

Materials of Yenisei Manichaeism

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The historiography to date limits the appearance of adherents of Manichaeism to the north of the Sayan ridge within the boundaries of the Minusinsk basin. The Finnish expedition of Doctor I. R. Aspelin in 1887 made documentary records of a number of monuments (Podkamen, Oshkole, Ukraine) that bear images of figures in long robes. In the middle of the twentieth century, O. Menchen Helfen, in an article based on these discoveries, identified the figures as the alien priests of a cult, namely Manichaeism, but this theory found no support in the scientific community.¹ The Russian scholar L. R. Kyzlasov refers these mysterious figures to the period of the early Middle Ages - the Tashtyk culture - but he has refrained from any judgments and publications on this point. The Hungarian scholar M. Erdy considers the costume of the characters as typical of shamans belonging to the Central Asian and the Siberian tradition.² The epitaph sources of Yenisei writing contain a certain element of solar-lunar character, which is indirectly associated with Manichaean cosmology, but contemporary sources providing no details of this religion.

More recent discoveries of monuments with stone carvings scattered in the landscape of the Iyus steppes additionally support the possible existence of an alien religious tradition in the Kirghiz state. Fieldwork on the outskirts of these steppe sites over the last ten years has brought to light a number of discoveries: the engraved images of mysterious figures dated to the ninth and tenth centuries which bear identity with those recorded by Aspelin have been found. These finds are of satisfactory intactness, in some cases they represent one-assembly structure of reproductions, in others a multilayered palimpsest, and on the whole the quality of their preservation guarantees the criteria of prospective identification. In the petroglyphic images of figures in mantles one can observe three types, differing in details and other specific attributes of dress which characterize their regional, sectarian, or communicatively-time distinction. Here we will consider on-

¹ O. Maenchen-Helfen, "Manichaeans in Siberia," *Semitic and Oriental Studies* 16 (1951), 326.

² M. Erdy, "Manichaeans, Nestorians or bird-costumed humans in their relations to hunt-type cauldrons in rock carvings of the Yenisei Valley," *Eurasia Studies Yearbook* 68 (1996), 45-95.

ly the first type of images - strangers in long mantles, which we have named "vajra bearers".

After examination of some of the figures, as recorded by the Finnish expedition using digital equipments, it was found that they carry under the arm an object in the form either of a cone, or of a two-part design of roundish outlines (Fig. 1, 1-5).

According to the biography of missionary history in China, "Gao sen Zhoun" (beginning of the sixth century), one of the attributes of the cult practice of Buddhists of the Mahayana school is called "vajra-fly chaser Zhu".³ In the extensive materials on the tantric Buddhism of Tibet we find eremite staffs known as *khvat-vanga*, or the spherical *vajra*, the discal *vajra*, or a scepter made from human skulls.⁴ The staff *khakkhara*, or lamaist *vachir*, is mentioned in monuments in Central Asia (Hara-Hoto).⁵ The monk's wand or staff (sansk. *khakkhara*) has supposedly been known since Buddha himself. The main purpose of the staff is to warn all living things around the bearer that he is moving, so as not to accidentally stop someone's chain of rebirth. It is important to emphasize that the monastic staff was widespread in northern Buddhism, covering Tibet, Mongolia, China, and Japan. The staff has withstood the passage of time, yet evolved in appearance. The staff could be longer, for use as a walking stick, or a rod on a short handle which is placed under the armpit.

The monk's staff, or baton, has a short handle (tibet. *khar-gsil*, mong. *dulduy*) in Tibetan Lamaist tradition a stump (Fig. 1, 7) and a metal top in the form of the leaf of the *bodhi* tree, the tree under which Buddha attained enlightenment.

This cult object represents an octal construction of metal arcs with an amulet with a miniature figure of the Buddha Shakya-Muni and many hanging ribbons that bear symbols auspicious for all living beings. The upper part of another type of Tibetan staff (Fig. 1, 8) has the shape of a Buddhist stupa at the top of the fig tree, schematically showing a leaf of the *bodhi* tree (& 509-11 / and MAE). The spire of the stupa in the form of multiple steps could be replaced by other figurative images, such as the form of crossed lightning (sansk. *vajra*).⁶ The attribute in the hands of Yenisei personagediffers by the documentary criterion among all mentioned above examples (Fig. 1, 2). He has identity and similarity with the wand of Buddhistic Saint Maudga Lya-yana (Fig. 1). Maudga Lya-yana is one of the main Śākyamuni Buddha's followers. In Buddhistic iconography he is depict-

³ Hue-Tszao. «Gao Sin Tzuan» *Biographies of worthy monks*. Vol. 2. Saint Petersburg 2005, 153.

⁴ Goy-Lotsava Shonnupel, "Dark Blue Annals," *Buddhism History in Tibet. VI-XVth centuries*, tr. Y.N. Rerikha, Saint Petersburg 2001, 139; S.-H. Sartypova, *A cult of goddess-keeper Boldan Lhamo in Tibetan Buddhism*, Moscow 2003, 102-108.

⁵ S. M. Kochetova, "Deities of stars in paintings at Hara-Hoto," in *Works of the Dept. of History of Culture and Eastern Arts. The State Hermitage*. Vol. 4. Leningrad 1947, 472-502.

⁶ P. Demieville, *Iconography and History. The Twin Pagodas of Zayton. A Study of Later Buddhist Sculpture in China*. Cambridge (1935), Cf. W v 1, E III 14.

ed with trilobite wand (khakhara) in hands. In Zoroastrian (Iranian) cult art the divine scepter of God Zurvan occurs.

These attributes of ritual-eschatological assignment are a peculiar heritage of deities- thunderers in *vajrayana* mythology and rituals, northern Buddhism- Mahayana and Zoroastrism. The American researcher S. Lieu, referring to Manichaeism influence on the art of the Buddhism of Ladakha, wrote: "the symbolical Cross of Light has replaced its natural form with a lightning stroke (*vajra*)".⁷ Indirect visual sources find support in Manichaeism literature. In Coptic texts, Mani speaks about a staff: "I will dress them in a wisdom armor and righteousness staffs". The gold arrow (scepter) was received by Yima, the Zoroastrian keeper, from Ahura-Mazda. The historical fact of the eastern mission led by Mar-Ammo points to Buddhist adaptation in eastern Iranian and central Asian Manichaeism: Manichaeists have accepted Buddhist forms and contents.⁸ The original composition of the Prince Aprin Kora is a collection of Turkish texts modeled as *Budhastotras*, or "Praise to the Buddha", which is an essential part of the texts in the Buddhist-Manichaeism literature of Tokharistan. In the text, the following epithets characterize Mani: "sharp *vajra*", "wise, providing knowledge", and "my elephant" (having the force of the Buddha).⁹

The corpus of iconography of the thunderer's cult is supplemented with these images of a thunderous arrow in the natural landscape surroundings of a represented monument (Fig. 1, 6), by external stone-graphic signs. These two-sided cones are an attribute of thunderer's rituals in the spirits study cosmogony system of medieval infidels of the Iyus interflaves. They have identity and similarity of those scepters which are seen under the arms of the figures in long mantles. The crosswise *vajra* form reflects a cult of "space force of gnostic systems of the East and as for a place and time" - the shaman cult of heavenly spirits-patrons that causes a consistency in issues of belief of newcomers and adherents of spirit study faiths of the Iyus steppes.

Thus it is not absolutely clear what tradition the scepter under the arm of this or that character concerns. The following discovery corrects an essence of this question - a monument known as "Four figures" in Barstag (on the left bank of the White Iyus) (Fig. 2). The two or three-layer image represents an archer in pursuit of a deer (of the Tashtyk period) on the bottom layer and four figures in a procession from left to right on the top layer. The person going first is in the full dress of the minister of a cult, in a crown and magnificent bow-shaped headband or braided plait hanging down near a nape; in the area of the armpits is a biconi-

⁷ S. N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in Central Asia and China*, Naghammadi and Manichaeism Studies, Leiden, Boston MA and Cologne 1998, 55.

⁸ H. J. Klimkeit, "Selected Studies," in M. Heuser and H. J. Klimkeit *Studies in Manichaeism Literature and Art*. Leiden, Boston MA and Cologne 1998, 237; B. A. Litvinsky, "Buddhism and medieval civilization," in *Indian culture and Buddhism. Collection of works in memory of F. I. Shcherbatsky*. Moscow 1972, 150.

⁹ H. J. Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road: Gnostic Parables, Hymns and Prayers from Central Asia*. San Francisco 1993, 286.

cal staff; the hands are not seen; around the belt there is an ornament in the form of round suspension brackets on braided threads, at the bottom of the costume, like a dragging tail, is a train. The second figure wears long clothes, is of smaller stature, an adolescent, with a feather in his hair. The third figure is an aged man, in full vestments, but without a staff. The fourth figure finishing the procession is in long attire. Judging by the images in profile and other details of their appearance, the anthropological type of the characters is Aryan, except the fourth, who clearly has the head and figure of a representative of the Turkic type of the surrounding ethnic groups of the uplands of Central Asia. A characteristic detail of the three adult characters is a diadem in the form of a double circle under a crown in the area of the forehead.

Judging by examples of the religious convergence of the two faiths of Buddhism and Manichaeism, the object under the arm of the priest-figure (in the opinion of the author) is a double-ended *vajra*. Others, judging by the similarity of the characters in Oshkol painting, presented above, hypothetically may be related to what we know as round-shaped Buddhist scepters like a sphere, or a disk, or the *vajra* made from human skulls.

So, polytypic wands in the armpits of Yenisei personages “*vajra* wearers” characterize chronologically different periods of small outlandish groups’ coming to Yenisei.

According to the information we possess about the religious rapprochement between the two religions of Buddhism and Manichaeism, the object under the arm of the priest (in the author’s opinion) should be defined as a two-ended *vajra*.

In relation to all four figures, the type of costume of the strangers, in particular, long mantles with trains stretching back, indirectly relates to Chinese culture. Excessively long attire was a fashion at court in the Soui dynasty (sixth-seventh centuries AD),¹⁰ but there are no grounds to relate the attire of the strangers to Chinese fashion alone. “Long clothes” (*uzun ton*) are the long cassocks of Chighil Manichaeists.¹¹ The long clothes are noticed in an Ephthalite cultural milieu that is known from the story of the Buddhist pilgrim Si-yu-chi (sixth century). He speaks about magnificent female dresses made from expensive fabrics with trains as long as 3 feet and more.¹² In the ninth-century descriptions of Gardīzī there are some details related to the “wide clothes” of inhabitants of the Uygur state with long hollow.¹³

¹⁰ L. P. Sychev, Traditional embodiment of the Yin-Yan principle in Chinese ritual attire, *The role of traditions in the history and culture of China*. Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Moscow 1972, 144–150; S. V. Pankova, Interpretation of mysterious figures from Khakassia, in *History and culture. The east of Asia*. vol. 2. The Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Science. Novosibirsk 2002, 135–140.

¹¹ Y. A. Zuev, *Early Turks: history and ideology sketches*. Almaty 2002, 220–222.

¹² S. Beal. *Si-yu-chi. Buddhist Records of the Western World*. London 1906, vol. 1, pp. xc–xci.

¹³ V. V. Bartold, *Report about a trip to Central Asia with a scientific purpose 1893–1894*. Saint Petersburg 1897, 116. A. P. Martinez, Gardīzī’s two chapters on the Turks: *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982), 136.

The ascetic ideal appearance of the Manichaeic-preacher Syrian-Christian, Persian-Haraanskan pagan traditions and the Buddhist „law tutor“ could be translated in the renewed guise of a missionary at the crossroads of the Silk Road between West, East and India. Language formulas like “Mani-Buddha”; “My Father-Mani-Buddha”, “Buddha Maytreya, Mani Mar the Apostle: he has brought ... salvation ... from just God, the Father of Light”¹⁴ assist in understanding the issues of confessional coordination (albeit temporary) of two doctrines expressed in “sacred language”, and the priestly clothes of Heavenly warriors. The clothes of the Buddha in his “former appearance” as “alive” symbol of the cosmogonic phenomenon between light and darkness, according to Chinese chronicles, were a subject of diplomatic gifts.¹⁵ An important source is an annal from the Chinese chronicles (fifth century AD): “at the end of the reign of the sovereign Vyn-Tschen [453–465] the Kashgar master in year of 465 sent [to the Court] with his envoy the chasuble *Shagya-Moni* which was about 20 feet long.”¹⁶

From all said above, the chasuble of *Shagya-Moni* actually represents a materialized relic, the universal form not only for a set of diplomatic gifts, but also the imitation of battle and full dress “armour in metaphorical quality of eschatological experiences” – a religious symbol of Manichaeic sectarianism of the second or the third wave on the missionary ways from west to east, and south to north.

Among the four figures in the procession, the second, the adolescent (*Shramanera* – buddh.) has a feather on his head, indicating a condition of elevated spirituality. In all the religions of the East the image of the boy, “the Soul yearning for salvation”, is endowed with the ability to speak with the higher deities, possessing the gift of prediction as he “has received wisdom from the Buddha”.¹⁷ The attribute of a feather on the head, the symbol of the heavenly charisma of the elite, occurred in the central Asian cultural tradition from antiquity until the late Middle Ages.¹⁸ Honorable ceremonial feathers were an emblem of the skilled marksman within the Asian nomadic world of the Kök-Turkic people (sixth–eighth centuries) and the ancient Uygur state (ninth–tenth centuries).¹⁹

Let us note what the Coptic Manichaeic book the “Psalms of Thomas” tells us about tiaras: “the Boat [a crown – NR] has received a palm branch ... he has decorated it and elevated the Host to the Great.” “The palm branch” going down arc-

¹⁴ Klimkeit, “Selected Studies,” 243.

¹⁵ V. V. Bartold, *Works*, Vol. VIII. Moscow 1973, 54–55; A. G. Malyavkin, *The Uygur state in the IX–XII centuries*. Novosibirsk 1983, 238.

¹⁶ N. J. Bichurin (Hyacinph). *Collection of data on the people living in Central Asia in ancient times*. Vols 1 and 2. Moscow and Leningrad 1950, 258.

¹⁷ Klimkeit, “Selected Studies,” 261, 296; J. Tucci, *Religions of Tibet*. Translated from Italian by O. V. Alberil. Saint Petersburg, 2005, 295.

¹⁸ Men-gu-yu-mu-tszu. *Notes about Mongolian nomads camps translated from Chinese*. Edited by P.S. Popova. 1895, 413; A. I. Levshin, *Description of the Kirghiz-Cossack hordes and steppes*. *Ethnographic News*. Part II. Saint Petersburg 1832, 16.

¹⁹ Esin Emel and Beduk Bork. *The iconography of Turkish honorific headgears*. *Proceedings of the IXth Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference*. Naples 1970, 19, 112–114.

like from under the tiara to a nape, has indirect attitude to a circle of symbols of Mandeaeen-Nasorean (gnostic) religiosity.²⁰ According to another version we understand arcual attribute, which decorates the head, as a twisted braid coming down from the tiara. Such braids were met in the early Tibetan tradition of Buddhist school of Nyingma and Gelug. The wearing of mantles and wreaths is the immutable act of the formalized demonstration of the Manichaeen behavioral code.

As noticed above, each figure has a round emblem on his forehead. All attempts of researchers in domestic and foreign historiography to relate the phenomenon of the Yenisei "mysterious figures" to the missionary activity of Nestorians or even pagan shamanists, on the evidence now available, have no grounds. The Nestorians, for known reasons, would not put a pagan sign on their foreheads.

They bore crosses as a sign of finding the Christian "tree of the Cross".²¹ An equipotential cross is a symbol of the Nestorian Church.²² Besides, Nestorian priests wore two-layered clothes: a red-and-white short coat over a long green alb, *eibu*.²³

Round of the Ancient East: the Eye of God, the Word (*Logos*). (In the indirect motives circle of the formally identical emblems there is a known graphical archetypical symbol "a point in a circle" of the Neolithic and Bronze Age that spread almost over the whole south of Eurasia). In the religious-mystical doctrines of Late Antiquity, "the third spiritual eye" [in Buddhism - monosyllabus, the Ohm,²⁴ the Seed of the Buddha,²⁵ a space sign on the Buddha,²⁶ in Manichaeism - the Eye of Zurvan-Mani-Buddha, in Jesus Christ's message - Light (Parthian text, M. 42); in Turkic religiousness as a variant - charisma of good luck -

²⁰ E. S. Drover, *Hidden Adam. Mandeaeans. History, literature, religion*. Compiled by N. K. Gerasimov. Saint Petersburg 2002, 262.

²¹ D. Hvolson, "Preliminary notes about discoveries in the Semirechye region of Syrian gravestone inscriptions," in *Christian monuments in the Semirechye region in print from ZVOIRAO*, Vol. 1. Saint Petersburg 1886, 34; H.B. Pigulevsky, *Byzantium and Iran on a boundary of VI and VII centuries*. Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Moscow and Leningrad 1946, 104-105; S.D. Dzhumagulov *Epigraphs of Kirghizia. 3rd Century*. Frunze 1987, 38-39.

²² Lieu, *Manichaeism in Central Asia and China*, 179.

²³ Zs. Gulaczi, *Mediaeval Manichaeen book art: a codicological study of Iranian and Turkic illuminated book fragments from 8th to 11th-century east Central Asia*. Nag Hammadi and Manichaeen studies, Leiden and Boston MA 2005, 24.

²⁴ G. Rene, *Symbolism kreyja*. Transl. from the French by T. M. Fadeeva and U. N. Stefanov. Moscow 2004, 264, 300.

²⁵ V. Chohan. *The selected works*, edited by A. N. Margulan. Alma-Ata 1958, 400.

²⁶ Esin Emel and Beduk Bork. The iconography of Turkish honorific headgears. *Proceedings of the IXth Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference*. Naples 1970, 19.

*Qut*²⁷ met the requirements of transcendental knowledge on a self-knowledge and self-improvement way. Additional examples from Manichaeic literatures: "... and we will strengthen our hand in a prayer and open our eye to your [Jesus - NR] figure",²⁸ or "... we will follow the Savior, our upper eye, and our ear with which we hear" (a hymn fragment - we would infer). Numerous examples of the propagation of the solar-lunar sign on the foreheads (*tiaras*) of bearers are characteristic of small plastic figures of Greek-Bactrian Kushan and Ancient Sogdian culture.²⁹ The sign is noted in cult scenes of Pendzhikent painting and round sculpture,³⁰ in the astrological pantheon of symbols of Central Asia,³¹ in the iconography of monuments of Khotan in the form of gold disks on a hat of the Kirghiz prince.³² In paintings of the "Maya cave" in Kyzyl, the solar-lunar sign crowns the heads of deities.³³

The formal similarity of a sign in a cultural-historical context and advancement in time does not mean the identification of its variants always follows. However there are no grounds to question this archetype symbol, preserving its magic semantics, apprehended by Manichaeists and put on their tiaras - it is mentioned in Turfan Manichaeic literature as the "Domination Diadem."³⁴

The sign of the Domination Diadem (the Eye of Zurvan-Mani-Buddha, "cognition symbol"³⁵) was the peculiar form of pass recognized without explanations, in a place and time on all the ways of propagation of Manichaeic sermons within the territories of Middle and Central Asia. The sign, "a circle in a circle", is in the general set of solar-lunar visual sign sources of the Iyus interfluves.³⁶

²⁷ T. D. Skrynnikova, Mongols' ideas about the ruler sacral position. *Turkic and Mongolian written monuments*. Russian Academy of Sciences. Oriental Studies Institute. Moscow 1992, 80.

²⁸ Parthian text M.2811: J. P. Asmussen, *Manichaeic Literature. Representative Texts Chiefly from Middle Persian and Parthian Writings*. Persian Heritage Series, No. 22. Scholars' Facsimiles, Reprints. Delmar, New York 1975, 107.

²⁹ V. A. Meshkeris, *The Sogdian terracotta*. Edited by T. V. Antonov. Dushanbe 1989, 25; B. Y. Stavisky, *Buddhism Fates in Central Asia*. Moscow 1998, 146.

³⁰ A. M. Belenitsky, *Monumental art of Pendzhikent. Painting. Sculpture*. Moscow 1973, 19.

³¹ S. M. Kochetova, Deities of stars in painting [at] Hara-Hoto, *Works of the Dept. of History of Culture and Eastern Arts*. The State Hermitage. Vol. IV. Leningrad 1947, 476.

³² Le Cog, *Bilderatlas zum Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Mittelasiens*. Berlin 1925, fig. 69.

³³ M. M. Dyakonov, Pendzhikent and Central Asia paintings, *Painting of Ancient Pendzhikent*. Moscow 1954, 152, fig. 25.

³⁴ Klimkeit, "Selected Studies," 230.

³⁵ N. I. Rybakov. "Eye of Zurvana-Mani-Buddha. Following the discoveries of the expedition of I. Aspelin (1887-89)." *Study of a historical and cultural heritage of the people of Southern Siberia*. Gorno-Altai: Akin, 2007, Vol. 5, 121-134.

³⁶ See N. I. Rybakov, "Sun-moon in Iyus steppes petroglyphs," *World outlook of the population of Southern Siberia and the Central Asia in the historical retrospective*. Barnaul 2008, Vol. II, 60-82; N. I. Rybakov, Procession - a monument of Sogdian-Yenisei cultural-historical interrelations. *World outlook of the population of Southern Siberia and the Central Asia in historical retrospective*, Scientific Works Collection, Barnaul 2009, Issue III, 135-159.

Let's touch upon some special symbolic elements convincingly confirm remained evidences of the orthodox Manichaean church (Fig. 3). The figure on the left (Barstag) is the minister of a cult, the *vajra* bearer, on a fragment of monument interpreted above; the figure on the right is the righteous person (Podkamen - a fragment, materials - NR) in the full vestments of ceremonial attire. Notice that the character does not belong to the group of *vajra* bearers, but his dress is not separable from that of similar image of representatives of a cult in the iconography of monuments of East Turkestan. His vestments include a tiara with a solar-lunar emblem, falling bands, long mantle and other details. Over the mantle the hands are placed on the breast (palms inside), a visual example of the iconography which meets the requirements of the special Manichaean canon: one of three seals - "the seal of hands", an interdiction for the destruction of the bestial world and lust. These two characters, by their external signs alone, do not ascertain the fact of belonging to one and the same Manichaean consortium, but the graphic surroundings in which they are placed reflect a specific uniform factor of Manichaean doctrine: one can observe at the feet of the minister of a cult with the *vajra* the iridescent movement gradually discharging from below upwards, from the earth's surface. At the same time the mantle of righteous man (Podkamen) is shaded from the figure's middle downwards, thickening to the earth's surface.

My preliminary conclusions are the following: Matter, all the substance of the bestial world, continuously combats the forces of light, but the main object of its struggle is the human whose will it tries to paralyze. The light remains imprisoned in the bestial world, going upwards also are definitively cleared of the material. The eschatological destiny of the World Soul depends on the missionary activity of the Elect, who saves both his own soul and Light, contained in it and in the World Soul. The specific iconography of the iridescent movement of light from below upwards meets these requirements of Manichaean doctrine. In the second case the shaded part of a mantle of the righteous man characterizes a specificity of Manichaean dualism (light/darkness) - iconographic corroboration of how the aggressive part of the world, Matter, reflects the following single factor of Manichean dualism: the opposition of heaven *topographia sacra* substrate of the lower world-Darkness (dark matter). This shadowed part of the world is expressed in the language of graphic metaphors: at the feet of a cult follower with a *vajra* (Barstag) from the surface of the earth there are a number of arcs of rising light, gradually more sparse towards the top as it discharges gradually upwards. The robe of the righteous person (Podkamen) is shaded from the middle of the figure downwards, thickening as it gets closer to the ground. In either case, first the aggressiveness of the darkness of the world must be emphasized. The same "negative" iconography is shown in one of the figures in Aspelin's kogo cycle (Fig. 1, 2).

It follows from all the above that the figures in long mantles are Manichaeists of the second or the third wave costumed in hybrid suit, but we do not know what Buddhistic-manichaean sect or sects came to Iuys.

The primary iconographic material we have is represented by the unique sample of stone-graphic art from the milieu of Yenisei petroglyphs. The motif

repertoire, the composite qualities, the stressed hierarchy in a procession of figures, a set of graphic attributes and symbols of "divine participation" are, to certain degree, the cultural-historical import of an alien religious tradition. Involvement and compatibility with Central Asian shamanism, astrology, and magic is a form of the plurality of Manichean syncretism.

As the historical necessity and the convergence of ideologies preaching missionary attire has transformed a few symbolic models of religious dress were formed. Set decorations in the dress of *vajra* bearers and other regulatory and scenic elements in the motifs of the processing figures show combined pagan, Buddhist and Judeo-Christian religious components. It seems to us that the ceremonial vestments of the *vajra* bearers meet the metaphorical qualities of eschatological experiences of preaching ideology, especially Buddhism and Manichaeism. As for Buddhism, the formal elements of the costumed characters ascertain the form of northern *Tokhars-Khotanese* Buddhism developed into Tengriism and shamanism.

The appearance of newcomers dressed in the homiletic clothes of *vajra* bearers with elements of the mixed maintenance characterizes their regional or sectarian difference. The iconographic aspect of polytypic tiaras and elements of an ethnic impurity can speak about a temporarily restored religious community of surrogate image, as the socio-historical factor of compulsory persecutions. (Yenisei-stone-graphic Art does not confirm the coming of Manichaeian people in "pure type").

In this connection the cultural-historical surroundings of the northern Mongolian steppes, as a prospective missionary route to a terminal point on Yenisei, is of importance.

However, *Iyusskaya* (*Yeniseyskaya*) iconography finds only indirect remains in the corpus of the known *turfansko-turkestan* art, which as a whole is a unique sample of Kirghiz-Manichaeian-Buddhistic petrographic art. To our knowledge, to date, no visual examples comparable to the Yenisei monuments have been found, which is a problem for interpretation.

From historical sources, we know that Nestorians and Manichaeists were expelled from China by the imperial decree of 845.³⁷ Additionally, 83 years earlier (761/2) Manichaeian preachers reached the limits of the Uygur state at Bögü-Kagan (759-779) where Manichaeism became the state religion.³⁸ One of the versions of the Manichaeian sermons on Yenisei beginning is that it was the consequence of the Kirghiz expansion of 840 in the Mongolian steppes, i.e., a compulsory drive of preachers to Iyus as prisoners of war. One should not disregard the fact that the first arrival of Manichaeian preachers at Yenisei could be related to a military campaign of the Uygur ruler Eletmish Bilge-Kagan (747-759) seventy years earlier, in 759, as result of which the ancient Khakass ruler had to recognize

³⁷ N. A. Aristov, *Notes about ethnic structure of Turkic tribes and nationalities and data about their number*, Zhivaya Starina, Volumes III-IV, 1896, Saint Petersburg 1897, 91.

³⁸ H. J. Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road: Gnostic Parables, Hymns and Prayers from Central Asia*, San Francisco 1993, 271.

vassalic dependence and to accept a special title belittling its dignity: Bilge (Tun)-Irkin.

The next historical milestone in Manichaean contacts with the Kirghiz, more precisely, their flight to the north, presumably after a possible coup in anti-Manichaean Ordubalik in 779. The next historical mark of the supposed advancement of Manichaeists to the Yenisei steppes, more exactly - their flight, is possibly after the anti-Manichaean revolution in Ordubalyk when the Manichaean faith was forbidden, and was restored only 16 years later in 795.

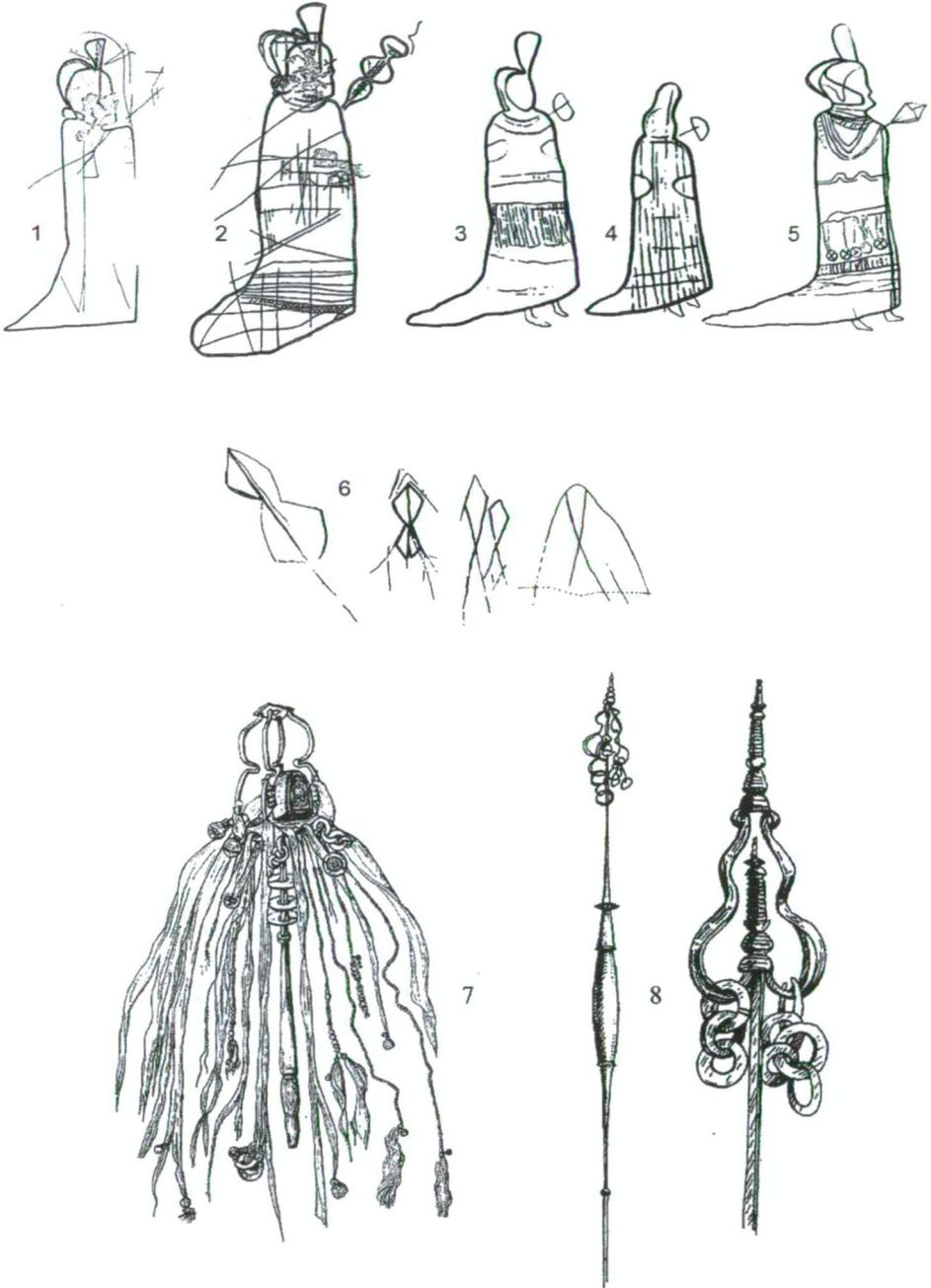


FIGURE 1. *Vajra* bearers. An iconography of the Iyus steppes
 1 and 2 Figures (Podkamen) on: Appelgren Kivalo N. 1931
 3-5 Figures of Oshkol painting (reconstruction - N. I. Rybakov)
 6 Thunderers' arrows, Iyus interfluves (materials - N. I. Rybakov)
 7 and 8 Staffs. Tantric Buddhism. Tibet (N. L. Zhucovskaya)



FIGURE 2. Four figures (Barstag). Left bank of the White Iyus (materials - N. R.)

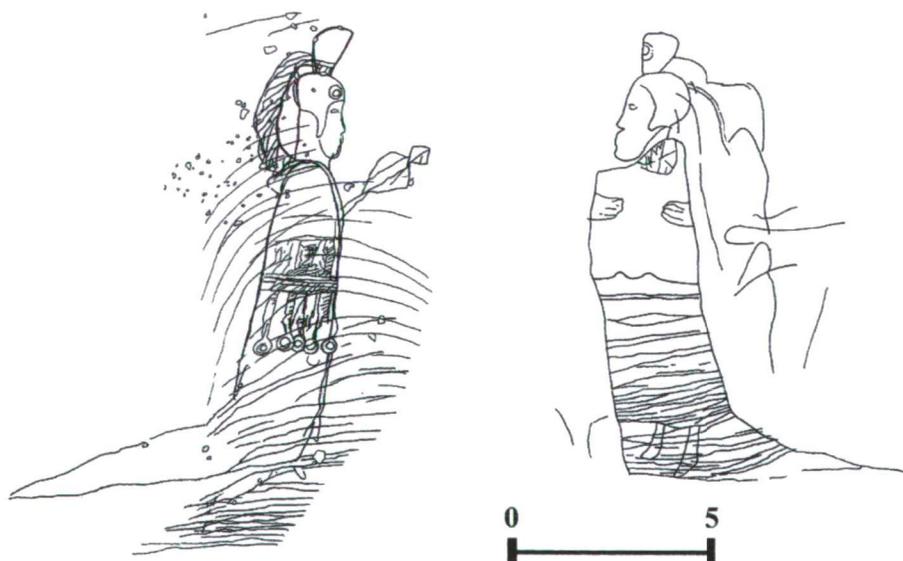


FIGURE 3. The minister of a cult, the *vajra* bearer (Barstag).
The righteous person (Podkamen, fragment, materials - N. I. Rybakov)