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## “REINTERPRETATION” OF MANICHAEAN POTHĪ-BOOK, LINES 44–45 AND 45–47

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### Abstract

In his article the author deals with the meaning of *uč*, which appears in lines 44 and 46 of the so-called “Manichaean Pothī-book” and not only means “end” but can also point to the “exterior / the beginning (of your path [= your teaching])” in that text.

Despite the fact that the texts it contains have, for the most part, already been edited several times, the composite manuscript of the so-called “Manichaean Pothī-book” still allows numerous alternative interpretations. This is true, for example, of lines 44–45 and 45–47 of the text known as the “Great Hymn to Mani”. Above all the passage in lines 45–47 allows us to draw several conclusions as to the possible meaning of this text that is fragmentary in places. In the passage in question we read: *umug-suz erinč tınl(1)glar • oruķunuz uĉin bulmaĉın • olınĉıg sansarta kaltım(1)z*. Bang Kaup and v. Gabain translated this as follows: “Unwissenheit Lebewesen • Deines Pfades Anfang nicht finden • blieben wir im kreisenden Sansāra •.” (Bang, v. Gabain 1930: 9 [189]). Clark (1982: 182) suggested the following translation, which diverges significantly from that given in TT III: “We mortals, without an object of desire and miserable, remained in the tortuous *saṃsāra* without obtaining the end of your path” [this is almost identical in his re-edition of the text of the Hymn from 2013: “(But) we miserable mortals, without an object of hope, remained in the torturous *saṃsāra*, without attaining the end of your path.” (Clark 2013: 155)].

It seems somewhat nonsensical that in the passage the mortals referred to have not reached the “end” of the path (e.g. of Mani’s teaching) – after all, Manichaeism

is ultimately a Gnostic system and knowledge is central here to the concept of salvation. This passage within the “Great Hymn to Mani” (lines 1–173) can be seen in the overall context of the *Saṃsāra* and the salvation of the five states of existence through Mani’s actions (the Hymn can indeed be divided into large units of this kind<sup>1</sup>), which is covered in lines 36–65. This overall context (despite the Buddhist influences in this part, with the whole Hymn being rich in Buddhist elements) also suggests that what is meant here is that the mortals who remained in *Saṃsāra* were those who had not yet encountered the teaching of the “envoy of the light.” This also corresponds with the following sentence, which is about Mani having saved the five states of existence by letting them climb the ladder of wisdom. In other words, he put up the ladder of wisdom for them (46–47: [• bilgā] biliglig šatu (P) tikt[i]η[iz •] beš ažuṇug • irkl[ä]t[ip] ozkurt[unuz •]; – as opposed to Mani causing the mortals to climb the ladder of wisdom while passing through the five states of existence in order to escape the *Saṃsāra*?<sup>2</sup>) so that the mortals in the five states of existence could attain the “exterior” of his teaching, i.e. become familiar with the teaching.

The solution is to be found in one of the meanings of *uč*, which not only means ‘end’ but can also mean ‘exterior’ (here one need only think of the opposition *ič*: *uč* found in various Turkic languages). Through a corresponding section in lines 44–45, Bang Kaup and v. Gabain concluded that *uč* may here have the meaning of ‘beginning’ (rather than ‘end’, as in Clark 1981 and 2013). The text there reads: tɪnɪ(ɪ)glar ilk[i]t̪ä • orukuṇuz uči [...]TK//[...]NK’[...]KY/ kut[ru]ltɪ. This was translated as “[Zu?] dem Anfang Deines Weges [d. h. zu Deinem Wege] [gelangend?] • ... wurden sie befreit •” in TT III (Bang, v. Gabain 1930: 7 [187]), which seems altogether plausible and was adopted in part by Clark: „[...] mortals previously [...] the end of your path [...] was rescued“(Clark 1982: 182), „[...] mortals at first [...] the end of your path [...] were saved“(Clark 2013: 155). If, however, the state of preservation of fragments U 81 a + b is taken into consideration, the lacuna could have contained all sorts of things and a direct connection between *orukuṇuz uči* and *kutrultɪ* is anything but certain. At this point, the very well preserved text in lines 45–47 has been translated / interpreted on the basis of the doubtful reading / interpretation of the fragmentary text in lines 44–45. Here it is far more likely that the passage is to be understood in such a way that *orukuṇuz uči* in line 44 is to be interpreted very similarly to the meaning in line 46 (which Clark already hypothesized), even though the use of the accusative instead of the instrumental causes certain difficulties. It is almost certain that nothing else was written at the end of the line and the separation of a single grapheme at the end of the line, as Clark (2013: 140) assumed, can also be ruled out. Firstly, there are hardly any examples of this in the manuscript; secondly, the Y of *uči* at the end of the line is geminated, making it in some way “final” (quite apart from the fact that the final N assumed by Clark would not have required more space than the second Y of \*WČYY). The interpretation of *orukuṇuz*

<sup>1</sup> This will be covered in more depth in the upcoming re-edition of the composite manuscript by the author of this article.

<sup>2</sup> Clark (2013: 155, note to line 047 on p. 170) according to Wilkens (2008: 214–215).

*uči* as “the exterior / the beginning of your path (= your teaching)” would certainly seem to fit much better into the context and is more in line with the “Manichaean way of thinking” as it is encountered in the “Manichaean Pothī-book.”

Of course, this is not the last rung on the ladder of wisdom, but merely an alternative interpretation and a suggestion.

## References

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