

ТРУДЫ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОГО ЭРМИТАЖА
LXII



СОГДИЙЦЫ,
ИХ ПРЕДШЕСТВЕННИКИ,
СОВРЕМЕННОКИ
И НАСЛЕДНИКИ

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ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ ЭРМИТАЖ



TRANSACTIONS OF THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM
LXII

**SOGDIANS,
THEIR PRECURSORS,
CONTEMPORARIES
AND HEIRS**

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held in memory
of Boris Il’ich Marshak
(1933–2006)

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ИХ ПРЕДШЕСТВЕННИКИ,
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На основе материалов конференции
«Согдийцы дома и на чужбине»,
посвященной памяти
Бориса Ильича Маршака
(1933–2006)

Санкт-Петербург
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Stefano Pellò (*Venice*)

A PAPER TEMPLE: MANI'S *ARZHANG*
IN AND AROUND PERSIAN LEXICOGRAPHY

*Les kamonsis révèrent encore un certain Mani-Nakache qu'ils
regardent comme un prophète et auquel ils ont élevé une statue à son image.
Ce Mani, suivant les écrivains orientaux,
était contemporain de Moïse et a écrit l'ouvrage d'Ardjeng qui est,
dit-on, un oracle des Chinois (Court (Ms). P. 86, 87).*

A reference to the *Arzhang* (*Ardjeng*), generally understood as the semi-legendary and apparently long-lost book of paintings by Mani¹ (Mani-Nakache, i.e. *Mānī-yi naqqāsh* “Mani the painter”), in a nineteenth-century ethnographic report dealing with the Kafirs of the Hindu-Kush by Claude-Auguste Court, a French general working for the Sikh kingdom of Panjab, is not a mere curiosity.² It highlights the role of the Persian literary space as a powerful medium of cultural diffusion and interaction deep into the colonial age and in areas usually regarded as peripheral. The fact that the “unbelievers” of the Kom tribe were perceived as identifying their deity Mon/Moni with the Persian poetic idea of the prophet of Manichaeism underlines the strength of the Persian literary/aesthetic dimension as a tool for interpreting and popularizing historical and cultural realities. This is true for both the textual level and its contextual and extra-textual values and ties. In the case of Mani's *Arzhang* in the Persianate literary world – the observation can easily be extended to several other comparable cases – the problem of the reality of the *Arzhang* itself is complementary to, and not in contrast with, the issue of its reception in the poetic dimension. It is mainly by considering these dynamics of reception that it becomes possible to find a plausible path for an “archaeological”³ investigation of the traces of Manichaean painting and some related cultural items in Persian sources.

The relatively frequent use of the term *arzhang*⁴ as a metaphor or a model to describe natural, architectonic, human and especially pictorial beauty in Persian literature has been noticed many times⁵ and needs not to be re-discussed here in its general terms. However, notwithstanding its acknowledged rich metaphorical role on the one hand and its persistence as a descriptive theme on the other, the image of Mani's book of paintings in Persian literature has not yet been the object of specific research. The consequence is a tendency towards reducing the issue in some simple equations such as “*Mani* = the archetypical painter” and “*Arzhang* = the archetypical painting”, in accordance with an essentializing inclination to view Persian poetry mainly as a set of de-historicized unchangeable symbols



Fig. 1: MIK III 6368 recto, Manichaean elects in scribal duty (after A. von Le Coq, *Die Manichäischen Miniaturen / Die Buddhistische Spätantike in Mittelasien*. II. Berlin. 1923. Taf. 8b: b.)

with more or less “spiritual” values. While waiting for the results of a statistical analysis of the occurrences of the word *arzĥang* (and its alternative forms) in ninth- to eleventh-century Persian poetry, we will present here a brief survey of the entries devoted to the *arzĥang* in some of the most important Persian lexicographic sources from the 11th to 17th century. Along with some selected literary references to Mani’s painting book, these will show the actual width of the semantic and inferential value of the *arzĥang*-image, and indicate a path for dealing with the understanding and knowledge of Manichaean painting (and also of painting as a whole) in the Persian and Persianate literary environment. More generally, this approach can also help in reflecting on the peculiarities of the cosmopolitan inclusiveness of the Persian poetic space at the time of its formation during the Samanid and the early Ghaznavid period, especially from the point of view of the reception of Central Asian pre-Islamic and proto-Islamic cultural motifs and objects.

The survey is based on fifteen Persian lexicographic works dating from 1072 to 1653–1654 and representing an acceptable sample for an analytical survey, namely: the *Lughat-i furs* (1072), the *Farĥang-i Qammās* (late 13th – early 14th centuries), the *Šiĥāḥ al-furs* (1328), the *Dastūr al-afāṣīl* (1342), the *Mi’yār-i jamālī* (1344), the *Majmū’at al-furs* (14th century?), the *Lisān al-shu’arā* (before 1419), the *Zafāngīyā wa jahānpūyā* (before 1433), the *Sharafnāma-yi munyarī* (1473–1474), the *Farĥang-i Wafā’i* (1526), the *Tuhfat al-aḥbāb* (1529), the *Majma’ al-furs* (1599, first redaction; 1618, second redaction), the *Farĥang-i jahāngīrī* (1608), the *Burbān-i qāṭi* (1651–1652), and the *Farĥang-i rashīdī* (1653–1654). The definitions given by these sources can be subdivided into three main groups: 1) the *arzĥang* as a painted book or, more generally, some sort of painted object; 2) the *arzĥang* as an idol

temple and/or a picture gallery (the picture gallery of Mani or a picture gallery in general), often, but not necessarily, located in *Chin*, i.e. Eastern Turkestan⁶; 3) the *arzhang* as a painter, a sort of double of its author. Leaving aside the latter interpretation, we will concentrate here on the first of these three views (very often – it should be preliminarily stressed – coexistent in the same dictionary), functionally referring to the second one in the final part of the article.

The definition of *arzhang* as a book made of illustrations or containing them is found in the oldest Persian lexicon we possess, the *Lughat-i furs* by Asadī Tūsī (1072), where we read that it (*artang*) is simply:

the book of the figures of Mani (*kitāb-i ashkāl-i mānī*, Asadī Tūsī ed. 1957. P. 108).

Very similar is the definition given by the oldest lexicon of Persian composed in South Asia, the *Farhang-i Qawwās*, which describes Mani's book (*arsang*) as

the book of Mani where he had painted images (*kitāb-i mānī-st ki naqshbā dar ū nibishta būd*; Fakhr-i Qawwās ed. 1974–1975. P. 11).

Compared to the rather scanty definition given by the *Lughat-i furs*, however, the *Farhang-i Qawwās* seems to express more directly the idea of an illuminated book, choosing the more technical *naqshbā* (images, decorations) instead of the somewhat sibylline *ashkāl* (forms, figures) to speak of the images contained in Mani's work. The explanation given by the later *Lisān al-shu'arā*, though depending on Qawwās, even more clearly hints at a book containing images and not made of images:

artang: [...] the book of Mani the painter which contained images (*kitāb-i mānī-yi naqqāsh ki dar ū naqshbā būd*; An. ed. 1995. P. 71).

Somewhere in between Asadī Tūsī and Qawwās (and his anonymous follower) is the *Šihāh al-furs*, which states that Asadī Tūsī's definition is the most proper one (the form chosen here is *arsang*), but quite clearly distinguishes between the idea of a collection of images and a book containing images, as it is clear from the reading of the related entry:

It has some meanings. First: the portraits/images (*šurathā*) made by Mani the painter. Second: an idol-temple. Third: the name of the book of figures by Mani, and this is the most correct definition (*siyūm: nām-i kitāb-i ashkāl-i mānī-st wa in ašahh-ast*; Hindūshāh Nakhjwānī ed. 1975. P. 193).⁷

A similar view is also expressed quite clearly and in straightforward terms by Surūrī at the end of the 16th century, according to whom the most correct definition of the *arzhang* is “the book which contained the figures of Mani” (*kitāb-i-st ki dar ān ashkāl-i mānī būda*; Surūrī ed. 1959–1962. I, P. 62), a definition very similar to those given by the *Farhang-i Qawwās* and the *Lisān al-shu'arā*.

Other lexicographic sources tend to concentrate on the nature and the functions of the presumed contents of Mani's mythical book. Consider, for instance, the *Sharafnāma-yi munyarī*, where the alleged subject of Mani's paintings⁸ is specified by the author:

artang: the book of pictures of Mani the painter about portraiture (*kitāb-i ashkāl-i mānī-yi naqqāsh dar šuratgarī*; Qawām Fārūqī ed. 2006. P. 77).⁹

Going beyond the “iconographic” aspects of the *arzhang*-issue, the *Mi'yār-i jamālī* highlights the normative function of the book:

artang: it was the canonical book of Mani the painter, and every time an image came to his mind he used to fix it in that book (*dastūr-i mānī-yi naqqāsh būda-ast chūn ū-rā naqsh-i ba khaṭīr āmadī dar ān dastūr sabt kardī*; Shams-i Fakhri ed. 1885. P. 78).

The term used to define the book, *dastūr*, can be read here not only as a “canon” for painters but also as a set of religious rules, in this case accompanied by images created by its author.¹⁰ The coexistence of several different traditions regarding the *arzhang* as some sort of painted object becomes self-evident if we consider that the *Dastūr al-afāzīl* already in the 14th century describes the work by Mani not as a book but as a “painter” and as:

The painting on the curtain where Mani the painter had drawn the images of the whole world (*naqsh-i chādūr ki mānī-yi naqqāsh naqshbā-yi hama ‘alam dar ū nigāshta būd*; Ḥajīb-i Khayrāt Dihlavi ed. 1973–1974. P. 61).

It is noteworthy – as a further evidence for the persistence of coexistent multiple views on the *arzhang* – that the probably slightly later *Zafāngūyā wa jahānpūyā* describes the object under investigation as “book by Mani the painter” (*kitāb-i-st az ān-i mānī-yi naqqāsh*; Badr al-Dīn Ebrāhīm ed. 1974. P. 91, l. 5), but elsewhere it specifies that it consists in nothing else than a painting: “that book is a painting which Mani had prepared” (*wa ān kitāb-i naqsh-ast ki mānī sākhṭa būd*; Badr al-Dīn Ebrāhīm ed. 1974. P. 49, l. 7).

Leaving for a while the lexicographic field, it is useful to recall here that the Timurid historian Mīrkhwānd (d. 1498), describes the work by Mani not as a painted book but as a tablet (*lanḥ-i artangī*), depicted by the “false prophet” during one year of hiding in a cave and then declared to be of divine origin (Mīrkhwānd ed. 1960. P. 743–744). More than two and a half centuries before, Muḥammad ‘Awfī had narrated a version of the story in his famous *Jawāmi‘ al-ḥikāyāt*, where the *arzhang* is said to be a scroll of paper:

[...] and he had prepared a big scroll (*dary*) of a kind of paper, which resembled the internal skin of a chicken egg for its thinness, its purity and its whiteness,¹¹ and on that scroll he painted the image of every sin and its punishment [...] (‘Awfī ed. 1973. P. 205–206)¹²

‘Awfī – for whom Mani is a Babylonian teaching the Chinese the art of painting¹³ – also adds that a copy of this work is to be found in the treasury of the Emperor of China, which can be seen at the same time both as a (unconscious or not) hint to a historical reality, i.e. the late survival of the Manichaean reigns of “Chinese” Central Asia and as an allusion to a literary motif, i.e. the *Arzhang* – the “precious book” by definition – as part of the treasuries of great kings. It should be incidentally added here that the well-known note by Abū ‘l-Ma‘ālī (end of the 11th century) in his Persian treatise on religions entitled *Bayān al-adyān*, according to which a copy of the *Arzhang*, a book containing “images of various kinds”, was held in the treasuries of the Ghaznavid emperors (*kitāb-i kard ba annā‘-i taṣāwir ki ān-rā arzhang-i mānī khwānand wa dar khaṣṣūyīn-i ghaznīn-ast*; Abū ‘l-Ma‘ālī ed. n. d. P. 17), though obviously fascinating and not at all rejectable as such, could nevertheless also be read in a similar way.

In such a textual landscape, swarming with different views on Mani’s book, the later dictionaries provide the reader with a sort of compendium of all the traditions related to the *arzhang* in Persian. As far as the nature of the *arzhang* as an object is concerned, the most notable motif to be found in these texts is the rather confused but meaningful – for the history of the understanding of pictorial traditions – relationship they develop between

Mani's painted book and the work of 'Tanlūshā/Lūshā, the historical Teucros of Babylon, author, in the 1st century C.E., of a treatise on the decans of the Zodiac.¹⁴ The *Farhang-i jahāngiri*, where the *arzhang* is identified with another Manichaean text, the *Evangelion* (spelt as *angalyūn* in the text),¹⁵ and elsewhere described (under the heading *artang*) as “the name of the book of paintings (*nigārnāma*) by Mani the painter”, gives the following definition for the word *tanglūsh* and its variant *tanglūshā*:

It has two meanings. The first is the name of the book where the wise Lūshā collected the portraits (*šurathā*), the images (*naqshbā*), the illumination motifs (*islīmī-khaṭā'ihā*), the decoration belts (*giribbandhā*), and the other techniques and artifices invented by him in the field of drawing and painting; this book can be compared to the *artang* and the *angalyūn* of Mani. And as Mani was the authority among the painters of China, he was the head of the painters and designers of Greece; similarly, as the collection of the work of the painters from China is called *artang*, the collection of the work of the painters from Greece is called *tang*. [...] It is also the name of a sage (Injū ed. 1980. II. P. 1789–1790).

To understand the discussion of the term *tanglūsh*/*tanglūshā* as the name of a book better it can be helpful to read the definition of the word *tang* given by the same dictionary:

It is generally used to indicate the page (*šafha*) or the tablet (*takhta*) where painters and designers display their own art and, more specifically, the book of paintings (*nigārnāma*) by Mani. This book is also called *artang* and *arzhang* (Injū ed. 1980. I. P. 1786).¹⁶

Therefore (leaving aside the confusion generated by the second part of the definition), the corrupted form of the name of Teucros is here transformed into *tang-i lūsh*/*tang-i lūshā*, i.e. “the painted page(s)/tablet(s) of [the sage] Lūshā” as opposed to the Manichaean *artang*. Similar definitions, with more or less significant discrepancies, can be found elsewhere, e.g. in the *Majma' al-furs* where older sources are mentioned, and in the *Burbān-i qāṭi'* where the historical figure of 'Tanlūshā/Teucros (“some say it is the name of a sage from Babylon”, Ḥusayn Tabrīzī ed. 1963. I. P. 521) is coexistent with the splitting of his name in two parts (“it is the book and the sheet (*šafha*) of the sage Lūshā, because *tang* means sheet and *lūshā* is the name of a sage from Greece or, according to others, from Babylon”; Ḥusayn Tabrīzī ed. 1963. I. P. 521). What is more important to underline here, however, is the fact that all our sources agree in juxtaposing a “Western/Greco-Roman-Byzantine (*rūmī*)” canon – which we can easily decode as “style” – for painting to an “Eastern/Chinese-Turkestanī (*chīmī*)” one, embodied by two semi-legendary works and their more or less exotic authors. The final, concise statement by the *Farhang-i rashīdī* is very clear in this respect:

It is correct to say that the *artang* is the sheet (*šafha*) or the tablet (*takhta*) on which the painters from China (*chīn*) used to display their art. The canonical collection (*kārnāma*) of the painters from China is thus called *artang*, whereas the canonical collection of the painters from Greece (*rūm*) is called *tang* (Abd al-Rashīd ed. 1958. I, P. 90).

Whether and how this insisted distinction between two schools/styles of painting (the general *topos* of the competition between Greek and Chinese painters is a rather common one in Persian literature)¹⁷ and especially between two related “textbooks” is connected to specific facts in the history of Iranian and Central Asian figurative art, such as, for instance, the existence of more or less “Western” archetypes for the depiction of astrological symbols suggested by Frantz Grenet and George-Jean Pinault in relation to a painting on a Chinese manuscript from Turfan (8th – 9th century, see Grenet,

Pinault 1997. P. 1027–1028), though fascinating, is well beyond the scope of this study and the reach of the present writer. It is, however, remarkable that the juxtaposition built by the Persian lexicographers between an Eastern and a Western painted canon for figurative art – embodied, as we have seen, respectively by Mani and Teucros and their work – finds quite often a perfect parallel in the interpretation of the terms *arḡhang* and *tanglūshā* as indicating name of places. As anticipated, Persian sources sometimes describe the *arḡhang* not as a book but as an idol-temple or a picture gallery situated somewhere in Central Asia, quite often connecting it with Mani and China and identifying it with the *nigāristān*/*nigārkhāna-yi chīn* or *ṣūratkhāna-yi chīn*, the legendary “picture-gallery of China”, at least beginning with the *Ṣiḥāḥ al-furs* (“*arḡhang*: it is the picture-gallery – *ṣūratkhāna* – of China”, Hindūshāh Nakhjawānī ed. 1975. P. 192, 203). See for instance the brief definition found in the *Tuhfat al-aḥbāb*:

artang: it is the picture gallery (*nigārkhāna*) of Mani, who was one of the painters from China (Awbiḥī Harawī ed. 1986. P. 40).

Generally speaking, as other scholars have already noticed, the origin for the Persian literary motif of a mythical painted place in Central Asia should be traced in a more or less direct knowledge, in the formative phase of the Perso-Islamic cultural cosmopolis, of “pagan” religious centres magnificently decorated with frescoes, such as, for instance, the caves of Dunhuang.¹⁸ The fundamental connection of the *arḡhang*-temple with the figure of Mani, however, suggests not overlooking the possibility of a specific link between the Persian canonical image of the “painted Chinese Manichaean temple” with the actual *mānistāns* (*m’nyst’n*, in its most common Parthian and Middle Persian variant, Durkin-Meisterernst 2004. P. 227), the Manichaean centres, whose first function was, according to the Chinese so-called *Compendium of the Doctrines and Styles of the Teaching of Mani, the Buddha of Light*, to host a room for scriptures and images (Tajadod 1990. P. 61, 232)¹⁹, pointing to an organized scribal and artistic activity.²⁰ A possible alternative etymology for *mānistān* might support this hypothesis with a less speculative argument. Usually interpreted as being related to Parthian and Middle Persian *mān*- “to remain, to stay” or to *mān* “house, dwelling”,²¹ the first element of the word *mānistān* might instead be identified, as a matter of fact, in Parthian and Middle Persian *mān*- “to agree, be similar, resemble” (cf. New Persian *mānistān*).²² *Mānistān* could thus perhaps be read alternatively as something like “the place of [painted] similitudes”. Interestingly enough, this is in any case the explanation of the word *mānistān* (as a Zoroastrian sectarian doctrinal term) that we find in the Persian treatise on religions *Dabistān-i maḡāhib* (17th century) where it is interpreted as a synonym for *‘ālam-i miṣāl*, the Arabic-Persian philosophical expression to indicate the “world of similitudes” or the “imaginal world”, the mesocosmos between the physical and the transcendent dimensions.²³ Following our interpretation, the New Persian word to be compared to the Middle Iranian term *mānistān* as its correspondent (if not as its calque) would not be *khānaḡāb*/*khānaqāb* as proposed by Utas, but *nigāristān*/*nigārkhāna* (and its synonym, formed with an Arabic loanword, *ṣūratkhāna*, all generally translated as “picture gallery”), not by chance closely connected, in Persian literature, with Mani and Chinese Central Asia. *Nigār*²⁴ (or *ṣūrat*), meaning “[painted] image” would easily find a semantic parallel in *mān*- “to resemble”, and the second part of the compound, *khāna* “house”, would alternatively act as a substitute for the locative suffix *-stān*.

It might be not by mere coincidence, moreover, that in the *Šihāh al-furs* the term *mānī* itself is considered as meaning also “the place of painters” (*jaygāh-i naqqāshān*):²⁵ could it be the re-surfacing of a lexical convergence of *mānistān* and the name of Mani, originally due to the interrelated connections with the art of painting of the two terms? On the one hand, these working hypotheses would not be in contrast with the well-known fundamental actual function of pictorial representation in Manichaeism and with the above seen specific role of images in the Manichaean *mānistān* and, on the other, would better explain the starting point for the Persian poetic metaphorization of an historical-archaeological reality.²⁶ In other words, if the *mānistān* is by definition – even through a re-etymologyzation²⁷ – a place hosting images (a *nigārkhāna* or *šūratkhāna*) among whose primary functions is to represent visually the ultimate religious truths, the beautiful paintings by Mani, by the Persian Islamic tradition imagined as being contained in a work called *arṣhang*, will be logically connected to such buildings. The specific term *arṣhang* (seen as the Manichaean collection of paintings *par excellence*) will thus easily substitute *mānistān* and be used to indicate the Manichaean “monastery” as such, through the overlapping with the directly related (at least functionally and historically, if not even etymologically) *nigārkhāna/šūratkhāna*. In any case, what might have been in the origin a synecdochical expression to indicate some kind of non-Muslim place (or better, places) of worship in present-day Xinjiang, is understood in later sources as a sort of centre for the production of Chinese-style painting. The “textbook”, in other words, is transformed into a building (through the unconscious exploitation of actual historical and possibly etymological ties) and given a specific geographical identity, becoming a meaning-maker in the Persian literary hermeneutics on figurative art. As we have anticipated, this Chinese-Manichaean picture gallery and site of artistic production finds its Western counterpart in the symmetric transformation of the work of Teucros/Tanglūshā in a school for painters, as stated in the *Majma‘ al-furs*:

tanglūshā: it is the academy (*ilmkhāna*) of the Greeks (*rūmiyān*) [...]. Some have said that *tanglūshā* is the name of a Western (*maghribī*) sage whose work is known by the same name, but the *Mu‘ayyid al-fuṣṣalā* [another Indo-Persian lexicographic work completed in 1519²⁸] reports that it is the name of the academy of the Greeks in the art of painting, and it is opposed to the *artang* (*Surūri* ed. 1959–1962. I. P. 282).²⁹

The same parallel is expressed in the *Burbān-i qāti‘* with a few further details about the supposed nature of the two archetypical Western and Eastern *scholae* for painters:

Some say that it is the academy (*ilmkhāna*) of the Greeks (*rūmiyān*) for [the study of] portraiture (*šūratgarī*) and the methods and techniques of painting (*naqqāshī*), and this is the correspondent of the Chinese picture-gallery (*nigārkhāna-yi chīnī*; Ḥusayn Tabrīzī ed. 1963. I. P. 521).

As for Giorgio Vasari, who in the introduction of his famous *Vite de’ più eccellenti architetti, pittori et scultori italiani* wrote that the arts of sculpture and painting were invented by the Egyptians, the Chaldeans and the Greeks,³⁰ for Persian Muslim literati pictorial representation is an exotic discipline which finds its masters, alternatively or contemporarily, in *Rūm* and *Chīn*. Mani and his mythical *arṣhang* become, in this context, a sort of synthesis *a priori* of these two stylistic extremes, of which the Persianate intellectuals and connoisseurs were of course well aware. Mani can be, as we have seen, a Western master painter who goes to the East or an Eastern master painter who goes to the West, and in any case his work, or

alternatively the place for the representation of his work, finds a geographically juxtaposed *alter-ego* in Tanglūshā, a perfectly correspondent master and/or book and/or place. Mani's *arzhang* is thus, in Persian lexicography, a *locus* for expressing the ways of reception of the different canons in the field of the figurative arts and for recovering and conveying actual data and facts in the religious history of Central Asia. It should be stressed here in passing that the idea of Mani as a great painter connected in some way with China and the myth of his painted book is not a general "Islamic" one but is specifically connected to Persian literary culture: as the philological material presented here confirms quite clearly, the immediate reason for this Eastern and mainly iconographical reception of Manichaeism is no doubt the presence of Manichaean reigns (with their painted places of worship, be they actually *mānistāns* or Buddhist *vihāras*), such as that of Qočo, in what the Iranian world considered as China during the formative period of the Persian literary culture in Khorasan and Transoxiana.³¹ These specific contextual aspects graft themselves onto an already diffused, in the Abbasid Arabic literary culture, perception of the preciousness of Manichaean books,³² thus generating the myth of the *arzhang* in the Persianate Eastern half of the Muslim world.

In this layered context, it is difficult and perhaps not so advisable to precipitately jump to the "real" *arzhang* and decide, for instance, about what actually Abū 'l-Ma'ālī refers to when he writes that a copy of the *arzhang* was kept in the treasuries of the Ghaznavid kings. Various eminent Ghaznavid poets – who arguably had an easy access to the library of their patron-kings – referred to the *arzhang* in their verse well before the composition of the oldest lexicographic source we possess, the *Lughat-i furs*, and well before Abū 'l-Ma'ālī himself. Even judging from some of randomly-chosen lines of theirs, there seems to be a confusion about the nature of this work starting from the very material of which it is made. According to the following line by the poet laureate of Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna, Farrukhī Sīstānī (d. 1038), for example, the *arzhang* seems to be understood as being a painted silk scroll:

hamī tāft az pārnīyān rūy-i kbūb-ash
nīgār-i-st gūyī ʔi artang-i mānī (Farrukhī Sīstānī ed. 1992–1993. P. 383)

His beautiful face was glowing in silk:
 he resembled a portrait from the Artang of Mani.

Another great Ghaznavid master, Manūchihīrī Dāmghānī (d. 1041), evokes colourful images on a background of blue paper:

nīgāb kun ki ba nawrūz chun shuda-ast jābān
chu kārnāma-yi mānī dar ābgūn qirṭās (Manūchihīrī Dāmghānī ed. 1984–1985. P. 45).

Look at how the world has become in spring:
 like the masterly work of Mani, on blue paper.

Both of the images are clearly realistic in mentioning materials actually in use in Central Asian painting, and the reference to "blue paper" in the similitude by Manūchihīrī might even point to the ultramarine blue sometimes used as a priming colour in Manichaean book illustrations (Cf. Klimkeit 1998. P. 276). Nevertheless, the two images, by two contemporary poets working in the same courtly milieu, refer to different materials. All in all, according to our lexicographic sources and to the other texts considered here, *arzhang* seems to mean

not only and not necessarily a specific doctrinal book made of or containing the doctrinal paintings of the prophet of Manichaeism, but it appears rather to be used as a polysemic word collectively indicating different kinds of receptacles – mainly books, but not only books – of precious paintings in some way connected to a distinguished Central Asian Manichaean milieu, generally identified with “Chinese”-influenced pictorial techniques.

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¹ On the problematic relationship between Mani's picture-book and the Parthian work known as *Arzhang wifrās*, commonly understood as its commentary, see the insightful study by Sundermann, where various observations on the Perso-Islamic reception of the myth of Mani's painted work can also be found (Sundermann 2005. P. 375–377).

² Despite their significance in the history of trans-cultural representation, General Court's report and its original Persian version have seldom been the object of scholarly analysis: see the introductory study by Holzwarth 1994 and the observations in Pellò 2009. P. 100–104.

³ The adjective “archaeological” is used here following the methodological approach of Melikian-Chirvani 1995.

⁴ *Arzhang* is the form we will generally use here to refer to the textual object under analysis. A number of other variants are recorded in Persian sources, primarily *artang* but also *archang*, *arghang*, *arjang*,

arsang, *arsang*, etc. (for further details see Asmussen 1985). The single variants used by the authors considered in this paper will be specified in the individual cases.

⁵ Consider, for instance, Zipoli 2009. P. 232; Sims 2002. P. 20–22; Schimmel 1992. P. 120, 149, 242, 364; Tajadod 1990. P. 205–210; Asmussen 1965. P. 10–11. Specifically related to the issues dealt with in the present paper are Piemontese 1995a and Piemontese 1995b. Various references to Mani the painter can of course be found scattered in works and articles dealing with Persian literary sources on painting, such as, for instance, Roxburgh 2001. P. 174–179 and *passim*; Porter 1995. P. 225–227; Porter 1992. P. 136–142 and *passim* and Soucek 1972. P. 9–12. A relatively recent survey of the figure of Mani – also as a painter – in Persian sources is Esmailpour 2006.

⁶ According to Francois de Blois, when dealing with “China” (*al-šīn* in Arabic sources) the Muslim authors writing on Manichaeism generally refer to

- “the Chinese dependencies in Central Asia, Turkistan” (de Blois 2006. P. 60).
- ⁷ Hindūshāh Nakhjawānī ed. 1975. P. 193. The same definition is found in the later *Farhang-i Wafā’i*, clearly drawing on Nakhjawānī (Wafā’ī ed. 1995. P. 21; the form used in the text is *artang*, but, according to the editor, some manuscripts have *arsang* like its model: cf. *ibid.*, n. 3). Nothing is added by the undated *Majmū’at al-furs*, repositing the second and third meaning (in inverted order) given by Nakhjawānī, Šafī Kaḥḥāl ed. 1976. P. 143.
- ⁸ A connection, historically plausible, with the Timurid efflorescence of painting and interest in its technicalities coeval to the composition of the dictionary might help to explain the indication of the supposed typology of the images contained in the fabulous book; it remains, at present, the object of mere speculation.
- ⁹ *Šuratgarī*, with its generic meaning of “drawing images”, is the same term used in Firdawsī’s *Šābnāma* by Mani himself for describing the peculiarity of his prophetic mission: “I am a prophet, he said, through painting”, *ba šuratgarī guft payghambar-am* (Firdawsī 2005: 336). The reason here for translating it with its technical meaning of “portraiture” lies in the apparent repetition we would have had using the general meaning of “drawing images”. As a matter of fact, it seems from the structure of the sentence that the aim of the author is to narrow the definition given by Ašādī Ṭūsī and his followers and to state which kind of images the *arḫhang* contains.
- ¹⁰ After a brief survey of Perso-Islamic sources, Sundermann writes “the *Ārdhang* was rather an impressively decorated and illuminated doctrinal book than a kind of *Tafelband*” (Sundermann 2005. P. 376).
- ¹¹ We read the passage as follows: “*wa dari-i buzurg bar shikl-i kaḡhaḡ-i muḡayyā karda biūd ki dar tunuki wa šafā wa bayāḡ ba pūst-i miyāna-yi bayāḡ-yi murḡh mīmanīst*” The passage is understood in a slightly different way by Piemontese, who reads کاغذی as *kaḡhaḡī* (i.e. as an adjective meaning “papery”), thus translating “egli aveva apparecchiato un grande volume di forma cartacea, che per sottigliezza, purezza e bianchezza somigliava alla pelle di un uovo di gallina” (Piemontese 1995a. P. 302). The qualities of “thinness/sottigliezza”, “purity/purezza” and “whiteness/bianchezza” referred to by ‘Awfī, however, seem to us much more applicable to the material (the paper) of which the scroll is made than to the scroll itself.
- ¹² Given the strict similarities in many details, such as those regarding the quality of the paper of Mani’s work, ‘Awfī’s version of the story must be considered as the fundamental source for the late Chaghatai text (apparently a translation from a lost Persian work) studied by Zsuzsanna Gulácsi: the strange description of the *arḫhang* as a box (the word used in the Turkic text is *qūtī*, according to Gulácsi 2005a. P. 149) made of painted paper, could be simply explained as a mistake by the translator, who most probably read the homograph, in Perso-Arabic script, *durj* (box) instead of *darj* (scroll).
- ¹³ Cf. Piemontese 1995a. P. 299. An opposite view is found, for instance, in the *Zafāngīyā wa jahānpūyā*, according to which “Mani is the name of a painter from China who was a master in Rūm”, Badr al-Dīn Ebrāhīm ed. 1974. P. 49, l. 6.
- ¹⁴ On Teucros and the corruption of his name in Arabic (and subsequently Persian) see Nallino 1922. P. 356–362; Storey 1958. P. 35 and Taqizade 2010. P. 126–127). We have chosen to use here the spelling *tanglūshā* instead of the relatively more familiar *tangalūshā* (which is, for instance, employed in the *Lughatnāma-yi Dīkhudā*) for two reasons: first, our lexicographic sources either openly propose this reading (*bā kāf-i fārsī-yi manqūf* “with the Persian *kāf* quiescent”, Qawām Fārūqī ed. 2006. P. 274) or do not specify any vocalization for the *gāf*, whereas they indicate that the first letter must be read “with a *fatḡa*” (cf. for instance Surūrī ed. 1959–1962. I. P. 282; Injū ed. 1980. II, P. 1789), thus suggesting that the letter is quiescent; second, the explanations given by the lexicographers, who postulate the possibility of a splitting of the name into *tang* and *lūshā* (see *infra* in the article), seem to exclude the presence of the vowel *a* in that position.
- ¹⁵ “It is the name of a book where Mani the painter collected the designs (*tašnīrḡhā*), the images (*naqshḡhā*), the illumination motifs (*īshlīm-keḡaḡā’īḡhā*), the decoration belts (*gīrībhandḡhā*), and the other techniques and artifices invented by him [...]. When [the *angalyūn*] is associated with the name of Jesus, the Christians, the Cross, the *ḡunnār*, the Syriac language and related subjects, it is to be understood as the Christian Gospel (*īnjīl*). When it is associated with items such as images (*naqsh*), portraits (*nīḡār*), flowers (*gul*), and colours (*abwān-rangḡhā*), it should be interpreted as the book of Mani, which is also called *artang*, *arḫhang* and *arīḡhang*” (Injū ed. 1980. II, P. 1761–1762).
- ¹⁶ The form *ḡang* is found, with a similar meaning, in the earlier *Farhang-i ḡafāngīyā* (Badr al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ed. 1974. P. 92, l. 16; see *infra*, n. 29) and in the later *Burbān-i qāḡī* (Ḥusayn-i Tabrīzī ed. 1963. I. P. 550). For a discussion on Oir. *ḡang*- “to draw” and the etymology of *Ārdhang* see Sundermann 2005. P. 377, 379.
- ¹⁷ See Piemontese 1995b. On some possible historical clues for the Persian *topos* of the artist coming from

- China see the contribution by Gianroberto Scarcia in this volume.
- ¹⁸ See for instance *Roxburgh* 2001. P. 176, n. 71; P. 177, n. 72.
- ¹⁹ The ideogram used for “images” is 圖 (cf. also Mikkelsen 2006. P. 68), the same employed in the *Compendium* to define the “drawing” of the *da men he yi*, sometimes associated with the *Arzhang* (but see the relevant critical observations in Sundermann 2005. P. 377). See also the observations by *Lien* (1998. P. 82–87) and *Utas* (1985. P. 656).
- ²⁰ Cf. the painted fragment from Qoço in Fig. 1. from *Le Coq*. Türkische Manichaica aus Chotscho. I.
- ²¹ For a brief discussion on this possible etymology of *manistān* see *Utas* 1985. P. 657.
- ²² Cf. *Durkin-Meisterernst* 2004. P. 225. See also *MacKenzie* 1990. P. 53.
- ²³ “According to this sect, revelation is obtained only by the world of similitudes, which is called *manistān*” (*wahy pīsh-i īn tāyijā ba sūbut-i ‘ālam-i miṣāl ke an-rā manistān gūyand durust shavad*) *Mawbid Kaykhusraw Isfandyār* ed. 1983. P. 10.
- ²⁴ According to *Sundermann*, the identical Middle Persian form *nigār* might be the corresponding Iranian name for the Coptic *Eikōn* (*Sundermann* 2005. P. 382–383): *nigāristān/nigārkhāna*, in its narrowest sense, would thus theoretically become readable also as the place of “the” Image.
- ²⁵ “Mānī: it has two meanings: first, it was the place of painters; second, it was the name of the master of the painters of China, and the Manichaean painting/image is attributed to him” (*Mānī: du mānī dārād amwal jāyghā-i naqqāshān buwad dumnum nām-i ustād-i naqqāshān-i chīn būd wa naqsh-i mānawī mansūb bad-ū-st*), *Hindūshāh Nakhjawānī* ed. 1975. P. 307. The latter explanation is considered “weak” (سخت) by the *Farhang-i Wafā’ī* (*Wafā’ī* ed. 1995. P. 197): this could point to the antiquity of the meaning, no more comprehensible to Muslim writers and thus sounding strange to their ears. A possible evidence for a direct connection between the *nigāristān-i chīn* and the Manichaean *manistān* is found in a line by the Samanid poet *Kisā’ī-yi Marwazī* (see *Pellō* forthcoming 2013).
- ²⁶ A perhaps useful parallel, from the epistemological point of view, can be found in the relatively better known literary use, in Persian, of the Buddhist imagery connected to the *nambahār*, i.e. the *nava-vihāra* (see on the use of Buddhist imagery in Persian poetry: *Melikian-Chirvani* 1974).
- ²⁷ Cf. the following statement by *Utas*, pointing to an open and layered interpretation of the functions and the historical reception of the *manistān*: “It is more than likely, however, that the use of the word *manistān* changed with time. It must have become more technical and specialized, perhaps with differences in application in various parts of the Manichaean territory. Thus the functions of a *manistān* in Central Asia in later centuries might very well have changed to comprise almost everything except a hospice for *electi*”, *Utas* 1985. P.664.
- ²⁸ See on this dictionary: *Naqawī* 1962. P. 66–68.
- ²⁹ A comparison with the definition given by the earlier *Zafāngūyā* can be useful to observe the progressive transformation of the name of the Babylonian astronomer into a place: “*Sanghūshā*: it is the book of the Academy (*ilmkhāna*). This academy is that of *Lūshā*, which is the name of a book in the Academy of the Greeks (*rūmiyān*). The original meaning (*aṣḥ*) of *san* is ‘image’ (*naqsh*) and ‘picture-gallery’ (*nigāristān*)”, *Badr al-Dīn Ibrāhīm* ed. 1974. P. 92, l. 15, 16.
- ³⁰ “Io non dubito punto che non sia quasi di tutti gli scrittori commune e certissima opinione che la scultura insieme con la pittura fussero naturalmente da i populi dello Egitto primieramente trovate, ch’alcun altri non siano che attribuiscono a’ Caldei le prime bozze de’ marmi et i primi rilievi delle statue, come danno anco a’ Greci la invenzione del pennello e del colorire”, *Vasari* ed. 1991. I, P. 89.
- ³¹ See, for an example of early textualization of “Chinese” Manichaeism in Persian, the well-known references to the “religion of Mani” (*dīn-i mānī*) in the passage on the features of *Chimistān* in the early geographical work *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, dating 982 (*An*. ed. 1962. P. 59–63 and *An*. tr. 1937. P. 83–85).
- ³² The observations by *al-Jāhīz* in his *Kitāb al-hayawān* on the Manichaean obsession with preciously illuminated books have been mentioned many times in this respect (see, for instance, *Gulácsi* 2005b. P. 60). Less known is the metaphorical role of Manichaean books in the poetic space, much more related to the themes we deal with here. An interesting line found in the *Dmān* of *Abū Nuwās* could be a good starting point for further research in this field, especially considering that, at least judging from the construct state employed in the second hemistich, the poet seems to refer to a specific work and not to a generic “Manichaean book”: “The face of ‘Abwayh, be careful! is the Book of the Manichaeans” (*wajhu ‘abwuyyibi fa-hzarū/bu kitābu l-ṣanādīqāl*) (*Abū Nuwās* ed. 1982: 276).

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