

On the Methodology used by Prof. Liu
Ts'un-yan 柳存仁 in his Monograph
entitled "Traces of Zoroastrian
and Manichaeic Activities
in Pre-T'ang China"

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It has been a long-recognized truth amongst scholars that Taoism, in its long history, has been influenced by not only Buddhism but also by other non-Chinese elements. Kubo Noritada 窪徳忠, Sakai Tadao 酒井忠夫 and Miyakawa Hisayuki 宮川尙志 have already pointed this out.¹⁾ However, a new theory has recently appeared to the effect that the Taoist texts of the end of the fifth century were infiltrated by Christian stories from the Bible, and that they must have been introduced through Manichaeism. This theory was advanced by Prof. Liu Ts'un-yan 柳存仁 of the Australian National University in an oral presentation at the 29 *International Congress of Orientalists* in Paris in 1973. He then had his argument published in the *Selected Papers from the Hall of Harmonious Wind*, Leiden, 1976, under the title 'Traces of Zoroastrian and Manichaeic Activities in Pre-T'ang China' (pp. 3-55). This article, apart from the new theory mentioned above, advanced novel arguments about the period in which Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism entered China.

Prof. Liu is a notable scholar who has published a great deal, mainly about the Ming era. It is therefore only natural that his oral and written work should be the object of public attention. However, there have since been no arguments advanced to support or oppose Liu's new theories mentioned above. One objective of this essay is to advance contrary opinions about Liu's conclusions.

However, this is not just meant to be limited to a personal statement about the content of Liu's thesis. The main objective of this presentation is to make an impact on the method of so-called "comparative studies".

Prof. Liu is well-known as a very erudite and knowledgeable scholar, and it would be impossible for the likes of myself to emulate such a deeply researched piece of work. According to the late Paul Demiéville's preface to

the *Selected Papers from the Hall of Harmonious Wind*, Liu managed to read the whole of the Taoist Canon *Tao-tsang* 道藏 in two years, making fifty notebooks. Liu's thesis is an extensive piece, amounting to fifty two pages in English and fifty four pages in Japanese.²⁾ The scope of primary and secondary materials quoted in the notes is vast, and he has also made a comprehensive examination of a number of different works in European languages which are related to Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism. The reader will invariably be impressed by Liu's linguistic ability, the overwhelming amount of materials quoted and the numerous references cited.

Yet, in spite of all this, I have serious doubts about the validity of Liu's conclusions. Of course, I cannot rival Liu's specialist knowledge and erudition, but, despite my superficial knowledge, the reason I contest his conclusions is because I think his methodology is fundamentally mistaken. Because I think his methodology is faulty, I also think that both his erudition and his copious references come to almost nothing, leaving only a pitiful mountain of sources. It seems to me that his methodology is wrong mainly because it appears to be based on the conventional precept in ancient Sinology that if one reads many books, one will automatically become a good scholar; it seems to me that Liu gives priority to erudition and specialist information, but that his thesis lacks insight about methods of dealing with this information. This presentation, through an examination of Liu's methodology, will finally try to address itself to these general methodological problems, which, to a large extent, persist among some eminent scholars even now.³⁾

I. Synopsis of Professor Liu's Monograph

Zoroastrianism is a religion initiated by the prophet Zarathushtra in ancient Iran in the seventh century B.C. Its sacred text is called *Avestā*, and it attached importance to the ideas of brightness and wisdom, as exemplified by the contrast between *Ahura* and *Daeva*. Manichaeism is a Persian religion founded by Mānī in the late third century A.D., and it contained Christian, Zoroastrian and Buddhist elements. Mānī was a prophet who came from the world of light to the land of the living. Both religions collapsed in the wake of the spread of Islam, and, with the persecution of Buddhism in China (843 A.D. onwards), faced complete extermination.

Liu's monograph takes up the problem of when exactly these two religions entered China. Furthermore, he tries to show that Biblical stories had penetrated Taoist texts of the late fifth century A.D. through the intermediary of Manichaeism which had already entered China. Liu's thesis is divided into three parts. A summary of the content is as follows. In the first part, Liu takes up the problem of when Zoroastrianism entered China. Ch'ên Yüan 陳垣, in his article, 'Huo-hsien-chiao ju Chung-kuo k'ao' 火祆教入中國考, *Kuo-hsüeh chi-k'an* 國學季刊, vol. 1, no. 2, 1925, p. 30, argues that

Zoroastrianism entered China no earlier than the period 516–527 A.D., was limited to North China, and had no effect on Chinese society in general. Liu puts the date back earlier, and he argues that it had a more general effect on Chinese society as a whole.

In the second part, Liu discusses the problem of the entry of Manichaeism into China. According to the opinions of Ed. Chavannes, Paul Pelliot, Ch'ên Yüan, Mou Jun-sun 牟潤孫 and others, this took place in 694 during the reign of the Empress Tsê-t'ien Wu-hou 則天武后. According to Chiang Fu 蔣斧, Lo Chên-yü 羅振玉, T'ang Chang-ju 唐長孺, Shigematsu Toshiaki 重松俊章 and others, it took place during the Sui 隋 Dynasty in the reign of Emperor Wên 文 between 581 and 604. Liu, however, puts the date of the entry of Manichaeism into China back even further, at the end of the fifth century.

In the third part, Liu deals with the links between Taoism and Manichaeism. Liu takes as his main source the sūtra *Yüan-shih wu-liang tu-jên shang-p'in miao-ching* 元始無量度人上品妙經 in 61 books (*Tao-tsang: Tung-chên-pu pên-wen-lei* 道藏: 洞真部本文類 1–13) and its commentaries with special reference to the *Yüan-shih wu-liang tu-jên shang-p'in miao-ching ssü-chu* 元始無量度人上品妙經四註 (*Tao-tsang: Tung-chên-pu yü-chüeh lei* 道藏: 洞真部玉訣類 38–39), edited by the Taoist priest Ch'ên Ching-yüan 陳景元, who was active in the latter half of the 11th century with his preface dated 1067. In the above mentioned source, there is a commentary written by Yen Tung 嚴東, a scholar active at the beginning of the Southern Ch'i 南齊 Dynasty, of whom Liu argues that the *Tao-tsang's Table of Contents* 道藏目錄詳註, Bk. 1/14, is mistaken in listing Yen Tung as a Northern Ch'i 北齊 person. Liu also argues that a manuscript identical to one of the parts of the *Ling-pao tu-jên ching* 靈寶度人經 existed already in the middle of the fifth century. He argues that the commentary of Yen Tung must have appeared at the end of the fifth century for four different reasons. Liu is of opinion that this work contains Zoroastrian and Manichaean technical terms.

Liu's argument has been divided into three parts, for the sake of analysis and because Liu himself lists contentious points and his own conclusions at the beginning. It is now necessary to look at the contents of these parts in more detail. Liu's monograph is very extensive and, therefore, for reasons of space, I will summarize his monograph and then show the bases of argument on which his data rest.

In the first part of the monograph, Liu uses three types of evidence to argue his case that Zoroastrian influences existed in pre-T'ang China.

The first evidence cited is the legend of the Empress Dowager Hu 胡太后 (515–528) contained in her biography in the *History of Northern Wei* 魏書, Bk. 13, as well as in the *History of Northern Dynasties* 北史, Bk. 13. In this legend, the word *Mi-to tao-jen* 密多道人 is used, and this, in Liu's opinion, must be derived from the Persian word *Mithra*. *Mithra* was a mediator

between *Ohrmazd* (*Ahura Mazda*) and *Ahriman* (*Ahra Mainyu*), and an old Iranian divinity who occupied a place as an orthodox deity in the pantheon of Zoroastrianism. Liu argues that Zoroastrianism had already entered China by the beginning of the sixth century. Liu backs up this argument by quoting the following pieces of circumstantial evidence:

- a) The Hsien-pi 鮮卑 and Turkish languages were spoken amongst the ruling class of North China at that time. Persian cultural artifacts were habitually used, and a considerable number of Persian monks also worked for the Northern Wei court.
- b) Evidence that the Emperors and the aristocracy of the Northern Dynasties were Zoroastrian believers can be found in the *History of Northern Wei* 魏書, the *History of Southern Dynasties* 南史, the *History of Northern Dynasties* 北史, the *History of the Northern Ch'i* 北齊書 and the *History of the Sui Dynasty* 隋書. For example, in the Section of Rites 禮儀志, II, *History of the Sui*, there is a line to the effect that *Hou Chu* 後主 of the Northern Ch'i (564-577) rendered services to *Hu-t'ien* 胡天. *Hu-t'ien*, in Liu's opinion, was a Zoroastrian God. He also points out that the word *hsien* 祆 originally stood for the deva or the god of Mazdaism or an ancient Iranian deity.
- c) The *sa-pao* 薩寶 office dealt with Chinese-Persian affairs, and this office already existed in about 470 during the reign of the Emperor Hsien-wên 獻文 (466-471) of the Northern Wei, that is to say, about ten years before Yen Tung's commentaries were written.
- d) According to the Zoroastrian religion, it was believed that the gods drew close to believers through the medium of fire, and that believers had fire-worshipping sessions three times a day. In a poem composed by Empress Dowager Ling 靈太后, there is a stanza 化光造物含氣貞 which means, according to Liu, "Giving light, creating things, thy spirit is pure" (*History of Northern Wei*, Bk. 13). It is a eulogy of the sacred fire. Liu, therefore, thinks it beyond doubt that Zoroastrian fire-worshipping ceremonies were established in the Northern Wei.
- e) In the *History of Southern Dynasties*, Bk. 4, during the eleventh year of Yung-ming 永明 of the Southern Ch'i 南齊 (493), there is a story about the sacred fire [赤火] and the *śramaṇa* 沙門 who carried it. According to Liu, this fire perhaps was the Zoroastrian sacred fire, and the *śramaṇa* was possibly a monk who worshipped *Mithra*.

In my opinion, the above-mentioned pieces of evidence are only circumstantial and do not prove anything, the reasons for which will be given in a latter part of this article.

Turning to Liu's second piece of evidence regarding the influence of Zoroastrianism, it should be remembered that Liu pays particular attention to the statement that the *Liang-fêng t'ang* 涼風堂 Hall in Yeh 鄴, the capital of the Northern Ch'i, was used as a court of justice. According to Liu, Persians commonly referred to religion as "the law" and, as is shown by the fact

that there was a custom of using Zoroastrian temples as law courts in Samarkand (cf. the *History of Northern Dynasties*, Bk. 97. Correctly, the reference should be made to the *History of Sui*, Bk. 83.), the Northern Wei and Northern Ch'i Dynasties inherited the same usage. Thus, Liu concludes that the *Liang-fêng t'ang* Hall of the Northern Ch'i was a remnant of the Zoroastrian System.

The third piece of evidence which Liu quotes as concerning Zoroastrianism is the Zoroastrian technical terms which he considers to have been used in the *Tu-jên shang-p'in miao-ching ssü-chu* 度人上品妙經四註. In order to substantiate his claim that Zoroastrian technical terms are contained in this Taoist sacred text, Liu first makes reference to the number 1468. According to Māni, this number referred to the number of years during which the great fire that would bring about the end of the world would last and, therefore, in Liu's opinion, is indicative of Manichaean influence. (However, he does not explain where or why this number exists in its *Tu-jên shang-p'in miao-ching*.)

He then proceeds to argue as follows. The number 999,990,000, which can be seen in Bks. 2 and 3 of the *Four Commentaries*, is a number that corresponds to the Zoroastrian texts *Vendidad* (XXII, 2 (5)) and *Bundahis* (VIII, 10) (XXXII, 9). There is a correspondence between the inner sounds 內音 of eight characters allotted to each of the *Thirty Two Heavens* 三十二天 (cf. Bk. 4, 3a-25a) and parts of the *Avesta and Pahlavī* texts. The word *po* 鉢, which can be found in the *Tung-hsüan ling-pao tu-jên ching ta-fan yin-yü shu-i* 洞玄靈寶度人經大梵隱語疏義 (*Tao-tsang*, 48), is a derivation of the Sanscrit word *pātra* and may be connected in some way to the word *pad-mānakō* "measure, quantity" of the *Pahlavī* texts (V, p. 340). The word *su-lao* 蘇勞, which can also be found in the same text, may be a derivation from the word *zaurura* "a man broken down by age" or *zaothra* "libation of holy water (?)", which can be found in the *Avesta* (III, 18-9). Furthermore, Liu refers to the theses of Goodrich, Pelliot and Dubbs which he thinks corroborate his arguments.

After presenting his three types of evidence, which have been expounded above, to support his thesis that there were traces of Zoroastrianism in pre-T'ang China, Liu moves to the second part of his monograph entitled *Traces of Manichaeism and Its Influence in Pre-T'ang China According to the Historical and Taoist Texts*. His argument is based on the following nine contentions.

- 1 Those who took part in rebellions in pre-T'ang China, especially the religious sects of the *Maitreya* faith, had links with Manichaeism.
- 2 The concepts of *wan-nien* 萬年 "Myriad Years" and the *Four Kings* 四王 are of Manichaean and Zoroastrian origin. In the *History of Northern Wei*, Bk. 35, there is a statement to the effect that Ch'i Hsien 祁纘, a Taoist monk, advised Ts'ui Hao 崔浩, a Taoist believer, to change the character *tai* 代

“generation” with the characters *wan-nien* to worship the King (of) Four (Directions). According to Liu, the concept of *wan-nien* mentioned above is Zoroastrian. In addition to this, the relationship between the words *Ssü T'ien-wang* 四天王 “Four Heavenly Kings” and *Ming-chiao* 明教 (the name given to Manichaeism in Sung times), which can be seen in the imperial edict of 1119 as quoted in the *Sung Hui-yao* 宋會要, Bk. 165, *Hsing-fa* 刑法, and the words *Ssü-wang* 四王 “Four Kings” and *Ming-wang* 明王 “the King of Light”, which are found in the biography of Wang I 王誼 in the *History of Sui*, Bk. 40, indicate a Manichaean influence. He also argues that another word for the apocryphal sūtra *Chin-kang mi (yao-lun) ching* 金剛密 [要論] 經 that is catalogued in the *K'ai-yüan shih-chiao-lu* 開元釋教錄 compiled by Chih-sheng 智昇 in 730 (*Taishō* 55, p. 672c) and also named as *Fang [wan] ming-wang yüan-ch'i ching* 方 [萬] 明王緣起經 is a sūtra that describes the descent of *Maitreya* down to this world. This sūtra is probably a prototype of such Manichaean sacred texts as the *Ta-hsiao ming-wang ch'u-shih* 大小明王出世 and the *Erh-tsung ching* 二宗經 which are both quoted in the *Shih-mên chêng-t'ung* 釋門正統 compiled by Tsung-chien 宗鑑 active in 1237-40 (大日本續藏經下之下乙, 第三套, 史傳部第五冊 p. 412a).

3 Evidence that *Maitreya* is involved in the original Manichaean teaching has been verified by the Parthian hymn M42 published by Henning in 1934.

4 The influence of Manichaean regulations and practices such as white clothes, vegetarianism, prohibitions against alcohol and celibacy on pre-T'ang China can be deduced from the following evidence.

a. In the biography of Wang Wên-t'ung 王文同 in the *History of Sui*, Bk. 74, there is a statement to the effect that Wang detained any Buddhist priests that observed fasting and vegetarianism as sorcerers 妖妄 and sent them to prison. Liu argues that if vegetarians were only Buddhists, it would have been most unlikely that they (violators) would have been branded sorcerers, therefore suggesting a mixture of Buddhist and Manichaean elements.

b. In the *History of Northern Dynasties*, Bk. 65 (=the *History of Chou*, Bk. 13), there is a description about Ta Hsi-wu 達奚武 who dreamt of a “god in white clothing” in the Sacred Mountain Hua 華山; in Liu's opinion, there is undoubtedly a connection between this deity in the Mount Hua and the Zoroastro-Manichaean faith. This is also suggested in an account by Herodotus (ca. 485-425 B.C.) (*Histories*, I-131) that “Persians ascended many towering mountain peaks to make sacrifices to their God”.

c. According to the *Ta-T'ang ch'uang-yeh ch'i-chü-chu* 大唐創業起居注, Bk. 1, there are accounts about how *Hou-chu* 後主 of the Northern Ch'i 北齊 Dynasty liked white clothing and about how Emperor Yang-ti 煬帝 usually wore white clothing. As it was usual for Buddhist priests to wear dark robes and Taoist priests yellow headgear, this referred to specific acts of special behaviour at that time. It is, therefore, safe to say that their underlying rationale had a religious origin; in short, traces of the Manichaean

custom of revering white clothing can be observed. The same thing can be seen with reference to the White Bandits 白賊 in the biographies of Chang Shao 張劭 and Chang Ch'ang 張暢 in the *History of Sung* 宋書, Bks. 46 and 59.

5 In Manichaeism, particularly in its Mesopotamian elements, bright light was revered. In the legend about the origin of the Kuang-ming-ssü 光明寺 temple, which was set up in 584 by the Sui Emperor Wên-ti in order to house the Buddhist priest Fa-ching 法經, there is a story about a lamp emitting natural rays (cf. *Ch'ang-an-chih* 長安志, Bk. 10). Liu argues that this is based on the anecdote about two candle-like things radiating on the shoulders of Māni, a Manichaean tradition quoted by an-Nadim in the *Fihrist al-Ulūm*.

6 Because Māni excelled in techniques of medical care and exorcism, the story that the Emperor Wên-ti spoke of curing disease with the divine candle and sacred rod 神燭聖杖 (*History of Northern Dynasties*, Bk. 11) is linked to the above-mentioned techniques of Māni.

7 Chavannes and Pelliot have already pointed out in *Un traité manichéen retrouvé en Chine* (p. 174 note) that the music entitled *Shan-shan Mo-ni* 善善摩尼, presented to Wên-ti 文帝 of Sui (*History of Sui*, Bk. 15b) by the State of Kao-ch'ang 高昌國, is a eulogy to Māni. Liu adds to their discovery his explanation that the general title of this music 'Musical Tunes of Sacred Brilliance' 聖明樂曲 already gives an indication of a Manichaean trend.

8 The *liang-fêng* 涼風 "cool wind" that appears in the *Hsü-t'ing mi-shih-suo ching* 序聽迷詩所經 of the Nestorian sect (*Taishō* 54, p. 1287c), is a word that indicates the *Holy Spirit*. This word was perhaps originally a Manichaean technical term that was translated into Chinese and then adopted by the Nestorians.

9 Manichaean influence can be seen in the *Tu-jên-ching ssü-chu*. For instance, the writing in volume one (5a-6b) is very similar to the first poem of *The Angad Rosnan*, and the writing in volume two (56a-b) similar to *The Psalm of the Bema* (CCXXVII). The names of the five sons of *Ching-fêng* in the sūtra tentatively named *Po-ssü chiao ts'an-ching* (*Taishō* 54) can be traced back to Manichaean origins. Furthermore, the names of the five demon kings of Wu-t'ien 五天 "five Heavens", which appear in the *Tu-jên Sūtra*, Bk. 2, originated from the above-mentioned *Manichaean* names of the five sons. For example, the name Paḥragbēd (Turfan Pahlavī) corresponds to Pa-yüan-ch'ou-po 巴元醜伯.

Liu, in his third and final section, addresses himself to the problem of Biblical traces that can be found in the *Tu-jên Scripture*. He argues that the person called *Ta-wei* 大隗 in the sentence 'Fei-t'ien ta-ch'ou tsung-chien shang-t'ien' 飛天大醜總監上天 (22b) and in the statement "Ta chē ta-wei yeh, shih san-chieh chih tu-lu" 大者大隗也, 是三界之都錄 of the *Tung-hsüan ling-pao tu-jên-ching ta-fan yin-yü shu-yi* 洞玄靈寶度人經大梵隱語疏義 (18a-b) is David. He also argues that the person called *Ch'ou po* 醜伯 in "Ch'ou chē po yeh, shih san-chieh chih mo-wang, shou-shih yü Ta-ch'ou" 醜者伯也, 是三

界之魔王，受事於大醜 of the commentary written by the T'ang scribe Li Shao-wei 李少微 in the *Four Commentaries* must be Joab. As proof for this deduction, Liu refers to the *Old Testament*, Second Book of Samuel, chapter 24, verses 1-4: Again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, "Go, number Israel and Judah." So the king said to Joab and the commanders of the army, who were with him. "Go through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba . . ." (*The Holy Bible*, The Bible Societies, revised standard version, 1952, p. 294), and the events mentioned in verses 1-4 of chapter 21 of 'First Book of Chronicles' in the *Old Testament*. Therefore, Liu argues, stories about David and Joab could have been absorbed into Manichaean texts, and used in China when Taoist scholars wanted to enlarge the content of their holy writings.

II. Point-by-point Examination of the Contentious Aspects of Prof. Liu's Monograph

On the basis of the summary given in the previous section, I now intend to examine various problematic points in Liu's monograph.

First, it is unlikely that everyone would accept without question the contention that the word *Hu-t'ien* 胡天 must refer exclusively to a Zoroastrian god. Even with all his note 54, concrete proof is completely lacking.

Second, although people of the time did attach importance to such customs as worshipping the holy fire, white clothing, vegetarianism and light, these were not just the preserves of Zoroastrianism alone. The white color, for instance, was also greatly revered in Korea.

Third, it is common knowledge among scholars that there are extensive links between the *Ling-pao tu-jên ching* 靈寶度人經 and Buddhism (the *Fa-hua ching* 法華經). However, for some reason, Liu completely overlooks the existence of these links, preferring instead to stress only the possible links with Zoroastrianism. However, the thesis that strong links existed between Buddhism and Taoism is now an established theory that surely should be taken into account. For instance, Liu, although once admitting that the word *po* 鉢 has some bearing on Sanscrit (*pātra*), says that, "I think *padmānakō* (*pāt*) would make better sense in the Chinese text." However, Liu only shows that this is an example of a word with foreign origin, and, in fact, an understanding of this point is not an essential prerequisite to understanding the passage in which it appears. Since Prof. Liu takes the *Yen Tung Commentary* 嚴東註 as his major primary source, perhaps he should first have examined the following extract written by Yen Tung himself in the same *Commentary* (vol. 2, 54b). "Inner [secret] names and hidden aliases, these words closely resemble Sanscrit. If there are names with difficult meanings, there are other mystic explanations for them". 內名隱諱，皆多相類梵語，難解別有訣解。 It is clear from this statement that Yen Tung knew that the word

po was a Sanscrit derivation. If this is so, Liu should not have tried so hard to locate a term in the *Zend Avesta* and *Pahlavī* texts, which may correspond to, for instance, the *Thirty Two Heavens* 三十二天. Perhaps there is, first and foremost, a Buddhist derivation. For instance, Liu interprets *Ah-ta-ho* (*t'ien*) 阿答惹(天) (*Yen Tung Commentary*, Bk. 2, 51a) to be derived from *Ātərvaxš* which is the name of the second fire-priest (*Vidēvdāt* 5:58). However, perhaps a more suitable derivation would be the Sanscrit name "Atapa", which means "cold heaven" according to Buddhist texts. (It indicates one of the *Eighteen Heavens* 十八天 of human desires 色界, and one of the *Five Clean Heavens* 五淨居天). Proof that this term already existed can be seen in the *Ta lou-t'an ching* 大樓炭經, Bk. 4 (*Taishō* I, p. 104c), which was jointly translated by *Fa-li* 法立 and *Fa-chü* 法矩 of the Western Chin 西晉 and in other works.

Perhaps the most questionable point in Liu's conclusions is his contention that the word *Mi-to* 密多 (of *Mi-to tao-jên* 密多道人), which can be seen in the biography of *Hu T'ai-hou* 胡太后 (515-528), is derived from the Persian word *mithra*. This assumption is absolutely crucial to Liu's article because it is upon this that his reasoning of Zoroastrian traces and influences in pre-T'ang China largely rests.

However, what on earth led him to such a delusion? With regard to the word *mi-to*, it is thought that this word is a derivation of the Sanscrit word *mitra* and was usually translated in Chinese Buddhist texts as *yu* 友 "friend", an assumption that has not been challenged by any scholar to date. For instance, the name *T'an-mo mi-to* 曇摩密多 is derived from the name *Dharmamitra* (translated *Fa-hsiu* 法秀 or *Fa-yu* 法友), and *Po Shih-li mi-to* 帛尸梨密多 from *Śrīmitra* (translated *Chi-yu* 吉友). *Dharmamitra* came from Kashmir and *Śrīmitra* from Hsi-yü 西域 or Western Regions, and there has been no evidence so far to suggest that they had any relationship with ancient Iran whatsoever. It is therefore difficult to understand why Liu, in note 34, quotes the names of the two above-mentioned priests for comparison of Chinese transcriptions of the Persian word *mithra*. Perhaps Liu failed to notice that the word *mi-to* was translated as *yu* 友 in Chinese. If he had known this, it is highly unlikely that he would have thought *mi-to* to be a derivation of the Persian word *mithra*, which means 'mediator'.

Furthermore, Liu also seems to have made erroneous interpretations as a result of failing to distinguish between the words *mithra* and *mitra*. *Mithra* corresponds to the sounds *miθra*. Surely Liu should have known that, linguistically, this is a crucial distinction to make.

In addition, if the derivation of the word *mi-to* is used to discuss whether Zoroastrianism had an impact in China of the Northern Wei and T'ang periods or not, there are other rather more appropriate sources to use than the two above-mentioned examples cited by Liu. In particular, he would have been well-advised to quote *Pa-tsu* (a Buddha) *Mi-to* 八祖密多 in the *Fu-fa-*

tsang-yin-yüan chuan 付法藏因緣伝, translated jointly by Chi-chia-yeh 吉伽夜 and T'an-yao 曇曜 of the Northern Wei (cf. *Taishō* 50, p. 314c) (same example can be seen in the *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi* 佛祖統紀, Bk. 34, compiled by Chih-p'an 志盤, *Taishō* 49, p. 328a), and *Mi-to Hsi-na lun-shih* 密多犀那論師 (Sap'o-to pu 薩婆多部) in the *Ta-T'ang ku San-tsang fa-shih Hsüan-tsang hsing-chuang* 大唐故三藏法師玄奘行狀, by Ming-hsiang 冥詳 of T'ang (*Taishō* 50, p. 315c). However, both were Indian Buddhists who had nothing to do with Zoroastrianism. This fact effectively destroys half of the fundamental assumptions upon which Liu's monograph is based.

So far, only particular problematic points in Liu's monograph have been discussed. There are problematic points in any thesis, and, as long as they are not fatal, a detailed point-by-point critique would not decrease the general value of the work, especially if the value is of great quality. However, if there are problems with regard to the structure and methodology of the thesis, its overall value would indeed be greatly affected. In my opinion, the particular points of contention raised so far do, in themselves, constitute fatal flaws in Liu's work. However, even if one assumed this not to be the case, additional outstanding fatal methodological weaknesses remain. In fact, particular problematic points sometimes arise as a result of faulty methodology. With this in mind, I would like to make some more general comments about methodological problems, problems which do not just arise in Liu's monograph.

III. Methodological Problems as the Conclusion

In contrast to Ch'ên Yüan's and all other established theories up to now, Prof. Liu argues that Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism entered China at a much earlier time than the time proposed by these scholars. Furthermore, taking the *Ling-pao tu-jên ching* as his main source, Liu, through the liberal use of a vast amount of documentary material, tries to prove that the *Old Testament* of the Bible had an influence on pre-T'ang Taoism.

Probably no one can match Liu's industry and encyclopedic knowledge. However, as shown in the preceding section, it is possible to detect that Liu used his sources inadequately, and that his evidence is insufficient. If these observations are correct, the main pillars of Liu's argument will have disintegrated.

However, quite apart from the individual problematic points of Liu's argument, his thesis also suffers from glaring methodological defects. In particular, he makes forced, unnatural associations of ideas. For instance, he thinks that, because Manichaeism placed a special emphasis on the wearing of white clothes, there must have been a connection with Manichaeism in any example where white clothes were worn. The frequency of such expressions as "could be", "could have been", "again a conjecture", "a suspicion",

"I am inclined to believe that . . ." in Liu's work indicates that he only compiled material that fitted in with his own pre-suppositions. In other words, Liu overlooked or skimmed through documentary material that did not fit in with his argument. A good illustration of this can be seen when Liu, using Yen Tung's commentary as his major source, tries to advance the argument that this commentary has links with Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism, while failing to notice and quote Yen Tung's own assertion that there is a Sanscrit influence on the words in question. Similarly, after taking the general contexts of the *Four Commentaries* 四註 and the *Old Testament* into consideration, it is impossible to advance the fantastic argument that *Ta-wei* 大隗 is David and *Ch'ou-po* 醜伯 is Joab.

If a scholar, referring to numerous examples, citing copious references from Eastern and Western texts and showing vast erudition, fits all his findings into one thesis, it would be very difficult for a reader not to be overwhelmed and not to think that the arguments presented and conclusions reached are therefore correct. But, from a rational, logical standpoint, Liu's monograph seems to me only a clever experiment in "association d'idées"; it has no logical structure. Liu advances his thesis sometimes without precise premises, saying there are links between one source material and another that just do not exist logically. Consequently, Liu's monograph only adds up to a compilation of plausible sources.

These conclusions may seem harsh, but I feel it is necessary to state them because insufficient attention has been paid to developing adequate ways of dealing with and ordering source materials. This is needed even, and especially, after efforts have been made to compile huge amounts of primary sources.

For instance, comparative historians should be aware of key methodological problems as what the word "influence" really means, how the concepts of "assimilation" and "borrowing" differ, and which of these characteristics are components of the word "traces". These are important problems of which comparative historians should be aware and do something about *before* they go rushing off constructing their own pet theories. Unfortunately, Liu does not seem to have done this in his work.

If one were to pursue the problem further and ask why such methodological problems have not been adequately discussed, one would no doubt visualise a typical, conventional researcher. These ancient China specialists became authorities on their subject just by reading lots of books and accumulating information. They did not ask themselves why it was necessary to read such a vast quantity of material. They just seemed to think they would automatically be regarded as great scholars as long as they read huge quantities of materials and acquired a great deal of information.

However, no one will automatically come to correct conclusions just because they have read a large number of books. The only consequence that shows is that the researcher has read a lot of books. Once he has compiled his material, he has to think about methods and norms of organization—*i.e.* methodology. If these problems are not dealt with, all he will be left with is a storehouse of plausible materials and miscellaneous, but uncertain, information.

Regrettably, generally speaking, there has been no serious debate or opinions advanced about methodology in our sinological studies. Or, to look at it from the opposite point of view, researchers have been satisfied with their work as soon as they completed the compilation stage, and have not gone any further; they do not seem to acknowledge the importance of such things as systematic interpretative techniques. It seems that the traditional habit of thinking that the most important thing for a researcher to do is to imbibe and record information has left its mark on Liu's work.

When reading Liu's monograph, it would not be surprising if the following crossed the reader's mind: "There are really plenty of weaknesses in his argument, but since I'm not a specialist in Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism, I don't feel qualified to offer a counter argument." Any scholar with this type of attitude is, of course, tainted with the injurious way of thinking mentioned above simply because he or she thinks the only way to judge the quality of a thesis is by the amount or material collected and used.

One widely held misconception is the more material one compiles, the closer to truth one will get. Obviously this is a fallacy: erudition in itself is no sure guarantee of finding the truth. In fact, very much the opposite can be the case. The more books referred to, the more likely the scholar will be to come across sources that would reveal the errors of his own original preconceptions or opinions. If that happens, it is vital to devise ways of resolving such inconsistencies. Nevertheless, researchers who over-stress the importance of erudition would, when coming across such contradictory material, tend to brush it aside, saying it is an "exception" to their conclusion. Sloppy, unconscientious researchers would probably deliberately not mention contradictory material. In any case, they do not dare to declare they were ignorant of some fact, because erudite scholars, on principle, should not display any lack of information or knowledge.

The reader may think probably that my remarks are only too common amongst researchers, but, in reality, the ancient opinion that the most erudite, knowledgeable researchers are always those most qualified to pronounce on their subject is not yet extinct. Although I have discussed this point elsewhere,⁴⁾ but, after having read Prof. Liu's monograph, I feel obliged to re-iterate my comments here. Of course, a certain amount of erudition is necessary. I am afraid, however, that a neglect of the importance of methods may produce the second and third monographies along the lines of Professor

Liu's.

NOTES

- 1) Kubo Noritada 窪徳忠, *Dōkyōshi* 道教史, p. 105; Sakai Tadao 酒井忠夫, *Dōkyō shijō yori mitaru San Chō no seikaku* 道教史上より観たる三張の性格 (*Shina Bukkyōshigaku* 支那佛敎史學 I, 4, Shōwa 昭和 12); Miyakawa Hisayuki 宮川尙志, *Rikuchōshi Kenkyū: Shūkyōhen* 六朝史研究, 宗教編, pp. 43, 157.
- 2) Ishii Masako 石井昌子 and Ueda Shingo 上田伸吾 jointly translated this work as: Ryū Sonjin kyōju no Kenkyū: Zoroasutā-kyō oyobi Mani-kyō no Katsudō 柳存仁教授の研究: プロアスター教及びマニ教の活動, *Tōyō Gakujutsu Kenkyū* 東洋學術研究, XVII, 4, 1978, pp. 125-153; XVII, 6, 1978, pp. 78-104.
- 3) This manuscript is based on the presentation given on 17 Feb. 1977 at the Dai Ni-kai Dōkyō Danwa-kai 第二同道敎談話會 (at Taishō University), and on my article of the same title in Japanese, presented to a Festschrift in honour of Dr. Suetoshi Ikeda, entitled Ikeda Suetoshi Hakushi koki kinen, *Tōyōgaku Ronshū* 池田末利博士古稀記念東洋學論集, Hiroshima, 1980 (Shōwa 55).
- 4) My article entitled, *Chūgoku-shisō Kenkyū no arikata ni tsuite* 中國思想研究の在り方について. This can be found in a commemorative Anthology in honour of Dr. Ēichi Kimura entitled, *Kimura Ēichi Hakushi Shōju Kinen, Chūgoku Tetsugakushi no Tenbō to Mosaku* 木村英一博士頌壽記念中國哲學史の展望と模索, published by Sōbunsha 創文社, 1977 (Shōwa 52).