

INDIAN INFLUENCE ON MANI RECONSIDERED THE CASE OF JAINISM

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In 2005 Iain Gardner published an article with the title: “Some comments on Mani and Indian religions according to the Coptic *Kephalaia*”.¹ The most important reference point for the following paper is that he argued that some of the terms found in the Coptic text (*bouddas, aurentes, kebellos / kebullos*) are transliterations of Indian terms (Skt. *buddha, arhat, kevala / kevalin*) and that they can be traced to Buddhist or – and this is a new aspect brought into the discussion by Gardner – Jain concepts and traditions.

The following article will re-examine the hypothesis of Indian influence on Manichaeism in general and the possible share of Jainism in particular. It will take into account recent results of South-Asian philology and archaeology, and try to contextualize singular points from the previous paper in a more detailed way.

It is an interesting fact that consideration about possible Indian influence on Western (in the purely geographical sense) religions has been mainly restricted to Buddhism. This reflects, in our opinion, some of the dangers in a diffusionist approach to the history of ideas or religions; and it may be worthwhile to ponder on the pros and contras before embarking on a journey to discover such historical influence of one religious strand on another: Indian religions on Manichaeism.

To retrieve the diffusion of a certain phenomenon or concept from one cultural realm to another easily lends itself to complication through simplification.² There is – and

¹ Gardner 2005. For a translation of the complete text of the (then) edited *Kephalaia* see Gardner 1995.

² The other extreme would be to question suggested ways of loans by the counter-construction of virtual scenarios and possibilities in the sense of “it could also have been ...” It should be made clear here that we, in the case of Jain influence on Manichaeism, do not claim an exclusive historicity of a “how it really was” but rather attempt to question well-established perceptions – Buddhist influence on Manichaeism – of the historical context of Manichaeism in the light of the textual evidence discussed. Another point of criticism may come from a more conceptionally oriented position: that the notion of -isms like “Buddhism” and “Jainism” are modern constructs which must not necessarily have been clearly discernible in a historical context. We consciously use these -isms in a heuristic meta-terminological way without, however, giving up the claim that objectively observable and self-conscious distinctions existed between the religious

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