

The Uygur Era of Manichaean Art: Three Centuries of Innovation & Splendor

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The concept of Manichaean art was introduced to scholarship in the early part of the 20th century by Albert von LeCoq (1913, 1924), who described fragments of exquisite paintings in various mediums, which were produced under Uygur patronage between the mid 8th and early 11th centuries in and around the city of Kocho. For about 100 years, Le Coq's publications defined an important part of Silk Road Studies by relating its examples to the production of Buddhist and Islamic painting in Central Asia and beyond. During the past 20 years, new discoveries in codicology, iconography, and materiality shook up this field. This lecture explores this corpus of Uygur Manichaean art, and examines recently recognized cases where it provides insight into Mesopotamian Jewish, Armenian Christian, Uygur Buddhist, and southern Chinese Manichaean art.

The Manichaean religion and its historical phases

Mani (active 240-276 CE), Sasanian Empire, Iran cultural region, West Central Asia, East Central Asia, Uygur Manichaeism (755/762 CE - ca. 1124 CE), Northern Chinese Manichaeism

Corpus of Mesopotamian Manichaean art

- pendent sealstone of Mani (Bibliothèque nationale de France) Paris, late antique textual sources about Mani's *Book of Pictures*, evidence about plain books and *manistans*
- teaching with images, solely pictorial books, horizontal roll (handscroll), contemporaneous Jewish evidence for teaching with images

Corpus of Uygur Manichaean art

- plain books (5000 fragments), picture books (4 fragments), illustrated service books (84 fragments), murals in *manistans* and cave chapels (4 fragments), banners (2 double-sided fragments), and silk hanging scrolls (15 fragments), carbon-dated illustrated folio
- Syro-Mesopotamian codicology, horizontal codex format vs. vertical codex format, sideways-oriented illustrations in Uygur Manichaean service books, contemporaneous evidence for sideways-oriented illustrations in Armenian and Syriac Christian gospel books
- motifs of local material culture, shared motifs with local Buddhist art
- two locally produced Uygur Manichaean painting styles: West Asian ("Persian") style vs. Chinese style, Uygur correspondences with Tang/Song imperial portraiture and Tang/Song Buddhist painting
- picture books vs. modified versions of Mani's canonical paintings

Corpus of Northern Chinese (Tang) Manichaean art

- Manichaeism in Tang China (731-843 CE)
- plain books (3 fragments), textual evidence for *manistans* and silk hanging scrolls

Corpus of Southern Chinese (Song-Yuan-Ming) Manichaean art

- Manichaeism in China during the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties
- *manistans* and a shrine with a statue of Mani (dated to 1339 CE)
- 8 silk hanging scrolls preserved in Japan and the USA: diagrams, icons, and narrative scenes; didactic and devotional art, non-canonical paintings

Suggested readings:

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- Gulácsi, Zsuzsanna, *Mani's Pictures: The Didactic Images of the Manichaeans from Sasanian Mesopotamia to Uygur Central Asia and Tang-Ming China*, Leiden, 2015.
- Gulácsi, Zsuzsanna and Jason BeDuhn, "Picturing Mani's Cosmology: An Analysis of Doctrinal Iconography on a Manichaean Hanging Scroll from 13th/14th-century Southern China," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, 25 (2011/2015), pp. 55-105.
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- Härtel, Herbert, and Marianne Yaldiz, *Along the ancient silk routes: Central Asian art from the West Berlin State Museums*, New York, 1982.
- Le Coq, Albert von, *Chotscho: Facsimile-Wiedergaben der wichtigeren Funde der ersten Königlich preussischen Expedition nach Turfan in Ost-Turkistan*, Berlin, 1913.
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- Lieu, Samuel N. C., *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*, Tübingen, 1992.
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- Morita, Miki, "Piecing a Picture Together: A New Manichaean Perspective on a Chinese Religious Painting in the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco," *Orientalia*, vol. 47/2, March 2016, pp. 138-144.
- Russell-Smith, L., *Uygur patronage in Dunhuang: regional art centres on the northern Silk Road in the tenth and eleventh centuries*, Brill, 2005.
- Tardieu, Michel, *Manichaeism*, Urbana, 2008.
- Yoshida, Yutaka (ed.), *中国江南マニ教絵画研究 (=Studies of the Chinese Manichaean Paintings of South Chinese Origin preserved in Japan)*, Kyoto: Rinsen Book CO, 2015 – in Japanese with English summary & contents.

