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A Visual Sermon on Mani's Teaching of Salvation

A Contextualized Reading of a Chinese Manichaean Silk Painting in the Collection of the Yamato Bunkakan in Nara, Japan

Zsuzsanna Gulácsi

Advances over the last few decades in our understanding of cultural and religious developments in Central Asia and its interconnections with China put us in a position to recognize significance in new discoveries that previously might have been overlooked or misread. Perhaps no one has contributed more to these advances than Takao Moriyasu, whose life long dedication to exploring the history of the Uygor civilization, especially the history of Uygor Manichaeism, at the crossroads of Central Asia has provided a substantially better informed foundation from which to interpret new material evincing locally the transmission and exchange of ideas and practices from a broader historical and geographical setting than researchers are accustomed to considering. He has helped us understand how China could be on the receiving end of cultural influences transmitted via Central Asia, such as in the case of the subject discussed here.

This paper explores the didactic function of a Manichaean silk painting from around the era of the Yuan dynasty that has been identified recently in the collection of a renowned Japanese art museum, the 大和文華館 Yamato Bunkakan.¹ The painting in question is a ca. 5-feet tall hanging scroll, consisting of five clearly demarcated registers of varying heights that together convey a subject that we may call *Sermon on Mani's Teaching of Salvation* (Fig. 1). While earlier it had been considered to be a Buddhist work of art,² today the Manichaean origin of this Chinese

1 The definite Manichaean attribution of the painting has been first offered by Yutaka Yoshida (2008). His pioneering study formed the foundation of the thematic volume of the Journal of the Yamato Bunkakan dedicated to the Chinese Manichaean silk painting in its collection. I am most grateful to Prof. Yoshida for sharing the manuscript of his article with me in advance of writing my contribution. The findings of my article fall within the overall framework of his conclusions and thus strengthen his identification.

2 The initial Buddhist interpretations of the painting, including its overall theme as the "Six Buddhist Realms" and its main scene as the "Meeting of the Three Religions" (i.e., Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism), were reviewed by Takeo Izumi. Although Izumi raises the possibility that the main figure could be Mani, due to its similarity to the basic iconography of the Mani statue from 1339 near Quanzhou, he urges further study before a secure Manichaean identification could be affirmed. He writes: "I should like to wait for the definitive answer to the question who is represented in the Yamato Bunkakan painting and to the problem of its religious affiliation" (2006, pp. 10-12).

painting is unquestionable for three principal reasons: its dedicatory inscription that bestowed the object on a Chinese Manichaean temple most likely at 宁波 Ningbo, in 浙江 Zhejiang province³; the iconography of its main deity, Mani, as well as that of the elect (Manichaean priests), who are shown in Chinese versions of characteristically Manichaean attire⁴; and the significant amount of documentary evidence on the worship of Manichaean deities (Mani and Jesus) represented in pictorial and sculptural forms by the Manichaean communities of southern China, especially Fujian and Zhejiang provinces, between the 10th and 17th centuries.⁵

Beyond providing data for religious attribution, this painting constitutes a rich visual source for the study of ca. 13th-century southern Chinese Manichaean art in terms of iconography and didactic function.⁶ In a recent publication, I focused on the Manichaean iconographic heritage of this painting and connected specific subjects depicted in it (namely the *Sermon Scene*, the *Image of a Deity*, and the *Judgment Scene*) to analogous representations in earlier Manichaean pictorial art from

3 As part of the Manichaean identification of the image, the inscription is discussed by Yoshida who provides an English translation by Takao Moriyasu: "Zhang Siyi from a parish(?) called Dongzheng, who is a leader of the disciples, together with his wife Xinniang [from] the family of Zheng make a donation and present respectfully a sacred painting of Hades to a temple of vegetarians located on the Baoshan mountain. They wish to provide it as their eternal offering. Accordingly, peace may be kept. [In the year ... and in the ... -th month]," (Yoshida 2008, Appendix and notes 4, 5, and 24).

4 Yoshida interprets the main figure as Mani, and the repeated image of the female figure as the Light Maiden (Sogdian *Daēnā*). Regarding the overall subject of the painting, he suggests that it is an illustration of Manichaean doctrine on the individual eschatology, and thus could be viewed as a scene inspired by a theme depicted in Mani's *Picture-Book* (Yoshida 2008). The Manichaean iconography of the main figure and the elects in connection with other southern Chinese Manichaean presentations are also discussed by Gulácsi 2008a.

5 The textual evidence on southern Chinese Manichaean pictorial art is surveyed in Gulácsi 2008a.

6 Due to the illegible state of the year and month in the dedicatory inscription (see note 3 above), the dating of this painting requires a scholarly argument based on art historical and/or a scientific basis. Currently, the 14th century is considered to be the most likely time in which this work of art was made (for an English summary of the Japanese arguments on the subject, see Yoshida 2008, note 3). It seems, however, that an earlier, 13th-century, date is also worthy for exploration for two reasons. Firstly, because the 5 large *Kings of Hell* hanging-scrolls in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which exhibit stylistic and iconographic ties with the Yamato Bunkakan image, bear inscriptions assigning their images to the year 1195 and the city of Ningbo (see note 37 below). Secondly, since southern Chinese Manichaean activities from the era of the 12th-century are documented by a textual account (see note 22 below). Therefore, before a dating argument is put forward, I consider the 13th century a reasonably approximate assumption for the dating of the Yamato Bunkakan painting.

ca. 10th-century East Central Asia. Such iconographic correspondences prove that, despite their clear integration to the artistic norms of ca. 13th century southern China, the roots of certain pictorial topics in the Yamato Bunkakan painting go back to East Central Asian Manichaean prototypes.⁷

My current goal is to examine the available data regarding the religious context of use of this painting. I suggest that it functioned as a visual aid for religious teaching in service of a Manichaean version of the practice that Victor Mair has called *picture recitation* (i.e., storytelling with images) in his 1988 monograph, which explores the origins of the Chinese version of the tradition (轉變 *zuan-bian*) and notes its survival throughout much of the Asian continent, including a closely related Japanese version (繪解き *etoki*) that is still practiced today in certain Pure Land Buddhist temples.⁸ By introducing Manichaean textual and visual evidence for the practice of delivering religious teachings with visual aids, such as textile displays (silk paintings and silk embroideries) or solely pictorial rolls (made of parchment and later paper), I argue that Manichaean communities used “illustrated sermons,” performed most likely by the elect, as a distinctive form of religious instruction already during the mid-3rd century in southern Mesopotamia, continued the practice in 8th-11th-century East Central Asia, and still employed it in ca. 13th-century southern China.

Formal Elements in Service of Visual Communication

This hanging scroll constitutes a well-conceived composition formed by an assembly of a relatively large number of individual scenes. Numerous formal elements are repeated in the arrangement of each scene, contributing to the effectiveness of the visual communication and suggesting the painter’s comfort with a structural repertoire of tested artistic means employed in order to reach the mind of the beholder. These formal elements form the foundation of the communicative efficacy defining the overall character of the painting.

Each register is composed as a self-standing, individual pictorial unit. This is achieved by the varied compositional arrangement of the figures and is further enhanced by thin brown lines that frame some of the scene. Regarding basic content, register 1 at the very top depicts heaven through a palace building that forms the focus of a narration of events with repeated figures of a few mythological beings.⁹ In a technique known as the cyclic method of narration, this composition shows how the Light Maiden and her entourage conduct their business: arriving on the left, while being greeted by an unidentified female host; visiting with the host, while seated

⁷ Gulácsi 2008b.

⁸ Mair 1988, pp. 1-16; and Kaminishi 2006, pp. 103-108.

⁹ For more on this scene and the discussion of the Light Maiden (Maiden/Virgin of Light), see Yoshida 2008.

inside the palace at the center; and then departing on the right, while being seen off by the host. The scene maybe titled: *The Light Maiden's Visit to Heaven*. Register 2 depicts a sermon performed around the statue of a Manichaean deity (most likely Mani) by two Manichaean elects, shown on the right. The elect giving the sermon is seated, while his assistant is standing. A layman and his attendant, seen on the left, listen to the sermon. Therefore, the scene may be titled: *Sermon around a Statue of Mani*.¹⁰ Register 3 is divided into four small squares, each of which is devoted to one of four classes of Chinese society in order to capture what seems to be the possible life experiences of the Chinese Manichaean laity (known as *auditors*). In succession from left to right, the first scene most likely represents itinerant laborers, the second builders, i.e., professional craftspeople, the third farmers, and the fourth aristocrats.¹¹ This set of scenes may be titled: *States of Good Reincarnation*. Register 4 depicts the Manichaean view on judgment after death. It shows a judge seated behind a desk surrounded by his aids in a pavilion on an elevated platform, to the front of which two pairs of demons lead their captives to hear their fates, either positive or negative. The Light Maiden arrives along the upper left on her usual cloud-formation with two attendants, to interfere on behalf of the man about to be judged. This scene may be titled: *The Light Maiden's Intervention with a Judgment*. Register 5 concludes the hanging scroll by portraying four fear-provoking images of hell that include from right to left: arrows being shot at a person suspended from a red frame, dismemberment, a fiery wheel rolled over a person, and finally group of demon torturers waiting for their victim. Therefore, this scene may be titled: *States of Bad Reincarnation*.

The registers have distinct heights that convey their visual hierarchy, which in turn corresponds with their intended viewing-sequence. Through this sequence, the registers constitute a comprehensive narrative that makes sense in light of what is known today about Manichaean art and religion.¹² Accordingly, the starting scene is found in register 2, which shows a sacred space located around a statue of Mani, where a religious instruction is given. The topic of the instruction corresponds (most certainly) with the overall subject of the hanging scroll – Mani's teaching on salvation. The second scene is located in register 4, where the theme of salvation is captured by showing how the Light Maiden arrives to intervene with the judgment of a person after death. The third scene is seen in register 1. This scene captures how the Light

10 Gulyács 2008a, note 39.

11 This interpretation was suggested by Yoshida, who considers the fourth scene depicting merchants (Yoshida 2008).

12 With special attention to the Chinese sources, a through study of Manichaean literature on the topic of judgment after death, including the role of the judge as well as that of the Light Maiden is not included in this study due to the limited length required by the editors. For a discussion see my forthcoming study (2009).

Maiden visited a heavenly site that most certainly forms the basis of her intervention with the judgment. The visual link between the heavenly scene and judgment scene is the repeated figures of the Light Maiden and her entourage, traveling on a cloud formation. In register 1, they are shown completing the business that forms the background of their arrival to the scene of the judgment. Finally, the fourth and fifth sets of scenes are found in registers 3 and 5. They are of equal heights and are composed of a series of smaller scenes painted next to one another. Just as the heavenly scene, they too are connected to the judgment scene. In their case, however, the connection is expressed through physical links, since they are located directly above and below the depiction of the judgment. They both show the possible outcome of the judge's verdict. The fourth scene, register 3, captures examples of good reincarnation as members of human society. One of these is likely to be the destination of the reincarnated soul of the man standing in front of the judge, when, after the intervention of the Light Maiden, the judgment is completed. The fifth scene, register 5 captures another possible destination for reincarnation that would result from the unfavorable judgment of the soul. Nevertheless, it seems that the fear-provoking images of hell function only as a warning here, due to their distinct separation from the rest of the registers of the hanging scroll by a bright decorative line.

Unifying the varied individual scenes of this complex hanging scroll is the underlying principle of symmetry observed through varying degrees of formality in the compositions of the five registers. The main scene, in register 2, is the most formally balanced. It is practically mirror symmetrical, since in it the tools of centrality and isolation highlight the frontally depicted main figure of the whole image. In addition, registers 1 and 5 also observe centralized and symmetrical layouts, since the visual weights of their figures on the left and the right sides of the vertical axis are relatively the same, despite the fact that the two sides of the compositions are clearly not identical. In its center, register 1 highlights the centrally positioned and frontally depicted building with an unusual, foreshortened projection. Register 5 contains a large burning wheel of torture in its middle section. Breaking with the routine of centrality, both registers 3 and 4 are composed without having any object or figure in the middle of their pictorial space. Instead, they are both arranged having two distinct sides facing inward along a vertical axis. Thus, they too accomplish a balanced, although informal symmetry.

This hanging scroll is clearly not a devotional work of art that was used for the purposes of religious worship. It is dominated by a narrative character displayed throughout its complex pictorial program that relies on a large set of uniquely arranged individual scenes. Although the sequence of the scenes is logical, it is not self-evident. Their comprehension implies a beholder familiar with Manichaean reli-

gious teaching. We have seen that various compositional elements, just as a comprehensive theme, unite the individual registers into this intricate image that is hardly suitable for casual viewing. Therefore, this silk painting can be best interpreted as a didactic work of art designed as a visual aid for religious instruction. If so, this painting constitutes a prime example of such an image that was used by a Manichaean community in ca. 13th-century southern China, possibly in the region of Ningbo, in Zhejiang province.

Teaching with Images in Mediaeval China

No art historical study has examined the formal characteristics of silk paintings used for religious instruction in mediaeval and early modern China. Nevertheless, it is known from studies conducted by cultural and religious historians, that paintings were routinely employed in the service of religious propaganda and indoctrination in the Buddhist context and appear to have unique artistic features. The identification of a Chinese Manichaean painting used in this role constitutes an important piece of new evidence on the diverse religious contexts in which images functioned as visual aides of teaching.

The first extensive study on the subject was conducted by Victor Mair, who published his findings in a pioneering monograph in 1988. The starting point of Mair's research was a genre a popular Chinese literature, known as *變文 bian-wen* ('transformation texts'). Dating from the Tang period, transformation texts represent the first extended vernacular narratives in China. The earliest examples discovered from Dunhuang included textual manuscripts as well as painted hand scrolls sometimes with no texts, just images, which contributed to a confusion regarding the interpretation of their function as well as origin. According to a popular explanation, they were promptbooks for monks for sermons and lectures. At the same time, evidence suggested that *pien*-storytellers were primarily lay entertainers (sometimes women). Mair argued that the genre of transformation texts derived from the tradition of *chuan-pien*, a type of oral storytelling with pictures, i.e., picture recitation, which as a folk tradition in China was poorly documented in the historical accounts. Since relatively little Chinese data was available on picture recitation, Mair considered analogous genres from a variety of countries across the Asian continent, including India and southeast Asia, Iran and Central Asia, as well as Japan. Through his survey Mair could point to the historical depth of the tradition as well as its diverse religious application among not only Buddhist, not also Hindu, Jain, Islamic, and Manichaean communities. The results allowed Mair to better understand the Chinese material, but also to discover a historical link among a number of these traditions and thus urge for further research on the subject.¹³

Together with the spread of Buddhism from China to the rest of East Asia, the practice of picture recitation was transmitted to Japan, where it exists until today in the form of *etoki* performances. The first monograph in English on the Japanese *etoki* appeared in 2006. It was written by Ikumi Kaminishi, who presented a contextualized study by focusing on both textual and visual documentary sources, some dating as early as the 10th century. Since *etoki* is still offered today in about two dozen Buddhist temples, Kaminishi is able to introduce data based on not only documentary textual and visual sources, but also actual paintings currently used for the practice, as well as participant observation. The latter allows the reader to see the survival of specific didactic techniques that utilize pictorial handscrolls (Fig. 2c) and hanging scrolls (Fig. 3c) as visual displays.¹⁴

Buddhist sources on picture recitation may help the interpretation of the surviving, fragmentary data provided by Manichaean sources from China and East Central Asia. On the one hand, the Buddhist analogies document that teaching with images can be done either in a folk setting by laymen, or in the institutional setting of an organized religion by monks for the benefit of the laity. On the other hand, the Buddhist data allows us to see both pictorial handscrolls and hanging scrolls as pictorial formats suitable for visual displays.

Didactic Paintings in Manichaean Communities

The identification of a Manichaean painting as a visual aid for religious instruction from ca. 13th-century southern China represents an important piece of new evidence on the diverse application of picture-recitation. Already Victor Mair in his pan-Asiatic survey has drawn attention to the non-Buddhist use of this technique of religious instruction by noting folkloric versions of Islamic and Hindu storytelling from contemporary Iran and Northwest India, as well as an institutional version of the practice among the Manichaeans documented in connection with Mani's *Picture-Book*.¹⁵ As known from a variety of textual sources, Mani (216-276 CE) had a pictorial scroll with a set of images to illustrate his teachings.¹⁶ This collection of

13 The best-documented version of picture recitation in mediaeval China is known in connection with the representation of Buddhist hells that were studied in an article by Stephen Teiser. Teiser approached the artistic sources from a perspective of a social historian, concentrating on the context of use associated with the images of Buddhist purgatory, known as Ten Kings of Hell scroll (1988).

14 Mair 1988, pp. 1-16; and Kaminishi 2006, pp. 103-108.

15 Mair 1988, pp. 28-29 (Jain), pp. 50-53 (Manichaean), pp. 95-97 (Hindu), and pp. 118-120 (Islamic).

16 One of the earliest textual sources on Mani's Picture is by Ephrem the Syrian (died in 373 CE), who cites Mani in order to note the function of the images. For a current translation, see Reeves (1997, 262-263).

paintings (frequently referred to in scholarly studies as Mani's *Picture-Book*) existed in later copies throughout the Manichaean world and represented a prime example of paintings used as visual aids for religious teaching. Indeed, the Manichaean data is especially relevant for understanding the early history of picture-recitation. Manichaean sources not only supply the earliest securely dated evidence for this practice, but they attest to a millennium of continuous history, which can be outlined here briefly through three contexts: 3rd-century southern Mesopotamia, ca. 10th century East Central Asia, and ca. 13th-century southern China.

The earliest textual accounts that convey the use of paintings for Manichaean teachings take us back to the first generation of Manichaeans in southern Mesopotamia. About this early community it is noted by Ephraem Syrus, who wrote one of the first anti-Manichaean texts (*Prose Refutations*), that Mani himself used a set of pictures in a hand-scroll format as illustrations for his teachings. This text is the most informative secondary account preserving mid-4th-century West Asian information on the appearance, content, and didactic use of Mani's *Picture-Book*. Regarding appearance, we learn that this book was painted, and that Ephraem knew about it in a scroll format. By writing that Mani was "using pigments on a scroll," Ephraem implies the format of a classical pictorial roll, most likely made of parchment, which Ephraem seems to have pictured analogously to the classical painted roll, as one horizontal frieze-like painting, i.e., one roll consisting of a continuous set of images. Regarding the subject of this pictorial roll, he states that it depicted Mani's teachings on doctrinal themes. Specifically on its usage, Ephraem notes that a variety of didactic means were used in it in order to facilitate the teaching of the doctrine: its figures were identified by names written next to them, and allegoric images of beauty and ugliness were employed in it to attract the viewers towards good and repulse them from evil.¹⁸

17 Currently 20 textual references are known concerning Mani's Picture-Book. Although each of them is about just a paragraph in length, these texts convey important documentary data of this lost work of art, recording its name, format, content, and usage. The study of the texts allows us to look for possible remains of Mani's Picture-Book among Manichaean visual sources and explain it as a late ancient Mesopotamian religious version of the pan-Asiatic phenomenon of story telling with pictures. This methodology and conceptual framework is followed in a forthcoming monograph on the subject that takes on the task of searching out this lost work of art in textual and visual sources (Gulácsi 2009).

18 The text reads: "According to some of his disciples, Mani also illustrated (the) figures of the godless doctrine, [...], using pigments on a scroll [Syriac megillah]. He labeled the odious (figures) 'sons of Darkness' in order to declare to his disciples the hideousness of Darkness, so that they might loathe it; and he labeled the lovely (figures) 'sons of Light' in order to declare to them 'its beauty so that they might desire it.' He [Mani] accordingly states: 'I have written them (the teachings) in books and illustrated them in

The use of didactic paintings continued during the East Central Asian, Uygur-supported phase of Manichaean history that took place between the mid 8th and early 11th centuries.¹⁹ From the Manichaean remains discovered at Kocho, two solely pictorial fragments indicate the existence of teaching with visual aids. Both are remnants of pictorial displays. Both derive from larger compositions that depict a uniquely Manichaean subject – the *Primary Prophets*, well known from Manichaean textual sources that discuss Mani together with the founders of other religions whose teachings were relevant to Manichaeism. In East Central Asian texts, these prophets are considered to be lesser ranking than Mani and number four. They are likely to include the antediluvian prophet, Seth; the Buddhist prophet, Shakyamuni; the Zoroastrian prophet, Zarathustra; and the Christian prophet, Jesus. Both pictorial fragments with this doctrinal theme show traces of five figures seated cross-legged on lotus flowers, enclosed in two sets of halos (halo around the head and mandorla around the body), and identified (either through an inscription, or an attribute). They are arranged in a symmetrical composition that uses centrality and scale to communicate hierarchy – the four, somewhat smaller size forerunners surround a larger-size central figure, who is likely to be Mani.²⁰

The first Manichaean fragment (III 4947 & III 5 d) that can be interpreted as remnant of a didactic display is housed in the collection of the Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin (Fig. 2a).²¹ It retains the historical Buddha and parts of the central

colors. Let the one who hears about them verbally also see them in visual forms, and the one who is unable to learn them (the teachings) from [words] learn them from the Eikōn Ephraem, Refutations 126.31 - 127.11 (Reeves 1997, 262-263)."

- 19 For a book-length study on the history of Uygur Manichaeism, see Moriyasu 1991 (in Japanese) and 2004 (in German).
- 20 My interpretation of these two fragmentary scenes is based on textual references that mention Mani in connection with the prophets preceding him. Their number varies between three (plus Mani) and four (plus Mani) depending on whether they are in Mediterranean or East Central Asian Manichaean texts. In the immediate context of the visual remains, the Turkic Pothi-book, whose sole content is a long Hymn to Mani, mentions four prophets (without naming them) in addition to Mani: "You [Mani] descended after the four Prophets (Uyg. tört burkhan)" (Clark 1982, p. 183 line 66). If we take the Turkic (Uygur) text as the basis for the interpretation of the scene, it is likely that Mani was in the center, surrounded by the four prophets. This is especially likely because Mani is discussed being exalted among them: "You are worthy to be carried on the flat crowns of the heads / Of the former prophets. / Thus, I praise and worship you" (Clark 1982, p. 188 lines 260-262).
- 21 It is identified as Manichaean based primarily on the correlation of specific motifs and technical details with the reference group. The motif of a gold disk is used with such frequency in Uygur Manichaean art that it has been considered as a token motif for identification of this fragment, which is thought to be Manichaean on other grounds, too (Gulácsi 1997, p. 197). Technical details in the depiction of the Buddha correspond

being's mandorla.²² This high-quality fragment is executed in the “West Asian Style of Uygur Manichaean art,” showing Shakyamuni with an authentic Buddhist iconography and with his name (*B-U-T*) written in Sogdian script vertically on his chest.²³ The Buddha figure was located in the upper right of a scene from a horizontal pictorial scroll (Fig. 2b). The composition was organized around a large central figure (Mani) underneath a canopy and featured most likely four side figures (forerunners to Mani).²⁴ This interpretation of the original layout and the content is strengthened by textual references to the primary prophets of Manichaeism as well as the record of a second Manichaean fragment (discussed below) depicting this subject. The use of Manichaean pictorial scrolls for religious teaching must have been analogous to that of similar displays documented from Buddhist settings. Solely pictorial Buddhist rolls were discovered from Dunhuang Cave 17, attesting to their use in 9th-10th century East Central Asia.²⁵ It is most likely that together with the spread of Buddhism the technique of using painted rolls for religious teaching was transmitted to Japan, where until today one Pure Land temple, Dōjōji in Wakayama prefecture,

with details seen in the execution of other Manichaean works of art in the fully painted version of the West Asian style of Uygur Manichaean art, which favored the use of an ultramarine blue background and large quantities of gold in addition to a five stage execution that concluded with the drawing of delicate details in red line onto the gold- and white-covered surfaces. For a detailed discussion, see Gulácsi 2003 pp. 12-15 and 21-22.

22 This fragment was matched from two individual pieces. For the color facsimile and a detailed discussion, see Gulácsi 2001a, pp. 146-148, 240, and 250.

23 Larry Clark suggests that both the script and the language of the three-letter text are Sogdian (see Appendix I, No. 66, in Gulácsi 2001, p. 240). This reading requires a minor correction. While the script is undoubtedly Sogdian, the language cannot be Sogdian, as was pointed out to me by Yutaka Yoshida (personal communication), due to the fact that the noun *pwt*- is always supplemented with a -y in its nominative form, i.e., *pwy* ‘Buddha’ (Gharib 1995, p. 115 line 2929). Although this eliminates Sogdian as the language, it does not mean that the connotation that Clark assigns to the word is wrong. The Sogdian script is used in 8th-11th-century East central Asia to write Manichaean texts in a variety of other languages, including Parthian, Middle Persian, and Old Turkic (i.e., Old Uygur). The language of the inscription on the chest of the Buddha is likely to be one of these, since the noun ‘Buddha’ is *pwt* in Parthian and Middle Persian (Durkin-Meisterernst 2004, p. 118), as well as in Old Turkic (Clauson 1972, p. 297).

24 For a study of the codicological characteristics of illuminated scroll fragments and the interpretation of the original layout of this fragment, see Gulácsi 2005, pp. 88-93 and 185-188, respectively.

25 The contents of Cave 17 include three pictorial rolls that narrate popular Buddhist stories in Chinese painting styles. Two of them, OA 1919.1-1.080 (see Whitfield & Farrer 1990, 83-85) and Or. 8210/S.3961 (see Zwalf 1985, 103), in the collection of the British Museum, depicts the *Ten Kings of Hell*. The other scroll, P 4525 in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, depicts the story of Śāriputra (Vandier-Nicolas 1954).

still prefers this format for its annual *etoki* performance (Fig. 2c).²⁶

The hanging scroll format was also used by the Manichaeans in Central Asia for teaching purposes as documented by a fragment with the *Primary Prophets* that survives through a linedrawing made as part of the records of the German expeditions and published by Le Coq in 1923 together with a detailed description of the coloring and gilding on this now lost high-quality silk painting (Fig. 3a).²⁷ The content of the linedrawing together with Le Coq's description suggest the following interpretation of the layout (Fig. 3b). *Fragment a* provides data on the right side of the composition, confirming the location of two figures, who were enclosed in halos and mandorlas and seated on lotus seats beneath one another. The right edge of the scene is defined by a hem that attached a violet-colored silk border decorated with white rosette-like motifs made through wax-resist dyeing. *Fragments b* and *c* contain bits from the left knees and mandorlas of two figures and belong to either the ones depicted along the right, or two additional similar figures along the left edge of the image. *Fragments d* and *e* retain bits from a large-scale central figure and could not have been parts of the other four figures, due to the larger mandorla, distinct lotus petals, and small-scale laymen preserved on them. The size of the complete scene (ca. 90 cm x 70 cm) and its border (ca. 10 cm) suggest a vertical display of a single image framed in a decorative border, as seen on comparable remains of temple banners in the region.²⁸ The remnants of this painted and gilded silk retain a composition and content analogous to that of the scroll fragment with the Buddha figure. In

26 For a brief overview on the history of *etoki*, see Mair 1988, 114-5 and Color Plate 6. Kaminishi notes the unique preference of the handscroll format at Dōjōji and explains it as a local development (2006, 119-121).

27 Both Albert von Le Coq (1923, pp. 25-26) and Klimkeit (1982, p. 43) considered the textile fragment preserved through this linedrawing to be a Manichaeian painting with a depiction of Jesus. Nevertheless, due to the fact that neither elects nor any “token motifs” are contained in it, this fragment has been designated having an “unconfirmed Manichaeian origin” by Gulácsi (1997, p. 186; and 2001a, p. 266). The recognition of a Manichaeian pictorial subject (*Primary Prophets*) based on the analogy to the scene preserved on the scroll fragment with the Buddha (MIK III 4947 & III 5d), confirms the previous Manichaeian reading of this fragment by Le Coq and Klimkeit. All in all, the Manichaeian origin of this fragment is indicated by factors such as its site of origin (Ruin K), technical traits (ultramarine blue, gold leaf, and the “West Asian style of Manichaeian art”), and most importantly by its subject that corresponds with a recognizable Manichaeian theme (*Primary Prophets*).

28 This type of a temple banner is classified by Bhattacharya-Haesner under “Type C III” in a study that forms the introduction of her monumental catalogue with 794 fragments of painted and embroidered textiles (2003, pp. 39 and 44-49). Banners with decorative cloth borders stitched around a central scene to frame the single large image are also discussed by Bhattacharya-Haesner, e.g., MIK III 7458, MIK III 6340, and also MIK III 6220 (2003, pp. 231, 258-59 and also 71, respectively).

this case, the prophet that can be identified (based on the cross motif at the top of the staff in his hand) is Jesus, located at the lower right of the scene.²⁹ For didactic purposes, this silk painting functioned most likely similarly to what is seen today in numerous Buddhist temples of Japan, such as Saikōji in Nagano prefecture, where the hanging scroll format is preferred for *etoki* (Fig. 3c).³⁰

The last era of Manichaean history took place in southern China between the late 9th and early 17th centuries, where the existence of Manichaean communities are confirmed by textual as well as archeological records.³¹ One of these communities that lived around the 13th century, possibly in the region of Ningbo, used the silk painting preserved in the collection of the Yamato Bunkakan to illustrate an important element of Manichean teaching – the question of salvation (Fig. 1). While the style and the iconography of this Chinese Manichaean depiction is analogous to roughly contemporaneous Chinese Buddhist images, the theme of judgment itself cannot be considered a Chinese Buddhist influence on Chinese Manichaeism. The topic of judgment, which is pronounced after death to set the path of reincarnation for the auditors, forms an integral component of Manichaean eschatology and is documented already from the earliest era of Manichaean history.³² The ninety-second chapter of the Coptic Manichaean *Kephalaia* (a collection of Mani's teachings from 4th-century Egypt) records the depiction of the theme of judgment in Mani's *Picture* [Copt. *Hikōn*]. The passage in the *Kephalaia* about the depiction of Judgment in Mani's *Picture-Book* documents that a group of paintings in Mani's *Picture-Book* were devoted to the theme of *Judgment* and showed death, judgment, and the ultimate fate of the righteous in heaven, as well as that of the sinner in hell.³³ Since the judgment theme was part of Mani's *Picture-Book*, a Manichaean iconography for its depiction most certainly had developed already during late ancient times in southern Mesopotamia, utilizing a West Asian visual language that followed local artistic norms in terms of media, style, and compositional rules, as well as iconography.

29 Klimkeit 1982, p. 43. For another possible interpretation of the arrangement of the figures based on Coptic Manichaean sources, see Gulácsi 2008a, note 70.

30 Kaminishi 2006, pp. 104-105. I am most grateful for Prof. Ikumi Kaminishi of Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts, for kindly providing her original photograph to be reproduced here as Fig. 3c.

31 On the history of Manichaeism in China see, Lieu 1988 and 1992.

32 This aspect of the Yamato Bunkakan painting was emphasized by Yoshida (2008).

33 The passage in the *Kephalaia* reads: "You [Mani] have made clear in that great *hikōn*; you have depicted the righteous one, how he shall be released and brought before the Judge and attain the land of light. You have also drawn the sinner, how he shall die. He shall be set before the Judge and tried [...] the dispenser of justice. And he is thrown into Gehenna, where he shall wander for eternity. Now, both of these have been depicted by you in the great *hikōn*," (*Kephalaion* 92: 234.24 - 235.6, see Gardner 1995, 241).

Conclusion

While the ultimate origin of picture recitation may turn out to be India, as Victor Mair hypothesized, it is undoubtedly that this practice has a well-documented continuous history among the Manichaean communities that existed across the Asian continent in phases between the mid 3rd through the early 17th century. In addition to the Buddhists, the Manichaeans also employed and spread across Asia the practice of using paintings as illustrations of religious teachings. While further research will have to shed light upon the extent of the Manichaean application of the practice, as well as onto the question of influence between the Manichaean and Buddhist communities, it is clear at this point that picture recitation was an effective technique of religious propaganda employed across the vast territories of Asia in late ancient, mediaeval, and modern times.

The above-presented contextualized study of the Chinese Manichaean silk painting in the collection of the Yamato Bunkakan suggests that this hanging scroll was used in ca. 13th-century southern China as a visual aid for illustrating an important element of the Manichaean teaching of salvation. The formal qualities of the painting are well suited for a visual display. It is executed on a relatively large scale, and consists of a set of well-defined and systematically arranged sub-sections organized into five registers. In accordance with their heights, the registers fall into a sequence that illustrates a cohesive narrative on Mani's teaching of salvation. The scenes show how the Light Maiden, based upon her visit to heaven, intervenes on behalf of the person to be judged in order to save him from the dooms of hell and assure him a good reincarnation as a respected member of Chinese society. Just as a Manichaean elect in real life would have explained questions of salvation to his lay audience, so the main scene of the hanging scroll captures the delivery of such a sermon in a ritual space. Around a statue of a Manichaean deity, most likely Mani, a Manichaean elect and his assistant delivers a sermon to a noble man and his servant companion. The core iconography of this sermon scene, as well as some elements in the depiction of the judgment scene, accord with earlier Manichaean prototypes surviving from the arts of East Central Asian. Therefore, this unique Chinese Manichaean silk painting attests to an iconographic tie, in addition to the continuity of a function, between two different episodes in the history of Manichaean art and culture.

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