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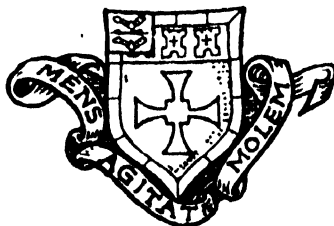


15. ADAM AND EVE

SURVIVALS OF  
Sasanian & Manichaean  
ART  
IN  
PERSIAN PAINTING

By

SIR THOMAS W. ARNOLD, C.I.E., Litt.D.



OXFORD

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**The Fourth Charlton Lecture was delivered by Sir Thomas Arnold in Armstrong College on November 6th, 1922, and is here printed.**

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## SURVIVALS OF SASANIAN AND MANICHAEAN ART IN PERSIAN PAINTING

**S**PECIAL interest attaches to all survivals of an earlier state of culture which, after a long period of apparent disappearance, emerge again without there being any evidence of how they managed to continue to exist. Such survivals in the sphere of religion have in recent years received special attention ; we have abundant material for the study of the survival of early cults under the altered forms they assume in consequence of their adaptation to religions that came into existence at a later date. Thus on sites where in ancient days there was a Buddhist shrine, we may now find the tomb of some entirely imaginary Muhammadan saint ; and instances in which Christian churches, especially in Greece and the nearer East, have been erected on the site of classical temples are familiar to all students of the history of religion. One of the most interesting features in such survivals is the fact that under the altered appearance, some very early cult or practice continues its existence, in spite of the supposed entire disappearance of the system of religion with which it was originally connected.

Similar phenomena are observable also in the domain of art, and it is such a group of facts that is presented in this lecture. The most obvious instances are survivals of classical art in the painting and the sculpture of the Christian Church ; these are well known to every student of European art, because the examples are abundant and

have been made readily accessible in reproductions of all kinds. But in the field of Muhammadan art the student is faced with special difficulties, and in none more than in the case of Persian painting, the subject of the present lecture—the purpose of which is to show that in Persian painting from the thirteenth century onwards we find emerging again artistic motifs which, for lack of any examples during the interval, seem to have died out centuries before, and yet by some means (the exact nature of which is unknown to us) they have managed to remain alive in a continuous artistic tradition. Examples of the prototypes of such survivals are found in the art of Persia before the Arab conquest, when Persia was under the rule of the Sasanians, from the middle of the third century to the middle of the seventh. Such survivals present a problem in the history of art that up to the present has received little attention, but it deserves special study in this country, since, in various libraries and other collections here, we possess some of the finest examples of Persian pictorial art that have ever been produced. For the student of Persian painting finds his materials, not in Persia itself, but in London and Oxford, or, if he can go farther afield, in Paris and Boston and New York.

But as compared with any of the schools of art that have flourished in Europe, the materials are lamentably sparse and scattered, especially for the earlier periods. In the first place, historical records of Persian painters are entirely lacking until we come down to the fifteenth century, and even then such biographical information as can be obtained is scanty and is in most cases confined to the mere name of the artist. This is a difficulty which is familiar to the student of other periods of art, as, for

example, that of the Flemish or the German Primitifs; but in the case of Muhammadan art, this lack of any record of the personality of the artist is the result of a contemptuous attitude towards the painter himself and his craft. We may be ignorant of the name and of all personal details connected with the life of some of these Primitifs in Europe, such as the so-styled Flemish ' Master of the Life of Mary ' whose charming pictures are among the treasures of Berlin, Cologne, and Munich, or the so-called ' Master with the Pink ' whose works are found in Budapest and Berne, or many another Christian painter to whom the historian can only refer under such vague and impersonal designations ; but still we know one thing about them—namely, that they worked with the approval of their contemporaries,—that their pictures were set up in a place of honour in some church or cathedral, and that devout persons gazed up to them with reverence and admiration as they knelt before them in prayer on their knees. The Christian artist could thus feel—poor though he might be—that his art had the sanction of religion and won for him the sympathy and goodwill of his fellow townsmen. But the case was entirely different with the Muhammadan painter, for Islam, unlike Christianity, has never taken pictorial art under its protection. Not only do the Arabs, like some other Asiatic peoples, appear to have had a strong dislike to plastic or other representations of the human figure, but after the rise of Islam they incorporated this dislike into their religion, and consequently one of the distinguishing features of Muslim theology has been its condemnation of all forms of art that attempt to represent the human figure, or indeed any form of animal life whatsoever.

Not that Islam has been hostile to art as a whole, for in the mosque it gave to architecture the sanction of religion ; and geometrical designs and elaborate colour schemes were developed to a height of artistic excellence that has won for Muhammadan art the admiration of all students of design. But in the eyes of the Muslim theologian the painter of the human figure was a reprobate, undeserving of any pity or consideration. The founder of Islam is recorded to have said that when on the day of judgement the painter will stand before the Throne of God, God will command him to put life into the objects of his artistic creation. When the poor wretch confesses his inability to turn these semblances into living realities, he will be cast down into hell, to burn therein for ever.

The thought underlying this condemnation of the painter appears to have been this, that by depicting living beings he had sacrilegiously assumed to himself the function of the Creator, to whom alone appertains the giving of life. So uncompromising is the Muslim theologian in this condemnation of pictorial art, that it extends not only to the painter but also to any one who patronizes him, for the Prophet declared that the angels would not enter a house in which there were representations of any living thing.

It may easily be understood how inimical this theological attitude has been towards the development of painting in the Muhammadan world, and a pathetic interest therefore attaches itself to such works of art as have managed to survive, despite the efforts of the theologian to destroy them. Now, the study of any religion is of interest not only for the embodiments of its ideals in the life and institutions of its adherents, but also for such

phenomena as present themselves in opposition to, and in spite of, the positive precepts of its creed. Since therefore Islam is especially noteworthy for the remarkable devotion with which even its sternest injunctions have been obeyed by its followers, it is a marvellous testimony to the living force of the artistic instinct that in spite of the great influence exerted by the accredited exponents of that creed so much painting has been produced in Muhammadan countries. Not only is it remarkable that so much was produced, but also that so much has survived, for the same bigotry that discouraged all such artistic effort was continually active in destroying works of art after they had come into existence. How many paintings have been deliberately destroyed we shall never know, but the mutilated condition of such examples as have survived is evidence enough of this unceasing hostility. There are many pictures in the great collections in this country in which an attempt has been made to rub out the faces of the persons represented ; or the dislike of such delineation of the human form has shown itself in other ways ; e. g. a fine illuminated manuscript in the Library of the India Office possesses one single picture which apparently offended the religious susceptibilities of some one into whose possession the manuscript had come ; to tear out the page would have involved the loss of some of the text ; so the owner employed a painter to remove all the faces of the persons in the picture by painting flowers and continuing the landscape over them. In addition to other forces of destruction at work that are responsible for the scanty number of examples of the great periods of Persian painting—such as damp and the white ants and other incidents of an oriental climate—there was the incalculable

ruin caused by the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century ; these ruthless barbarians swept off the face of the earth ancient cities—centres of Muslim culture—and destroyed all the treasures of art they contained, with the same pitiless thoroughness as they showed in the massacre of their inhabitants. The student of the history of art is consequently faced with the following difficult problem. From the thirteenth century onward there is an almost unbroken series of paintings which, for lack of a better designation, have been styled Persian ; they are obviously the outcome of a highly developed artistic feeling, but to what source can the ancestry of this school of painting be traced, or whence do certain constantly recurring characteristics of it derive their origin ? Examination of the existing materials shows that similar artistic conventions occur in the art of an earlier civilization that had perished six centuries before, and that in some mysterious manner they succeeded in remaining alive, through that long period, under alien and often hostile circumstances.

I propose, therefore, to consider the survivals of such earlier periods of artistic development, as they reappear in these Persian paintings. I have selected only two of these earlier schools of painting, the Sasanian and the Manichaean. There are obviously others, and a passing reference may be made to the influence of Chinese artistic conventions. Chinese works of art were brought into Muhammadan countries from an early period, and Chinese artists followed the Mongol armies in their victorious movement westward in the thirteenth century, and there are certain characteristic features of Chinese painting which were adopted by Persian artists as permanent conventions of their own. Among these was the Chinese ' Tai ' or

‘ cloud form ’, for the Persian painters, instead of taking the trouble to notice the shape of such clouds as they could see for themselves in the sky, almost invariably represented clouds under this conventional form as they saw it in Chinese paintings or on Chinese pottery. But the roots from which Persian painting grew extend back many centuries before any Chinese influence made itself felt.

Every student is familiar with the story of Alexander’s conquest of the Persian Empire. After his death, in the division of his conquests, Persia fell to the lot of Seleucus, whose descendants ruled it for a century and a half. For more than four centuries after, another race of foreign rulers, the Parthian, occupied the country, until, early in the third century of our era, a national movement set upon the throne a native Persian dynasty, the Sasanian. This Sasanian dynasty lasted for more than four centuries, until it was swept away by the Arab conquest in the seventh century. But under the Sasanians Persia had passed through one of the greatest periods of its history and was a formidable rival to the Roman Empire itself. The empire of Persia under the Sasanians comprised not only modern Persia but the Mesopotamian valley as far south as the edge of the Arabian desert, and the border between the great rival powers of Rome and Persia was drawn from north to south in the western end of Mesopotamia. Their capital was Ctesiphon, not far from the modern city of Baghdad, where the great arch of the palace of the Sasanian kings is still visible. It is important to realize the wide extent of the Persian Empire at this period, as we can thus recognize how such cultural influences as survived from the Sasanian period into the period of Arab rule could

exercise influence far south of the country which now appears as Persia on our maps. From the records we have of the wealth and grandeur of the Sasanian kings, and from the accounts of the loot which the Arab conquerors acquired when they entered the palace of the Persian king, we may form some idea of the great artistic activity that flourished under their patronage ; but here, as so often elsewhere, the forces of destruction have left to us but few memorials of Sasanian art. We know that a school of painting flourished, and that artists decorated with pictures the palaces of the Sasanian kings, but of such palaces the ruins even seldom remain, and only a fortunate chance has preserved for us a few silver vessels which remained hidden underground for many centuries, and can still give us some idea of the character of the art of this period.

Consequently, there is but scanty material for the student who endeavours to trace out a continuity in Persian art ; but that such continuity existed, there can be no doubt whatsoever. In some mysterious manner, the same artistic tradition as was operative in the middle of the seventh century, when the Arabs conquered the Sasanian empire, succeeded in remaining alive for a period of six centuries, at the end of which the old motifs reappeared. This continuity is all the more remarkable when we bear in mind the great diversity between Sasanian culture and Islamic culture, and remember the remarkable manner in which, in any Muhammadan community, Islam dominates every department of human life, giving its own colour not only to religious observances, but also to art and letters, manners and social institutions.

It is therefore a noteworthy phenomenon in the history of art that, in spite of the Islamic condemnation of repre-

sentations of the human figure, it is just such forms of artistic expression that emerge once again after a lapse of six centuries. What happened during that long interval we can only conjecture. There was probably some form of artistic activity, though little evidence of it has survived to us.

Let us now consider those characteristics of later Persian painting, the prototypes of which are to be found in Sasanian art. I have selected the following: representations of angels, of hunting scenes, and of drinking parties in a garden. These are all commonplace characteristics of the later Persian painting and were painted so frequently generation after generation that they must obviously correspond to some fundamental interest in the Persian outlook upon life. It might seem that representations of angels, since they enter so largely into the theological consciousness of Muhammadan peoples, and pictures of hunting scenes or of pleasure parties in a garden, in a country where the love of the garden is one of the most noteworthy features of the life of Persian society, would have permitted the artistic feeling of one generation of painters after another to create fresh forms of expression in quite a spontaneous manner. We might have expected that each individual artist would have followed the promptings of his own genius or his own taste. But an examination of the long series of pictures of these three different types reveals to us the survival of an early tradition from Sasanian times, which one generation after another reproduced.

Let us take first the Sasanian artist's representation of the angel. In one of the best-known monuments of Sasanian art, the 'Tāq-i-Būstān' near Kirmānshāh, we find a great arch,<sup>1</sup> at the entrance of an artificial grotto, cut

<sup>1</sup> Plate I.

out of the side of a hill, overhanging a tank. This work was executed by the order of the last great king of the Sasanian dynasty, Khusrau II Parvīz (590–628).

In the spandrils of the arch there are two figures of Victory, each holding out in the right hand a crown, to which are attached two broad streamers. The crowns appear to be made in the form of a double chain of pearls, and the Victory on the right carries in the left hand a cup full of pearls,<sup>1</sup> such as on great and presumably rare occasions it was customary to sprinkle over a victorious king or some princess on her bridal day. It is obvious to every student of classical art that we can trace back to a much earlier period the artistic influence to which these figures of Victory are due. Such an arrangement of winged Victories in the spandrils of an arch was a common convention on the Roman triumphal arches, and in the mosaics of Christian churches these Victories become angels, such as may be seen in the church of San Vitale at Ravenna. The classical influence which is so obvious in these sculptures of Tāq-i-Būstān was not, however, derived directly from classical art, for though the style of the dress of these Victories is Greek, yet the ill-arranged details would suggest that the artist was not altogether familiar with this style of costume ; and we have here rather a late survival of the Hellenistic art that from ancient Bactria spread its influence westward into Persia and eastward towards China.

In the Buddhist paintings that have recently been discovered in Central Asia we find evidences of a similar Hellenistic influence which could only have reached so far east, from Bactria. Since we are not concerned here with the earlier origin of this form of representation, we will take this example of Sasanian sculpture as our starting-

<sup>1</sup> Plate 2.

point. The Persians who were contemporary with its execution probably saw in these figures two great arch-angels of the Zoroastrian angelic hierarchy, stretching out their crowns towards the crescent moon, one of the symbols adopted by the Zoroastrian kings, which can be seen fastened by scarves to the top of the arch. Such figures within the spandrils of an arch occur again and again in Persian painting, but we have to leap over an interval of more than seven centuries and a half before we can find an example of the survival of this artistic convention in a manuscript of Persian poetry copied in the year 1396.<sup>1</sup> Here, in the spandrils of an arch, we find two similar angels, though they lack the force and dignity of their prototypes, which were so much nearer the original classical tradition. They still carry the cup full of pearls, and they exhibit a constantly recurring feature of Sasanian costume in the streamers or scarves tied round the waist. These do not actually occur in the sculptures of Tāq-i-Būstān, but are prominent in a piece of Sasanian silver work representing a lion hunt, which is either a piece of Sasanian work of the fifth century or is a later Central-Asian copy.<sup>2</sup> We see them again in another picture of an angel of the fourteenth century, representing the Archangel Michael.

As Persian painting was mainly a courtly art and the painters worked for their princely patrons, representations of hunting are frequent. The prototype of these goes back to the great hunting scenes on the Sasanian rock sculptures or similar scenes on Sasanian silver work, e. g. one representing Khusrau II, who made the great arch of Tāq-i-Būstān—dated about A. D. 600—and they appear again and again in the designs of Persian carpets, and in the illumination of manuscripts. Along with the representations of the

<sup>1</sup> Plate 3.

<sup>2</sup> Plate 4.

prince hunting the lion or the deer or the wild boar are pictures of him sitting at his ease in a garden, drinking wine, while musicians play on stringed and wind instruments.<sup>1</sup> Here again there is extant a Sasanian prototype of such familiar representations, and a comparison of this earlier example shows features that are reproduced in sixteenth-century Persian paintings, though so many centuries intervene between them.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the motif of a lion killing a deer, which we find on a Sasanian silver bowl of the sixth century, reappears as a decorative motif on the margins of Persian manuscripts again and again.<sup>3</sup>

Naturally, with the lapse of time and the growth of greater artistic skill and artistic individuality, the influence of the original convention tended to grow weaker, but in the representation of certain familiar incidents that are constantly repeated, it is possible to trace the influence of a traditional motif over a considerable period of time. There was no more favourite subject for the Persian painter than the story of the heroic days of ancient Persia, which received permanent literary form in the great epic of Firdausi towards the close of the tenth century. Illustrated copies of this great epic are innumerable, and we can trace in the pictures of certain favourite incidents the original Sasanian design under its various modifications during successive periods of artistic development. For purposes of illustration I have selected the story of the old Persian king, Bahrām Gūr, who took his lutist with him one day when he went hunting the deer ; he asked her to set him a difficult task, so that he might show off his skill as an archer. She told him to shoot an arrow in such a way as to pin the hind foot of a deer to its ear. He first just touches the ear of the animal with an arrow, and when it

<sup>1</sup> Plate 5.<sup>2</sup> Plate 6.<sup>3</sup> Plates 7, 7a.

lifts its foot to scratch the ear, with a second arrow pins foot and ear together.

The Sasanian representation of the incident occurs on a piece of silver work, in the Museum of the city of Kazan, though this actual silver dish is probably only a later imitation of Sasanian work.<sup>1</sup> The same artistic tradition reappears on an earthenware vessel found on the site of the city of Ray (Rhages); as this place was plundered and burnt by the Mongols in 1220 and never recovered its former prosperity, this vessel cannot be later than the thirteenth century, and may indeed be earlier.<sup>2</sup> There is an interval of more than two centuries and a half between the date of this earthenware vessel and that of a Persian manuscript in the British Museum, the colophon of which bears the date 891 A.H. (=A.D. 1486).<sup>3</sup> The pictures in this manuscript belong to a period in which there was a great revival of Persian painting, to which Chinese and other influences had largely contributed. Under the stress of foreign domination and the pressure of foreign artistic conventions, it seemed as though all Sasanian traditions would be overwhelmed and drowned beneath a flood of new influences, but in this picture the old Sasanian tradition still survives, the lutist is still uncomfortably perched on the camel behind the prince, and though he now wears the head-dress that the Mongols had introduced into Persia, he reproduces the same attitude as that of Bahrām Gūr on the piece of Sasanian silver work of the seventh century.

Later Persian artists apparently felt that the camel was a clumsy beast for a prince to ride while hunting, and they painted Bahrām Gūr seated on a horse and provided the lutist with a horse of her own to ride on.<sup>4</sup> Thus by the end

<sup>1</sup> Plate 8.

<sup>2</sup> Plate 9.

<sup>3</sup> Plate 10.

<sup>4</sup> Plate 11.

of the sixteenth century the old Sasanian tradition had died out.

The connexion between Sasanian art and Persian painting can be established by clear and definite evidence ; but it is not so easy to indicate in Persian pictures survivals of the art of the Manichaeans, who had a school of painting which has been almost unknown in Europe until recent times. The modern world has forgotten the Manichaeans, but there was a time when this religion had a wide extension throughout both Europe and Asia, and in both continents the Manichaeans were viewed with fierce hatred. They were persecuted by the Sasanians in Persia from the very outset, and after a brief interval of toleration suffered persecution also at the hands of the Arab Caliphs in Baghdad. The Christian Church in the West endeavoured to crush them out of existence as zealously as did the theologians of Islam, and the annals of the medieval inquisition contain frequent records of the examination and the reconciliation of Manichaeans. Western Christendom became familiar with their name through the writings of St. Augustine, who had been himself a Manichaean before his conversion to Christianity, and the Albigenses who were exterminated by Simon de Montfort in the thirteenth century were believed to have been infected by the Manichaean heresy.

But Manichaeism is now entirely dead as a religious faith ; indeed it is one of the few religions laying claim to universal acceptance that has entirely perished from the face of the earth. It takes its name from that of its founder, Mani. Born not far from the modern Baghdad in the third century of the Christian era, he began his public teaching in 242 and was put to death by the Sasanian king

about 275. Mani represented himself to be the last of a series of messengers of divine truth—Buddha, Zoroaster, and Jesus—and as being the Paraclete whose coming had been promised by Christ. The fundamental doctrine of his religion was that there are two eternal principles—light and darkness, good and evil—ceaselessly in opposition to one another. The universe he declared to be essentially evil, and the first human pair, Adam and Eve, to be the offspring of devils, who hoped by producing them to imprison, and so to keep in their own possession, a portion of the element of light.

Mani taught his followers that they were to try to set free the particles of light, which in the process of the formation of the world and of the human race had become entangled with the particles of darkness. This liberation was to be effected by means of fasting, celibacy, and prayer. Since the performance of all these religious obligations was impossible for persons engaged in the ordinary avocations of the world, the Manichaeans were divided into two distinct divisions—first, those who attempted to follow out all the precepts of Mani, and lived lives of celibacy and fasting, and withdrew from all worldly affairs ; such persons were called the Elect, and formed a hierarchy, at the head of which was the representative of Mani himself ;<sup>1</sup> next, the ordinary Manichaeans, who were allowed to marry and take part in the affairs of the world, and were called the Hearers.<sup>2</sup> The Hearers had every Sunday to repeat certain prayers and to give one-tenth of their possessions in alms. They had to support the Elect, who, since they were not allowed to take part in the affairs of the world or even to pluck fruit or gather vegetables, were

<sup>1</sup> Plate 12.

<sup>2</sup> Plate 13.

entirely dependent on the Hearers for their food and all other requirements. The Ten Commandments of the Manichæan Church forbade idol worship, lying, covetousness, murder, adultery, theft, the teaching of arts of deception, magic, scepticism in religion, and lukewarmness in behaviour. Manichæism may be briefly described as a kind of Christianized Zoroastrianism, since it sought to reconcile the doctrines of Zoroaster and Christ.

But we are not concerned here so much with the religious tenets of the Manichæans as with their art, and one of the strangest facts about this religion is that in the land of its origin the name of Mani was remembered in the Muhammadan world (with the exception, of course, of serious students of religious history) as that of a great painter. So successful had been the persecution of this religion by the Caliphs of Baghdad that by the end of the tenth century there were hardly any Manichæans left in Muhammadan countries; their existence as a religious body appears to have become forgotten, and the Persian poets from Firdausi onwards (in the beginning of the eleventh century), though they constantly make reference to Mani, describe him as a painter who produced a wonderful picture book, and his name came to be proverbially used in describing any skilful artist. This strange transformation of the founder of what claimed to be a world religion into a mere painter arose from the fact that Mani himself had decorated his religious books with brilliant pictures, and his followers followed his example.

St. Augustine, for example, speaks of the magnificent parchment manuscripts of the Manichæans, and of their fine leather bindings, but he makes mention of them only in order to urge his readers to burn them whenever they

could get hold of any ;<sup>1</sup> and this injunction was so zealously carried out not only in the Christian but also in the Muhammadan world, that not a single example of the painting of the Manichaeans was known to exist until, in 1904, Professor Von Le Coq found in a ruined city near Turfan (in what is now Chinese Turkistan) a few scattered Manichaean paintings and some frescoes on the walls of what had been a Manichaean temple.

From historical records we know that, when towards the end of the eighth century the Caliphs of Baghdad were putting thousands of Manichaeans to death, the persecuted adherents of this faith fled into Turkistan and other parts of Central Asia. Here they gained many converts, and a remnant of them appears to have survived even up to comparatively modern times.

The importance of the Manichaeans in the history of art is that they attached great importance to painting as a medium of religious instruction, that their temples were decorated with frescoes and their religious books with brilliant paintings. Since their religion had attained a wide extension for five centuries before the Manichaeans were driven out of Muhammadan territory, and even after that date, under the cloak of a pretended conversion to Islam, a number of persons remained secret adherents of Manichaeism, there must have been a school of art devoting itself to book illustration for five centuries continuously ; and though the religious books of the Manichaeans might have been destroyed, the artistic movement they had initiated and had kept alive for so many centuries might well have continued to exist in the service of other masters.

<sup>1</sup> Incendite omnes illas membranas elegantesque tecturas decoris pellibus exquisitas (*Contra Faustum*, xiii).

As orthodox Muhammadan sentiment was so hostile to representations of the human figure, it would be natural that whenever any Muhammadan was so regardless of religion as to want to have a picture painted, he would call in the services of an artist belonging to some non-Muslim religious body, either Christian or Manichæan, and these painters would become the masters of such Muhammadan painters as ventured to disregard the condemnation of their own theologians.

Is it possible to trace in later Persian art any survivals of this Manichæan artistic movement, which was at one time so active? The investigation is one of great difficulty, as the materials available are so scanty; but taking as our starting-point the remains of undoubted Manichæan work, found by Von Le Coq, the date of which cannot be later than 1036, when the city in which they were found was abandoned by its inhabitants—and may even be some centuries older—let us consider first some of the technical details and afterwards certain representations of well-known incidents that appear to have been produced under Manichæan influence.

All students of the history of ornament are familiar with the various modifications of the so-called palmette. Originating in Egypt as a conventionalized representation of the lotus, this ornament has wandered from country to country, undergoing various modifications in different localities and in different periods of art; but though the origin may be one and the same, certain modifications are characteristic now of Greek art, now of oriental art, &c. There is certain presentation of this form of ornament that is found in the frescoes of Turfan—one has been described as a Chinese peony—but it is an error to suppose

that painters of this period made any attempt to copy actual flower forms with which they might have been familiar ; rather, we have here one of the many modifications of the original Egyptian conventionalized representation of the lotus ; and another is of a simpler form looking like a four-petalled flower. Now, these particular ornaments in the frescoes of Turfan are of rare occurrence elsewhere, but they are to be found in the ornamental decoration of certain Arabic manuscripts of a much later date,<sup>1</sup> the artistic provenance of which has been a matter of considerable dispute, notably in a manuscript dated 1307, belonging to the Library of the University of Edinburgh.

The similarities existing between these two groups of artistic activity are not confined merely to such ornamental details, but are found also in the treatment of drapery. In a group of manuscripts the illustrations of which have arbitrarily been assigned to a so-called Mesopotamian school, we find strange meaningless folds in the garments of the persons represented, which closely resemble the draperies worn by figures in the frescoes of Chinese Turkistan. But apart from these special details which indicate the existence of a common artistic tradition, there are certain subjects which the painter puts before us in a form that can be most readily explained as being of Manichæan origin. Such particularly are the rarely-occurring pictures of incidents taken from the Bible.

A Muhammadan artist who attempted to draw any such pictures would have no Muhammadan tradition to serve him as a guide ; for Muhammadan sentiment would be hostile to any such representations whatsoever. In such a case, either a Christian or a Manichæan artist

<sup>1</sup> Plate 14.

would have to be employed, but in the manuscript referred to above we have pictures of the Annunciation, the temptation of Adam and Eve, &c., which are entirely unlike any known representations of similar subjects in Christian art. If a Christian artist were working under the influence of a Byzantine tradition, we could trace out the origin of the type he followed from the abundant examples of Byzantine art available to the student ; but though it is not impossible that some of the conventions of Byzantine painting may be traced in this eclectic art, yet in general conception and treatment of the subject-matter, Byzantine art has nothing to offer at all comparable to the pictures we are now considering. It is indeed possible that the painter of these pictures might have belonged to one of the Oriental Churches, e. g. the great Nestorian Church which for centuries flourished in Persia and in Mesopotamia, in the enjoyment of great wealth, such as rendered possible a liberal patronage of artists. But the treatment of these subjects is not such as would suggest that the artist who produced them was a Christian at all or had been influenced by any Christian tradition. It is possible, therefore, that we have here an instance of a Manichaean tradition. For to the Manichaean the story of Adam and Eve was familiar, and Jesus was accepted by Mani as the greatest religious teacher that had immediately preceded him, and pictures of Jesus must have occurred in the Manichaean religious books that have perished. It therefore appears more than probable that these pictures, painted at the end of a long period of Manichaean artistic activity, have preserved for us a form of pictorial presentation and an artistic tradition which otherwise has almost entirely perished.

Among these pictures is one representing the tempta-

tion of Adam and Eve.<sup>1</sup> It would at first sight seem to be a picture of God walking in the Garden of Eden and conversing with Adam and Eve. But in the manuscript in which this picture is found it does not occur in any account of either the Jewish or the Christian religion, but is given as an illustration of the Zoroastrian legend of the temptation of the first man and woman (Mēshā and Mēshyāna), who are said to have lived happily for fifty years, without any need of eating or drinking, and free from all pain and sorrow. Then Ahriman, the spirit of evil, appeared to them in the guise of an old man and persuaded them to eat of the fruit of the trees ; he set them the example, and as soon as he had eaten he was turned into the figure of a handsome youth. Such a legend had never formed the subject of Christian art, and in this picture there is a distinct variation from the Christian representations of the Fall, in that, while Eve holds in her hand an apple, Ahriman holds in his a pomegranate. Moreover, the Chinese character of the landscape indicates for this picture an Eastern rather than a Western source. Just as it seems impossible to trace this representation back to Christian art, still less possible is it that it should have had a Muhammadan origin.

Another picture, from its very subject-matter, could never have owed its origin to a Christian source. The Muslim theologians, in their desire not to be outdone by their Christian opponents who quoted from Isaiah the prophecy of the coming of Christ, maintained that the mission of Muhammad, too, had been foretold by Isaiah.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly they quoted from Isaiah (xxi. 6, 8, 9)—and quoted incorrectly—as follows : ‘ For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Go, set a watchman ; let him declare what

<sup>1</sup> Plate 15 (*frontispiece*).

<sup>2</sup> Plate 16.

he seeth. And he cried, O Lord, I stand continually upon the watch-tower in the day-time, and am set in my ward whole nights ; and behold I see a man riding on an ass, and a man riding on a camel ; and one of them came forward crying, and said : Babylon is fallen, and all the graven images of her gods hē hath broken unto the ground.' To the Muslim theologians, he that rode on the ass was Jesus, and the rider on the camel was Muhammad ; and to whom but to Muhammad could the fall of Babylon be ascribed ? for in consequence of the coming of the Arabian Prophet, Babylon had fallen, its idols had been broken, and its empire had perished.

In the representation of the Baptism of Christ, we have another picture that entirely lacks any of the features of the tradition of Christian art.<sup>1</sup> The types are Central Asian ; the enormous shoes are typical of those worn in Turkistan. The hovering dove is apparently of brass. Neither Christian nor Muhammadan art can provide the prototype for this picture. But as Jesus took so prominent a place in the theological system of the Manichaeans, they must have had their own characteristic manner of painting the various incidents of the Gospel story, and it seems more than probable that we have here a picture modelled upon the religious tradition of Manichaean painting.

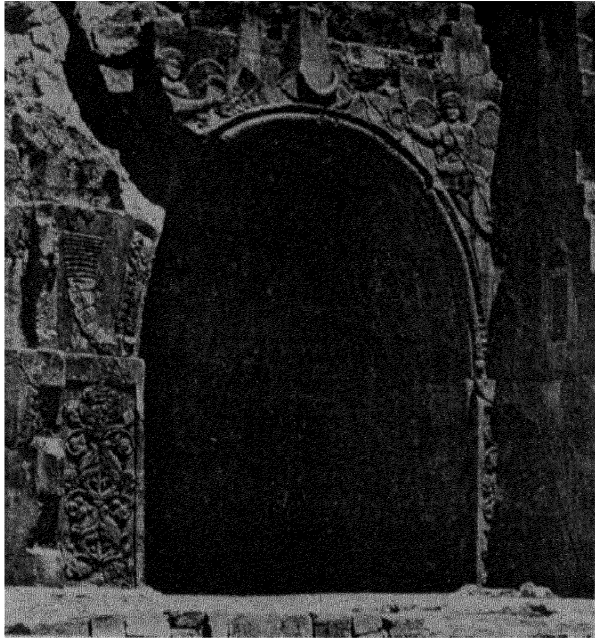
From the very nature of the case we are treading upon uncertain ground, but some of the subjects that we have considered—the Temptation of Adam and Eve, and the Baptism of Jesus—are so familiar to us in Christian art, that the strange, unusual treatment they here receive seems to exclude all possibility of their having been the work of a Christian painter. Muhammadan painting (for the reasons

<sup>1</sup> Plate 17.

already explained) had no traditional form of representing such subjects, nor indeed had any place at all for a religious art that included representations of such holy persons. The only other religious art that could have produced these pictures was the Manichaean, and the Eastern character of the types of face and figure, and the similarity in technical details to the Manichaean paintings that have survived in Central Asia, suggest that this is the source to which these strange pictures must be traced back.

Our investigation has led us into somewhat unfamiliar paths, for it cannot indeed be expected that either Sasanian or Manichaean art should make the same appeal to the English student as the more familiar art of Greece or Italy. But the art of every nation and of every age is of interest as an expression of human personality, and a certain pathetic attractiveness attaches to an art that has succeeded in keeping itself alive and in exerting an influence, through centuries of neglect, and despite all the destructive forces of war and conquest and the fanaticism of hostile theologians. To every student of art, whatever may be his special interest, it is encouraging to recognize the vitality of the artistic impulse, in forms however remote and unfamiliar, and the survival of the love of artistic expression over the hostile forces of destruction.



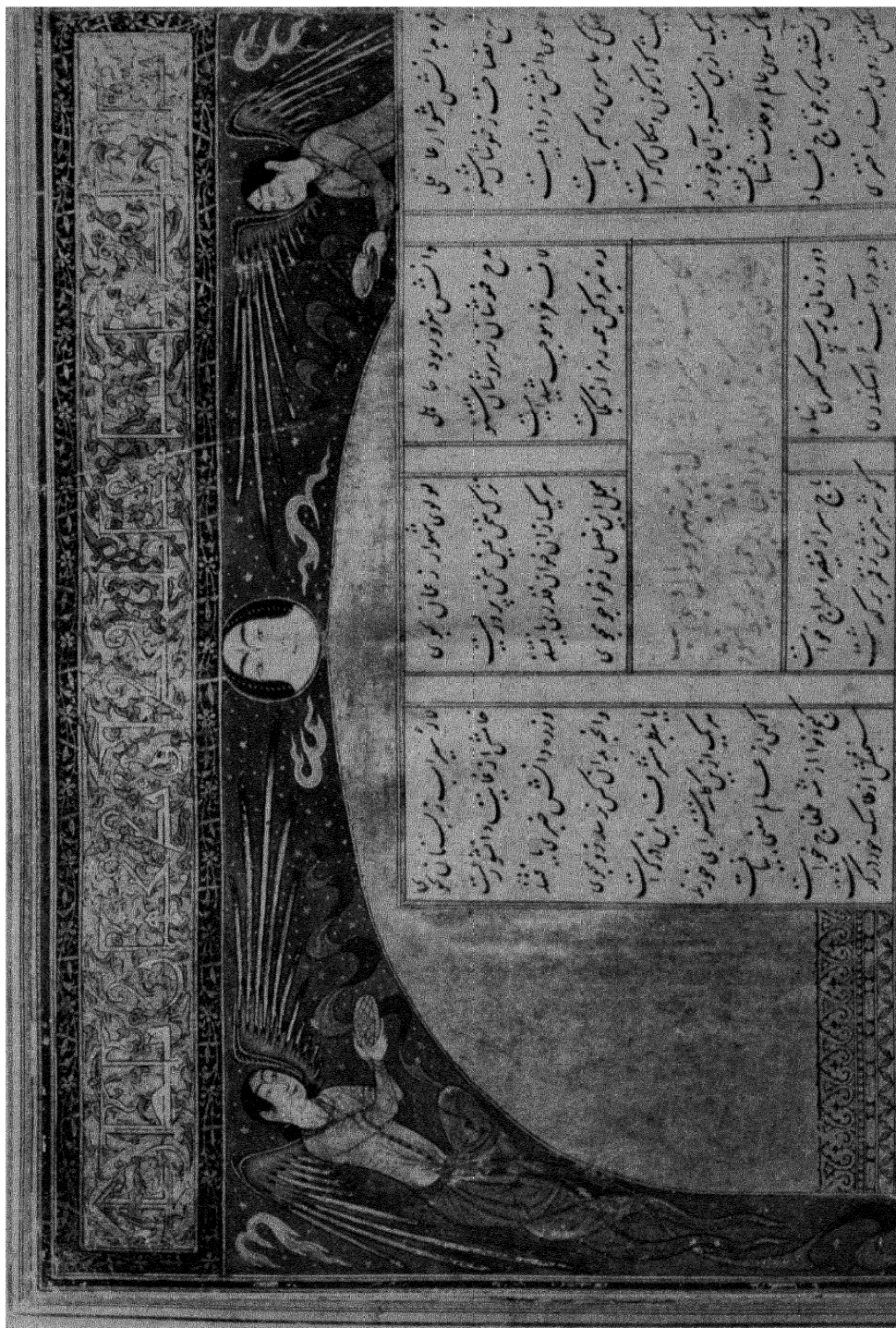


1. Arch of Tāq-i-Būstān



2. Figure of Victory





3. ANGELS, from Persian MS. of 14th century



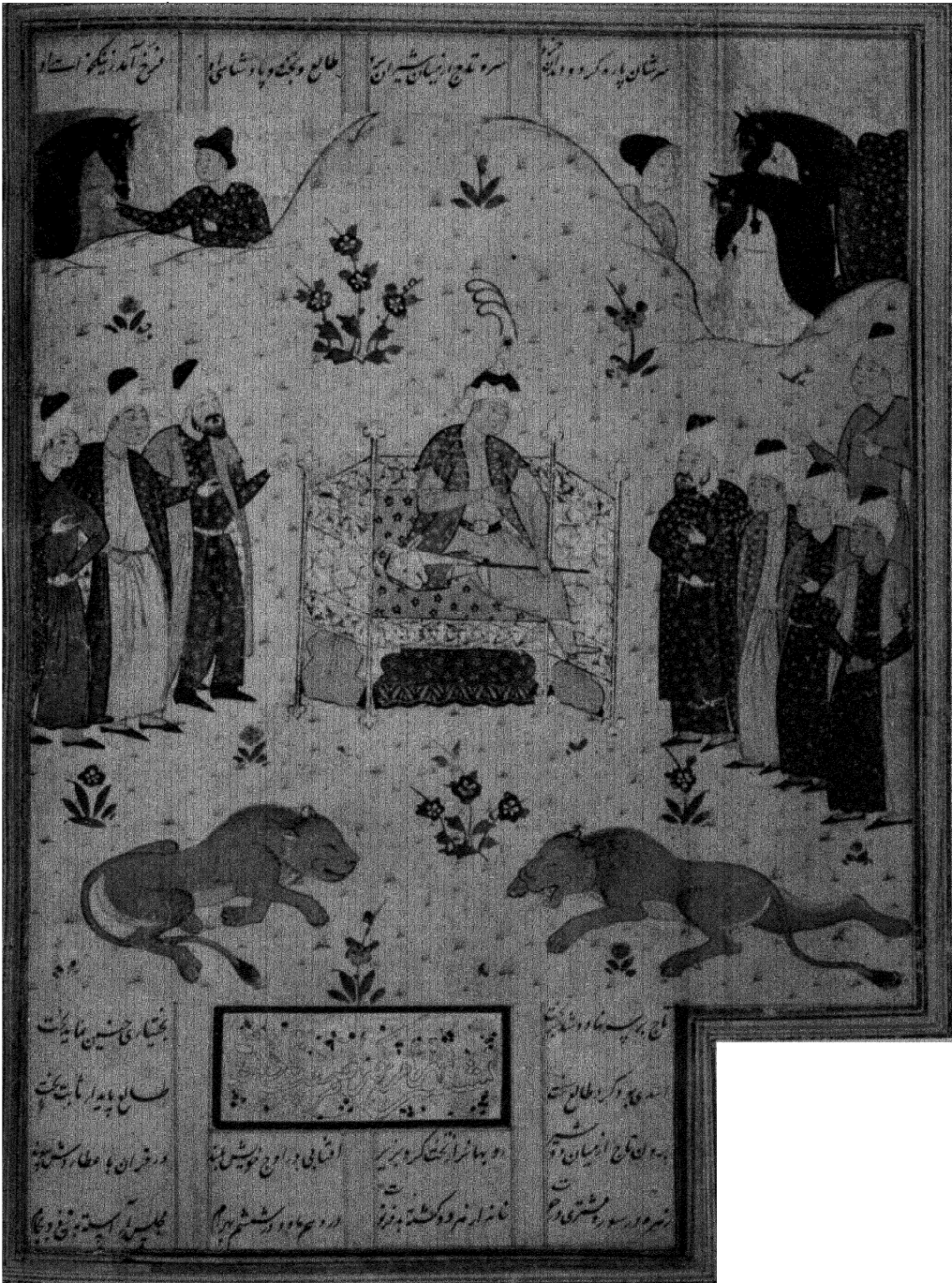


4. Sasanian King, hunting



5. King, drinking in garden





6 PRINCE, WITH ATTENDANTS



کا تارا کره کرد بس ام کور  
 ما کله بو آسوسته اندر کره  
 هم اندر زمانه شون ما کوشه  
 دو پکان گای سرور در شش  
 بگوشه سینه آسوا اندر کند  
 سرور کوشه و با شیکه به دست

بر اینکینت از دست اینجا بر شوم  
 بسید سپه روانان سپه بر تیز  
 سرش در سره باشد ما کوشه  
 بخوان اندرون لعل کت بر شش  
 بسند آه و بر دجای پسند  
 بران آسوا آرزوه ما اول کت

دو پکان بر کین کئی تیر داشت  
 تیز او پکان ز سر بر کت  
 جان بر سپه و کاه ما دو تیر  
 بیون را سوی شست دیگر تیر  
 بخارید کوشش آسوا اندر زمانه

بدست اندر از بر تیر داشت  
 کیز کت دو ما اندر کت  
 بر دجاستان بر تیر کت  
 کیم کان کور در سر ساخت  
 تیر اندرون را اندر جادو کان



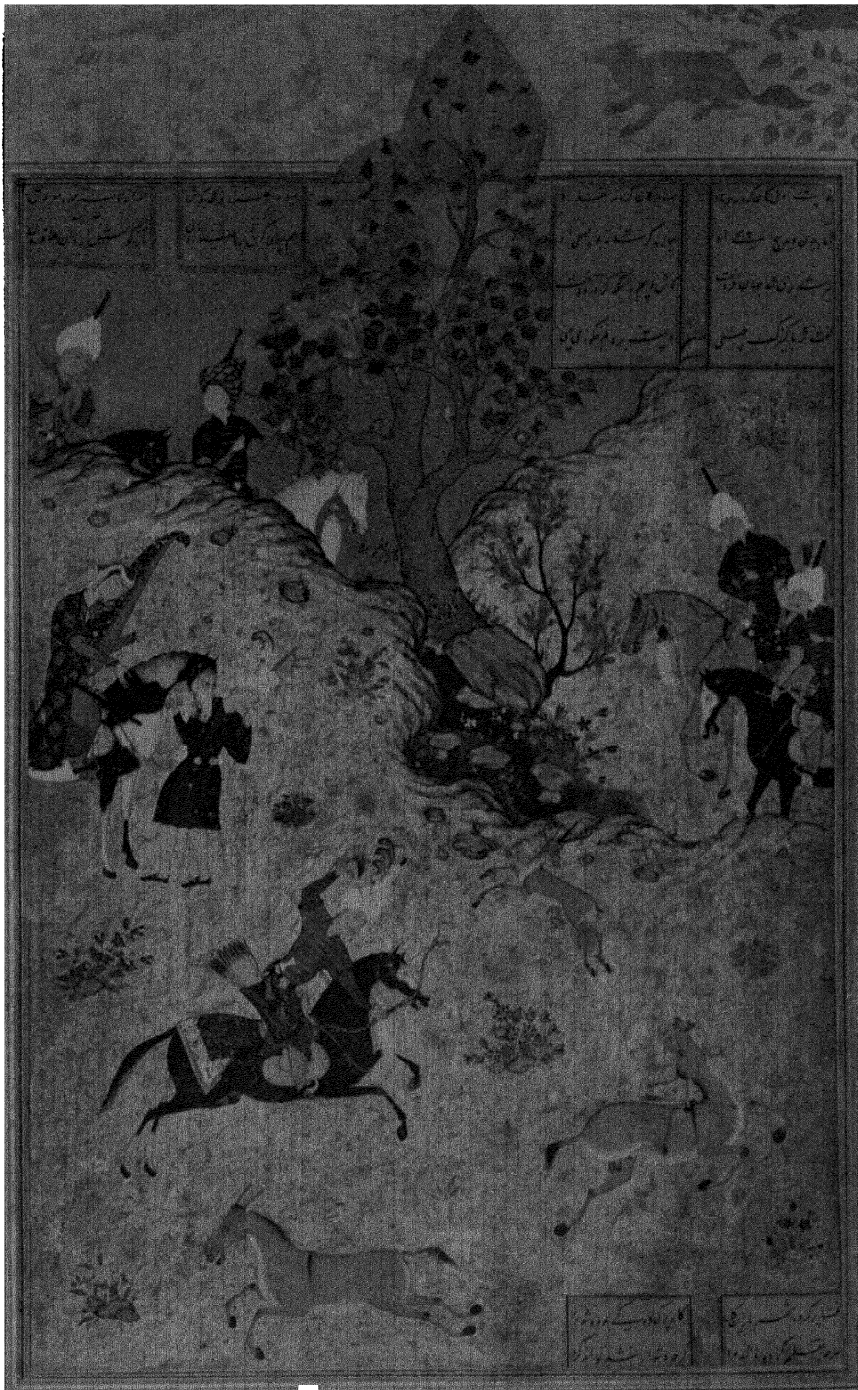
بز دوست بر ام و او را زین  
 کین کت گای تیر و کت

کت بر بر ز بروی زمین  
 چه بایست جنت همین بر کین

بیون از بر ما بسید و بر اند  
 اگر کند بودی کت او بر ام

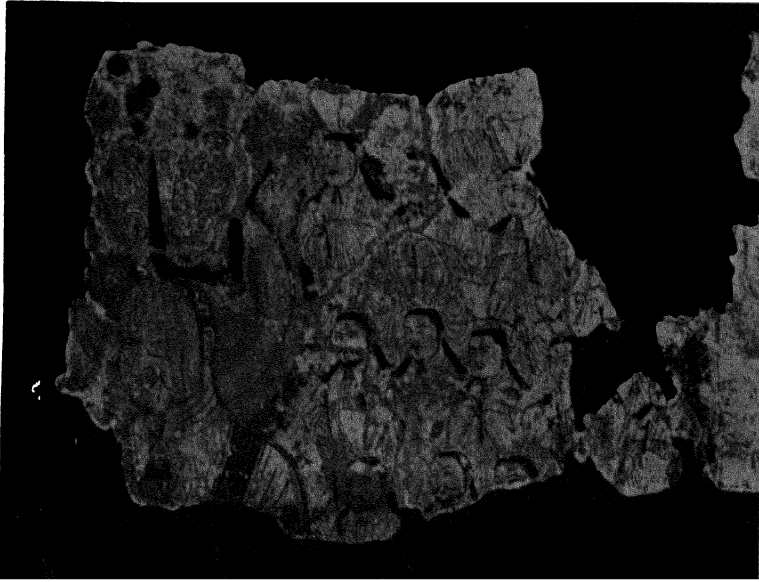
بز دوست در کت شون داشت  
 ازین ز تیر کت بری بر ام



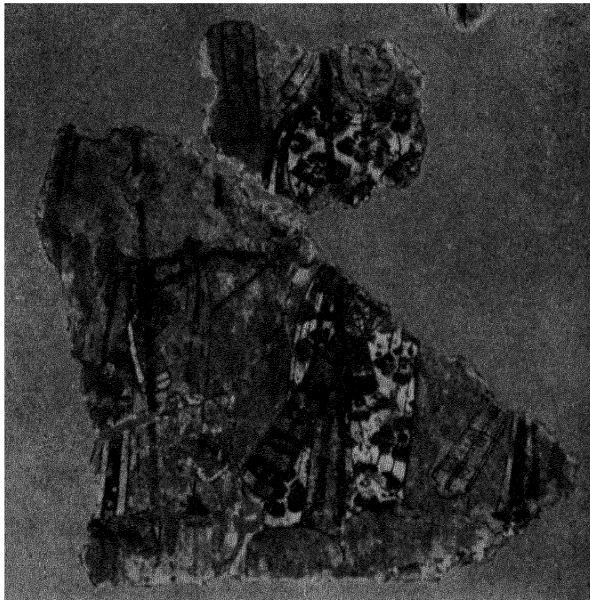


II. BAHRĀM GŪR AND ĀZĀDAH



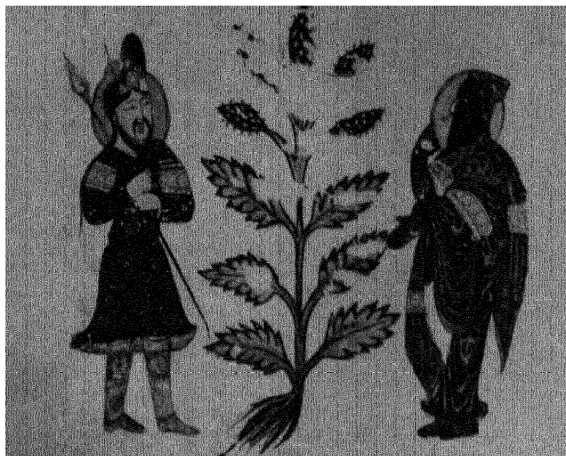


12. Manichaean priests

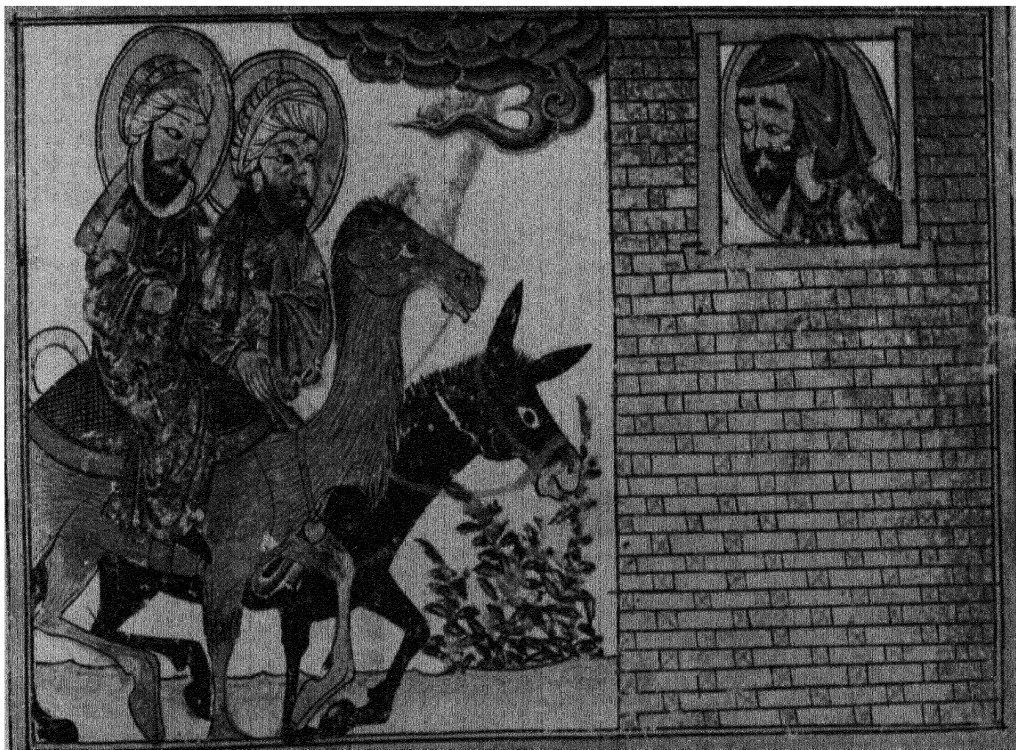


13. Manichaean laymen





14. Warrior and Physician



16. THE VISION OF ISAIAH





17. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS























