Undeniably one of the most important Syriac sources on the Manichaean is the section in Memre XI of the Liber Scholiorum which was written in 791–792 CE by Theodore bar Koni, bishop of Kashkar, near the Ummayid garrison city of Al-Wasit, between Kufa and Basra in southern Iraq. In keeping with earlier Christian writers, Theodore adopted a stringent antithetical stance against Mani; his biographical descriptions are marked by exaggeration, and character assassination. In marked contrast is the account of the Manichaean cosmogony that appears to have been reproduced verbatim from a genuine source. This paper addresses the legacy behind the Manichaean portions of the Liber Scholiorum which reproduced the structure of Epiphanius’ Panarion and, following the precedent set by Ephrem, recognised the significance of ‘the Manichaean cosmogonic myth’ that drove the entire system and supported its doctrinal and ritual structure.¹ But in the considerable period of time that had elapsed since the fourth century, significant changes in the situation of the Manichaean meant that the Liber Scholiorum, whilst transmitting the heritage of the Christian fathers, had a radically different perspective.

Mani’s connections with south-west Mesopotamia were well known and were explicitly pointed out by the tenth century Arab commentators, al-Birûni and al-Nadim.² Although Mani had died in 276 CE and

the Manichaean faith had been severely persecuted by the Sassanids, his followers received an offer of protection at the beginning of the fourth century when king 'Amr (272–300 CE) of Hira wrote several letters on their behalf to the current monarch Bahram II (276–293 CE). This intervention resulted in a temporary abeyance in their persecution, although it resumed under Bahram’s successor Hormizd II. Manichaean communities, albeit depleted in numbers and influence, still remained in Mesopotamia until the tenth century when they finally departed en masse for the more tolerant and safer environs of Central Asia. Like the early Christian Church, the Manichaean religion was characterized by a pronounced ascetic streak—such overt similarities had sometimes led to confusion. The *Chronicle of Se’ert* asserted that Bahram II had banned both religions that he perceived to be identical since the Manichaeans claimed to be Christian, dressed like Christians and likewise scorned marriage and the procreation of children. Perhaps most damagingly, Mani had styled himself as ‘the Apostle of Jesus Christ’.

These purported similarities provided the potential for the Abbasids to associate the Christians, intentionally or otherwise, with the Manichaean communities dwelling within their realms. Moreover, the Diophysite theology i.e. ‘the two natures’ of Christ also lent itself to such suspicions especially since the explicit connection of the Church of the East with Manichaeism had already been asserted by Miaphysite writers who were always keen to denounce the ‘Nestorians’. The Syrian Orthodox historian, John, bishop of Ephesus (507–586 CE) who was born near Amida (modern Diyarbekir) proclaimed, when writing about Simeon, bishop of Bēt Arshām, a militant polemicist working on behalf of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Sassanid Mesopotamia:

in a village near the river Kutha, probably in the neighborhood of Kutha near Babylon. Al-Nadîm stated that he was ‘one of the people of Ḫūh in the domains Bādārāyā and Bākusāyā, which were towns between Baghdad and Wasīt’ and n. 1 referring to Al-Birūnī, *Al-Athar al-Baqiya*, Sachau ed. p. 208 or the geographical names, Yaqqūt, *Mu’jam al-Buldan* (Leipzig ed.) (1866) 4:317, 2:143, 1:459, 477.


4 Addai Scher & J. Périer, ‘Histoire Nestorienne Inédite (Chronique de Seert),’ *Patrologia Orientalis* IV (1908) 237–239. In response to the royal actions, the Christians petitioned Bahram II and explained their position, specifically pointing out that the Manichaeans dressed like the Christians in order to hide themselves (‘se cacher’). As a consequence, Bahram II desisted from persecuting the Christian communities.