

The Perso-Babylonian Calendar

Mani fitted the Aryan concept of an aeon of 12,000 years into his own picture of the world. However, he converted it into his “Perso-Babylonian Calendar”. He spoke of himself thus: « Thereupon this revelation has come down, the prophecy in this last age (\approx *peyvann*) through me, Mani, the messenger of the god of truth to Bbylonia. »¹ He adopted the Babylonian version of the Seleucid era, which began with April 3, 311 B.C., and identified the years of that era with the years of the last millennium, that of Pisces.

From the Chinese Treatise entitled *Moni guangfo jiaofayi lüe*²:

« According to the Perso-Babylonian calendar (*po-ssü p‘-p‘i zhangli*), there are since the beginning of the world twelve constellations which govern different eras. In the year 227 of the era governed by the eleventh constellation called Aquarius (*no < *ndo_r < Pers. dōl*) (viz., 1085/ 1084 B.C.) Śākya (= Gautama Buddha) appeared in this world. In the year 527 of the era governd by the twelfth constellation called Pisces (*mo-hsieh < Parth. māsyāg, OPers. *māθija-*), Mani, the Buddha of Light was born in the country of Sulin (Pers. Sūrestān = Babylonia) at the jewel palace of Pa-ti (Pers. *pati*³) by his recognized wife Man-yen (= Maryam) of the family of Chin-sa-chien (? The noble Parthian family Kamsaragān). »
S_B 527 = 216/ 217 A.D., the date of birth of Mani.

From the *Šābuhragān*, the chapter on “the coming of the messenger” (مجيء الرسول) quoted by Bērōnī³:

Mani said: « He was born in Babylonia in the year 527 of the astronomers of Babylon, i.e. Anno Alexandri 527, and four years after the beginning of the reign of the king Ardabān⁴ [whom I believe to be Ardavān the last]. » In the same chapter he said that: « He first received divine revelation (وحى) when he was thirteen years of age, or the year 539 of the astronomers of Babylon, when two years passed (خلتا \approx OPers. *ṭakata-*) from the beginning of the reign of Ardašēr the king of kings (= in the second year of Ardašēr). »

S_B 538 = 227 (/ 228) A.D., the first year of the reign of Ardašēr.

¹ . Šābuhragān:

«ثمّ نزل هذا الوحي وجاءت هذه النبوة في هذا القرن الاخير على يديّ انا مانى رسول اِله الحقّ الى ارض بابل.» بيرونى، الآثار الباقيه، ٨، ٢٢.

² . G. Haloun & W.B. Henning, “The Compendium of the Doctrines and Styles of the Teaching of Mani, the Buddha of Light”, *Asia Major*, III, 1952, (184-212), 190. See also N. Tajaddod, *Mani le Bouddha de Lumière. Catéchisme manichéen chinois*, Paris, 1990, 47-9 ;

ب. سرکاراتى، اخبار تاريخى در آثار مانوى، نشریه دانشکده ادبیات و علوم انسانی، دانشگاه آذربایجان،

۱۳۵۳، ۲۶ / ۱۱۲، (۳۳۹-۶۱)، ۵۰-۳۴۸.

³ . *Vestiges*, 6, 58.

⁴ . Pers. M ʾrdβʾn / *ardavān*/, Parth. ʾrtbnw < **arta-bānu-*.

A Sogdian fragment, M 767 ii⁵

R

1 iii [z'r] srδδ ° dwlyy ii z'r ° m'sy'gyh
z'[r] srδδ ° ° c'f šw' ° w'fyδδ rtw
jmnw ° myyδδ ° m'x ° 'tyy srδδ ° kyštškwn
° 'tyy γrf srδyṭ wβ' kyy xii 'nxrtyh
'xš'wn s't nyjtyy ° kδδryy ṭ'r'c °
xšyyndk °[°] (c)[y](wyδδ) pyδ'r 'fcmbδyy 'm'γwn

V

7 p[. .]. (w)tyy 'styy ° pww xyp[δ]'w[nd sr]cyy (or : pr]cyy)
xrtyy 'styy ° 'nxr(ty)y z'r z'r s[r δy]ṭ °
'tyy ms wrg kww m'sy'g prm wyspw
'nxryy z'r z'r srδδ 'xš'(wn) pṭšmyrtyy
° ṭym CC pcβndyy ° vii pxryt(yh) °
'tyy vii pxryyṭ pr 'f[cmb]δδ 'xšwnyṭ

'... [from the dominion of Capricornus] 3 000 years [remain], of Aquarius 2 000, of Pisces 1000. Much has gone, by so many moments (*ratu* = 10 seconds), hours, days, months, and years, (the duration of the dominion of the twelve) decreases. And it is many years that the dominion (*exšāvān* ≈ Pers. *xādāyīh*) of the twelve constellations (*anxar* ≈ Pers. *axtar*) has totally expired. Now ṭ'r'c (? ṭ'r'k 'darkness')⁶ is dominating. For this reason, the whole of the world is ... (? pw'nwtyy 'without protection'), it has been going without a master (or) ... (? prcyy 'support', srcyy 'chieftain').

The thousand years each of the constellations. And, from Aries to Pisces, the dominion of each constellation is accounted a thousand years each, again, a hundred years in connection (*pacβandē*).

Of the seven planets (*paxrē* ≈ Pers. *abāxtar*). And the seven planets (are) the rulers of the world (*efcambaδ*) ...'

Raham Asha

⁵ . W. B. Henning, "The Compendium ...", 202-4.

⁶ . « The final period appears to have been named *tārāc* in Sogdian, which, if connected with Persian *tārāj*, may have meant 'plunder, booty'. »