



## COLOGNE MANI CODEX

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**COLOGNE MANI CODEX** (Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis), a lump of parchment fragments the size of a matchbox, containing a portion of the life and teachings of Mani, discovered in 1969 at an indeterminate spot in the area of Asyūt (ancient Lycopolis) in upper Egypt (Koenen, 1973, pp. 240-41), the smallest ancient codex known to date. In the same year it came into the possession of the Institut für Altertumskunde at the university in Cologne. The seemingly hopeless task of restoring the codex was successfully completed a few months later by A. Fackelmann in Vienna. What emerged was the earliest extant original Manichean work written in Greek (see Henrichs, 1979a, pp. 342-51). The restored work comprises fragments of ninety-six leaves from one codex, measuring 4.5 x 3.8 cm, and a few other, even smaller fragments. The original number of leaves in the manuscript can no longer be determined, as the first and last pages are missing. Each page contains a single column of text, usually twenty-three lines long, written in a minute but clearly legible script.

*Publication.* Albert Henrichs and Ludwig Koenen published an initial report on the work (1970), followed by the first edition of the text, in the years 1975-82. Since then many corrections and alternative readings have been published, primarily in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, especially by Reinhold Merkelbach (for a list of his contributions, see Koenen and Römer, 1988, p. xxix n. 50). Koenen and Cornelia Römer have continued to work on the codex; their facsimile edition with a transcription appeared in 1985. Scrutiny of this text revealed that in a number of instances fragments could be assembled to form longer passages (Koenen and Römer, 1985b, pp. 47-54). This discovery led



to their publication of a second edition of the complete codex in 1988, though the volume of commentary on pp. 121-92 of the codex and a glossary of terms for the entire edition have yet to appear. A concordance to the first edition was published in 1985 (Cirillo, Concolino Mancino, and Roselli).

Because of the great importance of the codex, it immediately became the subject of research by scholars of Manicheism. Aside from numerous interpretive essays by the editors, two symposia in Rende (Calabria) and Cosenza, in 1984 and 1988 respectively, have been devoted entirely to the codex. The papers presented at the first were published in 1986 by Luigi Cirillo and Amneris Roselli, those presented at the second by Cirillo.

*Content.* The fragmentary text preserved in the Cologne codex deals with Mani's youth and the beginning of his missionary activity, though, because of extensive damage to the leaves, particularly in the last sections, even the most elementary logical connections are often lacking. The account of Mani's introduction to the Elkesaite baptist sect (p. 11) provides the first verifiable date in his life. The child Mani is accompanied by guardian angels and "holy powers" during this whole period, and he experiences wonderful visions, which he still does not understand. The end of the period is marked by the "maturation" (*tò akmaïon*) of Mani's body, which was originally dated by the editors to his twenty-fifth year but later to the end of his twelfth year (Henrichs and Koenen, 1975, p. 15 n. 25; for a different opinion, see Sundermann, 1975, pp. 205-14). The next certain date is that of the revelation of the teaching through Mani's spiritual companion and twin, the *syzygos*, during his twenty-fifth year (pp. 17-18). From that point on the description of Mani's life becomes more detailed, including his initial teaching activities and conflict with the baptists, his failure in the debate, and his final separation from them. This section, which forms the main portion of the preserved text (pp. 14-114), also contains apologetic and exegetic homilies (e.g., on the truth of the paraclete's witness to the revelation and on the proper understanding of Mani's parousia). The final preserved section (pp. 114-192) covers the beginning of the Manichean world mission in episodic and legendary terms. The concrete events mentioned include the conversion of Pattikios, Mani's father (pp. 118-20); the southern Mesopotamian port of Pharat on the Persian Gulf is mentioned (pp. 140 l. 4, 144 l. 4), as is the "Median" Ganzak (Gk. Gounazák, Ganazák; p. 121 ll. 8, 12). The editors date Mani's appearance in the palace of the Sasanian emperor Šāpūr I (ca. 240-70 c.e.; pp. 163-64; see below) to his twenty-sixth year.



The work bears the somewhat puzzling title *Perì tês génnēs toû sómatos autoû* (On the origin of his body), which Koenen first interpreted in the Pauline sense, as a reference to the creation of Mani's church, his mystic body (1978, pp. 164-66). The codex would thus be a hagiographical treatment of Mani as part of a comprehensive history of the church. Koenen has since retracted this interpretation, as in many instances the Greek word *sôma* refers specifically to Mani's body and is thus used as a term for the earthly person of the founder of the religion (Koenen and Römer, 1988, pp. xv n. 2, 51 n. 2). It can therefore be assumed that the title refers to the Manichean belief in a spiritual Mani who only temporarily assumed earthly form.

*Form and Origin.* The Cologne Mani codex is divided into sections, each beginning with a name (e.g., Abiësoûs, Anâ, Innaïos, Koustaïos, Timótheos) or simply "the teachers." The editors identified these figures as the transmitters of the texts that follow (Henrichs and Koenen, 1970, pp. 110-14); the work is thus obviously a compilation from older ones. As some of the transmitters' names (Innaïos, Koustaïos) are known from Mani's circle and their successors, the sources must have been of the 3rd century, incorporated into the text of the codex at the beginning of the 4th century. That it was probably originally written in eastern Aramaic (Syriac) is strongly suggested by a number of linguistic features (Henrichs and Koenen, 1970, pp. 104-05; Henrichs, 1979a, pp. 352-53). The transmitters frequently cited the "words" or writings of Mani himself (Henrichs and Koenen, 1970, p. 112), for instance, his letter to Edessa (pp. 64 l. 1 to 65 l. 22). At the beginning of the "Living Teachings of Mani" (pp. 66 l. 4-68 l. 5), the citation is demonstrably exact (Henrichs and Koenen, 1970, pp. 192-96). This manuscript of the Greek translation has been dated to the 5th century on the basis of paleographic evidence (Henrichs and Koenen, 1970, p. 100). The language exhibits many postclassical features and imitates the diction of the Septuagint and the New Testament (Henrichs, 1979a, p. 353; Koenen and Römer, 1988, p. xxv).

The sources, motifs, and components of the text have been analyzed by Henrichs (1981), using the methods of literary criticism, but as yet the literary function of the codex itself has not been studied. The contents and nature of the presentation suggest that it belonged to a popular genre aimed at a broad circle of readers and listeners. Literary works of this kind are otherwise unknown in the tradition of eastern Manicheism. Although there are some other texts with comparable hagiographical themes, it is doubtful that there is any other instance in which the transmissions of followers were integrated



into continuous, conventionalized hagiographical description (Sundermann, 1986, pp. 88-91). In the west, however, the so-called “Coptic church history,” found at Madīnat Madī in Egypt but now lost, was comparable. The reports were also given under the “authors’ names” (Schmidt and Polotsky, 1933, pp. 28-29). As the latter work deals with Mani’s death and the subsequent fate of the church, it can be concluded that both compilations are parts of a more comprehensive Manichean church history in Aramaic, Greek, and Coptic, the first part of which is preserved in the Cologne Mani codex.

*Importance for Research on Manicheism.* The narrative contained in the Cologne Mani codex follows hagiographic convention, in many places based on the pattern of the life of Christ and often incorporating popular themes (Henrichs, 1979b, pp. 92-95, 97-103), but it also includes historical material, which is of the greatest value for research on Manicheism. In the text it is asserted that Mani grew up in a Judeo-Christian community of which [Alchasai](#) was regarded as the founder. What had previously been known about this legendary figure was not always consistent with the known practices among the baptists Mani knew (e.g., rejection of marriage). The justification for describing these baptists as Elkesaites has thus been called into doubt a priori (Luttikhuisen, esp. pp. 25-37, 153-64, 220-22). Most scholars regard the testimony of the Cologne Mani codex as credible, with the proviso that the teaching of the founder of a sect can be subject to modification in actual practice among his followers (Henrichs and Koenen, 1970, pp. 141-60; Merkelbach; for other sources, see Koenen and Römer, 1988, p. xvii n. 12).

It is certain that Alchasai was known in the Manichean tradition and that he was probably contrasted, ahistorically, with his own followers as an early advocate of Mani’s ideas. This phenomenon can be traced back to widespread older traditions and probably to Mani’s own teachings, as is confirmed by the reference to Alchasai (ʿlxs) in a Parthian Manichean fragment (Sundermann, 1981, p. 19 l. 26) and by the identification in a 10th-century Arabic text (Ebn al-Nadīm, ed. Flügel, I, p. 340 ll. 25-30, II, p. 177; tr. Dodge, II, p. 811) of al-Ḥ-s-y-ḥ as the founder of the Moḡtasela, a southern Mesopotamian baptist sect related to the Manicheans.

There is, however, no reason to doubt the assertion in the Cologne Mani Codex that Mani grew up in a Christian-oriented, rather than a Mandaean, community (Rudolph, 1974, pp. 476-77, 482), which is of fundamental importance to an understanding of the intellectual and religious background of his teachings. His earliest teachers were not members of a decidedly anti-Christian sect



under strong Persian influence but Jewish Christians who believed in the efficacy of rites and baptism. The gnostic ideas in the new teachings grew out of Mani's differences with those teachers (Koenen, 1981, pp. 736-56). Mani's teachings were indeed originally what medieval orthodox Christians claimed, a Christian heresy.

The Cologne Mani codex is not a dogmatic tract. Its themes were drawn from fully developed Manichean dogma. The hope of finding in this text Mani's teachings in their original form, free of later ontological dualism, thus remains unfulfilled (Stroumsa, pp. 143-44); in fact, the "[two] natures" are mentioned frequently in the codex (e.g., three times on p. 132 ll. 13-16).

*Importance for Persian studies.* From the point of view of Persian studies, the most important material in the codex is the synchrony provided by the account of Mani's twenty-fifth year: "[When I] was twenty-four years old, the year in which Ardašīr, king of Persia, subjugated the city of Hatra and in which his son King Šāpūr adopted the great crown (*diádēma mégiston*), on the 8th (?) day of the month of Pharmuti, according to the lunar calendar [i.e., on 17-18 April 240, counting from the evening of the first day to that of the second] . . ." (Koenen and Römer, 1988, pp. 10-11; Henrichs and Koenen, 1975, pp. 20-21, 79 n. 44: April 18-19). Marie Louise Chaumont (reference from P. O. Skjærvø) observed that the term *diádēma mégiston* corresponds to the expression *LB'dydymy* of the Paikuli inscription. There is no reason to doubt that these were Mani's own words, and it is clear that he was well informed about current events. Henrichs and Koenen (1970, p. 126) interpreted this reference to the conquest of Hatra by Ardašīr I, rather than by his son Šāpūr, as confirmation of the "late" chronology for the reign of Ardašīr put forth by Theodor Nöldeke (*Geschichte der Perser*, pp. 400-34) and Ḥasan Taqīzāda, but they nevertheless acknowledged that both the early (239 c.e.) and the late (241) dates suggested for the official beginning of Šāpūr I's reign are possible (Henrichs and Koenen, 1970, pp. 129-30) while considering the earlier date more probable.

The Cologne Mani codex thus appeared to the editors to confirm the early date (12 April/1 Nīsān 240) for the coronation of Šāpūr I as ruler over Persia. It should be noted that the date itself is not given in the codex but was derived from a combination of the report there with Ebn al-Nadīm's report of the date of Mani's first official public appearance (ed. Flügel, II, p. 327; tr. Dodge, II, p. 775; cf. Henrichs and Koenen, 1970, p. 127). The respective accounts of the public appearance of Mani on 1 Nīsān and his call to proclaim his teachings on



8 Nīsān are in fact incompatible; it is possible that reports based on different historical attempts at synchronism were uncritically combined by Ebn al-Nadīm.

An important argument for dating the coronation of Šāpūr I to the year 239-40 was put forth by Ruth Altheim-Stiehl on the basis of an examination of the inscription on the Bīšāpūr stele (1978; cf. Haloun and Henning, p. 199 n. 4). Only the dates 223-24 for the accession of Ardašīr and 239-40 for Šāpūr are compatible with the period of the stele and the dates in the inscription. On the other hand, it is clear from the Cologne Mani codex that such an early dating of the reign of Ardašīr is incorrect, for he must still have been alive in the year April 240-April 241. A number of suggestions for resolving this dilemma have been put forth (for a summary, see Altheim-Stiehl, 1982), but the possibility of different dates for the “fire” (i.e., coronation) of the first two Sasanian kings (223-24 and 239-40 respectively) and their first years of official rule (226-27 and 241-42) should be considered.

If Mani really appeared during his twenty-sixth year (241-42, according to the reconstruction of p. 163 of the codex) in the palace of King Šāpūr I, who was mourning his father’s death, that would lend credence to the frequently advanced hypothesis that Ardašīr died during that year (Wiesehöfer, p. 374).

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