CHAPTER SIXTEEN

MANICHAEAN RITUAL PRACTICE AT ANCIENT KELLIS:
A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF THE MEANING
AND FUNCTION OF THE SO-CALLED

PRAYER OF THE EMANATIONS*

IAIN GARDNER
University of Sydney

The Manichaean text commonly referred to as *The Prayer of the Emanations* is generally supposed to have been preserved in a single extant copy. This copy was written in Greek on a (reused) wooden board, probably in the first half of the IVth century CE and—one imagines—somewhere in Egypt. It was a fine production; and recovered complete in one piece from the rear courtyard of House Three at Ismant el-Kharab during excavation in February 1992.¹ The papyrologist in attendance at the time was R.G. Jenkins, who published the *editio princeps* in 1955.² The text was subsequently re-published in 2007 in the definitive Dakhleh Oasis Project monograph series, now as P. Kellis VI Gr. 98. On this occasion the Greek edition was prepared by K.A. Worp, with the English translation

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¹ The excavations were directed by Colin A. Hope of Monash University, and held under the aegis of the Dakhleh Oasis Project.
² R.G. Jenkins, ‘The Prayer of the Emanations in Greek from Kellis (T. Kellis 22),’ *Le Muséon*, CVIII, 1995: 243–263. For the record: I joined the Dakhleh Oasis Project in 1991, after the recovery of Manichaean texts from Ismant el-Kharab had became apparent. However, I did not take part in the following fieldwork season in Egypt. On the return of the Australian team to Melbourne in 1992 R.G. Jenkins related the discovery of this remarkable piece to me, and I was able to suggest some relevant references in Manichaean literature for him to use in his publication (as it was apparent to me that it belonged to that religious tradition).
and commentary by myself. There have also been two other detailed scholarly discussions of the text in recent years, focussed on the issue as to whether it is in fact of Manichaean authorship, a question that I believe this present paper will make redundant.

In brief summary: This extant version is a superior production, written in 132 lines, and has the appearance of a master from which copies might be made. It is headed by a title, l. 1—generally to be translated as—‘Prayer of the Emanations (Εὐχή τῶν προβολῶν)’; and ends with the same, ll. 131–132 ‘The Prayer of the Emanations is finished (Ἐπληρώθη ἕ τῶν προβολῶν εὐχή)’. In fact, Khosroyev has argued that the Greek is better understood as an objective genitive, thus The Prayer to the Emanations; and I would agree that this gives a more literally accurate representation of its purpose (as subsequent discussion will make clear). We can note also that the term προβολή is not found in the body of the text, and that one could reasonably query whether the title is itself original.

The majority of the text is made up of ten stanzas (for want of a better word) of greatly varying length, each beginning the same: ‘I worship and glorify (Προσκύνω καὶ δοξάζω) ...’. We can return to further discussion of the term προσκυνέω later; but, of course, its specific meaning is ‘obeisance’ or ‘prostration to’ a superior or divine being. For the moment: each of these stanzas is directed to a somewhat different being or group

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3 I. Gardner, Kellis Literary Texts. Volume 2, (= P. Kellis VI), Oxbow Press, Oxford 2007: 111–128. For the record: K.A. Worp autopsied the text in Bashendi in the mid 1990s with myself present; though, such is the fine scribal hand and excellent preservation of the piece, there is little variation of substance from Jenkins’ edition. The English translation and commentary were primarily written by myself, but I discussed both in detail with M. Choa (who prepared the Greek index for P. Kellis VI) and benefited from suggestions and references that he made. I note also that S.N.C. Lieu and myself published a slightly revised version of Jenkins’ translation in our Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004: 194–196.


5 I will refrain from further description of the piece, as it has been amply discussed by Jenkins 1995 and in P. Kellis VI.

6 Khosroyev op. cit. 2005: 210; and at more length my comments in P. Kellis VI.