

## THE DATES OF MANI'S LIFE

by S. H. TAQIZADEH

*Translated from the Persian, introduced, and concluded*

by W. B. HENNING

In the first appendix to G. Haloun's translation of the Chinese Manichaean document a new set of dates was proposed for the principal events of Mani's life (*Asia Major*, iii, 1952, 196-204). It so happened that S. H. Taqizadeh, universally regarded as the leading authority in all matters of Oriental chronology, was then about to publish a book on Mani written in Persian; when he had taken cognizance of our article, he added to it a *Takmilah* (or "finishing touch"), in which he gave an account of the Chinese document and discussed the new dates. In 1953, His Excellency Mr Taqizadeh kindly sent me page proofs of this *Takmilah*. It seemed to me a great pity that so important a contribution was likely to remain inaccessible to almost all the numerous scholars who take an interest in the history of Manichaeism; for very few of them are sufficiently familiar with the Persian language to be able to follow such intricate argument as is here presented. Accordingly I prepared a draft translation and submitted it to Mr Taqizadeh when he visited this country in 1954, on the occasion of the Congress of Orientalists held at Cambridge. After some amendments had been made and a few slight improvements of the contents had been introduced, Mr Taqizadeh very kindly approved my English version, which is here published with his permission.<sup>1</sup>

## TAKMILAH

[i] . . . Professor Henning's part of this article contains some very important and useful points concerning Mani and his creed; among other matters, he has put forward a new theory of the date of Mani's death, which disagrees with what I have said about it in the present compendium and in some of my earlier articles which were published in English.

About the date of Mani's death a number of different theories has

<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile the Persian text has been issued: *Māni va dān-i ū (Našriyye-yi Anjuman-i Irānfināsi)*, Tehran 1335 (1956). The *Takmilah*, separately paginated with *abjad*-numbers, is inserted after page 70; reference is here made to its pages by Roman numerals in square brackets.

been placed on record within the last twenty years. At first, on the strength of passages in Parthian Manichaean fragments<sup>1</sup> which gave *Monday the fourth of Šahrivar* as the day of Mani's death, H. H. Schaeder and I myself proposed February 14, 276; for in the years 273-7, which could be presumed to have been the regnal years of Bahrām I, the fourth of Šahrivar fell on a Monday only in 276. Later, when the Coptic Manichaean Psalm-book turned out to have mentioned the date as Monday, too, but *Monday the fourth of Barmhat* (which date corresponds, in 276, with February 29, a Tuesday), the whole question became subject to doubt. Finally, the opinion (which I was the first to advance) gained ground that *Monday the fourth*, the common factor, was the true date; that, however, neither the Persian nor the Coptic month formed originally part of the date, but instead the Babylonian month *Addaru*, for which the translators had substituted approximately corresponding month-names from their own calendars. [ii] Since in the years 275-7, which may be considered the final years of Bahrām I, it was only in 277 that the fourth of Addaru was a Monday, I attributed the death of Mani to that year and adduced some additional arguments, which appeared to support that attribution.

Now, however, Professor Henning, relying on a Turkish Manichaean colophon in which the year 522 after the death of Mani is counted as a "pig-year",<sup>2</sup> has become persuaded that the year of the death was 274 and the day Monday, March 2 (corresponding with the fourth of the Babylonian Addaru); the aforesaid scholar supports this view chiefly by stressing that all other conclusions are built on conjectures, inferences, and calculations, while this opinion is grounded on an ancient written document, which is the only source in this matter.

No one acknowledges Henning's learning and high rank as a scholar more than I do; he was also my teacher in Pahlavi; nevertheless, I cannot refrain from expressing doubt about this theory, for the following reasons.

The wording in the *Kitāb alFihrist*, on which Henning relies, does not clearly convey that the date on which Mani received his second revelation and the command to propagate his religion coincided with the day of Shapur's official accession and coronation, on which he received Mani in audience. We may rather assume that Mani announced his prophethood and occupied himself for two or three years with conversions and missionary work and with his journeys to the East and the South, up to Khorasan, Sind, and so on; that, having heard the news of Ardashir's death and Shapur's accession during his stay in Sind, he returned to Ctesiphon and gained access to Shapur with the help of the king's brother, Pērōz; that on the day of the coronation, which took place on the first day of the Babylonian

<sup>1</sup> Andreas-Henning, *Mitteliranische Manichaica*, iii (1934), p. 861.

<sup>2</sup> v. LeCoq, *Türkische Manichaica*, i, 12.

year as was customary, he was admitted to the presence of the king and had the courage to proclaim his religion openly and formally; and that that day was the first of Nisannu in the Christian year 243. This hypothesis is supported by several arguments:

Firstly, relying on Ibn anNadīm and Beruni, we should calculate the years of Mani's birth and of his first and second revelations in the following fashion. His birth took place within A.D. 216, with great probability on April 14 (= 8th of Nisannu of the Seleucid lunar year 527). [iii] Therefore he entered upon his thirteenth year, *i.e.*, completed his twelfth year, on April 14, 228 (if the years of his life are counted in Julian years) or on April 1, 228 (if one counts them, as he himself would have done, in lunar Babylonian years).

The first revelation came to Mani [within the Seleucid Babylonian year 539 = March 25, 228—April 12, 229, and] within his thirteenth year, therefore after April 1, 228, and before April 12, 229 (= Nisannu 8, 539—Nisannu 1, 540 lunar Sel.). Since, however, he received the revelation, according to his own statement in the Shābūrāgān as quoted by Beruni, *after the passing of two years* of Ardashir's reign (or *within its second year*), its arrival can be narrowed down: it came *either* after September 26, 228, when two years had passed since September 26, 226, the beginning of Ardashir's reign in official reckoning (Mani's age would by then have been twelve years and five and a half months approximately); or between September 26, 227, and September 25, 228, *i.e.*, within the second year of Ardashir's rule; at all events, after April 14 (or April 1), 228, the day of Mani's twelfth birthday. One may not count the two years from Ardashir's actual accession (his coronation), which apparently took place in April, 227; for then the two-year period would have ended only by April, 229, when Mani had already completed his thirteenth year, whereas Beruni's phrase "son (boy) of thirteen years" definitely means, not that he had completed his thirteenth year, but that he was in his thirteenth year. At any rate, considering that Ibn anNadīm says "when twelve years had become complete for him" and Beruni "when he was a son (boy) of thirteen years" = "when he was in his thirteenth year", it is necessary to place the "coming of the revelation" after March 25, 228 (= the first day of the Seleucid year) or rather even after April 1 (= Nisannu 8), and probably between that date and, say, October or November of the same year, so that it would fall within Mani's thirteenth year but not too close to its end, and within Ardashir's third official year but not too far removed from its beginning.

Secondly, the second revelation, and with it the call to missionary work, came to Mani after he had completed twenty-four years of his life; they were completed on April 14, 240 (in Julian years) or April 19, 240 (in Babylonian years). It is overwhelmingly probable [iv] that at that date Ardashir was still on the throne. He exercised royal power, according to the

most reliable sources, for fourteen years and ten months (for fourteen years and six months according to a weaker tradition); for the final term of this period, when Ardashir either abdicated or died, the following four possibilities are given:

(a) If it is counted from September 27, 223, the beginning of the Persian year during which Ardashir killed Ardavan, it comes to an end on July 26, 238 (or March 26, 238) or, if the Persian calendar is followed, on July 24 (or March 26), 238.

(b) If it is counted from the death of Ardavan (April 28, 224), it comes to an end on February 27, 239 (or October 27, 238) or, if the Persian calendar is followed, on February 18, 239 (or October 21, 238). At none of the dates gained by the above calculations (a and b) had Mani yet completed his twenty-fourth year.

(c) If it is counted from the "official" beginning, *viz.*, the first day of the first Persian year of Ardashir's reign as "King of Kings" (as Beruni, quoting the Shābūrāgān, explicitly calls it), namely, September 26, 226, it comes to an end on July 25, 241 (or March 25, 241) or, if the Persian calendar is followed, on July 23 (or March 25), 241.

(d) If it is counted from Ardashir's actual coronation (very probably on April 6, 227), it comes to an end on February 5, 242 (or October 5, 241) or, if the Persian calendar is followed, on January 26, 242 (or September 28, 241). At any of the dates found under (c) and (d), Mani was already twenty-five years old (or near that age).

Thus, the date of Shapur's accession (or the end of Ardashir's rule), calculated in any of these four ways (a-d), is not in agreement with the date assumed by Henning, April 12, 240.<sup>1</sup> In fact, we should gain the following values:

## SHAPUR

	True accession	"Official" beginning of 1st year
a	July 26, 238	September 23, 237
b	February 27, 239	September 23, 238
c	July 25, 241	September 22, 240
d	February 5, 242	September 22, 241

[v] All these are based on the assumption that Ardashir's reign lasted fourteen years and ten months; if it lasted fourteen years and six months,

<sup>1</sup> [On that day, however, I placed Shapur's coronation, not his accession, which I did not discuss or mention. W.B.H.]

the dates in the first column would have to be advanced by four months (if the Persian calendar was followed, they would be earlier by merely three days or so).

Although in the *Kitāb alFihrist* the report of Mani's "coming out" on the day of Shapur's coronation follows immediately without break upon the sentence about the second revelation and the descent of the angel that commanded him "to come out" on the occasion of his completing his twenty-fourth year, this collocation does not necessarily indicate that his "coming out" and the inception of his missionary work on his reaching the age of twenty-four took place on the day of coronation. For, firstly, according to the very same sentence, Mani, on the first day that he was received in audience by Shapur, was accompanied by two of his disciples,<sup>1</sup> which presupposes that he had begun his mission before and had acquired followers. Further, Ibn anNadīm, quoting Manichaean sources, states<sup>2</sup> that before his meeting with Shapur Mani had travelled about in various countries;<sup>3</sup> that he had converted Shapur's brother Pērōz to his creed, evidently in the course of his journeys, perhaps in Khorasan und Kūshān where he was governor; and that Pērōz "caused him to come to Shapur". On the heels of that report,<sup>4</sup> under the heading "the Manichaeans say"—the very heading that had introduced also the report of Mani's "coming out" on the day of Shapur's coronation (plainly both are derived from one and the same ancient Manichaean source)—there follows once more a story of Mani's going to Shapur and presenting several requests, all of which the king accepted. Then it goes on "Mani *had* called Hind and Šin and the people of Khorasan to his religion and *had* appointed one of his companions as his representative in each region" (*wa-kūna Māni da'a' IHinda wašŠina wa-ahla Xurāsāna wa-ḡallafa* [vi] *fī kulli nāhiyatīn šāhiban lahu*). Therefore, his first meeting with Shapur (clearly on his coronation day) lay a little later than his first announcement of his prophetship, his first appeal to others (possibly in private), his first successful conversions at home and in various other provinces, and his journeys.

Furthermore, as results from a Kephalaia passage laid in Mani's mouth, he set out on his journey to the South and the East (Sind and Khorasan) still in the time of Ardashir's kingship (perhaps in A.D. 240), made up his mind to come back when he heard of Ardashir's death (perhaps in 242) and Shapur's assumption of the royal power, returned along a route detailed in the Coptic work, by way of the Persian gulf to Persis, Mesene,

<sup>1</sup> *K. alFihrist*, p. 328, line 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 328, lines 26-7.

<sup>3</sup> Although the duration of this travelling is determined as forty years in the printed text, there is no doubt that a mistake has crept in and that the number was originally perhaps two or four years (or forty months).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 328, lines 27-31.

Khuzistan, and Ctesiphon, and only then, after reaching the Sassanian capital, was received by Shapur, on his coronation day. If Ardashir's death occurred after Nisannu 1 of the Seleucid lunar year 553 (April 20, 242), one may assume that Shapur's coronation had to be postponed to the first day of the next Babylonian year and thus fell on Nisannu 1, 554 = April 9, 243, the eve of the feast of *Mihragān*, when the sun was in its "exaltation" (Aries 19°).

In the *Kitāb alFihrist*, the ingredients of the whole story are given in various places on one and the same page, but not consecutively, in fragments torn from each other. Henning himself speaks of a report which, as he says, "certainly emanated from Manichaean circles, probably from Mani himself", and which implies that Mani had delayed and waited for about three years before announcing his prophetship publicly and beginning to fulfil the divine command.<sup>1</sup> This report, which Henning regards as incredible, seems on the contrary very sound and trustworthy. In the history of Islam, too, there are indications that its prophet, between his first revelation and very restricted appeal on the one hand and the public announcement of his prophetship and the appeal to the people in general on the other, spent about three years delaying, reflecting, and converting his friends and relations.

Beruni says<sup>2</sup> "Mani's affairs were uninterruptedly on the increase in the days of *Ardashir* and his son Shapur . . .". This sentence, unless there exist proof [vii] of its unsoundness, is in itself clear proof of our contention that Ardashir was still on the throne when Mani was twenty-four years old (i.e., after April 19, 240), probably even until his twenty-fifth birthday (April 7, 241), hence during the first year of Mani's missionary activities. Thus, firstly, the claim that the announcement of his prophetship after his twenty-fourth birthday (or in the course of his twenty-fifth year) coincided with Shapur's coronation becomes baseless; and, secondly, the sentence proves that Ardashir still held the reins on April 19, 240, at the very least. Henning, however, places Shapur's coronation on the first day of the Babylonian calendar in that very year, viz., April 12, 240, on a day, therefore, on which Mani had not yet completed his twenty-fourth year, whether we count in Babylonian or in Julian years; indeed, he himself points out that that date preceded the birthday by seven days in the former calendar, by two days in the latter. Actually, to interpret the report that Mani was entrusted with the prophetship after his completing twenty-four years as meaning that he was so entrusted *on the first day* of the calendar year in the course of which he became twenty-four years old, and not at some point in that year, is improbable. If, however, the phrase used in the *Kitāb alFihrist*

<sup>1</sup> *Asia Major*, iii, 201 n. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Āthār alBāqiyah*, p. 208.

about the second revelation, "when twenty-four years became complete for him", is taken to refer to the first day of the calendar year in the course of which he became twenty-four years old, then it follows necessarily that the equivalent phrase used of the first revelation, "when twelve years became complete for him", is to be referred to the first day of the Seleucid lunar year 539, *viz.*, April 9, 228 (or Nisannu 8 of that year = April 16, 228); whereas that date is unlikely (though not impossible) on other grounds, among them Beruni's statement that Mani was then "a son of thirteen years" and Mani's own words that "two years had passed from (the beginning of) Ardashir's reign".

It is likely, in a high degree, that in the Seleucid year 551 (April 12, 240—March 31, 241), which is, with a few days' difference, Mani's twenty-fifth year (the period when, in common parlance, he was "twenty-four years old"), Shapur had not yet succeeded Ardashir on the throne. [viii] The "official" beginning of Shapur's first year (in accord with the customary Sassanian system of chronology), which for some time and especially ever since Nöldeke has been accepted as falling on September 22, 241 (and which according to that system certainly opened the year, ending on September 21, 242, in the course of which Ardashir died or abdicated and was followed by Shapur), lay some time after the moment when Mani became twenty-four years old (at the least six months); and Shapur's coronation lay again some time (one year, six months, and nineteen or eighteen days) after this "official" beginning. Elias of Nisibis, too, counts the Seleucid Macedonian year<sup>1</sup> 553,<sup>2</sup> beginning on October 1, 241, as the first year of Shapur's reign. If now the duration of Ardashir's reign is calculated, as Nöldeke, probably rightly, assumed, by the method given above p. 109 under (d), *viz.*, from Nisannu 1, Seleucid Babylonian 538 = April 6, 227, to February 5 (or January 26), 242, the possibility arises that the latter date is that of Ardashir's abdication, not of his death: because his father was still alive, Shapur may have postponed his coronation (which in the normal way would have been due on Nisannu 1, 553 = April 20, 242, only two and a half months after his father's abdication) to the next following year, *viz.*, Nisannu 1, 554 = April 9, 243. Or else, if the date (early February, 242) is really that of Ardashir's death, Shapur may have been compelled to postpone his coronation by a full year because, in the spring of 242, he was busy with the war against Gordian and away from his capital. It is true that reliable investigations have shown [ix] that Gordian with his own army, under the command of Timesitheus (who in any case died before October, 243), did not until the first half of 243 occupy himself with conquests in Asia, taking Carrhae, gaining a victory near Resaina on the high road from

<sup>1</sup> = "year of Alexander" or "year of the Greeks".

<sup>2</sup> In Nöldeke's work misprinted 533 [Nöldeke, *Tabari*, p. 412; but correctly in the table, p. 435].

Carrhae to Nisibis, conquering Nisibis, and marching forwards to the frontiers of Mesopotamia; and that, moreover, Gordian's offensive in a southerly direction, towards the Euphrates, in the aim of reaching Ctesiphon by the southern route, took place only after the death of Timesitheus. Nevertheless, Gordian's movement towards the Orient had begun in 242; before the end of that year he had reached Asia and his army threatened the frontier regions of Syria and Mesopotamia and the dominion of Persia.

That Shapur succeeded Ardashir either at the end of 241 or in the course of 242 is clear thanks also to a statement by Zosimus,<sup>1</sup> who places that event after Gordian had married Timesitheus' daughter and established his power on a firm basis, therefore, between the autumn of 241 and the summer of 242.<sup>2</sup>

If we place the "official" beginning of Shapur's first year on September 22, 241 (= Farvardin 1) and his coronation on April 9, 243, we obtain perfect corroboration through the various reports, as in Tabari, etc., concerning the length of Shapur's reign, *viz.*, thirty years (or thirty years and fifteen days) and thirty-one years, six months, and nineteen (or eighteen) days; indeed, the very exactness of these figures affords a powerful argument in favour of the assumed dates. For, if Shapur's reign counted from his coronation lasted thirty years, its duration counted from its "official" beginning would have been thirty-one years, six months, and nineteen days precisely; since the interval between the two dates involved (Farvardin 1 of one year to Mihr 14 of the year thereafter, including the five epagomenae at the end of Murdād) is one year, six months, and nineteen days.<sup>3</sup>

[x] Support for our contention that Mani's death occurred in 277 is afforded by the reports that he was sixty years old at death or that he lived for sixty years; such reports are found in various sources, as in a Parthian Manichaean fragment quoted by Henning,<sup>4</sup> in the Chinese document<sup>5</sup> published by Haloun and Henning, and in certain other passages.<sup>6</sup> On March 31, 277 (= Nisannu 8) Mani would have completed his sixty-first (Babylonian) year; if he died, as we assume, on Addaru 4 (= February 26) of the same year, *i.e.*, thirty-three days earlier, his lifetime would have been 60 years and 318 days (counted in solar years: April 14, 216—February 26, 277). It does not seem likely that the figure 60, which everywhere appears plainly enough, can be regarded as due to mis-spelling or interpreted, as Henning assumes, as meaning "58 years of age", even if not strictly (in his calculation Mani would have lived only 57 years and 323 days, even less

<sup>1</sup> i, 17/18.

<sup>2</sup> See *BSOAS.*, xi (1943), 13 n. 1.

<sup>3</sup> See *BSOAS.*, xi (1943), p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> *ZDMG.*, 90, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Asia Major*, iii, p. 191, line 24, and p. 195, line 12.

<sup>6</sup> Referred to by Henning, *ibid.*, 199 n. 5.

than 58 years by 42 days); although Henning treats this important and glaring difference, between the 60 years of the sources and the 58 years (or less) of his conjecture, as a "minor and negligible difficulty".

To come now to the equation, in the Turkish colophon, of the year "522 after Mani's death" with a "pig-year", which Henning regards as the sole and principal authority in the question of Mani's death-date, and which would require attributing the death to the year 274: even if one cannot consider it totally unworthy of attention, it cannot, in my view, have decisive force in the face of the numerous contrary arguments. Firstly, the document is late. It is not at all unlikely that the authors of the Turkish manuscripts made mistakes in identifying non-Turkish years with Turkish ones, especially if they were accustomed to using Sogdian or Persian years and dates (or others, except Chinese ones). An example of this sort of mistake can be seen in a Manichaean Uigur calendar-fragment,<sup>1</sup> where the Yezdegerdi year 358 is described as a "mouse-year", while in fact it was a "cow-year", with its last days in a "tiger-year" (perhaps the year 357 Yezd. had been intended). I referred to this circumstance in my *Notes* to Henning's article on the Sogdian calendar-fragments.<sup>2</sup> In one of the last-named fragments, as I pointed out in the same *Notes*, the Christian year 985 is apparently identified with the year 388 after the death of Šād-Ormīzd (if [xi] the figure 388 is so to be interpreted), whereas it should have been 384 or 385, so that a mistake of as much as three years has crept in; however, that the number refers to Šād-Ormīzd (who died in A.D. 600) is nothing more than a possibility (a conjecture by Henning) and cannot be regarded as certain.

Henning's assumption that the original date of composition of the Chinese Manichaean document, the "Stein Fragment", was 724, earlier by eight years than its known date (731/2), is also merely a conjecture; and although some seemingly plausible arguments have been adduced in its favour, it does not appear entirely confidence-inspiring.

As a result of our discussion of the dates of Ardashir's and Shapur's reigns one may say, with some degree of assurance, that (1) Shapur succeeded his father, on his abdication or death, at the beginning of 242 (probably in the first days of February), (2) he was crowned on Sunday, April 9, 243 (= Nisannu 1, lunar Sel. 554), (3) he died in April, 273 (probably on one of the first days of that month), (4) his son and successor Hormīzd died in April, 274 (probably on April 11, or a little later), (5) Hormīzd was immediately succeeded by his brother Bahrām I, who lived to the middle of 277 (perhaps to the end of July), and (6) Mani was killed on February 26, 277, in the third year of Bahrām's kingship (two years, ten months and a fraction—or nearly eleven months—after his accession).

That, as is hinted and occasionally explicitly stated in the sources, the date of Mani's death is tied to the period of Bahrām's reign at any rate, moreover to a moment removed from its beginning, is an important point in determining it, and for this reason Henning has been compelled to date Bahrām's reign from the middle of 271 to September, 274, so that Mani's death (according to him on March 2, 274) would fall in Bahrām's third year. If, however, in accord with the arguments stated above Shapur's death is assumed for 273, even Bahrām's accession would have been later than the end of Mani, as dated by Henning.

Apart from the conclusions he has drawn from the Chinese document, Henning has leaned on W. Ensslin's opinions<sup>1</sup> [xii] about the dates of Shapur's coronation and his death, which have not remained without influence upon his views. Although Ensslin's work is useful in the parts dealing with Roman history, in matters of Persian chronology he unfortunately followed the baseless and unacceptable opinions put forward by Martin J. Higgins in his article *The Persian War of the Emperor Maurice*; it would go beyond the scope of this *Takmilah* to explain why Higgins' theories of the Persian year and its months in Sassanian times are unfounded.

The observations made above concerning Professor Henning's recent opinions and investigations should not by any means be accepted as decisive proofs against his theory. The confidence I have in his standing as a scholar, the quality of his investigations and observations, and his wide knowledge, do not permit me to claim absolute correctness of my own remarks. It is, I admit, possible that I am wrong; and I do not deny that it is possible that he is right. However, he himself encouraged me to express my opinion, and therefore I took the liberty to present the points made above about his article; otherwise, an amateur's statements in front of a specialist could merely have claimed to be a reminder . . .

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Εἰ δ' ἀναγκασθῆσόμεθα πρὸς τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἀντιλέγειν, οἷς μάλιστα ἐπακολουθεῖμεν κατ' ἄλλα, δεῖ συγγνώμην ἔχειν. Strabo

The remainder of the *Takmilah* summarizes the information, contained in the Chinese document, concerning Mani's writings. I have purposely refrained from omitting the concluding paragraph as well as some further kindly remarks in the body of the *Takmilah*; for they are a monument to the author's generosity of spirit. In fact, in matters of chronology and related subjects, His Excellency Mr Taqizadeh, none other, has been my teacher; whatever I know in this field I owe to his guidance. It was,

<sup>1</sup> In *Zu den Kriegen des Sassaniden Schapur I.*, Sb. Bayer. Ak. Wiss., 1947, 5, Munich 1949.

<sup>1</sup> Rachmati, *Türkische Turfan-Texte*, vii, No. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *JRAS.*, 1945, 157.

therefore, with the utmost diffidence that I ventured to put forward a hypothesis that ran counter to his opinion.

The chronology of Mani's life is inextricably bound up with the dates of the early rulers of the Sassanian state; whoever wants to settle the one, must at the same time deal with the other. I freely concede that Mr Taqizadeh has created an integrated whole; but it seems to me that for my own hypothesis the same claim may be made. It should not be overlooked that there is a considerable area of agreement, especially on such essential points as the duration of the reigns of the various Sassanian kings, the date of Mani's birth (April 14, 216), and the weekday and day of the month of Mani's death (Monday, the 4th of Addaru). The disagreement arises from "matters of opinion": the value to be put on certain traditions; the question which of several contradictory reports is more deserving of credit; and the like. In the outcome, almost all the important moments in the two schemes are separated from each other by a constant interval of three years:

	Taqizadeh	Henning
Ardashir's 1st year begins	September 26, 226	September 27, 223
His actual accession	April 6, 227	April 28, 224
Shapur's 1st year begins	September 22, 241	September 23, 239
His coronation	April 9, 243	April 12, 240
His death	April, 273	May, 270
Hormizd dies	April, 274	June, 271
Bahrām I dies	July, 277	September, 274
Death of Mani	February 26, 277	March 2, 274

The origin of the three years' interval lies in the various ways of determining the reign of Ardashir, who laid the foundation of the Persian (Sassanian) empire by his great victory over Ardavan, the last Parthian king of kings. The day of this event, "the day on which the dominion of the Parthians, the sons of mighty Arsaces, came to an end" (as the Chronicle of Arbela puts it), is happily known: April 28, 224. In the Persian official history, the Sassanian "Book of Kings", the duration of Ardashir's reign was given as fourteen years and ten months.<sup>1</sup> As this reign-period emanates from a Persian source, it is likely that it was counted from the victory over Ardavan, the event that in the eyes of Ardashir's Persian compatriots was the most important in his career; so that his reign would have lasted till February 239. Yet Nöldeke (followed herein by Taqizadeh), for reasons not

<sup>1</sup> Certain by the agreement of witnesses so remote from each other in the line of transmission as Agathias and Tabari. The alternative (fourteen years six months) has no claim to consideration (as Nöldeke clearly saw).

clearly explained, preferred to attach its initial term to the "year of accession" (begins autumn, 226) attributed to Ardashir by some Western authors (Agathias; Elias of Nisibis; implied by Mani). We do not know on what happening this "year of accession" is based (if it is soundly based at all)—the final defeat of the last Parthian claimant in Babylonia? the conquest of Seleucia? a solemn coronation in Ctesiphon? At any rate, it is scarcely appropriate to combine the Persian reign-period with this "year of accession" that had some limited currency in the western fringe of the Sassanian state. The result is incongruous: it is hard to believe that the Persians, in determining the length of Ardashir's rule, should have disregarded the first two or three years after his momentous victory and waited for some unknown event in Babylonia or Mesopotamia, which, whatever it was, was at any rate insignificant in comparison with the great battle that crushed the power of the hated Parthian overlords.

Moreover, if one accepts Nöldeke's construction, one has to put aside the direct statement in one of our best historical sources (Tabari) that the reign-period is to be counted from the defeat of Ardavan.<sup>1</sup> An even greater difficulty is presented by the stele of Bihshabur, which is dated in terms of the years of the "sacred fires" appertaining to the first Sassanian kings. It is hardly possible that this system of dating, an entirely Persian religious affair,<sup>2</sup> depended on occurrences outside Persia proper, in colonial territory populated by non-Zoroastrians. The natural assumption is that the "fire of Ardashir" was lit immediately after the news of his victory over Ardavan reached Istakhr.<sup>3</sup> In the stele the number of years given to Ardashir is sixteen: this is in consonance with his reign-period of fourteen years ten months, which are distributed over sixteen calendar years (five months after April 28, 224, to the end of the Persian year; fourteen full years; five months from the beginning of the following year). According to the stele, therefore, the full years of Ardashir run from September 27, 223, to September 22,

<sup>1</sup> Nöldeke, *Tabari*, 215q. "Seine Regierung währte, vom Fall des Ardawān an gerechnet, 14 Jahre, nach Einigen aber 14 Jahre und 10 Monate".

<sup>2</sup> Its importance is shown by the coins: throughout the Sassanian period, the "sacred fire" of each king occupies the reverse. "Years of the sacred fire" amount to "regnal years". In the later Sassanian coinage the regnal year appears on the reverse, at the side of the representation of the "sacred fire": the legend should be understood as conveying "year x. of the sacred fire of King Y."

<sup>3</sup> This is as good as proved by the appearance of the "fire of Ardashir", for the first time, on coins where his title is given as "king of Iran" (Paruck No. 13). On the earlier issues, struck before Ardashir extended his power beyond the Persis, his title is simply "king" and there is no "sacred fire" yet. Taqizadeh himself expressed the opinion that the coins with "king of Iran" belonged "to the period after the defeat of Ardavan, but before the consolidation of his power in the whole of the empire and his crowning in Ctesiphon (c. 224-7)" (*BSOAS.*, xi, 29); but the coins are inseparable from the institution of the "fire of Ardashir" (*NWR* ZY 'rtshstr), on which the dating of the stele depends.

239; so that the year beginning on September 23, 239, was counted as Shapur's year of accession.<sup>1</sup>

If we settle the limits of Ardashir's reign in the one way or the other, we are bound to determine the dates of the subsequent rulers in a matching fashion; for the duration of the various reigns is too well established to leave much room for argument. Nevertheless, we should examine the beginning of Shapur's rule, that being the central point in the whole series of events. It is unfortunate that the data given in the *Fihrist* for the coronation of Shapur are so constructed that they are equally applicable to two different days, and, as if malicious Fate had set out to baffle the historian, there is an interval of almost exactly three years between these two days: April 12, 240, and April 9, 243.<sup>2</sup> Here the evidence of Roman history, last examined by W. Ensslin, is of some importance: "Es kamen 241 Nachrichten aus dem Osten, dass der Perserkönig Schapur<sup>3</sup> erneut das Reichsgebiet bedrohe, und darauf antwortete die römische Regierung mit dem 242 beginnenden Feldzug, bei dem nominell Gordian III . . . die Führung hatte."<sup>4</sup> This is a fair summary by a leading classical historian; it is independent of Oriental reports. It seems to me that we would do an injustice to Professor Ensslin's admirable study if we dismissed it merely because he adopted in it the system of Persian chronology advocated by M. Higgins, which, I fully agree with Mr Taqizadeh, is untenable; for evidently Ensslin accepted the dates given by Higgins (which happened to be earlier than those proposed by any other author) only because they agreed best with the Roman evidence as interpreted by him; and that evidence favours the earlier dating.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It will be noticed that Taqizadeh, deviating from the indications of the stele, allows only fifteen full years for the rule of Ardashir (September 26, 226, to September 21, 241). The reason why his last year was not counted as Shapur's year of accession, contrary to later custom, may lie in the unusual circumstances, hinted at in several sources, that led to the assumption of power by Shapur (abdication or semi-retirement or co-regency).

<sup>2</sup> A fine observation we owe to Taqizadeh (above p. 113) is that the suspiciously precise figure "31 years, 6 months, and 18 or 19 days" found in some sources for Shapur's reign is made up from a full number of years and the interval between the beginning of the Persian year and the day of coronation. Regrettably this provides no criterion for the choice between April 12, 240, and April 9, 243. The latter, it is true, gives an interval of 6 months and 19 days, including the epagomenae (= 15 Mihr); the former, alas, fits just as well: it was the 18th of the 7th Persian month, so the interval was 6 months and 18 days (counting the coronation day, but neglecting the epagomenae).

<sup>3</sup> Taqizadeh (above p. 113) quotes Zosimus as saying that Shapur succeeded Ardashir after Gordian had married the daughter of Timesitheus, therefore after the autumn of 241. In fact, Zosimus says that Shapur then had succeeded Ardashir, a very different matter (ἡδη τῆς βασιλείας οὐσης ἐν ὄχρῳ, Πέρσαι τοῖς κατὰ τὴν ἑῶν ἔθνεσιν ἐπιέναι προσεδόκωντο, τὴν ἀρχὴν Σαπῶρου παραλαβόντος μετὰ Ἀρταξέρην).

<sup>4</sup> W. Ensslin, *Zu den Kriegen des Sassaniden Schapur I.*, Munich 1949, 118q.

<sup>5</sup> In his own inscription, Shapur attributes the conduct of the war with Gordian to himself entirely, but gives no precise date, beyond saying that it occurred at the beginning of his long reign.

An important point, rightly stressed by Ensslin, is the report in the *Chronicle of Arbela* (a prime source) that Shapur spent his first year in wars in northern Iran. This agrees badly with the later dating, excellently with the earlier one:

Shapur's first year	September 23, 239—September 21, 240
War in northern Iran	Summer 240
First moves against Rome	Summer 241 <sup>1</sup>

Further support is provided by the dates in the Pahlavi graffiti in the synagogue of Dura-Europos, buried under sand when the city was besieged and captured by the Persians in 256. Alrcady M. I. Rostovtzeff, *Berytus*, viii, 1943, 508sq., suggested that there had been an earlier conquest of Dura-Europos by the Persians in 253, and such a temporary occupation obviously affords the best (indeed, the only) opportunity for the activities of the Persian "scribes" in the synagogue. This view is now also held by C. H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, 1956, 336sq. The earliest and latest full dates are: 4th day of 7th month, year 14, and 18th day of 1st month, year 15. These fit precisely our scheme of early dating; they would correspond with March 26, 253, and October 6, 253.<sup>2</sup>

One would contend that the purely historical evidence, summed up in the preceding paragraphs, deserved more credit than the legendary story of Mani's life. Hagiography is not history; it is biased and involves elements of religious propaganda. We hear of Mani's age only on three occasions: when he was twelve, when he was twenty-four, and when he died at the age of sixty. Is it credible that the prophet's life thus proceeded in even jumps of twelve years *precisely*? Five and twelve, we must remember, were sacred numbers for Mani; everything in his system was grouped in pentads or dodecads. Did Life accommodate itself to Mani's system to the extent of granting him a span equal to the product of his favourite numbers? Such figures are no more than approximate values at best.

Mani's completion of his twenty-fourth year, in the Manichaean legend, is bound up with the coronation of Shapur. In my calculations, the coronation preceded the birthday by as little as seven (or two) days; according to Taqizadeh, the coronation followed it by almost three years. The implication of the relevant passage in the *Fihrist* is that the two events coincided: an angel, Mani's "Twin", came to him and said "*the time has come for you to go out . . . so he went out on the day when Shapur became king . . .*". Arguing within the hagiographical tradition, one experiences

<sup>1</sup> In agreement with the *Script. Hist. Aug.* "*Gordiano iam iterum et Pompeiano cons. [= 241] bellum Persicum natum est*" (ii 47<sup>a</sup> ed. Hohl).

<sup>2</sup> Taking into account the yearless dates, one can easily arrange them so that they all fall within 253: earliest 19th of 5th month [year 14] = February 4, 253, and 29th of 6th month [year 14] = March 21, 253; latest, 1st of 2nd month [year 15] = October 19, 253. They would thus testify to an occupation lasting 8½ months.



some difficulty in believing that a prophet addressed by his divine guide in such terms, "the time has come" (*qad hāna laka an . . .*), should be represented as responding to the command only three years later. We need not assume that Mani refrained from all activity until his twenty-fourth birthday arrived, the less so as a fragment of his autobiography tells us that after his first meeting with the "Twin" (therefore after his twelfth birthday) he began to spread his gospel and converted his father and others;<sup>1</sup> and the journey to India, described in the *Kephalaia* immediately after the first appearance of the "Twin", may have taken place when he was about twenty years old. The true interpretation of the report in the *Fihrist*<sup>2</sup> is probably that at the age of about twenty-four Mani gained the ear of the newly-crowned king of kings and was enabled to organize his missionary activities on a large scale.

Whether Mani's age at death exceeded full sixty years by some 300 days or fell short by some 700, in a community so conscious of sacred numbers and still addicted to the sexagesimal system the precise figure was bound to be replaced by the hallowed round number of sixty. That sufficed for the purposes of hymnology and popular consumption. It does not mean that the Manichaeans were incapable of precision where it mattered. Characteristically, our Chinese document speaks (twice) of Mani's "sixty years", in general context; but the very same document, by supplying precise dates for the prophet's birth and death, informs us that his life-span was a little short of fifty-eight years, namely, fifty-seven (solar) years and 350 days (March 12, 208, to February 25, 266). Such a figure, therefore, is not due to a conjecture of mine; it is directly attested in an authoritative statement of the Manichaean church, incidentally the only source known to exist that gives dates for both Mani's birth and his death. Adding the length of life, as derived from the Chinese document, to the actual day of birth, April 14, 216, we reach the early part of 274. The much-discussed Turkish colophon,<sup>3</sup> correctly construed, also points to 274. If the chronology proposed above for Ardashir and Shapur is accepted, 274 would be the last year of the reign of Bahrām I. There is thus some solid evidence in

<sup>1</sup> Andreas-Henning, *Mitteliranische Manichaica*, ii, 308.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn anNadīm has combined stories of different origin and value. Some depend on Mani's autobiography; others derive from late sources of poor quality. Thus the sentence with the Arabic equivalent of a pluperfect (above p. 110) is an unhistorical commonplace that cannot have been invented before the eighth century, when the Manichaeans had reached China; Mani, of course, never set foot in "Khorasan", far less in China.

<sup>3</sup> It seems hard to put a colophon, in which the scribe mentions the current year according to the era to which he is accustomed, on a level with calendar tables, which were calculated many years in advance; in the latter, mistakes occur easily. The Manichaean specimens, moreover, are very late; but the Turkish colophon, older by two centuries, was written at the time when Manichaeism flourished in Central Asia.

favour of the date proposed by me for the death of Mani, March 2, 274 (= Monday, 4th of Addaru, 584 Sel. Bab.).

It would be ungracious if in the end, having defended my point of view, I refused to admit that it may be wrong after all; and that Mr Taqizadeh's opinion may very well be right. We sorely need a fresh piece of unambiguous evidence to decide these questions.