



CHESTER BEATTY LIBRARY

the **CHESTER BEATTY LIBRARY**, a collection of manuscripts, printed works, and artifacts, predominantly Oriental, assembled by Alfred Chester Beatty and opened to the public in Dublin in 1954.

i. The library and its founder.

ii. Persian manuscript collection.

iii. Coptic Manichean manuscripts.

i. The Library and Its Founder

Alfred Chester Beatty (b. New York City, 7 February 1875, d. Monaco, 19 January 1968) was the son of a prosperous banker and stockbroker (Kennedy, p. 22) and was educated at private schools and Princeton University before transferring to Columbia University in New York. In 1898 he became one of the first graduates of the School of Mines (Kennedy, pp. 21-22). He began his career in Colorado, where, after beginning as a laborer, he worked as a mining engineer, manager, and consultant (Kennedy, pp. 22-23). As his career prospered, he worked in many parts of North America and Africa. At the age of thirty-five years, when he was forced to retire from active field work for reasons of health, he was already a very rich man. He was particularly noted for devising techniques for the extraction of copper from low-grade ores (Kennedy, p. 32). His friend Herbert Hoover, a mining engineer who later



became president of the United States (1929-33), persuaded Beatty of the advantages of London as a base for worldwide mining operations (Kennedy, p. 26). He settled there and in 1914 launched Selection Trust, the company with which he was associated until his second retirement in 1950. In 1933 he adopted British nationality (Kennedy, p. 36).

Since his childhood Beatty had been a dedicated collector of mineral specimens (Kennedy, pp. 21, 28), but his interests turned decisively to manuscripts and objets d'art only after he had moved to London, again partly under the influence of Hoover, who at that time was engaged in translating *De Re Metallica* (1553) by Georgius Agricola (1494-1555; pub. London, 1915). Initially Beatty purchased a wide variety of Western and Oriental materials, but in the 1930s he began to specialize in the latter field, possibly because important Western manuscripts rarely appeared on the market, whereas it was still possible to acquire outstanding Eastern examples; many of his purchases were arranged through dealers and agents, particularly in Istanbul, where much important material was coming onto the market during the 1920s and 1930s, after the fall of the Ottoman empire. He also made important acquisitions in Cairo, where he spent long winter holidays for his health. It was there that he acquired the major papyri, both biblical and Manichaean, that early established the reputation of the collection (see iii, below). He also remained interested in specimens of the Western printer's art. Throughout his career as a collector Beatty enjoyed close cooperation with distinguished experts in a variety of fields, particularly the staff of the British Museum. He personally financed publication of materials from his collection (see ii, below), including Chester Beatty Monographs, of which ten numbers appeared in his lifetime and which have recently (1990) been revived.

The collection, originally kept at Baroda House, Beatty's London residence in Kensington Palace Gardens, was removed to Dublin when he retired from mining and settled there in 1950. It was housed in a specially constructed library, which was dedicated in 1953 (Kennedy, p. 81); a second structure, devoted entirely to exhibition and storage space, was finished in 1957. Beatty continued to acquire and assembled a considerable collection of Western printed books and prints. In 1954 he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II for service to Britain in procuring vital resources during World War II (Kennedy, p. 82). Three years later he was named the first honorary Irish citizen. By 1965, when acquisition ceased, Beatty's library included Oriental manuscripts of practically every description, Islamic literature being represented by



approximately 4,350 items, the greater part of which are in Arabic. He bequeathed this collection to the Irish people, on whose behalf it is held by trustees; an annual grant-in-aid for operating expenses is made by the department of the *taoiseach* (prime minister).

Although catalogues and handlists of Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Indian manuscripts were published during Beatty's lifetime, none of them is complete. In addition to items listed in the published catalogues, approximately 150 Arabic manuscripts and fifty in Persian and Turkish remain uncatalogued. A total of 298 manuscripts ranging in date from the 7th/13th to the 13th/19th centuries, many of them masterpieces of illustration and binding, are described in the published catalogue of Persian manuscripts (Arberry et al.). Among the earliest Persian works in the collection is part of an early 7th/13th-century copy of the translation of Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* (Commentary on the Qur'ān; Arberry et al., I, no. 101, pl. 1). It is important to note that the holdings were classified sometimes by language and sometimes by place of origin. A considerable number of manuscripts in the Persian language are thus to be found in the catalogues of Turkish and Indian miniatures (Minorsky; Arnold). For example, the Indian section comprises about sixty manuscripts, mostly of Persian texts; descriptions of only eighteen are included in the catalogue (Arnold). Related material can also be found in S. Der Nersessian, *A Catalogue of the Armenian Manuscripts* (Dublin, 1958), and D. L. Snellgrove and C. R. Bawden, *A Catalogue of the Tibetan Collection and a Catalogue of the Mongolian Collection* (Dublin, 1969). The substantial holdings of Manichaean texts in Coptic on papyrus are in the process of editing (see iii, below).

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(Wilfrid Lockwood)

ii. Persian Manuscript Collection

Persian literary and artistic culture of the Islamic period is particularly well represented in the library. As Beatty was interested primarily in the arts of the book, he concentrated on acquiring Persian manuscripts with fine illuminations or illustrations, as well as separate specimens of miniature painting and calligraphy. Furthermore, several volumes in the collection are notable for their decorative bindings.

The items of Persian interest include not only works originating in Persia but also manuscripts and paintings in Persian from the Indian subcontinent and Turkey, as well as many Arabic manuscripts copied in Persia. Although the emphasis is on artistic value, manuscripts of philological interest are by no means lacking.

At an early date Beatty opened his collection to scholarly research. In the 1930s a series of catalogues and handlists was launched, each to be prepared by specialists invited by the owner. Most of the volumes are generously illustrated with reproductions. The first such publication was *A Catalogue of the Indian Miniatures* (3 vols., London, 1936), which was begun by [Sir Thomas W. Arnold](#) and completed after his death in 1930 by the librarian of the collection, J. V. S. Wilkinson (1885-1957). In addition to eighteen illustrated manuscripts of Persian works, albums of Mughal, Rajput, and other Indian paintings are included. Particularly noteworthy among the manuscripts is an early 11th/17th-century copy of *Akbar-nāma* by [Abu'l-Faẓl 'Allāmī](#) (Arnold and Wilkinson, no. 3, pls. 6-37) that had once belonged to the imperial library in Delhi; it is illustrated with sixty-one miniatures. In 1937 the description of this manuscript was also published separately (see Storey, I/2, p. 1314). Equally remarkable are several sheets from the famous *Dāstān-e Amīr Ḥamza*, made



for Akbar (963-1014/1556-1605; no. 1) and two illustrated translations of Sanskrit works on Yoga entitled *Jogbāšešt* (no. 5) and *Baḥr al-ḥayāt* (no. 16).

A Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts and Miniatures (3 vols., Dublin, 1959-62) comprises 298 manuscripts, as well as loose sheets with paintings and specimens of *nasta'līq* calligraphy. Preparation of this catalogue was initially entrusted to the French scholar **Edgard Blochet** (1870-1937) and was completed by **Arthur J. Arberry** and Mojtabā Mīnovī. The miniatures were described by Wilkinson and Basil W. Robinson. Particularly important for the early history of Persian painting are copies or fragments of the *Šāh-nāma* by Ferdowsī (I, nos. 110 [pls. 18-19; 741/1340-41], 114 [800/1397]; II, nos. 157 [pls. 2-5], 158 [pls. 6-7; both 885/1480], a copy of Sa'dī's *Golestān* from the workshop of **Bāysonḡor** (I, no. 119 [pls. 27-28; 830/1427]), a copy of the same poet's *Būstān* attributed to **Behzād** (II, no. 156 [883/1497]), and an illustrated manuscript of Ṭabarī's *Tārīk* (I, no. 144 [pl. 36; 874/1470]). In addition, there are some pages with large-scale miniatures from Ḥosām-al-Dīn's *Ḳāvar-nāma* (III, no. 293 [854/1530]), an epic poem on the life of the imam 'Alī (q.v.). Safavid painting is represented by works of Solṭān-Moḡammad, Āqā Rezā, and Mo'īn-e Moṣawwer (see especially items described in vol. III), some of which once belonged to the libraries of the Safavid shahs (III, nos. 272, 277 [pls. 38-43]) and the Mughal emperors (III, nos. 257, 280). Rare works of philological interest include *Majmū'a-ye dawāwīn-e dahgāna*, a collection of works by ten poets of the 6-7th/12th-13th centuries (I, no. 103 [pl. 3; 699/1300]); the *dīvān* of the 7th/13th-century poet Serāj-al-Dīn Qomrī (I, no. 107 [pl. 16; 710/1310]); and four allegorical texts in prose by "Ḥosām b. Moḡammad Rašīd," an otherwise unknown writer of the 8th/14th or 9th/15th century (I, no. 134 [864/1459]).

Other relevant publications from the Beatty collection include *A Catalogue of the Turkish Manuscripts and Miniatures* by Vladimir Minorsky (Dublin, 1958) and *Some Oriental Bindings in the Chester Beatty Library* by Berthe van Regemorter (Dublin, 1961). Approximately 2,500 Arabic manuscripts, less than half the total, were recorded by Arberry in *A Handlist of the Arabic Manuscripts* (8 vols., Dublin, 1955-66), who also gave brief descriptions of two hundred forty-four Koran manuscripts in *The Koran Illuminated. A Handlist of the Koran Manuscripts in The Chester Beatty Library* (Dublin, 1967); among the latter are a number of exquisite specimens of illumination from Persia (pp. 40-56, nos. 132-183) and some with interlinear Persian translations.



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(J. T. P. De Bruijn)

iii. Coptic Manichean Manuscripts

The collection of Coptic Manichean manuscripts now in the Chester Beatty Library was purchased on the Cairo antiquities market in 1930. In 1953 it was transferred with Beatty's other manuscripts from Baroda House, Kensington Palace Gardens, London, to Dublin. The collection includes part of an enormous mass of manuscripts that originally made up the library of a Manichean center; the remainder was acquired in spring 1931 by the German Coptologist Carl Schmidt for the papyrus collection of the Ägyptologisches Museum in Berlin (see [coptic manichean texts](#)).

As the manuscripts were purchased, rather than excavated, their exact provenience is uncertain. Schmidt was told that they came from Madīnat Māzī in the Fayyūm in Egypt, but this claim was probably false; it is contradicted by the language of the documents, which is the Coptic formerly used in the region of Asyūt (Lycopolis) in upper Egypt, where the Manicheans were firmly entrenched from the end of the 3rd century c.e. This language, which is both rich and homogeneous, cannot be identified with any of the dialects known from Gnostic or Christian manuscripts found in middle Egypt. Linguists refer to it as “sub-Akhmimic,” “Lycopolitan,” or “Asyutic,” but Manichean Coptic is more appropriate.

All the manuscripts were written on papyrus. They are in large codex format and are written in uncial script by several different 4th-century hands. They are not illustrated. The bindings have disappeared, probably torn off when the find was split up and distributed among dealers.



The manuscripts in Dublin were partly restored (placed under glass) and classified by Hugo Ibscher before World War II; after 1945 his son Rolf continued the work. This collection has never been examined as a whole and in depth by experts in codicology, paleography, or Coptic language.

The codices, complete or partial, include:

1. “Codex A,” a complete Manichean psalmbook consisting of 289 folios (578 pages), including a table of contents. It contains a collection of liturgical and private hymns used by western Manicheans (see especially Säve-Söderbergh; Nagel; Tardieu, 1988b, for additional bibliography). A facsimile edition has been published by S. Giversen (1988; the order of the plates in volume III should be revised, as they were arranged without reference to the contents). An edition and English translation of the “second part” and of the table of contents (117 folios) was prepared by C. R. C. Allberry in 1938; the “first part” (172 folios) has never been edited or translated.

2. “Codex B,” a fragment of the *Synaxeis* consisting of 13 folios (26 pages). Giversen has published a facsimile edition (1987b, pls. 101-26, in the order established by H. Ibscher). There is no edition or translation of this text, which contains glosses on the doctrinal teaching (*synaxeis*) inserted in the pericopes, or verses (*logoi*), of Mani’s Living Gospel (cf. Böhlig, p. 245 n. 16).

3. “Codex C,” a fragment of the *Kephalaia* consisting of 177 folios (354 pages). The *Kephalaia* manuscripts contain various texts in different literary genres and include many Iranian proper names. The Dublin text, which is quite different from that of the Berlin *Kephalaia* manuscript, contains records of the eastern, or Iranian, tradition of the oral teaching of Mani as it was collected in the entourage of his foremost disciple, Mār Ammō. The running head reads “Kephalaia of the wisdom of Mār (i.e. = my lord) Mani the living.” A facsimile edition has been published by Giversen (1987a), but only one fragment has been edited and analyzed, by Michel Tardieu (1988a).

4. “Codex D,” a fragment, consisting of 48 folios (96 pages), contains a collection of homilies by the disciples Salmaios and Koustaïos related to the imprisonment and death of Mani, as well as to the first persecutions of Manicheans in Iran. H. Ibscher designated this codex “the wig” because it resembles a thick, dirty mop of tangled threads. A facsimile edition has been published by Giversen (1987b, pls. 1-96), and an edition with German translation had previously been published by H. J. Polotsky in 1934. The



historical traditions represented in the text have been critically scrutinized by Werner Sundermann.

5. An isolated folio (2 pages) separated from the Berlin codex P. 15997, which contains a historical summary of the Manichean missions in Armenia, Azarbaijan, and the oases of the Syrian desert, from Šāpūr I to Narseh I (cf. Tardieu, 1988a, p. 158 n. 8). A facsimile was published by Giversen (1987b, pls. 99-100), and a partial edition of the codex with translation and commentary is in preparation (Tardieu, forthcoming).

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Michel Tardieu