

March 1 & 2, 2021 | 2:00 pm Pacific Time | Webinar Registration Required

Current Trends in Manichaeism Studies

The origin of the Manichaean religion stands at the intersection of multiple cultural worlds: Iranian, Semitic, & Greco-Roman. Its literary and artistic remains enrich our understanding of those cultures and the exchange that went on among them in late antiquity. The scholars assembled for this workshop offer the latest insights obtained from the painstaking work of extracting information from the fragmentary and effaced relics of this religion with the aid of new research technologies and approaches. They report on work in progress related specifically to conditions and developments in 3rd century CE Iran in which Mani and Manichaeism served as a cultural catalyst, explaining how these new insights are reshaping our understanding of both the religion and the world in which it emerged.

Day 1: <https://pourdavoud.ucla.edu/event/pourdavoud-center-workshop-current-trends-in-manichaeism-studies-day-1/>

Day 2: <https://pourdavoud.ucla.edu/event/pourdavoud-center-workshop-current-trends-in-manichaeism-studies-day-2/>



Jason BeDuhn (Professor of the Comparative Study of Religions and Asian Studies at Northern Arizona University)
Manichaean Interpretation of Iranian Religious Traditions

New sources such as the Chester Beatty Kephalaia Codex allow us to begin to break down the long-standing division between “Western” and “Eastern” Manichaeism in modern scholarship, and discover connections especially between Coptic and Middle Iranian Manichaean texts that shed light on the earliest centuries of the Manichaean religion. We are now in a better position to see how Mani and his early followers set out to acculturate their Christian movement to an Iranian context by identifying their teachings as the true interpretations of old Iranian religious traditions, contesting the authority of an emerging Zoroastrian leadership.



Paul Dilley (Associate Professor of Ancient Mediterranean Religions at the University of Iowa)
Also Schrieb Zarathustra? New Manichaean Sources for the “Law of Zarades” & His Otherworldly Journeys

The second volume of the *Kephalaia*, a Coptic papyrus manuscript held at the Chester Beatty library, is a major source for the history of early Manichaeism in its Iranian context. In this talk, I will give an overview of the multispectral imaging of the codex, reporting on the latest results which have significantly improved its legibility. I will then discuss the various references to and quotations of the so-called “Law of Zarades,” comparing them to both Iranian and Greco-Roman sources, and assess their rhetorical significance in the *Kephalaia* as well as their importance for understanding the Sasanian background of third-century Manichaeism. Finally, I will contextualize the *Kephalaia* passage on the journey to heaven and hell by Zarades and other apostles of light, connecting it to rival claims of inspired vision by Mani and Kartir.



Iain Gardner (Professor of the History of Religions at the University of Sydney)
New Research and Sources for the Life of Mani

This presentation will outline recent trajectories in research on the Life of Mani. Evidence from in-process work on new sources will be presented, with particular reference to the editing of surviving remnants from Mani’s letters. Copies of these compositions were revered, collected, translated into many languages and circulated throughout the Manichaean communities, and they provide a remarkable insight into the life of the apostle and his immediate circle.



Zsuzsanna Gulácsi (Professor of Art History at Northern Arizona University)
The Footprint of Mani’s Book of Pictures in Late Antique Sources: An Assessment of Social & Geographical Data about Teaching with Images During the 3rd and 4th Centuries

Unlike other religions, Manichaeism had canonical images, not just canonical texts. Primary and secondary textual sources document that the Manichaean canon included a solely pictorial volume—a picture book—that was authored by Mani, circulated in multiple copies already during Mani’s life, and issued in many later editions. From late antiquity, 13 passages mention the Book of Pictures (Copt. *Hikōn*, Syr. *Yuqnā*, Parth. *Ārdhang*, MPers. *Nigār*). They convey that Mani commissioned its images to be painted as visual aids for teaching. The goal of this study is to assess who had access to this pictorial volume of the canon and where it was used during the first 120 years of Manichaean history. Mapping this data reveals the geographic footprint of teaching with images among the followers of Mani.

Speaker Biographies

Jason BeDuhn is Professor of the Comparative Study of Religions and Asian Studies at Northern Arizona University. A former Guggenheim Fellow and National Humanities Center Fellow, and currently an advisor to UNESCO’s *Atlas of the Silk Road* project, he is the author of *The Manichaean Body in Discipline and Ritual* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); *Augustine’s Manichaean Dilemma* (University of Pennsylvania Press, vol. 1 2010, vol. 2 2013); and *The First New Testament: Marcion’s Scriptural Canon* (Polebridge, 2013). His current research explores intersections between the Jewish, Christian, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, and Manichaean religious traditions.

Paul Dilley is Associate Professor of Ancient Mediterranean Religions at the University of Iowa, Departments of Religious Studies and Classics. He specializes in Late Antique Christianity, including Manichaeism, with particular expertise in Egypt, Greek and Coptic philology, and the digital humanities. His first monograph, *Monasteries and the Care of Souls in Late Antiquity: Cognition and Discipline*, was published by Cambridge in 2017 and will soon appear in a softcover edition and a Romanian translation.

Iain Gardner is Professor of the History of Religions at the University of Sydney, and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities. He is a Coptic and Manichaean studies specialist who has edited many original documents from late antiquity. His recent study of historiography, *The Founder of Manichaeism*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2020.

Zsuzsanna Gulácsi is professor of art history (Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff), specializing in the contextualized study of pan-Asiatic religious art. A Guggenheim Fellow (2016) and a Getty Residential Scholar (2019), she is the author of *Mani’s Pictures: The Didactic Images of the Manichaeans from Sasanian Mesopotamia to Uygur Central Asia and Tang-Ming China* (Brill, 2015); *Mediaeval Manichaean Book Art: A Codicological Study of Iranian and Turkic Illuminated Book Fragments* (Brill, 2005), *Manichaean Art in Berlin Collections* (Brepols, 2001), and many articles on Manichaean, Eastern Christian, and Zoroastrian art.