Mani's Metivta: Manichaean Pedagogy in its Late Antique Mesopotamian Context

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Abstract

This article investigates the nature of Manichaean pedagogy as expressed through the late antique codices known as the *Kephalaia of the Teacher* and the *Kephalaia of the Wisdom of my Lord Mani*. By paying attention to a range of contextual cues that frame each moment of instruction, it first argues that much like their rabbinic and Christian neighbors, Mesopotamian Manichaeans did not study in academic institutions. Rather, instruction took place on an ad-hoc, individual basis, often based on happenstance events; there is no mention of a building dedicated to learning, a standard curriculum, or a semester schedule. This article then contextualizes this form of non-institutionalized Manichaean instruction by comparing three formulae found in the *Kephalaia* codices that have parallels in the Babylonian Talmud: the formula of Mani "sitting among" his disciples (or of his disciples "sitting before" Mani), of Mani's disciples "standing before" Mani, and of various people "coming before" Mani. In so doing, this article ultimately argues that the Babylonian Rabbis and Syro-Mesopotamian Manichaeans shared a common pedagogical *habitus*, one expressed through bodily comportment and hierarchy rather than through the imposition of institutional norms.

Keywords

Kephalaia of the Teacher, Kephalaia of the Wisdom of my Lord Mani, Manichaeism, Irano-Talmudica, Babylonian Talmud

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Introduction

Over the past few decades, a rough scholarly consensus has emerged among scholars of rabbinics and Syriac Christianity concerning the historical development of institutionalized academies, i.e., Babylonian *yeshivot* and the School of Nisibis, in Sasanian Persia.[1] Catalyzed initially by David Goodblatt's monograph *Rabbinic Instruction in Sasanian Babylonia*, this emerging consensus states that both rabbinic and Christian academies of higher learning emerged relatively late, perhaps towards the end of the fifth century.[2] Prior to the rise of institutions like the *yeshivot* in Pumbedita and Sura, rabbis met in what might best be described as local study-circles attached to a particular teacher or rabbi. Likewise, prior to its institutionalized incarnation as the School of Nisibis, the "School of Persians" may have been just one of a number of "voluntary associations" organized along ethnic lines, closer in form to synagogues than "schools."[3] The shift from discipleship circles oriented around particular teachers to institutionalized academies, that is, actual places dedicated to learning, complete with curricula, semesters, and a standing faculty, would have far-reaching consequences in the formation of rabbinic and Christian identities.

Though missing from this broader discussion, Manichaean literature nevertheless has much to contribute. Like the rabbis, the Manichaeans were a "scholastically"-minded, Aramaic-speaking late antique community who shuttled back and forth between the Roman Near East and Sasanian Mesopotamia.[4] In this article, I first

[1] For a nuanced discussion on the comparing rabbinic sources and Syriac sources, especially as it relates to pedagogy, see Adam H. Becker, "The Comparative Study of 'Scholasticism' in Late Antique Mesopotamia: Rabbis and East Syrians," *AJSR* 34 (2010) 91–113. Although this article focuses primarily on the Mesopotamian contexts, Palestinian rabbis also taught in non-institutionalized settings. See especially, Catherine Hezser, *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine* (TSAJ 66; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997) 195–214.

[2] David M. Goodblatt, *Rabbinic Instruction in Sasanian Babylonia* (SJLA 9; Leiden: Brill, 1975); idem, "New Developments in the Study of Babylonian Yeshivot," *Zion* (1981) 14–38. In response, see Isaiah Gafni, "Yeshiva and Metivta," *Zion* (1978) 12–37; idem, "Concerning D. Goodblatt's Article," *Zion* (1981) 52–56. Jeffrey Rubenstein applies stammaitic analysis to resolve Goodblatt's and Gafni's disagreement in "The Rise of the Babylonian Rabbinic Academy: A Reexamination of the Talmudic Evidence," *Jewish Studies Internet Journal* 1 (2002) 55–68; idem, *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003) 35–38. For an overview of the debate and the state of the question, see David Goodblatt, "The History of the Babylonian Academies," in *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (ed. Steven Katz; vol. 4 of *The Cambridge History of Judaism*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 821–39. For further comparison between rabbinic and Syriac Christian scholasticism, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Patriarchs and Scholarchs," *PAAJR* 48 (1981) 57–86, at 80; Mira Balberg and Moulie Vidas, "Impure Scholasticism: The Study of Purity Laws and Rabbinic Self-Criticism in the Babylonian Talmud," *Prooftexts* 32 (2012) 312–56, at 341–44.

[3] Adam H. Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Divinations; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006) 69–76.

[4] For a recent comparative approach between Manichaeans and rabbis, see now Zsuzsanna Gulácsi, "Visual Catechism in Third-Century Mesopotamia: Reassessing the Pictorial Program of

argue that the Manichaean genre of texts known as the *Kephalaia*, which, for the most part, consists of both the *Kephalaia of the Teacher* (1 Ke) and its sister text the *Kephalaia of the Wisdom of my Lord Mani* (2 Ke), strengthens and broadens this emerging consensus on the historical development of pedagogy in late antique Syro-Mesopotamia.[5] To make my argument, I focus on three formulae from the *Kephalaia*: the formula of Mani "sitting among" his congregation (and less frequently, of disciples "sitting before" Mani), of a disciple "standing before" Mani, and of various people "coming before" Mani. It is important to note here that, to the best of my knowledge, the *Kephalaia* is the only extant Manichaean work that uses these three phrases as formulae. As such, I begin with the assumption that the *Kephalaia* does not represent Manichaean pedagogy as a whole, or even a part of a whole, but as a particular expression of Manichaean instruction whose relationships with other forms of Manichaean instruction remains yet to be determined. In any case, I conclude this first section by arguing that, like their rabbinic and Christian neighbors, Manichaeans taught their disciples in discipleship circles oriented around a local teacher.[6] There is no explicit evidence that the Manichaeans responsible for the *Kephalaia* studied in an academy.

In the next section, I turn to contextualize Manichaean instruction as represented through these three formulae with their parallels in the Babylonian Talmud. Aside

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the Dura-Europos Synagogue in Light of Mani's Book of Pictures," *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 9 (2018) 201–29. From the side of rabbinics, see Geoffrey Herman, "The Talmud in its Babylonian Context: Rava and Bar-Sheshakh, Mani and Mihrshah," in *Between Babylon and the Land of Israel: Festschrift for Isaiah Gafni* (ed. Meir ben Shahar, Geoffrey Herman, and Aharon Oppenheimer; Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2016) 79–96 (Hebrew), especially 89 nn. 46–47. Herman emphasizes the local and synchronic parameters of comparison in his analysis of these stories. For further theorizations on contextualizing the Babylonian Talmud, see Shai Secunda, "'This, but also That': Historical, Methodological, and Theoretical Reflections on Irano-Talmudica," *JQR* 106 (2016) 233–41, and Simcha Gross, "Irano-Talmudica and Beyond: Next Steps in the Contextualization of the Babylonian Talmud," *JQR* 106 (2016) 248–55. Also, see Jae Hee Han and Annette Yoshiko Reed, "Introduction: Reorienting Ancient Judaism; Syrian, Mesopotamian, and Persian Perspectives," *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 9 (2018) 144–54.

[5] This is not to discount the number of *kephalaia*-like texts beyond the two major codices. For more, see Iain Gardner, "KEPHALAIA," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kephalaia.

[6] This article aims to reproduce the Coptic (including diaereses and supralinear strokes) of 1 Ke as it is presented in the following editions: *Kephalaia (I): 1. Hälfte [Lieferung 1–10]* (ed. H. J. Polotsky and A. Böhlig; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1940); *Kephalaia (I):2. Hälfte [Lieferung 11–12: Seite 244–291]* (ed. A. Böhlig; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1966); *Kephalaia (I): 2. Hälfte [Lieferung 15–16]* (ed. Wolf-Peter Funk; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000); *Kephalaia (I): 2. Hälfte [Lieferung 17–18]* (ed. Wolf-Peter Funk; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2018). For an English translation up to K122 (1 Ke 295.8), see Iain Gardner, *The Kephalaia of the Teacher: The Edited Coptic Manichaean Texts in Translation with Commentary* (NHMS 37; Leiden: Brill, 1995). English translations in this paper are based on Gardner's translations. For the edited text of 2 Ke (K321–347), see *The Chapters of the Wisdom of my Lord Mani: Part III, Pages 343–442 (Chapters 321–347)* (ed. Iain Gardner, Jason BeDuhn, and Paul C. Dilley; NHMS 92; Leiden: Brill, 2018). See also *Mani at the Court of the Persian Kings: Studies on the Chester Beatty Kephalaia Codex* (ed. Iain Gardner, Jason BeDuhn, and Paul Dilley; NHMS 87; Leiden: Brill, 2015).

from the *Kephalaia*, the Babylonian Talmud seems to be the only extant text from late antique Mesopotamia that consistently uses these formulae to mark moments of instruction. As such, it presents a unique opportunity for comparison with the *Kephalaia*. Without getting into the difficult question of why these corpora use these formulae, I ultimately argue that Manichaean pedagogy bears an unusually close relationship to rabbinic models of instruction. It is therefore peculiar but not unique to its context. By refracting the parallel formulae found in one corpus through the other, we can discern a shared social script operating within both communities. Put another way, though Manichaeans and rabbis participated in separate fields, they nevertheless played by a similar set of rules, a shared *habitus*. This model of analysis is necessary precisely because there were no institutions to impose canonized rules for proper behavior, as I argue in the first half of this paper. We must therefore try to discern how Manichaeans functioned as durable communities of learning, even without an institution. I will conclude by raising a few questions that my argument opens up for the comparative study of Manichaean and rabbinic literature.

The Strata of Redaction in the Kephalaia

Before investigating these three formulae, however, a brief word about the redaction of the *Kephalaia* is necessary.[7] The formulae that I analyze in this article belong to a particular stratum of the *Kephalaia*.[8] Since this stratum cuts through every chapter of the corpus, we must attribute this stratum to the work of redactor(s) who organized the "content" of tradition into a "standardized" form. This stratum has at least two related functions: first, its literary function is to organize and frame the content of Mani's words. To that end, it employs various formulae, like the ones discussed here; a range of literary devices, e.g. the parable and enumerated lists; and other literary strategies of anthologization, e.g. juxtaposition of multiple textual units. Second, this stratum locates the traditions of each chapter, i.e., Mani's words, in a particular moment of Mani's life. Occasionally, the redactors will provide more contextual information for that particular moment. This in turn furnishes crucial information on Manichaean pedagogy and serves as the primary data for our analysis. Ultimately, this stratum provides the internal scaffolding that renders

[7] For comments on the redaction of the *Kephalaia*, see Timothy Pettipiece, *Pentadic Redaction in the Manichaean Kephalaia* (NHMS 66; Leiden: Brill, 2009) 7–13, 79–91. Also, Wolf-Peter Funk, "The Reconstruction of the Manichaean Kephalaia," in *Emerging from Darkness: Studies in the Recovery of Manichaean Sources* (ed. Paul Mirecki and Jason BeDuhn; NHMS 43; Leiden: Brill, 1997) 143–59. My reading of the *Kephalaia* is indebted to critical developments in the study of the Babylonian Talmud.

[8] The formulae of "sitting among," "standing before," and "coming before" are almost always found in the beginning of a chapter. They introduce and frame the content of Mani's words. In other words, Mani never says "When I was sitting in the congregation of my disciples." I take the global presence of these formulae at the beginning of most chapters as evidence for heavy-handed top-down redaction.

both codices into a coherent whole and not simply a mass of random statements ostensibly uttered by Mani.

The presence of this stratum in both codices of the *Kephalaia* complicates straightforward assumptions that the *Kephalaia* accurately reflects pedagogy within Mani's lifetime in third-century Mesopotamia. Since 1) the redactors of the *Kephalaia* responsible for this stratum probably lived after Mani,[9] 2) the *terminus ante quem* for the *Kephalaia* is sometime in the early fifth century,[10] and 3) the formulae associated with pedagogy can be found in both codices and are thus the product of the redactors, it follows that this stratum reflects the world of its fourth-century redactors and not necessarily that of Mani's.[11] In other words, the redactors responsible for this stratum encoded their own pedagogical realities into it. Consequently, we should not necessarily understand this stratum's depiction of pedagogical moments as descriptions of Mani's past, but as representations of the redactors' present. This also means that the redactors' "Mani" is a cypher for the ideal Manichaean teacher and does not necessarily refer to or describe the deeds of the historical Mani.

A. Sitting in The Kephalaia of the Teacher [1 Ke]

The typical opening formula for a "sitting" study session usually runs like this: "Again, it happened one time, when Mani was sitting among the church in the midst of his disciples" [1 Ke 169.27–28].[12] Occasionally, the redactors supply further contextual clues that specify the manner and place where Mani sat. When we see such clues synoptically, we can conclude that "sitting" does not indicate

[9] The introduction to 1 Ke (1 Ke 1.1–9.10) already assumes that Mani is gone since it states that disciples should collect the wisdom that they had heard from Mani throughout their travels with him. For a broader argument about the *Kephalaia* as a scholastic tradition that postdates the death of Mani, see Pettipiece, *Pentadic Redaction*.

[10] Jason BeDuhn and Greg Hodgins, "The Date of the Manichaean Codices from Medinet Madi, and its Significance," in *Manichaeism East and West* (ed. Samuel N. C. Lieu; Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum, Analecta Manichaica 1; Turnhout: Brepols, 2017) 10–28.

[11] If we assume that the *Cologne Mani Codex* (CMC) accurately reflects pedagogical practices among third-century Mesopotamian Baptists, then we might be able to discern continuity between the CMC and the *Kephalaia*. For example, in CMC 79.15, Mani says that "he had enough debating with each one in that law, *standing up and questioning them* (ἀναίσσοντός μου καὶ ἀνακρίνοντος αὐτοὺς) concerning the way of God . . ." As we will see, "standing and questioning" is how the *Kephalaia* introduces a disciple who is about to ask Mani a question. For the full text of the CMC, with German translation and commentary, see *Der Kölner Mani-Kodex: Über das Werden seines Leibes; Kritische Edition* (ed. and trans. Ludwig Koenen and Cornelia Römer; Abhandlungen der Rheinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Sonderreihe Papyrologica Coloniensia 14; Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1988).

[12] The following chapters from 1 Ke refer to Mani "sitting" among his disciples: K2, 3, 7, 8, 15, 27, 65, 67, 69, 70, 72, 76, 81, 83, 87, 94, 95, 98, 115, 121, 132, 143, 176, 186. Consider the formulaic nature of these openings: "Once again, it happened one time, when the Apostle is sitting among the congregation" (K3, 81, 83, 94, 115, 121); "Once again, at one of the times, the Apostle is sitting among the church in the midst of the congregation" (K70); "Once again, the Apostle is sitting down one time among the congregation of his church" (K98).

the mere physical act of sitting but situates Mani and his disciples within a study session oriented around a Manichaean teacher. These study sessions did not occur in established schools nor did their participants follow a standard curriculum. Rather, they were ad hoc, as evidenced by the fact that Mani uses happenstance events as off-the-cuff opportunities to teach his disciples.

To reconstruct how the *Kephalaia* represents sitting study sessions, it is helpful to begin with its participants. Though the formula "Mani was sitting in the midst of his disciples" highlights Mani as the sitter, other chapters verify that Mani's disciples also sat before him. For example, K8 opens with the phrase, "Once again, the light-man speaks to the congregation that is sitting before him [ⲡⲁⲗⲓⲛ ⲁⲛ ⲛⲁϫⲉ ⲡⲣⲙⲛⲟⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲁⲧⲥⲁⲩϩⲥ ⲉⲧϩⲏⲉⲥⲧ ϩⲓⲧⲉϥⲉϩⲏ]." Similarly K2 says: "This is the occasion . . . that for his disciples who sat before him, questioned him, they say to him [ⲛⲉϥⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲉⲧϩⲏⲉⲥⲧ ϩⲓⲧⲉϥⲉϩⲏ ⲁⲩⲱⲛⲧϥ ⲛⲁϫⲉⲩ ⲁⲣⲁϥ]." These formulae attest to the pedagogical nature of these sessions. It should be noted here that the corpus does not usually depict the disciples as "sitting before" Mani, but "standing before" him. I will return to this topic in the following section.

The *Kephalaia* never depicts Mani teaching from a curriculum nor does it assume that there is a single place dedicated to studying. Instead, Mani held sitting sessions in a wide range of places. Moreover, his discussions were usually based on happenstance events. While one must always keep in mind the possibility that "happenstance" events are simply part of the literary form of the *kephalaion* and thus not reflective of social reality, both the consistency of this form and the lack of circumstantial evidence otherwise inspires some measure of confidence in their historical accuracy. For example, K95 says:

> Once again, the Apostle is sitting in the congregation of his disciples. The heavens were cloudy that day. He brought his eyes up and saw the cloud that day. He says to his disciples: This cloud that is apparent to you, which you see, I will reveal and teach you about it, how it ascended.

Similarly, K65 opens by saying:

> Once again, the Apostle is sitting down in the congregation of his disciples. One time, and the sun shone forth. He began to recount to his disciples about the greatness of the sun and its divinity.

Mani discusses the true interpretation of clouds in K95 and the divinity of the sun in K65, respectively. More importantly for our purposes, these opening passages imply that the disciples are sitting outside, where both Mani and his disciples can see the cloudy skies and the shining sun, and not in a specific building dedicated for study. Of course, one could assume that they were sitting inside and then looking outside, yet there is nothing in the passages themselves that warrants such an assumption. Furthermore, Mani's discourse on the sun and the cloud is sparked by the appearance of the sun and the clouds, that is, by happenstance events. There is no hint of a structured curriculum nor do his words point towards a pedagogical

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context beyond this particular sitting session. Just as quickly as it began, the study session ends. This strongly suggests that Manichaean teachers did not follow a standard curriculum nor did they organize their study-sessions into pre-determined chunks of time. Rather, these *kephalaia* present moments of instruction happening rather spontaneously.

Mani also held sitting sessions in cities. In K76, for example, Mani is "sitting in the city of Ctesiphon" [ⲛⲉϥϩⲏⲥⲧ ⲡⲉ ϧⲉⲛ ⲧⲡⲟⲗⲓⲥ ⲛⲕⲧⲏⲥⲓⲫⲱⲛ] when the Sasanian emperor Shapur summons him to his presence. Mani stands up to go and greet Shapur. He returns and is only able to sit for a short time [ⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲓ̈ⲛ̄ϩⲁⲧⲉ ⲉϥϩⲏⲥⲧ ⲁⲛⲓⲧⲏⲉ] before Shapur summons him again. This happens a third time, spurring a disciple named Aurades to ask Mani to send them another Apostle like Mani who might be unencumbered by Shapur's demands. Mani responds by teaching his disciples that the world cannot bear two Apostles in the world at the same time.

The specificity of the term "sitting" suggests a technical valence: Does one ever *sit* in a city? One might walk through a city, as Mani himself does in K347 (ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲅⲉ ϧⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲧⲟⲗⲓⲥ), or simply be *in* a city (K322: ϧⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲥⲓⲫⲱⲛ ⲧⲡⲟⲗⲓⲥ), but *sitting* in a city demands explanation. Given the nature of the exchange that follows between Mani and Aurades on why the world cannot sustain two Apostles, "sitting" clearly marks a pedagogical context. Furthermore, Aurades' speech supposes that there were a multitude of disciples sitting before Mani. He says "Give *us*" and ". . . will remain with *us*." The redactor here is invoking an image of Mani teaching his disciples who sit before him. Finally, Aurades's plea that Mani remain with his disciples suggests that sitting involves sustained interaction between Mani and his disciples. We do not know what Mani was teaching prior to Shapur's invitations or even whether he was teaching. Whatever he was doing, we know that Mani had not begun with a discussion on why there could not be two Apostles in the world, since he only does so in response to Aurades. This suggests that contingent factors drove the topic of discussion, which further suggests that the Manichaeans did not have a structured curriculum.

If external factors might draw Mani away from sitting with his disciples, then they might also intrude into his study sessions. The occasional presence of non-Manichaeans in these sessions suggests that they were rather porous, perhaps even oriented outwards toward the broader public. It goes without saying that their intrusion, and indeed the very fact that entire *kephalaia* are built around these intrusions, demonstrates the absence of an established curriculum. It also suggests that Manichaean study sessions were culturally legible to non-Manichaeans, which explains why they are able to navigate their way into Mani's sitting sessions. Let us turn to two examples. K121 opens by saying, "Once again, on one of the occasions, as our enlightener is sitting . . . in the midst of the land of Babylon, a man came before him [ⲁⲩⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲓ ⲙⲡⲉϥⲙⲏⲓⲧ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ], a presbyter belonging to the sect of the basket. He is a worshipper of idols." The very fact that a Manichaean could plausibly imagine a presbyter from a local Babylonian community approaching

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Mani while he is sitting in a study session suggests that Manichaean teachers held study sessions in broadly accessible locations, i.e., somewhere in the "midst of the land of Babylon." A similar example can be found in K89, which opens by saying, "Once again, it happened one time, a Nazorean came before the Apostle. He says to him, 'I will ask you one word! You, for your part, persuade me with a single word, but not many words.'" Though the formula for "sitting" is missing in this passage, it nevertheless has another formula that I will examine further below: in the same way that K121 features a Babylonian sectarian who "*came before* him," so here "a Nazorean *came before* the Apostle." For now, both opening passages demonstrate something of the porousness of study sessions, where not only disciples could gather, but non-Manichaeans might come to ask Mani questions.[13]

We gain a similar impression of the porousness of discipleship sitting circles from an unusually well-crafted representation of a study session, which is also held within a city. K83 opens with a description of a sitting session that includes not only disciples, but also city officials:

> Once again, it happened one time, while the Apostle is sitting in a great congregation, as some . . . the teachers and elders . . . by the rulers and first citizens [ⲛ̀ϩⲓⲣⲉⲛⲱⲛ ⲙ̀ⲙⲓⲛ ⲛ̀ⲛⲓⲣⲱⲧⲟⲡⲟⲗⲓⲧⲏⲥ]. Now, he is sitting down in their midst [ⲉⲧϩⲏⲥⲧ ⲟⲩⲛ ϧⲓⲧⲏ ⲙ̀ⲙⲟⲟⲩⲛⲓⲧⲉ]. All of a sudden, one of the elect came before him, but not . . . he is an elect . . . his commandments. He is an ugly man in his body . . . in his midriff, but he is perfect in his holy righteousness. He is a man who is upright in his truthfulness. When he came into his presence, he spread himself on the ground and paid homage before the Apostle in love. The masses of well-born men and free women cast their eyes about and saw that elect crying out in joy, exulting loudly and giving praise . . .
>
> He [the ugly man] was paying homage all the time, giving praise . . . the glorious one stood up from the *bēma*, where he was sitting. He drew and gathered him into him and hugged him to his body, kissing the elect. He sat down. . . . And when he had sat upon his *bēma* . . . with the entire congregation of well-born men and free women sitting before him.

In this scene, Mani is sitting in the midst of a great congregation that includes both his disciples and the leading politicians of this city, who are also "sitting before him." As elsewhere, sitting here also seems to carry a technical sense; it does not mean the mere physical act of sitting but is how the *Kephalaia* introduces a study session. Furthermore, the presence of Sasanian elites points to the outward orientation or at least the porousness of these study sessions. To be clear, I am not saying that the leading politicians of the city actually sat before Mani as a historical fact. Rather, the unproblematic presence of aristocrats in these "sitting" sessions gives the strong

[13] A comparison with rabbinic arguments against *minim* might prove useful for further contextualization. See now Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, *Jewish-Christian Dialogues on Scripture in Late Antiquity: Heretic Narratives of the Babylonian Talmud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). On rabbinic "heresy" itself, see David Grossberg, *Heresy and the Formation of the Rabbinic Community* (TSAJ 168; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017) 50–91.

impression that these moments of pedagogical exchange were not closed off from the broader public.[14] Indeed, it was perhaps because these study sessions were not housed in specific buildings or within clearly demarcated institutional structures that we have such a diverse cast of people interacting with Mani.[15]

Interestingly, the redactors use the cycle of "sitting before" and "standing before" to transition from the introductory narrative about the "ugly" Elect to the middle section, which focuses on the formation of pearls. After Mani chastises the aristocrats for not recognizing the inner perfection of the ugly Elect, the chapter goes on to say,

> When they [the aristocrats] were settled, they sat . . . while his disciples stand. They paid homage, saying to him: Tell us, our master . . . how (pearls) came about and were formed in the sea [1 Ke 202.6–11; ⲡⲧⲁⲣⲟⲩⲱ ⲁⲩϩⲏⲉⲥⲧ . . . ⲉⲣⲉ ⲛⲉⲥⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲧⲱⲛ ⲁⲣⲉⲧⲟⲩ ⲁⲩⲟⲩⲱϣⲧ ⲉⲩⲭⲱ ⲙⲙⲁⲥ ⲁⲣⲁⲩ ⲁϫⲓⲥ ⲁⲣⲁⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡ̄ϫⲁⲓⲥ . . .].

This transition points to one possible scenario for how a discussion within a sitting study session might have moved from one topic to another. In short, "Mani's" answers were also opportunities for disciples to ask further questions. This pedagogical style highlights the teacher and disciple relationship as the standard channel for instruction; the disciples' job was to draw out Mani's wisdom through a series of pointed and relevant questions. If so, then it is difficult to see how a curriculum might have fit within these sitting sessions simply because there is no space for a regular and corporate study of Manichaean scripture. Of course, the students already seem to know about the traditions found in the Manichaean "canon." Yet even then the *Kephalaia* generally refers to these texts as a catalyst for an oral-aural exchange between Mani and his disciples.[16] In other words, the mention of the "canonical" Manichaean scriptures often operates in the same way

[14] Manichaean literature frequently depicts Mani's mingling with the rich and the powerful; indeed, as the recent publication of 2 Ke demonstrates, it seems to have formed a particularly rich narrative cycle.

[15] Surprisingly, Mani sits on a designated seat [*bēma*: ⲡⲃⲏⲙⲁ; or perhaps simply a raised platform]. We cannot extrapolate from this example that Mani always sat on a *bēma*. Its appearance here is rhetorical: the *bēma* heightens the affective aspects of this scene by drawing attention to Mani's superiority and contrasting it with the physical ugliness and wanton abandon of the ugly Elect. The aristocrats' snooty attitude and rejection of the ugly Elect puts Mani's humility and acceptance of that man in sharp relief. Having been properly chastened by Mani, the aristocrats sit back down, and the disciples take this moment as an opportunity to stand up to ask Mani a question. For more on the *bēma* festival, see *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire* (ed. Iain Gardner and Samuel N. C. Lieu; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 237–38.

[16] See especially K1, where the disciples admit that Mani wrote about his Apostleship "in full" in his writings yet thank him for teaching about this topic orally "in an abbreviated form." If the disciples already had access to the writings "in full," why put his teachings "in an abbreviated form" at all? This question cannot be answered without paying attention to the ideological self-presentation of the *Kephalaia* as the oral wisdom of Mani, distinct from, yet no less authoritative in substance than, Mani's written texts.

as the sun shining and the clouds rising; they are happenstance events that catalyze a new topic of discussion within a sitting study session.

To recapitulate, 1 Ke furnishes strong evidence that sitting sessions were primarily pedagogical in function. None of those factors that one might associate with an institutionalized academy appear in the *Kephalaia*. Rather, they were non-institutionalized, had no standard curriculum, and did not take place in a specific building. Each session seems to have had a discrete topic of discussion sparked by some happenstance event or by the disciples' questions. The presence of non-Manichaeans in these sessions reflect the porousness, and perhaps even outward orientation of these study sessions. Given these points, we might speculate about how this discourse reflects the pedagogical realities of those responsible for its emergence. We cannot, of course, read these sitting sessions as descriptions of real events, nor can we simply say that they exist purely as "imaginary" discourse. Rather, the most reasonable solution seems to be that the redactors encoded their own pedagogical contexts into this stratum of the corpus.

B. Sitting in the Kephalaia of the Wisdom of my Lord Mani [2 Ke]

Though much of *The Wisdom of my Lord Mani* [2 Ke] remains to be edited and published, even a cursory skim through the available materials gives the reader a strong impression that we are dealing with a text that is more "literary" than *The Kephalaia of the Teacher* [1 Ke]. As opposed to 1 Ke, which often reads like deposits of textualized tradition, many of the chapters of the 2 Ke edited so far have a literary texture, as identified by Tardieu, who noted its emphasis on dialogues, a measure of interiorization, realistic contexts, identified characters, and a sense of narratival progression.[17] For our limited purposes, 2 Ke both confirms and extends what we have seen in relation to "sitting" in 1 Ke. There is still no hint of a standardized curriculum nor a building dedicated for studying. Instruction still happens through teacher-disciple relationships and Mani holds sitting sessions in a diverse range of locations. Nevertheless, 2 Ke also extends sitting in new directions. It not only associates sitting with textual production, e.g. writing letters and books, it also draws out possible connections between sitting and judgment.

The association between sitting and textual production is especially clear when we turn to the Goundesh cycle [K327–340]. 2 Ke describes Goundesh as a courtier in the Sasanian retinue and as a philosopher who eventually became Mani's disciple. In K332, Goundesh participates in a "sitting session" where the disciples read Mani's books out loud. This chapter opens by saying,

> Once again, it happened another time, as Goundesh is sitting . . . as they read in his presence from the *Treasure of Life*. The Apostle uttered great lessons to

[17] See Michel Tardieu, "La diffusion du bouddhisme dans L'Empire Kouchan, L'Iran et La Chine, d'après un Kephalaion manichéen inédit," *Studia Iranica* 17 (1988) 153–83. Paul Dilley confirms these aspects of 2 Ke, albeit only to the latter parts, in "Mani's Wisdom at the Court of the Persian Kings," in *Mani at the Court* (ed. Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dilley) 15–51, at 16.

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> him. . . . When Goundesh listened to this lesson that the Apostle uttered . . . written in this book. Says he to the Apostle, "This book is very great! It is a book . . ." . . . The Apostle says to him, "It is a new book [ⲟⲩⲭⲱⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ⲃ̄ⲣⲣⲉ ⲡⲉ]."

Again in K333, it says,

> Once again, it happened another time, when the Apostle was sitting down, the scribes sat before him writing letters to different places [ⲉⲣⲉⲡ̄ⲅⲣⲁⲫⲉⲩⲥ ϩⲛⲁⲥⲧ ϩⲓⲧ̄ϥⲉϩⲏ ⲉⲩⲥϩⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ϩⲛ̄ⲉⲡⲓⲥⲧⲟⲗⲁⲩⲉ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲛⲁ]. Goundesh came before the Apostle. He listened to him, the way that he writes without . . . them in his letters . . .

In contrast to 1 Ke, where it is usually Mani, and to a lesser extent, the disciples who do the sitting, 2 Ke focuses on a single character—Goundesh—sitting before Mani. By the time Goundesh enters the scene, the disciples, marked here as scribes, are already busy producing texts. They also act as amanuenses for Mani in K333. Both *kephalaia* hint at the importance of scribal production within these sitting sessions.

The Manichaean *Homilies* at least corroborate this association between sitting, textual production, and pedagogy.[18] The *Sermon on the Great War*, for example, which already mentions the *Kephalaia*,[19] says that the evil spirit "killed the readers of truth, who are always sitting, occupied with wisdom" (*Homilies* 12.20–21: ⲁⲥϩⲱⲧⲃⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲛⲁⲅⲛⲱⲥⲧⲏⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲏⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲧϩⲏⲉⲥⲧ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲩⲥⲣⲁⲥⲧ ⲁⲧⲥⲟⲫⲓⲁ). In fact, the *Sermon* is filled with references to this broader pedagogical and textual world.[20] We might even catch a glimpse of how these readers went about creating books like the *Kephalaia*. It says, "You will find them [reading] them [i.e., Mani's books] publicly and proclaiming the name . . . in them, the name of his lord and . . . him, and the name of all those who gave . . ., and the name of the scribe who wrote it, and also the name of he who put the punctuation marks in it, and the name . . ." (*Homilies* 25.14–19). Though the *Kephalaia* attributes all traditions to Mani, this sermon points to the broader networks necessary for producing such a text, from the collection of individual traditions all the way to those who ornament the words and pages. Given the importance of textual production in this sermon, it is no surprise

[18] *Manichaean Homilies, with a Number of Hitherto Unpublished Fragments* (ed. Nils Arne Pedersen; Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum, Series Coptica 2; Turnhout: Brepols, 2006).

[19] *Homilies* 18.6. See Nils Arne Pedersen, *Studies in the Sermon on the Great War: Investigations of a Manichaean-Coptic Text from the Fourth Century* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1996).

[20] The importance of texts for the Manichaeans is on full display in the *Homilies*. For example, the author of the *Sermon of the Great War* writes, "Thousands of books will be saved by the believing catechumens" (*Homilies* 24.13–14). Later, the Manichaeans will "come and find the writings being written and they will find the books being adorned" (*Homilies* 28.10–11). These passages idealize the labor involved in the actual production of texts and fix them within a broader pedagogic performance of the Manichaean scriptures. For the continuation of this trope into the Islamicate era, see especially the sources collected in John C. Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism* (Comparative Islamic Studies; Sheffield: Equinox, 2011) 85–131.

that it glorifies the "readers" by saying, "How greatly will they love the reader, since thousands will come to visit him, male and female, masses and masses in every city. The churches and the catechumens' houses will be like schools. You will find them singing psalms and . . . hymns . . . publicly in the presence of . . ." (*Homilies* 30.27–33).

2 Ke also suggests that sitting sessions were associated with holding court and meting out judgment. It is unclear, however, whether the chapters examined below provide evidence of *Manichaeans* holding court during sitting sessions since, in both examples, it is the non-Manichaean Sasanian elite sitting and meting out judgment. For example, K326 depicts a meeting between Mani and a Zoroastrian judge named Adourbat, who is sitting either by the gate of a Fire Temple or, more likely, within it. Adourbat hears legal cases from the crowd that had assembled outside the gate of the temple and "rises many times up" (ϣⲁϯⲧⲱⲱⲛ ⲛ̅ϩⲁϩ ⲛ̅ⲥⲁⲙ) to carry out his duties.[21] Likewise, K322 depicts Mani speaking to Thirousak, a Sasanian general. The Apostle accuses Thirousak of murder since Thirousak wants to kill a wolf that they had caught in their hunting trip. Mani uses terms that evoke the formula of sitting examined above: the wolf was "brought into the midst" (ϧⲓⲧⲥ̅ ⲛ̅ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲉ), which is similar to the formula of Mani sitting "in the midst [ϩⲛ̅ ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲉ] of the congregation." Furthermore, the wolf had "no helper among all the people seated in front of it and those standing up" (ⲛⲉⲛⲛ̅ⲟⲩⲃⲟⲏⲑⲟⲥ ϩⲛ̅ⲛⲓⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ϩⲛ̅ⲥⲧ ϩⲓⲧⲥ̅ⲉϩⲣⲏ ⲙ̅ⲡⲉⲧⲧⲁⲕ ϧⲣⲉⲧⲟⲩ). As with Adourbat, the sitting session here resembles a court. Mani adopts the role as the advocate for the wolf, eventually arguing that the wolf should not receive total destruction for killing a single sheep, when humans slaughter many more animals for consumption.[22] Nevertheless, again, we must be cautious of connecting sitting with judgment, since in both cases above, the one "sitting" is a non-Manichaean who already possesses some measure of political authority in the Sasanian world—a Zoroastrian priest and a military general.

Our final example from K323 narrates an encounter between Shapur, the king of Touran, and Mani. This chapter showcases how the location of one's body, its comportment, and social status intersect in the act of sitting. In this chapter, after a brief introduction in which Mani approaches "the gate of the king," Mani invites Shapur to come sit beside him.[23]

> Says the Apostle to him: Come and sit beside me upon the . . . The King of Touran, however, did not sit (there); rather he sat upon "a place spread before him." Says the Apostle to him: Why did you not sit beside me? Says the King of Touran to him: It is not fitting for me to sit with you [ϩⲁⲧⲛⲕ], nor am I worthy to sit upon "a place spread out" before you [ϩⲓⲧⲛ̅ⲥⲉϩⲣⲏ] because you are the

[21] It should be noted, however, that this is not the standard Coptic word used when disciples "stand before" Mani.

[22] This is the sense that one gets from what remains of K347–49.

[23] For an extensive treatment, see Jason BeDuhn, "Parallels between Coptic and Iranian Kephalaia: Goundesh and the King of Touran," in *Mani at the Court* (ed. Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dilley) 52–74, at 56–66.

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> blessed Buddha. You are the Apostle of God. If you please, I will proclaim before you . . . this lesson that I have heard in the wisdom of Buddha (2 Ke 354.2–11; cf. 2 Ke 356.8–9).

Where one sits matters. This chapter uses accepted standards of "sitting" to narrativize the superiority of Mani's station over Shapur the king. The emperor presumably sat in some awkward location, if he sat at all, since he considered himself unworthy of sitting beside or before Mani. Shapur recognizes that sitting beside Mani would be tantamount to assuming parity with him and refuses to do so. Indeed, Shapur even refuses to sit before Mani, presumably with the rest of the disciples. This is surely a fantasy written by later Manichaeans who thought of themselves as superior even to the King of Touran. I will discuss this passage a bit more below, but for the moment, we should not ignore the pedagogical context of this sitting session. After Mani interprets the wisdom of Buddha that Shapur had once heard, this chapter concludes by saying: "The king himself listened to the lesson of the righteous one. He received the wisdom of God from him" (2 Ke 356.2–3: ⲁⲡ̅ⲣⲣⲟ ϩⲱⲱϥ ⲉⲧⲙ̅ⲙⲏⲉⲩ ⲥⲱⲧⲙⲉ ⲁⲡⲥⲉϫⲉ ⲙⲡⲓⲇⲓⲕⲁⲓⲟⲥ ⲁϥϫⲓ ⲧⲥⲟⲫⲓⲁ ⲙ̅ⲙⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲙ̅ⲡⲟⲟⲧϥ̅).

C. Standing in the Kephalaia

The counterpart to "sitting before Mani" is "standing before Mani."[24] K84, for example, opens with a disciple standing up before the Apostle to ask him a question and concludes with that disciple sitting down. It reads: "Once again, on one occasion, one of the disciples stood up before the Apostle. He questioned him, saying . . . [ⲧⲱⲕ ⲁⲣⲉⲧϥ ⲙⲡⲙⲏⲧ ⲁⲃⲁⲁ ⲙ̅ⲡⲓⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ ⲁϥⲱⲙ̅ⲧϥ̅ ⲉϥⲭⲱ ⲙⲙⲁⲥ]." Similarly, K116 opens with a disciple questioning the Apostle. Though there is no mention of him standing up, it nevertheless concludes with that disciple sitting down.[25] In K322, as we have seen, where Thirousak and Mani were discussing the fate of the wolf, Mani said, "Nor was there a helper among all these people seated in front of it and those standing up" (ⲛⲉⲙⲙ̅ⲟⲩⲃⲟⲏⲑⲟⲥ ϩⲙ̅ⲡⲓⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ϩⲛⲁⲥⲧ ϩⲓⲧϥ̅ⲉϩⲏ ⲙ̅ⲙⲉⲧⲧⲏⲕ ⲁⲣⲉⲧⲟⲩ), suggesting that sitting and standing were complementary modes of participation in a "sitting" session. Finally, we have already seen the example of the "ugly" Elect, in which the aristocrats sit down once they are persuaded by Mani's rebuke, and the disciples, who were presumably sitting down, stand up to ask a question. One might cautiously universalize the formula to apply to the whole of the *Kephalaia* and say that chapters that begin with a disciple "standing before" Mani means that he is participating in a *sitting* study session.

The formula of "standing before" introduces a scenario where a disciple asks Mani a question through his own volition. Disciples do not stand when responding to Mani's questions, as in K72 and K98, but only when they themselves initiate

[24] The following open with the formula of a disciple standing before Mani: K69, 81, 84, 88, 90, 92, 109, 115, 138, 164. There are no examples from the currently edited sections of 2 Ke. Nevertheless, Pabakos "is silent and sits down" in 2 Ke 432.5–6, suggesting that he was standing up.

[25] See the conclusions to K123, 153, 157.

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the exchange. In every case, a disciple either seeks clarification on some doctrinal matter or on some perceived mismatch between doctrine and their experience as members of the Manichaean church. In K88, for example, a catechumen stands up before Mani to tell him about an Elect he had seen quarreling with another Elect. He is troubled by their behavior and doubts that they are righteous at all. Likewise, in K81, a disciple stands up before Mani and complains that he is overwhelmed by his responsibilities as the leader of his local church. He requests that Mani release him from his duties. These examples suggest that, like the formula of "coming before," the formula of "standing before" Mani functions as a literary device for distinguishing between one's mundane life as an "everyday" Manichaean and these moments of instruction, where the disciple comes to process their experiences as a Manichaean in the real world "out there." Again, the fact that these "happenstance events" (e.g., seeing the Elect quarrel or the onerous burden of being a leader) catalyze the contents of each *kephalaion* suggests that there is no established curriculum at play guiding the disciples along a predetermined path.

Furthermore, this formula suggests that responsibility for learning did not rest solely on the teacher, but also on the disciples. In fact, the disciples regularly prod Mani with questions so as to draw out, bit by bit, some of the wisdom lodged within him. Occasionally, they cite an earlier tradition that they had heard from Mani, usually with a request that Mani clarify or expand on that teaching.[26] Similarly, disciples sometimes ask Mani to "recount" a teaching or they begin their question by saying "I have heard you say, my master . . .," which means that they had already heard a version of that teaching earlier.[27] Such examples point towards the organic nature of pedagogical instruction, which assumes an extended relationship with the Manichaean teacher. Indeed, it may be significant that the disciples often introduce their requests for clarification by saying that "We have *heard* you say . . .," which points towards the importance of oral-aural instruction, on the one hand, and the *Kephalaia*'s self-presentation as transcriptions of Mani's words, on the other.

D. To Come Before in the Kephalaia

There is one more formula worth noting. Though the formula of "coming before" or "coming into the presence of" Mani [ⲉⲓ ϩⲟⲩⲛ ϩⲓⲧⲉϥϩ / ⲉⲓ ⲙⲡⲙⲏⲧ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ] appears relatively infrequently in the edited corpus so far, it is somewhat strongly associated with sitting study sessions.[28] In five of the eleven examples in which someone "comes before" Mani, Mani is sitting among his disciples. Most of these individuals are non-Manichaeans: Nazoreans, followers of the Sect of the Basket, Sasanian

[26] See K81, 90, 91.

[27] See K69, 109, 112, 115. There are instances when a disciple who is not introduced with the formula for standing recounts a tradition that he had heard from Mani, as in chapters 12, 14, 38, 85.

[28] K83, 89, 120 (?), 121, 329, 333, 336, 338, 340, 341, 342, 343. This formula should be distinguished from the formula of "walking to" [ϧⲱⲕ] someone, as found in K61, 322, 323, 326, 327, 337. This formula of "walking to" is strongly associated with the act of greeting (ϩⲁⲥⲡⲁϩⲉ).

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aristocrats, and philosophers like Goundesh, Masoukeos, and Iodasphes all "come before" Mani. These examples suggest that sitting sessions allowed outsiders to participate and ask questions, which, again, is not surprising if we assume that these sessions were held in generally accessible locations.

This formula generally emphasizes the individuality of the approaching person. Both K83 and K121, for example, specify the "religious" affiliation of the approaching person. Other chapters emphasize their emotional interiority, as in K336, which depicts Goundesh's distress over his realization that he is imprisoned in this cosmos. The formula also introduces named individuals, which is somewhat rare in the corpus available so far, as with philosophers like Goundesh but also with Manichaean disciples, like "Pabakos son of Artashahar son of Mousar" in K341. The reason for this emphasis on the individual may be to provide a reason for why this particular person asked this particular question. It is not a coincidence, then, that Pabakos asks about the *Law of Zarades* since, as Dilley notes, Pabakos, or Papak in middle Persian, was a popular name among Sasanian nobility.[29] Goundesh and the other named philosophers ask questions about the nature of the cosmos, since this was presumably the type of questions that philosophers would ask. The Nazorean asks Mani about the nature of God since it contradicted his own Nazorean perspective. Ultimately, this emphasis on the individual tends to highlight the asymmetry in knowledge between the approaching person and Mani; by underwriting the approaching person as an individual with specific characteristics, the corpus is able to depict Mani as an omniscient respondent, a figure able to field potential challenges from all sides.

Manichaean Pedagogy in its Late Antique Context

I have sketched out above the contours of three formulae associated with pedagogy in the *Kephalaia*. In this section, I turn to contextualize these formulae in its Mesopotamian setting through examples culled from the Babylonian Talmud.[30] As David Goodblatt has noted, the preposition "before" a certain rabbi (קמיה ד-) forms the backbone for a range of formulae that mark pedagogical contexts in the Babylonian Talmud.[31] A Coptic parallel in the *Kephalaia* for the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic "before" (קמיה ד-) is ϩιτϥϣⲏ (lit. before him) or ⲙⲡⲓⲙⲓⲛⲧ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ (lit. in the midst). As with the Babylonian Talmud, this phrase forms the building block for three of the formulae discussed here: "sitting before" (יתיב קמיה ד- ; ϩⲉⲛⲥⲧ ϩιτϥϣⲏ), "standing before" (קאי-קמיה ד-; ⲧⲱⲕ ⲁⲣⲉⲧϥ ϩιτϥϣⲏ), and "coming before" (אתא לקמיה ד-; ⲉⲓ ⲁϩⲟⲩⲛ ϩιτϥϣⲏ).[32] These parallels should not be understood

[29] Paul Dilley, "Also Schrieb Zarathustra? Mani as Interpreter of the 'Law of Zarades,'" in *Mani at the Court* (ed. Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dilley) 101–132, at 116. K349 also features Pabakos.

[30] I will follow the wording of MS Munich 95 and only note changes in the wording across the available texts when they significantly alter the meaning of the passage.

[31] Goodblatt, *Rabbinic Instruction*, 199–259.

[32] While the Aramaic root y-t-b often denotes some aspect of instruction in both rabbinic and

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as examples of borrowing, as if Manichaeans borrowed these formulae from the rabbis. Rather, these literary parallels probably reflect editorial choices that undergirded the processes of compilation, culling, and anthologization of ostensibly oral traditions that lie behind both the Babylonian Talmud and the *Kephalaia*.

Yet it is also necessary to go beyond the textual and into the social. My basic argument for this section is that Manichaean forms of pedagogy discussed above bear an unusually close relation to rabbinic forms of pedagogy. That is, the formulae found in the *Kephalaia* function similarly enough to their parallels in the Babylonian Talmud that we can posit a shared pedagogical culture that encompassed both the Manichaeans and the rabbis. In order to make this point, however, we need to delimit what we are comparing, especially since we are talking about non-institutionalized forms of pedagogy. In the absence of authorized institutions regulating "proper" behavior, how did Manichaeans and rabbis organize into and function as coherent learning communities, even without codified rules of behavior? What distinguished, for example, a moment of "learning" from any other moment, especially without the institutional rhythm of curricula, semesters, and faculty? I suggest that it is through the formulae of bodily comportment and positions that the text marks moments of instruction. Bourdieu's notion of *field* and *habitus* informs my inquiry in this direction. I suggest that though both Manichaeans and rabbis operated within different social fields, they nevertheless played by a shared set of unspoken rules, a common *habitus*; two games, one capacious set of rules.[33] Here, I model my inquiry on the work of specialists of rabbinic Judaism who use the idea of *habitus* to uncover how rabbinic texts represent and articulate bodily practice as meaningful social elements within rabbinic culture.[34] In the conclusion, I will speculate on how

occasionally in Syriac literature, it is less so in Coptic literature. For a discussion of the root in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, see note 2 for references to the exchange between David Goodblatt and Isaiah Gafni. See especially Gafni, "*Yeshiva* and *Metivta*"; Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002) 546. For Palestinian Aramaic, see examples in Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (2nd ed.; Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002) 247, 336; for Syriac, see Becker, "Comparative Study," 95, 101; *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (ed. J. Payne Smith; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999) 260. I have not been able to find parallel examples from Samaritan Aramaic (Abraham Tal) or Mandaic dictionaries (E.S. Drower and Macuch). While a deep study of the intersection between "sitting" and study in Coptic literature remains far beyond the boundaries of this study, a preliminary search through the Coptic Dictionary Online, operated through copticscriptorium.org, does not yield any significant correlation between the verb "to sit" and words relating to pedagogy. See W. E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939) 679–81. Accessed through *Coptic Dictionary Online* (ed. Koptische/Coptic Electronic Language and Literature International Alliance [KELLIA]), https://coptic–dictionary.org/. I thank Prof. Caroline Schroeder for her guidance.

[33] For a helpful introduction to these concepts, see Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (ed. Randal Johnson; New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) 1–25.

[34] See especially Catherine Hezser, *Rabbinic Body Language: Non-Verbal Communication in Palestinian Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity* (JSJSup 179; Leiden: Brill, 2017); Barry Wimpfheimer, *Narrating the Law: A Poetics of Talmudic Legal Stories* (Divinations; Philadelphia:

this argument can open up new questions and possibilities for the contextualization of Manichaean literature in its late antique Syro-Mesopotamian setting.

A. To Sit Before

Scholars have pointed out that late antique Aramaic-speaking populations use words derived from the Semitic root y-t/š-b to denote pedagogical contexts.[35] David Goodblatt, in particular, has rigorously analyzed the formula "to sit before Rabbi X" and concludes that it means "to study with R. X."[36] As argued above, Manichaeans also "sat" with their disciples in local circles and engaged in the study of oral traditions; instruction occurred on an ad hoc basis and topics of discussion did not follow a predetermined or standardized curriculum. This shared understanding of "sitting" grounds the following analysis of Manichaean and rabbinic pedagogical *habitus*. At the same time, we need to analyze the social dynamics of teaching: How was the relationship between sage and disciple actualized through the act of sitting? Here, I note two points of similarity between Manichaeans and the rabbis: the importance of location vis-à-vis the teacher and what constitutes a proper "scholastic" disposition.

First, both Manichaeans and the rabbis operated within a pedagogical culture that mapped hierarchy onto one's physical proximity to the sage. For example, in K323, the king of Touran refused to sit beside Mani because doing so would be to assume parity with Mani, whom he calls Bouddas and the Apostle of God. He also refused to sit before Mani, presumably because he thought himself unworthy to even sit as a disciple.[37] Or, perhaps he refused to sit beside or before Mani because he recognized that his type of cultural capital (political power) differed too radically from Mani's own (revelatory wisdom). Whatever the case, this chapter demonstrates that "sitting" was not neutral; where one sat vis-à-vis Mani determines and is determined by one's status and type of cultural capital.

Just as Mani's identity as Bouddas expressed the politics involved in sitting, so too does a rabbi's identity as the embodiment of Torah.[38] In b. Moʿed Qaṭ. 16b, for example, Mar Uqba sits before Shmuel at a distance of four cubits when they are studying Oral Torah (גרסי) and Shmuel sits before Mar Uqba four cubits away when they sit in judgment (הוו יתבי בדינא), presumably because Mar Uqba was more adept

University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). Both scholars provide a thick description of the social and cultural aspects by considering rabbinic texts as literary representations of social events and encoded hierarchies of power. In Wimpfheimer's words, they "work to articulate a picture of mundane rabbinic power in its locally negotiated sense" (*Narrating*, 166). For a similar line of reasoning as it relates to the School of Nisibis, see Becker, "Comparative Study," 107.

[35] Becker, "Comparative Study," 95 n. 18. Also, Isaiah Gafni, "Nestorian Literature as a Source for the History of the Babylonian Yeshivot," *Tarbiz* (1982) 567–76, at 571.

[36] Goodblatt, *Rabbinic Instruction*, 237.

[37] On the idea of the body of a king as the locus of ritual attention, see Matthew P. Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (Transformation of the Classical Heritage 45; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009) 188–223.

[38] Wimpfheimer, *Narrating*, 122–46.

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in adjudication.[39] Nevertheless, Mar Uqba sat within the hollow of his pillow (חייקי ליה דוכתיה למר עוקבא בציפתא), thus lowering himself physically to express his inferiority to Shmuel in matters of Torah. In their game of "who sits before whom," Mar Uqba and Shmuel evoke Shapur's dilemma since they too recognize that the location and comportment of their bodies express a cultural script for performing hierarchy. At the same time, this same script can also lead to the expulsion of rabbinic bodies from within a "sitting" circle. For example, when R. Haninah sits before R. Yannai reciting Scripture and then contradicts him on a matter of *halakhah*, R. Yannai tells R. Haninah to "Leave and go read your verses outside!"[40] R. Yannai's rebuke recognizes the priority of *halakhah* over recitation and puts R. Haninah literally "in his place," that is, outside of the "sitting" circle. After all, R. Haninah transgressed an unstated rule: the one who sits before another rabbi expresses through the location of his body his participation in a student-teacher relationship. One can only imagine how Mani would have responded if a disciple "sitting before" Mani dared to contradict aspects of his revelation. While this and other similar narratives highlight the rabbinic valorization of *halakhah*, they also suggest that the rabbis were conscious of hierarchy, especially as expressed through the location, comportment, and even expulsion of rabbinic bodies.[41]

Such examples demonstrate that moments of instruction were already embedded within a broader culture, not isolated from them. We see this in K83, which features the "ugly" Elect worshipping Mani. There, the ugly Elect broke cultural norms that silently undergirded the operations of a study session; he was too expressive in his worship of Mani, too "ugly" for such a performance, and got too close to Mani. This is what led the aristocrats to mock him. We can read against the grain of this narrative to discern how Manichaeans imagined what an idealized study session looked like: it was run with a measure of sober-minded decorum, the disciples should sit somewhere appropriate to their station, and it should be populated by "able-bodied," if not attractive, men.[42] Certainly, K83 is not presenting the behavior of the ugly Elect as something to be emulated. Furthermore, K83 seems to assume that masculine ugliness is more useful for its particular rhetoric than other gendered forms of ugliness.

Such unstated assumptions play an extremely important role among the Babylonian rabbis, as scholars like Jeffrey Rubenstein have shown.[43] Julia Watts

[39] Only MS Vilna adds "when studying Oral Traditions" (גרסי שמעתא). Rashi adds that Mar Uqba was a "prince" (נשיא).

[40] b. Ketub. 56a. MS Munich 95 reads: (יתיב ר' חנינא קרא קמיה דר' ינאי). See also b. Yebam. 40a; b. Ber. 30b. A similar phrase (פוק תני לברא) is found occasionally in the Talmud without explicit reference to a rabbi sitting before another rabbi, e.g., b. Šabb. 106a; b. B. Qam. 34b; b. Sanh. 62a; b. Yebam. 77b; b. ʿErub. 9a; b. Yoma 43b.

[41] Hezser, *Rabbinic Body*, 69–146.

[42] Elsewhere, the *Kephalaia* describes Mani as physically beautiful. 2 Ke 402.4–10 [cf. 2 Ke 405.24] describes Mani as "splendid in appearance" and his face as "beautiful and different." The effect is to match Mani's physical beauty with his identity as the Apostle.

[43] Rubenstein, *Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*.

Belser in particular shows how certain rabbis and figures "[function] as a kind of disability performance artist—whose disabled body becomes 'center stage' precisely so that the performer can draw the objectifying stare and critique its power."[44] Something similar might also be said about our "ugly" Elect. K83 marks him as a man "ugly in his body" [ⲟⲩⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲧⲏⲓⲥⲁϊⲉ ⲡⲉ ϩⲙ ⲡⲉϥⲥⲱⲙⲁ] and as having some sort of "disability" around his midriff.[45] His "ugliness in body" draws both the eyes of the wealthy aristocrats and the attention of the reader as Mani critiques the power of the disabling gaze, reminding them that the true value of a person does not lie in their embodiment, but in their faith. It is important to note, however, that K83 does not present Mani as breaking protocol when he steps down from the platform to embrace the ugly Elect. Rather, it is the ugly Elect who violates the norm. The *kephalaion* then takes advantage of that Elect's missteps in order to highlight Mani's compassion and magnanimity, even towards someone coded as undeserving of such treatment. If this reading is correct, the narrativization of such social scripts may also point to their flexible durability in real life, thereby hinting at how Manichaeans and rabbis functioned as "scholastic" communities even without the constraints of an institutional authority.

Furthermore, in the eyes of the aristocrats, the ugliness of the Elect in K83 is compounded by his excessive display of emotion. We find analogues for excessive displays of joy among the rabbis in b. Ber. 30b–31a. Though none of the rabbis featured here are marked as "ugly," these anecdotes are still useful for thinking about expectations for what constitutes a "proper" scholarly disposition. In b. Ber. 30b, we read two short stories of Abbaye "sitting before" Rabba, and R. Yirmiya "sitting before" R. Zeira. Both Rabba and R. Zeira notice that their respective colleagues are "too happy" (בדח טובא), and cite a verse cautioning against excessive joy. Their respective colleagues respond that such behavior is allowed when donning phylacteries. While these incidents take place within a "sitting" session, b. Ber. 31a continues with anecdotes that vaunt the importance of a sober-minded disposition even beyond that context: when the rabbis are "too happy" at a wedding of a colleague's son, the father of the groom intentionally breaks an expensive cup or sings a morbid song about the inevitability of death. These examples seem to demonstrate the importance of a sober-minded disposition among those who embody Torah, one that steers clear of excessive displays of emotion, even when the circumstances allow for them, i.e., during weddings. In the same way that the aristocrats' sneering at the ugly Elect's expressive worship of Mani exposed an unstated assumption about what constitutes a proper "scholastic" disposition, so too do the anecdotes about the rabbis here.

[44] Julia Watts Belser, "Reading Talmudic Narratives: Disability, Narrative, and the Gaze in Rabbinic Judaism," in *Disability in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Sacred Texts, Historical Traditions, and Social Analysis* (ed. Darla Schumm and Michael Stoltzfus: New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) 5–27, at 20.

[45] In Coptic, ⲛⲕⲁⲕϩⲁⲡⲉ ⲧⲏⲉⲗⲟⲩⲥⲉ. Perhaps the Elect was hunched over since the text seems to contrast his physical disability in his midriff with his "Uprightness [ⲉⲩⲥⲟⲩⲧⲱⲛ] in Righteousness."

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B. To Stand Before

As we saw above, the formula to "stand before" always indicates that a disciple is about to ask a question out of their own volition. After Mani answers the disciple, the disciple sits back down. As such, the disciple only remains standing for the duration of his conversation with Mani. These points suggest that when a disciple "stands up," he is actually involved in a "sitting" study session. This is the extent to which the *Kephalaia* offers information on the act of standing.

The Babylonian Talmud contains examples in which a disciple who is "standing before" his rabbi asks him a question, usually regarding some aspect of proper *halakhic* practice.[46] This matches Goodblatt's observation that the formula "'To stand before X' means not just to happen to be near X, but specifically refers to serving a master as his disciple-attendant."[47] The formula usually frames a scene that highlights the importance of the master-disciple relationship for the transmission of *halakhic* practice. Such instruction can happen through speech, as with the disciple asking the rabbi a question, and also through sight, with the disciple observing and emulating the actions of his rabbi, the embodiment of Torah.

At the same time, the formula of "standing before" a rabbi is not restricted to moments of instruction but operates as a general sign of respect among the rabbis. We find ample evidence for non-pedagogical "standing" throughout the Babylonian Talmud, especially in b. Qidd. 32a–33b.[48] In b. Qidd. 32b, for example, we encounter two parallel stories about a rabbi serving drinks to other rabbis at his son's wedding. In each story, only one set of rabbis stand up (קמו מקמי') before the rabbi as he is pouring drinks, and as a result, that rabbi gets angry at this perceived slight. The lesson seems to be that one must show respect to a rabbi at all times (הידור בעי ליה למעבד), even when serving drinks at a wedding. In this case, "showing respect" means standing before a rabbi. A *baraita* in b. Qidd. 33a goes on to define "standing for the sake of respect" (קימ' שיש בה הידור) as standing within four cubits of someone else's rabbi and standing up as soon as one sees one's own rabbi. The text goes on to relate a story of how Abbaye would stand up in honor as soon as he saw the ears of Rav Yosef's donkey. This *sugya* concludes with a debate about whether it is necessary to stand up before one's rabbi when engaged in Torah study. Though some rabbis hold that one is not obligated to stand before one's rabbi when engaged in Torah, Abbaye curses anyone who follows this ruling (לייט על' אביי). Such examples show that "standing" could also function as a sign of respect within the rabbinic community. We might therefore see the examples of disciples "standing before" their rabbi as a particular intensification of this general phenomenon, not as a specifically "pedagogical" phenomenon.

[46] b. Beṣah 28b; b. ʿErub. 102b; b. Šabb. 112a [MS Munich 95 has Abaye "sitting" before Rav Yosef rather than standing]; b. Ber. 49a–b [Only the Vilna has "standing before" rather than "sitting"].

[47] Goodblatt, *Rabbinic Instruction*, 208.

[48] On these passages, see especially: Rachel Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture: Jewish Ways of Seeing in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 239–44.

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Though the *Kephalaia* does furnish strong evidence for the association between pedagogy and standing before one's teacher, it does not provide evidence that "standing before" operated as a general sign of respect. Nevertheless, we might be excused for speculating beyond the narrow evidence of the *Kephalaia*: since the Manichaeans sat and stood before their teachers during moments of instruction in a way similar to the rabbis, then perhaps we can postulate that the Manichaeans also stood before their teachers as a sign of respect. If so, we might speculate that Manichaean disciples did not stand for some practical purpose, e.g. to amplify their voice or to make them easier to spot, but simply because it was expected of them *as disciples* before their teacher.

C. To Come Before

As discussed above, the formula "to come before" in the *Kephalaia* always introduces an individual, often a non-Manichaean, who engages directly with Mani. The identity of that individual informs the general trajectory of that *kephalaion*. Because our concern is on *habitus*, let us again see how the formulae in both the Babylonian Talmud and the *Kephalaia* coheres with one another. K89 opens in the following way:

> Once again, it happened one time, a Nazorean came before the Apostle. He says to him, "I will ask you one word! You, for your part, persuade me with a single word, but not many words."
>
> The Apostle speaks to him, "If you are able to utter to me a single word, then I myself will also utter a single word. However, if you may ask many, then again I too will proclaim a multitude!"

Compare this with the famous story of the convert from b. Šabb. 31a:

> Again, an incident, a Gentile came before Shammai [ושוב מעשה בגוי אחד שבא לפני שמאי]. He says to him, "I will convert on the condition that you teach me the entire Torah while I am standing on one foot." Shammai pushed him away with the builder's tool in his hand.
>
> He came before Hillel [בא לפני הלל]. He converted him. He said to him: Do not do to your colleagues what is hateful to you. This is the entire Torah and what follows is its interpretation. Go study.

These passages are nearly identical in structure: Again (שוב; ⲡⲁⲗⲓⲛ ⲁⲛ), it happened (מעשה; ⲁⲥⲫⲱⲡⲉ ⲛⲟⲩⲥⲏⲩ), a Nazorean/Gentile came before (שבא לפני; ⲉⲓ ⲙⲡⲉⲛⲏⲩⲧ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ) Mani/Shammai. The challenges raised by the Nazorean and the Gentile are also similar; they both ask the sage to perform an impossible task under completely arbitrary conditions. Their identities inform the type of question they ask; the Gentile must be a Gentile if he is to convert, and the Nazorean asks what seems to be a "typically" Nazorean question. These literary parallels suggest that Manichaeans and the rabbis shared similar assumptions for how an outsider should

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approach and engage with a sage.[49] Clearly, outsiders should not impose arbitrary rules for how a sage must respond to their question. Shammai, for one, recognizes the ridiculousness of the Gentile's proposition and responds appropriately by ignoring him. Mani and Hillel, however, humor their guests and rise to their challenge. As for Mani, he again accepts those who had "crossed the line" of appropriate behavior, as we had already seen in the case of the ugly Elect in K83. There, it was to demonstrate his compassion. Here, it is to demonstrate that Mani is able to field all challengers and to even catch them at their own game. This is demonstrated especially well in 2 Ke, where Mani bests three challengers: Goundesh, Masoukeos, and Iodasphes.

The examples above help us see that Manichaeans and rabbis shared a sense of how an "outsider" should approach a teacher. As for "insiders," the *Kephalaia* depicts disciples approaching Mani to worship him,[50] to learn from him,[51] and, surprisingly enough, to be comforted by him. In K336, for example, Goundesh "comes before" Mani to complain about his feelings of discontent. Mani tries to encourage him, noting that Goundesh is well-regarded by everyone, including the king. The rest of the chapter is too fragmented for comprehension, but it concludes with Goundesh declaring that he is no longer discontent, presumably because Mani had successfully reminded him that his true home is in the Kingdom of Light. For our purposes, this *kephalaion* suggests that disciples approached their teachers not only for instruction, but to be encouraged. In fact, it is difficult to make a strict separation between the two, in so far as the *Kephalaia* occasionally depicts disciples asking Mani knotty and worrisome questions that emerged precisely from their own emotional turmoil as a Manichaean disciple in the real world.[52] As such, these *kephalaia* hint at the enduring relationships that Manichaean teachers cultivated with their disciples. These relationships surely extended far beyond what is visible in the *Kephalaia*, which as a genre is more focused on the moments of instruction that emerge out of these already-existing relationships than in mapping out the contours of those relationships.

Similar uses for the formula "to come before" can be found in the Babylonian Talmud. There, the formula "X came before R. Y" most often depicts a scene in which two individuals "come before" a certain rabbi in order to resolve a dispute, especially around issues related to property, inheritance, and boundaries.[53] In such

[49] See also K120, 121.

[50] K83.

[51] K329, 333, 340 (?), 341, 342, 343.

[52] For example, K203 about the Manichaean leader who wants to be released from his duties. See also K86, 88.

[53] This formula must be distinguished from a similar formula כי אתא, which James Redfield has analyzed. See James Adam Redfield, "Redacting Culture: Ethnographic Authority in the Talmudic Arrival Scene," *Jewish Social Studies* 22 (2016) 29–80. I borrow the term "adjudicatory narratives" from Lynn Kaye in "Protesting Women: A Literary Analysis of Bavli Adjudicatory Narratives," *Nashim* 32 (2018) 131–57. See also Wimpfheimer, *Narrating*, 112–21. Catherine Hezser has analyzed these formulae in the Palestinian rabbinic texts in *Form, Function, and Historical Significance of*

cases, the litigants come from a wide swath of Mesopotamian society, including non-rabbinic Jews, rabbis, Gentiles, women, and "idolators." Though the majority of such uses for the formula relate to matters of adjudication, an appreciable set of examples points to a far broader use. Non-adjudicatory examples of this formula include scenes where rabbis and students seek to appease an offended party, directly or through another party,[54] request further midrashic interpretation,[55] ostracize someone,[56] verify the seals of tax documents,[57] authenticate a *dinar*,[58] dispense charitable sustenance,[59] manumit an enslaved person,[60] receive medical advice,[61] clarify the integrity of a manuscript,[62] study a book,[63] and give advice on building a house.[64] This set of examples offers a different vantage point for assessing how rabbinic students approached a rabbi. They suggest that "coming before" was not uniquely tied to moments of rabbinic instruction, but that such moments of instruction participated in a broader set of normative expectations for how both outsiders and insiders should approach a sage. As we saw above, where the formula for "standing before" a rabbi could function as a general sign of respect, the broad use of the formula "to come before" also seems to operate beyond the narrow boundaries of moments of instruction.

Of course, as far as we can tell, no one came before Mani to resolve a legal dispute with their neighbor.[65] Conversely, no one approached a rabbi to worship him as the Apostle of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, I have argued that a wide range of people did "come before" a rabbi and Manichaean teachers to study scripture, to challenge them, to seek their advice, and to appease or to be appeased by them. Moreover, as my initial example of the Nazorean and the Gentile indicated, both rabbis and Manichaeans shared a sense of how outsiders should approach a sage. As a result, it seems likely that both Manichaeans and rabbis shared a common set of expectations for how both outsiders and insiders should "come before" a sage.

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the Rabbinic Story in Yerushalmi Neziqin (TSAJ 37; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993) 297–98; eadem, *Rabbinic Body*, 135–40.

[54] b. Yoma 87a [formula only in printed MSS Vilna and Venice 1520]; b. Ned. 55a; b. Qidd. 31b; b. Soṭah 47a; b. Sanh. 107b.

[55] b. B. Bat. 75a.

[56] b. Moʿed Qaṭ. 17a.

[57] b. B. Bat. 167a.

[58] b. B. Qam. 99b [some MSS have only "she came and spoke" instead of the full formula].

[59] b. Ḥag. 15b [MS Munich 95 has לפני instead of לקמיה].

[60] b. Giṭ. 45a, 46b–47a.

[61] b. Šabb. 140a.

[62] b. Menaḥ. 29b.

[63] b. Pesaḥ. 62b [MS Munich 95 does not have this page, but the formula is well attested in other manuscripts].

[64] b. Taʿan. 25a [Weakly attested. Not in MS Munich 95, but MSS Vilna and Göttingen 3].

[65] See especially Dilley, "Also Schrieb Zarathustra?" It may be significant that, like the rabbis, the Manichaeans conceptualized their forms of practice as both revelation and law in K341–342.

Conclusion

I have made two arguments in this paper. The first argument is that, like their rabbinic neighbors, late antique Mesopotamian Manichaeans did not study in institutions of learning with a semester system, standing faculty, or established curricula. Rather, the topics of discussion emerged from happenstance events and did not go beyond the boundaries of each "sitting" study session. Manichaean teachers and disciples met in diverse locations and, perhaps as a result, were generally receptive to the presence of outsiders. My second argument is that this model of instruction bears an unusually close relationship to rabbinic models of pedagogy. More specifically, I argued that while the rabbis and Manichaeans were part of different communities, they shared a set of unspoken socialized "rules of engagement," a common *habitus*. I made this argument by showing how three parallel formulae found in both the Babylonian Talmud and the *Kephalaia*—of "sitting before," "standing before," and "coming before"—cohere with one another.

I would like to conclude with three brief points, one relating to the limits of this study and two relating to where we might go from here. First, the model of instruction discussed above presented only one aspect of Manichaean pedagogy and focused on only one genre of Manichaean literature. Even so, it is still difficult to reduce Manichaean "education" to singular moments of instruction. Rather, the boundaries for what constitutes "instruction" might reach the boundaries of the community itself. As we might expect given the lack of institutional norms imposing boundaries between what is "scholastic" and what is "non-scholastic," moments of instruction reflect the dense instantiations of broader social norms and cannot be isolated from those broader social contexts. Consequently, we must also pay attention to how each community constructs and employs various apparatuses for socializing—"educating"—its members. Liturgy would perhaps be one fruitful point for extending this conversation, especially given the size of the still understudied Manichaean *Psalmbook*, not to mention the prominent role that liturgy played among Aramaic-speaking Christian populations, on the one hand, and the potential for incorporating the study of synagogues and churches into this comparative venture, on the other.[66] Furthermore, hagiographies of Syriac "ascetics" as well as a deeper comparison with the *Apophthegmata Patrum* may also prove to be fruitful points of continuity: we might ask to what degree does the literary representation of Mani cohere with representations of other "holy people" dotting the Ancient Near East?[67]

Second, my argument above suggests that Aramaic-speaking communities in late antique Syro-Mesopotamia operated within a shared set of material and

[66] As Susan Ashbrook Harvey writes, "ritual process of liturgy contributed to ethical formation, no less than expository presentation. Hymns and homilies were vehicles for basic Christian instruction. . . . Holy instruction was reinforced by the bodily disciplines of liturgical participation" (eadem, "Liturgy and Ethics in Ancient Syriac Christianity: Two Paradigms," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 26 [2013] 300–16, at 301).

[67] I thank the anonymous reviewer for this helpful point.

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cultural constraints. The fact that rabbis, Manichaeans, and Christians[68] taught in discernably similar ways in similar circumstances cannot be explained away as mere coincidence nor as incidences of wholesale borrowing. Instead, we can posit a shared set of material, economic, and cultural factors operating behind and within each community. Although the precise nature of these factors remains opaque, the mere positing of a shared background may help us in our analysis of the texts produced by these communities. This leads us to the third point.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, if we posit a shared set of constraints operating within each community, we might be able to explain how such constraints informed the content and form of those texts produced by each community. Indeed, how did the model of instruction discussed above impact the content and form of texts like the Babylonian Talmud and the *Kephalaia*?[69] In what ways do these texts bear the imprints of the social realities that stand behind them and in front of them? From this point of view, it may be no coincidence that both the Babylonian Talmud—not to mention most of rabbinic literature—and the *Kephalaia* are "anthological" in form.[70] Moreover, both the *Kephalaia* and rabbinic literature exhibit remarkably similar literary strategies for creating and organizing tradition, e.g., the extensive use of parables,[71] symmetrical lists, thin stenographic layers of redaction, and the use of regular formulae. Indeed, given such similarities, perhaps it is no coincidence that both communities would come to valorize their teachings as nothing less than oral revelation, as "Torah in the Mouth" with the rabbis and as the *Kephalaia* with the Manichaeans.[72]

[68] Becker, "Comparative Study."

[69] Such questions have already proven useful in the case of rabbinic literature and may prove useful for the study of Manichaean literature as well.

[70] David Stern, *The Anthology in Jewish Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 3–12.

[71] As recognized by Dilley in "Mani's Wisdom," 17 n. 12.

[72] Martin Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE – 400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).