of many other Confucianist officials, and especially by those of Lu Yu, an official of the southern Sung Dynasty. At the time when he wrote (1163) the Sung government had lost


² CTCCC. 37, p. 21b. 6-7.

³ Coll. 15,3,4: "et verendum est, . . . accedenti tempore conentur per execrandas consuetudines, et scaevas leges Persarum innocentioris naturae homines, Romanam gentem modestam atque tranquillam, et universum orbem nostrum veluti venenis anguis malivoli inificere . . .".

⁴ Coll. 15,3,2 : "quibus nec obviam ire nec resistere fas est, neque reprehendi a nova vetus religio debet . . .".

⁵ CJ 1,5,18 (Edict of 527-9): "Πάντων ποιούντων πρόνοιαν τῶν συμφερόντων τοῖς ἡμετέροις ὑπκρίδιος ἐκείνω μάλιστα πάντων . . . πεφροντίκαμεν τοῦ τάς αὐτῶν σώζειν ψυχὰς διὰ τοῦ τὴν ὁρθῶν πίστεων ἀπαιτας καθαρὰ διανοια πρεσβεύειν."
virtually the whole of North China and the Central Plains to the Juchens and the capital had been moved from Kai-feng southwards to Hang-chou. As a result of this move, the government was brought much closer to Fukien, the heartland of Manichaeism in this period. In a memorial devoted to the subject of the followers of the Light Sect, he mentioned that the Manichaeans wore white dress when attending meetings and that their insatiable need for frankincense and red mushrooms had caused a dramatic rise in the price of these two commodities. He, too, was of the opinion that the Manichaeans were the successors of the Yellow Turbans of Chang Chüeh who laid waste much of China in the closing years of the Han Dynasty.  

(7) ORTHODOXY AND ORTHOPRAXY

Manichaeism in China somehow managed to survive the traumatic aftermath of the Fang La Rebellion and was able to come into the open under the more tolerant régime of the Mongols. It was active enough in the early years of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) for a severe persecution to be unleashed against its followers. Thereafter, Manichaeism faded from Chinese history. When Ho Chiao-yüan was writing his account of the Manichaean shrine on Hua-p'iao Hill in Ch'üan-chou at the beginning of the seventeenth century, he stated that there were still a few people practising that religion in Fukien although they would not do so publicly.

In our examination of the major polemical writings against the Manichaeans by government officials down to the end of the Sung Dynasty, an important point of contrast with the anti-Manichaean writings of the Christian Fathers which emerges is that at no time in China were the Manichaeans there persecuted on doctrinal issues. There is no mention of dualism in the memorials, and the view of the officials towards Manichaean writings was that their contents were fantastic or seditious rather than erroneous or heretical. The offence under which the

2 Wu Han, art. cit. pp. 267-70.
3 Ho Chiao-yüan, Min-shu, 7; cf. P. Pelliot, Traditions, p. 207.
Manichaens and members of other secret religious sects were prosecuted was “tso-tao”, which means literally “the left of the correct (or right) way”. Although it is often rendered into English as “heresy” or “heterodoxy”, it is a far cry from how the Church Fathers would have defined these terms. As Confucianism was essentially a code of ethical behaviour, those who upheld it felt less threatened by the new cosmogonic theories of Manichaeism than by their accompanying customs and practices. The Buddhists, on the other hand, were more conscious of the doctrinal differences between them and the Manichaens, whom they accused of practising a “wai-tao”. The latter means “an outside way” and is foreign in origin. It comes much closer in meaning to the Patristic concept of heresy, but its usage seldom extends beyond Buddhist literature.

In the Book of Rites (Li-chi), which is an important Confucianist manual on rules of propriety, “tso-tao” is listed with crimes such as undermining the forces of law through devious forms of interpretation, sorcery, soothsaying and dispensing of magical portions. The relevant passage was referred to by a Confucianist official in a memorial against Manichaens and other similar sects. The memorial is worth quoting as it gives us some idea as to why the officials saw the Manichaens as guilty of “tso-tao”:

Your humble servant bases his request on the chapter “On Rulership” in the Book of Rites which says that those who mislead the masses into rebellious activities by incorrect ways [“tso-tao”] should be executed. The Vegetarians and Demon Worshippers of today are precisely such people. Your servant has heard that this practice was widespread in the two Che and the two Chiang Provinces. It was started by one man and it is now practised by hundreds and thousands of people who swear themselves into gangs with very

1 The term “tso-tao” is very difficult to render into English or, for that matter, German. Werner Eichorn leaves it as “Linksbahn” in Die Religionen Chinas (Stuttgart, 1973), p. 126.


close ties. If any one of them is arrested, the rest of the gang will offer bribes in the region of five hundred to one thousand cash pieces. When one of them dies, others will gather firewood and burn his corpse. Thus they dispense with the need for a proper coffin and shroud, and save themselves from mourning and other funerary ceremonies. Such behaviour is a depreciation of ethical values and how will such people be able to discern the difference between master and servant? If such practices are not removed at the cost of some pain, they will breed rebellions and then soldiers will have to be used to extirpate them, bringing death and destruction to countless people.

The tone of this memorial is much closer to that of the Edict of Diocletian and of the anti-Christian writings of pagan Romans than is that of the laws of the Christian Emperors against the Manichaeans. It is interesting to note that a later Christian commentator of the Late Empire, the so-called "Ambrosiaster", in quoting Diocletian’s Edict had to make a few subtle but significant alterations in the wording to give it a more doctrinal flavour. Manichaeans in China, like Christians in pagan Rome, were not persecuted for the substance of their belief but for the outward practice which such belief entailed. We must not assume, though, that the Chinese were totally disinterested in cosmogony and metaphysics. Chu Hsi, the most influential Confucianist scholar of the Sung, wrote highly philosophical treatises against belief in evil as an originating principle. However, no official made use of his philosophical arguments in formulating the case against Manichaeans. In subsequent periods, if Chu Hsi is quoted at all in laws against secret religious sects, it is his writings on ethics which are cited. In the place of a state-church after the Byzantine model China possessed a state cult of ethics, and the enforcement of correct behaviour had a similar religious force to the extirpation of heresy in the

1 The mention of the Vegetarian and Demon Worship Sect being founded by one person confirms Ho Chiao-yüan’s account of the “Hu-lu” bringing Manichaeism from the capital cities to Fukien. Cf. P. Pelliot, Traditions, p. 205.


medieval West. That Manichaeism could fall a victim to orthopraxy in China is a significant reminder that its precepts and practices were very closely linked. It also emphasizes the fact that in traditional China, religion was never merely a matter of intellectual assent. It was first and foremost the acceptance of a distinctive way of life.