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A MANICHAEAN HISTORICAL TEXT


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Usually “historical texts” are not found in Gnostic literature, that is, texts dealing with the history and the times of the Gnostics themselves. The Manichees, however, were highly interested in the history of their founder and their church1. This interest is reflected in numerous fragments of historical texts from Turfan and above all in the Egyptian material, where this type of texts is represented both by the Cologne Mani Codex (CMC) and by the Coptic Manichaean texts, which contain a good deal of historical material2.

The parts of the seven Coptic Manichaean codices from Medinet Madi which are published in critical editions bear witness to this historical interest. Both the Kephalaia and the Psalm-Book contain much historical material, and in the Manichaean Homilies the text with the title The Part of the Narrative about the Crucifixion (Man. Hom. 42, 9-85) describes the death of Mani and the fate of the Manichaean congregation under its two subsequent leaders Sisinnios and Innaios. Also the last text in the Manichaean Homilies (Man. Hom. 86-96) contains some historical material. The same seems to be the case for the codex in the Chester Beatty Library entitled Kephalaia, like the one in Berlin3.

One of the seven codices seems to have had exclusively historical contents. C. Schmidt described the contents of a few leaves from this codex in “Ein Mani-Fund”4. The largest part of the codex was presumably lost during the Second World War, but a few leaves still remain in Berlin5 and a single leaf in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin. This Dublin leaf has been published in facsimile by S. Giversen6.

Till now the contents of the codex were known exclusively through Schmidt’s description. Combined with H. H. Schaeder’s philological and historical observations concerning topography and personal names in Schmidt’s description7, it has been used in many studies of the history of Manichaeism8.

The leaf of which Schmidt gave the most detailed description is the same as the one preserved in the Chester Beatty Library. After making a transcript from the facsimile edition I had opportunity to collate my transcript with the original leaf. Since then, P. Nagel generously reviewed my transcription; he found some additional readings, which have been acknowledged in the notes (here Nag.). Finally,

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1 The term “history” in this article is only intended to indicate this Manichaean interest in the life of Mani and the progress of his church. I do not intend to say that the Manichees shared any modern concept of “history”, a claim which would certainly be inappropriate in a description of their texts and intentions.

2 A fundamental study of the historical literature of the Iranian Manichees is W. Sundermann’s “Studien zur kirchengeschichtlichen Literatur der iranischen Manichäer”, I-II (AOF 13, 1986, 40-92, 239-317) and III (AOF 14, 1987, 41-107), also essential for the historical literature of the Western Manichees.


Giversen learned from W.-P. Funk that Polotsky’s original transcription of this leaf did still exist; the transcription is to be found in Berlin in “Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Altägyptisches Wörterbuch” together with other transcriptions some of which are probably from other leaves from P 15997. I have, thanks to W. F. Reineke, obtained access to this transcription. Even though the transcription is imperfect and insufficient, and it is obvious that it never came to be mature for edition, it is of great value because the leaf must have been in a better state of preservation in the thirties. It would not make much sense to publish Polotsky’s transcription because there is much text on the leaf which he did not try to transcribe, but his transcription contains valuable supplementary information to an edition of the papyrus. Since my transcript permits a clearer understanding of this important text, it is worth publishing it provisionally. This provisional publication is provided with a translation and notes on the readings and a brief discussion of the contents. In the notes it is always stated whenever a reading is only based on Polotsky’s transcription because it is now illegible (here Pol.). In some instances a reading is uncertain now, but it was certain in the time of Polotsky; therefore I have chosen to indicate the reading as certain.

According to Schmidt, the contents of the codex was compiled from the accounts of several Manichaean authorities whose names were written at the top edges of the pages9. But according to Alexander Böhlig, this information is not correct: It is only possible to see some “kaum lesbare und schwer deutbare Überschriften”10. On the leaf in the Chester Beatty Library, however, nothing is preserved of such a heading11. Otherwise, the first line is partially preserved, while it is impossible to establish whether the lowest preserved line was also the last line. In its present state the leaf contains 34 lines on the recto (plate 99) and 33 lines on the verso (plate 100). But the verso contained 36 lines in Polotsky’s time. The column height is now about 19 cm12.

Though the lines may not have extended equally far to the right, it seems possible to establish that the column of plate 100 was about 11.4 cm wide, because the last letter in line 19 seems preserved.

A column height of approximately 19 cm with about 33 lines and a width of about 11.4 cm corresponds to the dimensions of the columns in the Manichaean Homilies, where H. Ibscher estimated the column height to be about 20 cm and the breadth at about 13 cm with about 33 lines on average13.

Transcription of Plate 99

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9 Schmidt and Polotsky, op. cit., 30.
10 Böhlig, op. cit. 183-84.
11 One of Polotsky’s transcriptions in Berlin which is probably from another leaf from P 15997 has at the top edge of the page the framed heading ΛΟΤ and in line 23 the framed heading ΛΗΜΩΣ ΠΣΩΡ:
12 Since no number from the hand of Hugo Ibscher is preserved on the leaf, the numbers 99-100 from Giversen, op. cit., II, will be used here.
13 H. Ibscher in Manichäische Homilien. Hrsg. von H. J. Polotsky (Manichäische Handschriften der Sammlung A. Chester Beatty, I). Stuttgart, 1934, XIII. A more detailed description of the leaf from the historical codex can be found in the introduction in Giversen, op. cit. vol. II, VIII-IX.
Translation of Plate 99

.............Barhbiës....
...the servants of the land (χώρα) of Khūzistan....
..the servant..... the son of .........

the land (χώρα) of Anajit, Adūrbadagan and ...

.............but the profit of th[at] place...
...they are belonging to her ...

8

Arménia and Bithia to...

according to (κατό) their power.

...of Persia make peace (εἰρήνη) and they were re[conc]iled (?)

..........of that place in ...

..........the teacher Abiēsūi...

......before Malōp, the son of Abdkh[...]

g)o also in to Queen Thadamōr...

......rightly (κατλάος), and the teacher Abiēsūi.....

that......and other brethren, and they made a great...

24

......church (ἐκκλησιὰ) of that place...

the teacher ..... sent the servant Sethel.....

......Zakhias to Abira of the watch tower, and they...

......church (ἐκκλησιὰ) of that place.....

28

......the matter came before Kī[ng] Amarō....

......Abākarīm, therefore (ὡςτε) the brethren were caused to go.....

......a cause of healing, and they caused him to become friends with [us]...

......good (ὄγηθὼν) in him, and he helped us very...

32

......for us, and he became a great patron (πάτρον) for [us]...

......his p[at]ronage (βοήθεια) and his......

......appear.............
119-21 with references to earlier literature). Incidentally, one of Polotsky’s transcriptions in Berlin which is probably from another leaf from P 15997 mentions a "Amrô = Amru" (ibid., 28 A. 5); Schaeder, op. cit., 340-41: "Amrô" is transcribed "aus έως oder vielmehr, nach manichäischer und mittelpersischer Orthographie: έως" (cf. ibid., 345).

Transcription of Plate 100

[... ]

1 ΛΑΜΡΩ: M only in Pol. – π[... ]
2 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
3 ΛΑΜΡΩ: Π only in Pol. – π[... ]
4 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
5 ΛΑΜΡΩ: Π only in Pol. – π[... ]
6 ΛΑΜΡΩ: Π only in Pol. – π[... ]
7 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
8 ΛΑΜΡΩ: Π only in Pol. – π[... ]
9 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
10 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
11 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
12 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
13 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
14 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
15 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
16 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
17 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
18 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
19 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
20 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
21 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
22 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
23 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
24 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
25 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
26 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
27 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
28 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
29 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
30 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
31 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
32 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
33 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
34 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
35 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]
36 ΛΑΜΡΩ: π only in Pol. – Π[... ]

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“Kaum lesbar.” – 20 beginning ὤο: P only in Pol. – 20-21 ἐν [ἘΠΗ]ΠΕ: 1 only in Pol. The restoration is based on the phrase used in Man. Hom. 42, 15-16 about the accession of the King Hormizd I to the throne (ἀκτῆς ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΥ ΣΙΡΙΠΠΟ ΛΑΜΠΑΣ ΛΕΙΤΕΦραῖ (secondarily, I see that Pol. suggested the same restoration). Compared to line 19, there would still be space for one or two letters more in line 20, but the two lines may not have reached equally far to the right. – 22 ΔΟΣΜΑ: Based on Pol.; ἢ now lost. – 23: ἢ in Pol. – 24: A possible restoration of the lacuna at the end of the line is ΠΕ[ΘΗΤ. – 27 ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΥ: Nag. suggested ΕΤΗΔΗΜΗΤ. – 28 ΕΥΝΟΥΧ: XOC]: Restoration suggested by Nag. – 30 ΤΟΙ: To only in Pol. – 31 ΣΙΡΙΠΠΟ: ΣΙΡ only in Pol. – 32: ΤΙΟΝ: There does not seem to be space enough in the lines 31-32 for a restoration such as ΛΙΝΝΑΙΟΣ ἘΠΚ ΛΙΝΝΑΙΟΣ ΛΙΝΝΑΙΟΣ ΛΙΝΝΑΙΟΣ, but line 32 may have reached further to the right, because the right margin often fluctuates in these manuscripts. Pol. has ΤΩΝ, but this reading is wrong, as it can be seen from the papyrus, though not from the facsimile. – 33 ΣΕΠΣΩΝ: ΣΕΡΜΑ: Pol.: first Σ now illegible and first Σ almost illegible; both letters also suggested by Nag. – 34: Nothing of this line is now preserved, but its existence seems indicated in Pol. – 35 ΛΙΝΝΑΙΟΣ: Only in Pol.; the line not preserved any more. – 36: Nothing of this line now preserved, but its existence indicated in Pol. 

Translation of Plate 100.

.... headlong (?), and he went to King Amarō ....
.. in the thought (γνώμη) of Sapōres, the ....
[nob]le (εὐγενής) Persians (Πέρσης) ... the assistants (Βοηθός) ...
4 .. for him, and he told to him about the sufferings and the ...
and he thought him worthy (ἀξιόλογον) so that he will write to the King of the P[ersians (Πέρσης),
and he obtained favour for us, and King Amarō wrote
[let]ters (ἐπιστολή) to King Narses and S[a]pōre[s ...]
8 and the many nobles (εὐγενής) ............
... in order to despair of him who will .......
... protector .......................
king, and Innaios went in .........
12 King Narses, and Sapōres, the...[... the]
many [nob]les (εὐγενής) because of us .......
... the king ... that which is useful in order that you receive ......
King [A]marō as he obtained your favour for [us, and]
16 King [Nar]ses ordered (κελέζων) concerning us ........
[comma]nds (ἐντολή) (?)... stumble against them, and his ............
King [A]marō and Sapōres, the .............
... for us in this way until the day when [Ki]ng
20 Na[r]ses died and King Hormizd his son received [the]
[cr]own, and he was at enmity with Sapōres, the ........
... and the Magian (μαγουσάνας) and those who belong to his sect (δόγμα) ...
... us ... their king. And (δέ), in particular, [... the]
24 enmity and the hatred which is in his (?) heart (?)
... the hyparch (ὑπάρχος) Sapōres ...........
... our protector and our great pat[ron (πάτρων) ...]
... concerning (?) us that they persecute (διώκουσι) us ........
28 ... the sufferings to us, and he spread his eunu[chs (εὐνόμους)]
at every (κατα) place, and the servants of the fire.....
very, and they raised a great dange[r (κινδύνος) ...]
suffering and a great persecution (διώκμος), and Innaio[os went (?) to (?) the (?)]
32 pala[ce (παλάτιον) (?) at that time, and he went[ ...]
......, and he beseeche[d] him in order to obta[in] favou[r ....]
Following are some remarks on the contents of the text. The description of Schmidt presupposes that plate 99 preceded plate 100.\textsuperscript{14} I think this assumption is correct: At the bottom of plate 99 it is described how King Amarō became the patron of the Manichees, and on plate 100 he is acting as such.

The text mentions a queen, some kings and other persons. On the basis of the royal names it should be possible to fix chronologically the events referred to in the text.

On plate 99, line 21, Queen Thadamôr is mentioned. According to Schaeder, this expression is a syriacism. Aramaic yadamvr is Palmyra, and Schaeder compares the spelling θαλαμωπ with the spelling θεοδομορ which is found in Josephus,\textit{ ant.} 8,154. Consequently, θαλαμωπ ΤΠΡΩ renders the Syriac מלשנהدامור, “Queen of Tadmor-Palmyra”, and this queen should be none other than the famous Queen Zenobia of Palmyra\textsuperscript{15}.

A Queen Tačī, wife of a Caesar, is mentioned in two Manichaean Sogdian texts (18223 and K 16). W. Sundermann, who edited these texts, suggested that Tačī might be “a hypokoristic Verstümmelung” of the name of Queen Thadamōr, so that the Caesar could be Septimius Odaenathus of Palmyra.\textsuperscript{16} This hypothesis presupposes that in some way the name of Zenobia’s city has been transferred to the Queen herself, not only in the Coptic but also in the Middle Iranian texts.\textsuperscript{17}

If the hypothesis that Queen Thadamōr is Zenobia is accepted, then the event mentioned in our text may have happened after the death of Odaenathus, otherwise we would expect the text to mention a

\textsuperscript{14} Schmidt and Polotsky, op. cit., 28-29.

\textsuperscript{15} Sundermann, op. cit., 344.

\textsuperscript{16} Sundermann, “Iranische Lebensbeschreibungen Manis” (\textit{Acta Orientalia} 37, Copenhagen, 1974), 137; Sundermann, \textit{Mitteliranische manichāische Texte kirchengeschichtlichen Inhalts}, 41-45, 123. Cf. Sundermann, “Studien zur kirchengeschichtlichen Literatur der iranischen Manichäer”, I, 61 A, 64 concerning the possibility of a letter from Mani to Zenobia.

18223 and 18222 form the fragment of one sheet; 18223 tells about the healing of a certain Nafṣā who is the sister of Queen Tačī, wife of the Caesar; in this connection Mār Addā, Manichaean missionary in the Roman Empire, is also mentioned. In K 16, Nafṣā is speaking to her sister Tačī. Finally, the Manichaean Middle Persian text M 2/R1/28/ mentions that Nafṣā was converted to Manichaeism by Addā (this text is edited in Andreas and Henning, “Mitteliranische Manichaica aus Chinesisches-Turkestan II” (SPAW 1933), 301-2).

The complex of problems involved the use of θαλαμωπ as a personal name in our text was already observed by Polotsky as it can be seen from his note: “Thadmōr (= Palmyra) kommt als Frauenname auf einer palmyrenischen Inschrift vor (Mitteilung von Geheimrat Moritz). Die Königin Zenobia von Palmyra war eine Zeitgenossin des Mani” (Schmidt and Polotsky, op. cit. 28 A. 4.)
King of Palmyra. Therefore, it is most likely that the event occurred between 267 and 272, when Zenobia ruled Palmyra herself on behalf of her minor son Vaballathus.

On plate 100, the death of King Narses of Persia and the accession of his son Hormizd II in the year 302 is mentioned in line 19-20. The text on plate 99 is badly preserved, but if we nevertheless tentatively assume that plates 99-100 describe a progressive chain of events, then the narrative of the text begins no later than the year 272 and covers the period until the year 302 at the earliest, that is, a period of no less than 30 years. If the reference to Queen Zenobia refers to the time before the death of Odaenathus, the period will be even longer.

It is worth noticing that it was in this very period that both Mani and Sisinnios suffered martyrdom, events which are not mentioned on the present leaf. But according to Schmidt’s description of the contents of the historical codex the death of Mani was mentioned on other leaves. On one leaf the Áρηγγέως Sisinnios was mentioned. Presumably this means that the purpose of the narrative on plate 99 only was to recount a few events in the same period.

At the bottom of plate 99 is a description of how King Amarò became the patron of the Manichees. Perhaps he became their patron because of a miraculous healing performed by a Manichee; “a cause of healing” is mentioned in line 30. Miraculous healings are in no way unknown in Manichaean texts.

In the inscription of Paikuli where King Narses relates the circumstances leading to his accession to the throne, two persons called Amru are mentioned. The first “Amru King of the Lahmids” must be the same as ‘Amr ibn ‘Adî, the Arab King of Hira, who is known from Arab tradition, while the identity of the second Amru is disputed. Schaedler identified Amaro in our text with King ‘Amr ibn ‘Adî.

On plate 100, Σαπυρχος is mentioned in line 25. This Σαπυρχος was also identified by Schaedler with a person mentioned in the inscription of Paikuli. According to this inscription, a prominent faction of Iranian noblemen did not accept the new King, the young Bahram III, and they offered the crown to his great-uncle Narses. The first of this group of noblemen who is mentioned in the inscription is “Šâbuhr the Hargbed”. In the Sassanian state, the hargbed held the highest rank after the King, he belonged to the Sassanian clan himself, and had the privilege to crown the king. Schaedler identified this Hargbed with Σαπυρχος of Paikuli.

In his description of the text Schmidt only mentioned this Σαπυρχος. But the text mentions also a Σαπυρχος with a different title (plate 100, line 2, 18, 21; presumably, Σαπυρχος in line 7

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18 Schmidt and Polotsky, op. cit., 28. Some of Polotsky’s transcriptions in Berlin which are probably from other leaves from P 15997 seem to refer to Mani’s last days.
19 Schmidt and Polotsky, op. cit., 25, 29. One of Polotsky’s transcriptions in Berlin which is probably from another leaf from P 15997 mentions CICINNOC [ΠΩΡ]ΗΓΟΣ.
21 H. Humbach and P. O. Skjærvø, The Sassanian Inscription of Paikuli, Wiesbaden, 1983, Part 3.1, 71; Part 3.2, 120, 126 with further references. The title of this second 'mrw 'pgrn' is not preserved; Humbach and Skjærvø, op. cit., Part 3.1, 71 restore the lacuna with “[MLKA?]” and translate “Amru [King of] the Abgars (?)”.
22 Schaedler, op. cit., 345.
25 In his letter, Skjærvø discusses the identity of both Σαπυρχος and the Μαγουσαios mentioned on plate 100, line 22. He points out that it is uncertain whether this Μαγουσαios could be the well-known Kerdîr who was already ēhrbed, that is teacher of religion, in 260 (SKZ; Mid. Pers. line 34, Parth. line 28: Kerdîr ēhrbed, Greek line 66: Κηρτίρ μάγων (cf. Maricq, op. cit., 73)) and still held that office in 293 (he is mentioned in the inscription of Paikuli; cf. Humbach and Skjærvø, op. cit., Part 3.1, 41-42; Part 3.2, 45): He must have been very old in 302. To some degree, the same consideration holds for Šâbuhr the hargbed whom we may assume was also somewhat advanced in age in 293. Both persons or one or the other in our text may be someone else. But Skjærvø also points to the possibility that the “references are to Kerdîr and Šâbuhr the hargbed - or one or the other -, but refer to the past.”
26 Schmidt and Polotsky, op. cit., 28.
is the same person); even though some letters of this title are preserved, I have not been able to restore the word. It is of course possible that the two persons are one and the same in spite of the different titles.

It is natural to compare the narrative, the sequence of which is more or less comprehensible on plate 100, with the one in The Part of the Narrative about the Crucifixion in the Manichaean Homilies. According to the Homilies, Innaios became ἄρχηγός of the Manichaean congregation after King Bahram II’s execution of Sisinnios, the previous ἄρχηγός (Man. Hom. 83.21-22). The King called off the persecution when Innaios had cured him of a dangerous disease (Man. Hom. 83.28-85.10). On plate 100 of our text, Innaios plays an important role in making King Narses call off a persecution of the Manichees. Based on Schmidt’s description of the contents of the historical leaf, W. Seston suspected a discrepancy between the two narratives, but after all he remarked: “On ne pourra tenter de concilier les deux versions que quand le “livre historique” aura été tout entier publié”25.

The two narratives could be in agreement if we assume that the suspension of the persecutions mentioned in the Manichaean Homilies had been succeeded by a new persecution under Narses, which the King called off later on.

The references to historical persons mentioned in the Paikuli-Inscription lends some credibility to our narrative. But it should finally be mentioned that both the story in the Homilies and the story on the historical leaf contain motifs belonging to the genre of legend. In the Homilies there is the miraculous healing of King Bahram II. On the historical leaf, plate 99, line 30 speaks about “a cause of healing”; this may also relate to a miraculous event. But these legendary features cannot in themselves determine whether the stories are fabricated: A historical core might very well have been enriched or stylized with such motifs26.

Aarhus

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