Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism (Comparative Islamic Studies). By JOHN C. REEVES. Sheffield Oakville: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2011. viii + 338 pp. ISBN-13: 978-1-904768-52-4 (hbk.)

John C. Reeves, who is Blumenthal Professor of Judaic Studies at the University of North Carolina, has since the 1990s through a number of important articles and two monographs become one of the leading scholars on the origins of Manichaeism in its Aramaic and Jewish contexts. His *Jewish Lore in Manichaean Cosmogony: Studies in the Book of Giants Traditions* (1992) was dedicated to a thorough study of the late Józef Milik's fascinating discovery that Mani's *Book of Giants* (of which fragments from the Turfan Oasis are preserved, mainly in Middle Persian and Turkish) was in fact based on a Jewish para-Biblical text, fragments of which are among the Qumran texts. The Qumran and Manichaean "books of giants" dealt with the fate of those giant sons of the Watchers and "daughters of man" that were important in the "Enochic" interpretations of Genesis 6:1–4. Reeves' *Heralds of That Good Realm: Syro-Mesopotamian Gnosis and Jewish Traditions* (1996) was a commentary in detail on the citations of Jewish apocalypses that are contained in the Cologne Mani Codex. Besides these books, Reeves is also the author of *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic: A Postrabbinic Jewish Apocalypse Reader* (2005), an anthology and study of a number of Jewish apocalyptic texts.

Most welcome is now his new *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism*, which is an annotated collection of sources on Manichaeism in English translation. All these sources are excerpted from ancient texts dealing with other issues but also containing passages about the Manichaeans; the passages reach from very short notes to long accounts. He states his intention with the book as "to supply scholars with a roughly sorted mass of raw data for producing more nuanced histories and studies of Manichaeism in the Arabophonic cultural sphere." Instead of referring to an Arabophonic cultural sphere Reeves has, however, borrowed the adjective "Islamicate" from Marshall Hodgson, whose definition of it he quotes with approval: it refers "not directly to the religion, Islam, itself, but to the social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and the Muslims, both among Muslims themselves and even when found among non-Muslims." Hence Reeves' book contains not only translations of Muslim Arabic accounts of Manichaeism, but also Pahlavi, New Persian, Judaeo-Arabic, Syriac, and Mandaean accounts. Even though, e.g., Zoroastrian and Christian texts are written after the Arab conquest, it may, however, often be disputed whether they are not rather part of pre-Islamicate traditions than influenced by an Islamicate cultural milieu. We are not,

however, very interested in pursuing this point of criticism here, since we are happy to have access to all of Reeves' translations.

Reeves' *Prolegomena* contains of course the well-known and very important accounts of Manichaeism from the Muslim authors Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Bīrūnī and al-Shahrastānī, which have been known to and much used by Western scholars since the second part of the nineteenth century. But besides these sources it also contains the first translations of many sources into English and in some cases even into Western languages. The main stock of these was edited in 1956 by S. H. Taqīzādeh and A. A. Šīrāzī (*Mānī va dīn-e-ū*, Teheran, 1335 AH), but since then more sources have surfaced which are also translated by Reeves. Manichaeism was surely re-kindled after the Arab conquest of the Middle East so that these sources do not only throw light on the pre-Islamic Manichaeism but also on the competition and symbiosis between Muslims and Manichaeans.

Reeves' *Prolegomena* consists of five chapters: after the introduction there follows a second chapter with biographical testimonia about Mani. These testimonia may contribute to the work with establishing a chronology of Mani's life, as Reeves explains. Even though they are introduced, well annotated, and discussed by Reeves, it seems clear to us that they also are in need of more scholarly treatment: thus many of the testimonies contain word for word the same information and through traditional source criticism an attempt should be made to establish which sources are primary and which secondary. With good reason Reeves has incidentally separated a number of Christian sources (Syriac and Arabic) which ultimately must be derived from the fourth-century Greek Christian treatise *Acta Archelai*.

The third chapter contains a lot of very important fragments of Manichaean scripture, especially Mani's own works but also some Post-Mani literary citations. The importance of the Mani fragments is not least contained in the fact that only to a very limited degree have the ground-breaking finds of Manichaean literature in Turfan and Egypt unearthed fragments of Mani's own writings. No matter how this fact should be explained, it means that essential information about the origins of Manichaeism is still to be found in the non-Manichaean sources.

Here a very interesting passage from Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī's *Kitāb al-yanābī'* contains what seems to be a Manichaean paraphrase of Matthew 25:31–46 (Reeves 100–101). Reeves assumes that it is derived from Mani's *Šābuhragān* but probably a more complicated derivation is also possible: since there is no evidence that *Šābuhragān* ever existed in other languages than Middle Persian and since Matthew 25:31–46 is also interpreted from a Manichaean view-point in the Coptic *Sermon on the Great War*, we may well consider the possibility

that Mani also included the same eschatological teachings as in the *Šābuhragān* in one of his Syriac writings.

The fourth chapter contains testimonia about Manichaean teachings. These are organized in sections dealing with Jewish, Mandaean, Christian, Zoroastrian, and Muslim discussions. The Muslim section, which is by far the most comprehensive, is subdivided into doctrinal and mythological sections. This subdivision functions even though it should in our opinion only be seen as “relative” since doctrinal viewpoints and narrative can never be completely separated in Manichaeism.

In this chapter we find Reeves’ translation (216–219) of the much-discussed passage in Ibn al-Nadīm’s *Fihrist* about the fate of the individual souls after death. Three deities bring certain gifts to the souls of the Manichaean Elect and these gifts are in Reeves’ translation (217) “a cup, a garment, turban, crown, and garland of light.” Gustav Flügel made an almost identical translation in 1862 (*Mani, seine Lehre und seine Schriften*, 100): “das Wassergefäß, das Kleid, die Kopfbinde, die Krone und den Lichtkranz,” and Bayard Dodge’s translation from 1970 (*The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol. 2, 795) was “the drinking vessel, clothing, headcloth, crown, and diadem of light.” The translations “cup,” etc., are based on the Arabic reading *rakwa*, found in the versions of Flügel, Riḍā Tajaddud (missing in the bibliography), and Taqīzādeh. However, already Flügel noted the variant *zakāt* (written *z*, *k*, *w* and *tā’ marbūṭa*) in the copy of an Istanbul manuscript commissioned by William M. de Slane, and in the passage a few lines further on, where Reeves translates “they [i.e., the three deities] will put the cup in his hand,” Flügel noted the same variant in the Leiden manuscript. In 1933 Hans Jakob Polotsky supported the *zakāt* reading in *Ein Mani-Fund in Ägypten* (72–73), when he remarked that the gifts corresponded exactly to the gifts brought by the three angels in the Coptic *Kephalaia* chapter 7, 36:12–21: “price of victory (ⲃⲣⲁⲃⲓⲟⲛ), garment of light, wreath, crown, and diadem of light.” In chapter 114, 344:16, the *Kephalaia* mentions how the Elect “receives the victory (ⲉⲣⲟ).” Polotsky believed that the Aramaic word behind both of these terms was *zākhūthā* and referred to Mark Lidzbarski’s account of the semantic development of the root *z-k-y* (*Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer*, vol. 2, 1–2, n. 3). Lidzbarski had argued that from notions of “purity” and “freedom,” the root had also come to acquire the sense of “victory” in juridical language (cf. also Geo Widengren, *Mesopotamian Elements in Manichaeism*, 42–43, n. 2). *Zakāt* in its usual Islamic sense is generally understood as a borrowing from Aramaic, too, but in Ibn al-Nadīm’s quotation it should then be considered a rendering of the specific Aramaic sense “victory.” The connection between ⲃⲣⲁⲃⲓⲟⲛ and *zākhūthā* is supported by the Peshitta rendering of 1 Corinthians 9:24 and Philippians 3:14. The matter is, however, complicated

by the fact that βραβεῖον more specifically refers to “a prize in the games” (Liddell and Scott), i.e., a trophy as a *symbol* of victory. Since cups served as trophies in ancient Greece, the Arabic *rakwa* is perhaps a reasonable translation, but this of course depends on the language the Arabic translator was working from. The *lectio difficilior* principle, however, supports the *zakāt* reading, as it is more likely that a Muslim copyist would have changed *zakāt* to *rakwa* than vice versa. There is thus good reason to accept Polotsky’s suggestion, and Reeves’ translation seems to be a relapse to the understanding of the text from before the great find of Coptic-Manichaean texts. At least the matter would surely have merited a note.

The fifth chapter contains “historical” testimonia about Manichaeism and Manichaeans, that is, almost all the material that allows us to reconstruct the greater part of Manichaeism’s subsequent history in the Sassanian and Islamic empires. Reports about the Zoroastrian “rebel” Mazdak are included because of the sources’ contamination between Manichaeism and Mazdakism and modern hypotheses of a real connection between the two movements.

The book concludes with a chronological arrangement of authorities, bibliography, and indices.

Undoubtedly Reeves’ *Prolegomena* will become an important tool for future research in Manichaeism, and we are happy to learn about the sources that hitherto were not accessible to many scholars in the West. So it is not in order to grumble when we add a few formal points of criticism: the way Reeves has organized his book means that the same source may be found several times scattered in the different chapters. This was perhaps unavoidable but it may confuse the reader until he or she makes use of the good index in the end of the book. Cross-references always and not only sometimes would, however, have been a good idea here. There are also some unnecessary repetitions in the book, see, for instance, the discussion about the origin of the words *zindīq/zandaqa* (18, n. 28; 33, n. 86) or the same information partly contained in notes 492 and 500 (218–220) even though the notes are so close to each other.

Nils Arne Pedersen and John Møller Larsen
Aarhus University