Individualisation of Redemption in a Manichaean Painting from Ningbo*

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Redemption in Manichaean Art

Redemption in Manichaeism, conceived as a drama of cosmic dimensions, was also an extremely personal matter for every Manichaean individual. The liberation of First Man rising from the abyss and conducted back to paradise by the Mother of Life and the Living Spirit became the model for the future liberation of all individual souls. The fate of human beings at death was, according to Klimkeit,1 conceived in two different manners. In one version the soul was to appear before the Just Judge, a deity of the Third Creation, in order to hear his verdict which would either send the soul on the path of “Life”, that is into Paradise, or on the path of “mixture”, i.e. back to the world, or to “Death”, i.e. to Hell. In the other version the righteous soul leaves the body and is greeted by a redeeming deity, the so called “Daēnā”, produced by the own good deeds of the soul itself as Yutaka Yoshida has brilliantly argued,2 who, according to a Manichaean Sogdian text, comes with her attendants to welcome the deceased soul and leads it to Paradise.

Originally, as can be gleaned from Kephalaia, Ch. xcii, the fate of the auditor (catechumen) after death was not depicted. The reason given is that the catechumen must (presumably after countless rebirths) first go “the way of the Elect” and cannot “enter directly into the land of life”. His long process of purification yet to come was impossible to visualise in a single painting, “for he is not

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* I am deeply indebted to the Museum Yamato Bunkakan for giving the permission to use and to publish their photographs of the painting.
purified and cleansed at a single place ...” (*Kephalaia*, pp. 234–235). Thus, while initially only the Elect hoped to directly attain Paradise at death, the Hearers (*auditores*) could anticipate their salvation only after copious re-incarnations. However, a Chinese Manichean painting of the 13th century, probably from Ningbo, today housed in the Yamato Bunkakan (Fig. 9.1), recently identified by Yutaka Yoshida, not only harmonises both versions given by Klimkeit in one painting (there is the *Just Judge* before whom all souls must appear (Fig. 9.2), and a Daēnā with her attendants (Fig. 9.3a and 9.3b) who has come to redeem the righteous souls), but moreover seems to depict not the fate of an elect but the fate of an auditor and his wife after death (Fig. 9.4, 9.12a, and 9.12b).

When did this change in Manichaean painting occur?

**Liberalisation and Individualisation in Manichaean Art of the Turfan Oasis**

During the 9th and 10th centuries, when Manichaeism had become the state religion under the Uigurs in the Turfan Oasis, a gradual shift from the old model of depicting only the return of the electi to Paradise to a more liberal one which also comprised the *auditores* seems to have occurred probably due to the possibility of redemption for every being in Buddhism. What had initially been possible for the electi only gradually seems to have become attainable—if only perhaps as a hope for the future—also for *auditores*, certainly those belonging to the royal Uigur family or Uigur nobility of the Turfan area.

This process, intimately intertwined with a consecutive development of pictorial individualisation, is indicated by the names of electi written either directly on their gowns (MIK III 4979 a, b verso (Fig. 9.5), MIK III 6265 and

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7 Ibid., fig. 29.2, pp. 62–65.