CHAPTER V:
THE CRYSTAL SEAL OF 'MANI, THE APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST' IN THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE*

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The single Manichaean work of art known today from West Asia, where Mani's religion originated, is a rock crystal seal (INT. 1384 BIS) housed in the collection of the Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques (informally known as the Cabinet des Médailles) of the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris (Figs. 1-4).[1] While the antiquity of this seal is not in question, its provenance remains a mystery. There are no records concerning where it was found and how it got to Paris.[2] The only data about its origin in the Bibliothèque nationale is its purchase from a Paris dealer in 1896.[3]

This engraved crystal is a remarkable one-of-a-kind object. Its uniqueness is due not only to its historical significance, but also to its artistic characteristics that distinguish it among the hardstone stamp-seals of late ancient Iran.[4] After its initial identification and succinct sigillographic description by Menasce and Guillou in 1946, this seal received surprisingly little attention in Manichaean studies. Subsequent discussions remained restricted to mostly paragraph-length remarks in either an encyclopedic survey of Manichaean art (Gulácsi 2006) or in iconographic treatises, the latter of which tentatively hypothesized the ties of its image to the Manichaeans' depictions of their *Bēma* Festival (Adam 1954; Klimkeit 1982; and Jorinde Ebert

* This study is based on an examination of Mani's crystal seal conducted in late 2011, while I was lecturing on Manichaean art as the guest of the École pratique des hautes Études (Section des sciences religieuses) at the University of Paris upon the invitation of Frantz Grenet (Religions of Ancient Iran) and Jean-Daniel Dubois (Gnostic and Manichaean Studies). I am most grateful to Frantz Grenet for his help in navigating the Bibliothèque nationale ever so efficiently and for reading a draft of this paper. Much credit is due also to the staff of the Cabinet des Médailles, who saw to the making of a sealing impression and provided superb digital photographs of the seal for this project. Among the staff, I would like to thank especially Mathilde Avisseau-Broustet (chief conservator), who graciously facilitated my access to the object. In addition, I am deeply indebted to Nils Arne Pedersen (Aarhus University, Denmark) for asking me to conduct this study and reading a draft of my paper, with special attention to the inscription. The illustrations and diagrams supplementing this study were made in collaboration with the imaging specialists of the Bilby Research Center at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona.

[1] Pierre Jean de Menasce and André Guillou 1946, 81–84.

[2] The lack of records noted by Menasce and Guillou (1946, 83) is confirmed by Mathilde Avisseau-Broustet (personal communication).

[3] Alfred Adam 1954, 105 where he states: "Über Fundort und frühere Besitzer ist nichts bekannt; die Nationalbibliothek hat den Gegenstand i. J. 1896 von einem Pariser Händler erworben, wie mir der Hauptkonservator am Cabinet des Medailles, Hr. Jean Babelon, mitzuteilen die Güte hatte." Without crediting Adam, Hans-Joachim Klimkeit also notes that the seal was acquired from a Paris dealer in 1896 (1982, 50). Menasce and Guillou emphasize the lack of records, but point out that the antiquity of the seal is not in question, since the Syriac language of the inscription ties this seal to Mani, who is known to have spoken Syriac (1946, 83).

[4] For recent research on seals and gemstones of late antiquity see Christopher Entwistle and Noël Adams 2011 and Jeffrey Spier 2007.

1994).[5] More recently, the seal was considered in the context of Sassanid art (Rika Gyselen 1995; Prudence Oliver Harper 2006).

The goal of the current paper is to provide a basic art historical analysis of this crystal informed by Manichaean studies in order to establish a new interpretation of its attribution, correct previous misconceptions, and thus prepare this work of art for further research. My approach is two-fold: (1) Based on the assessment of the physical features, I argue that this small piece of clear quartz is a double-sided object that originally was enclosed in a metal frame to fulfill a dual function. Primarily, this crystal was designed as a hardstone seal, with an intaglio side (i.e., a sunken relief) made to function as a stamp used for authenticating documents. Its flat side, however, fulfilled a secondary function, since on this side the carved content shows through from below as a positive image, with a legible inscription and the main figure facing to the right, confirming that this side was designed as an engraved gemstone. (2) Based on the examination of the textual and visual message in light of late ancient Manichaean literature, as well as Parthian, Sassanian, and Kushan iconography and inscriptions on seals and coins, I suggest that this seal-medallion was made for the use of Mani (216-276 CE) as his official seal in the middle of the 3rd century CE, sometime during the era of his ministry (240-276). As customary on official seals from Mesopotamia and Iran at that time, the inscription provides the name and title, while the image pictures the owner of the seal most often as a bust.[6] In this case, flanked by two of his disciples (elects), the main figure represents Mani, who routinely begins his epistles by identifying himself with the very title used on this crystal – "Mani, the apostle of Jesus Christ."

1. Physical Features and Associated Functions

Ground into the shape of a cabochon with a perfectly circular base and a spherical shape, this small crystal may be best compared to a tiny loaf that features an intaglio on its convex surface, while its uncut flat surface is polished smooth. Overall, it measures 29 mm in diameter and 9 mm in maximum height. The colorless quality and the thin profile of the crystal are both utilized in creating a unique double-sided object that fulfilled a dual function (that of a *stamp-seal* with a negative image and that of a *engraved gem* with a positive image) originally mounted as a pendant and most likely set in gold.

The convex surface confirms that this side of the crystal was designed as a *stamp-seal* (see Figs. 3-4). As customary on seals, a sunken relief is engraved here as the negative form of the inscription and image designed to function by being pressed into clay to create a low-relief positive impression. The effortless quality of the lines (defined in various thicknesses and textures) and circular depressions (as in the letter "y" used five times in the inscription, see Fig. 5) carved away from the smooth surface of the stone indicate that the artist worked with a grinding-wheel. Based on its technique, this hardrock intaglio represents a superb example of Sassanid wheel engraving (see Fig. 6). The very technology of gem and glass cutting evidenced on this crystal has a long history in ancient Iran and Mesopotamia that flourished until

[5] Klimkeit 1982, 50; Ebert 1994, 23; and Gulácsi, "Manichean Art" (2008), in *Encyclopædia Iranica*. Although Gherardo Gnoli provides a bibliographical reference to the publication of Menasce and Guillou (1946), he does not discuss the seal in his entry on "Manichaean Art" in the *Encyclopedia of World Art* (1964, 443).

[6] My definition for what constitutes "an official seal" in late ancient Iran follows the one used by Rika Gyselen (2008, 9 n. 8).

the Mongol invasion.[7] The even convex shape together with the perfectly circular base of this seal is notable.[8] Although seals with a convex surface remain relatively rare, they have been documented in West Asia as early as the 7th century BCE.[9] Their impressions seem to offer the advantage of producing a cavity that may better protect the content of the sealing compared to those created by regular low-profile seals.

Stamp-seals were used to authenticate documents in late ancient West Asia. In the case of letters, this was done by tying up a parchment (or papyrus) scroll with a cord pressed into a still wet lump of clay that was pressed with the seal. Such a sealed piece of clay, when dried, formed a so-called bulla, which certified not only the authenticity of the original content, but also that the document had not been opened or tampered with before it was received. The bulla had to be broken up to gain access to what it certified. This practice is well attested from Parthian and Sassanid Mesopotamia and Iran, an example of which is considered below (see Fig. 9).[10] As to be expected from a highly literate religious organization as the one created by Mani, the practice of sealing letters is confirmed among the early Manichaeans. The vocabulary of their late ancient literature include nouns such as *seal*, *seal ring*, *sealed document*, in addition to the transitive verb *to seal something* in a variety of languages.[11] The concept of securing something with a seal is used in early Manichaeism to describe the main rules that Mani set up for his elects to live by, known as the *Three Seals*.[12] In addition, Mani's personal use of a seal to authenticate his letters seems to be documented also by the designation of his so-called *Seal Letter*, which he wrote in prison before his death as his final instruction to his disciples and to designate his successor in the leadership of the community.[13] Although a more figurative connotation of the term *seal*, meaning 'finished or closed,' is most certainly relevant here, the mere use of this figure of speech already implies a culture accustomed to the employment of seals.

The flat surface was designed to function as a transparent hardstone *engraved gem*, since this side allows the carving to show through from the convex side (see Figs. 1-2). When viewed from this flat side, the object features a positive design with a fully legible text and a fully visible image beneath the polished flat surface of the crystal. A metal setting, now lost, most likely utilized this side by displaying the legible text and image that showed the main figure facing to the right – the preferred direction on sealings and coins from ancient Iran. Based on this logic, the original

[7] See Hans E. Wulff 1966, 37, who also provides a diagram with a gem-cutter's grinding wheel and points to the "Cup of Chosroes" from the Cabinet des Médailles of the Bibliothèque nationale de France as a historical example (1966, 39 and 168, respectively). For an illustration of the latter, see my Fig. 9, below.

[8] The uniqueness of the circular base and the spherical shape among the seals of Ancient West Asia was already pointed out by Menasce and Guillou (1946, 84).

[9] For two examples of Assyrian conoid stamp-seals with shallow convex bases (one oval and one circular), see John Curtis, Julian Reade, and Dominique Collon 1995, 187-188. Both of these seals have high profiles and carry carved printable content not only on their convex base, but also along their sides. With the latter, they reference cylinder seals.

[10] Roman Ghirshman 1962, 244.

[11] For the wordlists, see *CFMD 1*, 418.

[12] The *Three Seals* (the seal of the mouth, the seal of the hand, and the seal of the chest) designate a disciplinary construct attested in all parts of the Manichaean world. For a survey of the textual sources, see Jason David BeDuhn 2000, 33-40.

[13] Mani is known to have composed his *Seal Letter* before he died in the Sassanid town of Gondeshapur (Syro-Aram. Bēth Lāpāṭ). This letter was read out as part of the annual *Bēma* Festival. For a study that considers the surviving Sogdian and Parthian versions of the letter, see Christiane Reck 2009, 225-239.

metal setting was most likely *not* part of a ring, since a ring would allow access to one side only (the convex seal side), leaving the flat side inaccessible and invisible and thus, eliminating the advantage of the unique design. The prominent double-sidedness of this crystal implies that its metal setting was that of a pendant that permitted access to both sides and both functions.

An example of a Sassanid seal stone that was originally mounted as a pendant is found in the collection of the British Museum (Fig. 8). This oval carnelian seal bears an inscription that identifies its figure as "Vehdin-Shapur, chief store keeper of Iran" and dates from the 5th century CE (Fig. 8a). Although its metal setting is lost today, the brownish-red stone has a very thin slightly convex profile that reaches only 5 mm at its maximum height, confirming the interpretation that this stone must have been mounted for use as a seal. Based on its large size (H: 47 mm, W: 37 mm), this seal was most likely mounted as a pendant and worn on the neck, similar to what is shown on the seal portrait of Vehdin-Shapur himself, as seen on its modern impression (Fig. 8b): a round gem mounted with a two-point suspension from a torque-like band (Fig. 8c).[14] The proportions and convex spherical shape of the pendant hanging from Vehdim-Shapur's neck in his bust portrait compare favorably to those of Mani's seal in Paris.

The dimensions of Mani's seal provide further evidence for its now-lost setting that was most likely made of a precious metal as a pendant. Firstly, the height of this crystal clearly requires an accessory for use as a seal. When pieces of hardstones are carved to function as stamp-seals, they are typically designed with a profile that offers a comfortable height to grip for sealing. Clearly, this stamp-seal does not have such a feature. Its profile is not high enough to hold the seal, when pressing it into clay. Although at its highest point the convex surface reaches 9 mm, the rounded stamp shape leaves only circa 2 mm un-carved area beneath the inscription, which would be needed to securely set the crystal in what was most likely a bezel setting. The damage visible on the lower middle of the concave surface lends support to this interpretation. The edge of the crystal is chipped beneath and to the right of the middle figure through the entire depth of the crystal. This conchoidal fracture on an otherwise intact crystal surface indicates that the seal was pried out from a setting made of precious metal, breaking the stone in the process.[15] Secondly, the 29 mm diameter of the crystal is too large for fitting into a seal ring. The likelihood of a pendant mount is further supported by the double-sided design and the subsequent dual function of the engraving on this see-through gem. Therefore, the overall proportions of Mani's seal indicate a pendant mount. This interpretation accords with the institutional context of Mani's seal, since personal seals in Sassanid Iran tend to be smaller (below 20 mm × 20 mm), while official seals tend to be are larger (close to 40 mm × 40 mm), and thus mounted as pendants.[16]

Setting rock crystal in gold is well documented from Sassanid Iran, a remarkable example of which is the so-called "Cup of Chosroes" in the collection of the Cabinet des Médailles (Fig. 9).[17] This large plate is fashioned by enclosing

[14] Harper 1978, 148.

[15] The metal settings of pendant seals rarely survive. One Sassanid exception might be a scaraboid seal with a hunting scene in the collection of the British Museum, which (unlike Mani's seal) features a hole (drilled behind the seal surface horizontally across the body of the stone) with a peg in it attached to a silver pendant-mount that could be authentic, see Curtis, Nigel Tallis, and Béatrice André-Salvini et al. 2005, 228, Fig. 416.

[16] Gyselen 2009, 167.

[17] Françoise Demange 2006, 96-97; also see Gyselen 1993, 239 and plate LVIII. Only one from among the largest floral crystal disks is lost today.

medallions of carved rock crystal and red garnet into solid gold rings, the latter of which are soldered to one another and interspersed with pieces of green glass in order to construct a shallow footed bowl (Fig. 9a). Among its medallions, twenty-eight are made of rock crystal: one figural disk in the center with an image of an enthroned king, and twenty-seven (9 × 3) floral disks in three different sizes. The diameter of Mani's seal is just a few millimeters smaller than the largest floral disks. The thick gold rings framing the crystals and garnets are smooth and undecorated, giving the impression of bezel settings from both sides, and thus comparable to the metal settings of pendant seals in ancient Iran. The carving on the central crystal disk shows an enthroned Sassanid king dressed in ceremonial attire with a pendant hanging from his necklace (Fig. 9b). The spherical shape of this pendant is comparable to the pendant in Vehdin-Shapur's portrait on his carnelian seal in the British Museum (see Fig. 8c).

There is considerable documentary evidence for bezel settings of Iranian official seals mounted as pendants.[18] A good example can be seen on a late Sassanid bulla in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Fig. 10). This historical lump of clay retains the impression of the slightly convex circular seal, bearing an inscription and an image of an official in a configuration similar to the design of Vehdin-Shapur's seal in London (see Fig. 8). The seal that created this bulla does not survive. From its impression, however, it is clear that it was round, measuring 27 mm in diameter together with its metal mount (Fig. 10a). This metal mount was a relatively wide (circa twice as wide as the height of the script in the inscription) and smooth bezel. At the upper edge of the bulla (above the head of the figure), a small spherical impression of a ball can be seen (Fig. 10b). This small metal ball, known as a "granule," is not a one-point suspension, but instead is a device used for preventing the seal to rotate while it was being pressed into the wet clay.[19] The suspension was most likely behind the granule soldered to the mount and thus, it did not leave a mark on the clay bulla. If any had survived, the impression of Mani's crystal seal on Manichaean bullas would have looked similar to the sealing on the bulla in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, showing the concave sealing together with the impression of a smooth bezel setting with or without a granule.

The material of the Manichaean seal is colorless silica, that is, pure quartz, commonly known as rock crystal. Quartz (silicon dioxide) is by far the most popular material of gemstones carved in late ancient West Asia. Most quartz, however, is colored, microcrystalline chalcedonic quartz: agate (multi colored), onyx (black), jasper (pink, green, and bloodstone), carnelian (brownish-red, see Fig. 8a), and chalcedony (brown, yellow, white, grey, or milky). The colorless, macro-crystalline

[18] Gyselen discusses numerous examples in her monograph from 2008, including seals of Zoroastrian priests such as the one seen on a bulla from Qasr-i Abu Nasr that preserves a sealing (32 × 35 mm) together with a smooth bezel setting (2008, 51).

[19] Seal rings with granules are well documented in the surviving archeological record of pre-Islamic Iran. They tend to be smaller, measuring between 10 and 20 mm in diameter, including their metal settings. Bullas produced by them often contain an imprint of a small sphere (often around 5 mm in diameter, known as the "granule" soldered to the bezel mount protruding next to the ring as a small solid ball). For a discussion of bullas with such seal ring impressions from early mediaeval West Central Asia, as well as a superb example of an actual gold seal ring with its soldered spherical granule, see Judith A. Lerner and Nicholas Sims-Williams 2011, 21-27 and Color Table 1. Examples of pendant seals and their impressions (that includes their smooth bezel settings and single granules) of Sassanid dignitaries are surveyed by Gyselen (2007, 278-283; and 2008, see especially seals 6, 7, 11-17).

form of quartz remains relatively rare among seals and carved gems alike.[20] Its Central Asian origin is noted in a variety of sources.[21] Belief in the magical properties associated with this stone in late Antiquity, such as the belief in its ability to make prayers answered and to heal kidney ailments and other diseases, were adopted by the early Christian communities, making it a popular material for amulets.[22] Ancient science notes the ability of rock crystal to split the light into a spectrum.[23] The early Manichaeans were undoubtedly familiar with many such associations. The surviving vocabulary of their Parthian and Middle Persian texts include the term 'rock crystal,' documenting the use of this stone during the early era of their history.[24] Based on its rarity, clear rock crystal seems to be a socially appropriate prestigious choice as a material to be used by the founder of the Manichaean church.[25] The fascinating assumption, that the early Manichaeans might have considered this exceptional and colorless form of quartz to be a suitable symbol of *the Light*, the central element in their teachings, is a reasonable hypothesis that, nevertheless, remains unconfirmed today. From the above analysis, however, it is clear that Mani owned and used this material – handling it as a seal and wearing it on his body as a pendant suspended from his neck.

2. The Inscription

As an integral part of this work of art, the inscription must be considered in an art historical study. The text shows through clearly on the flat side of the crystal (see Figs. 1 and 2) and imprints well onto the unbaked clay sealing produced for this study in the Cabinet des Médailles (see Fig. 4). The transcribed words read in Syriac as *Mānī šᵉlīḥā d-Išōʿ mᵉšīḥā* and translate as 'Mani, apostle (lit. messenger) of Jesus Christ (lit. messiah).' The letter-by-letter transliteration of the text is shown in a diagram (see Fig. 5). The calligraphy, the script, and the language of the inscription provide reliable data for the basic attribution of the seal to late ancient Manichaean West Asia. It is, however, the content of the inscription that yields critical epigraphic evidence not only for the identification of this carved rock crystal as the official seal of the prophet Mani, but also for its subsequent dating to the era of Mani's ministry that took place during the middle of the 3rd century in Sassanid Mesopotamia.

The script and the language of the inscription already tie this seal to the first Manichaean community of late ancient West Asia. The script is Manichaean. Showing a clear relation to Estrangelo Syriac script, specific Manichaean developments are demonstrated especially by four letters: *d*, *y*, *š*, and *aleph*. Therefore, the script itself confirms the Manichaean identification of this seal. Since the use of the Manichaean script is documented from 4th century Manichaean Egypt,

[20] Christopher J. Brunner 1978, 47, where three seals made of rock crystal are noted among the Sassanid seals of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

[21] E.g., Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* XXXVII (Collon and J.H. Betts, 1997, 166). For Chinese sources, see Étienne de la Vaissière and Eric Trombert 2004, 931-969.

[22] Kurt Weitzmann 1979, 210; where examples of early Christian rock crystal amulets from the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Dumbarton Oaks Collection are also noted (437-438).

[23] While Pliny the Elder (23-79 CE) considered quartz to be a permanently frozen form of ice, he was aware of its ability to split light into a spectrum. For references to seals and gems in Pliny's *Natural History*, see Collon and Betts 1997.

[24] *CFMD 3*, 112.

[25] Possibly attesting to the appreciation of rock crystal in Iranian culture is the listing of the quality "shining" (i.e., white and/or probably translucent) as the very first category of stones in the *Pahlavi Rivāyat* (Brunner 1978, 46).

its late ancient origin is unquestioned today.[26] Although the much-cited claim put forward by al-Nadīm (d. 998 CE)[27] that Mani invented the Manichaean script remains unconfirmed, the fact that the very script is used on Mani's own crystal seal anchors the script at a minimum to the era of his ministry (240-276).[28] The language of the inscription is Syriac (i.e., Middle/Eastern Aramaic), which is attested as one of the main languages of early Manichaean literature.[29] Fragments of Syriac Manichaean texts discovered from 4th-century Egypt prove its early use. Even more fitting to the proposed attribution of the crystal seal, Mani is known to have used Syriac as one of the languages of his own compositions.[30]

The lettering on this crystal seal shows a most precise calligraphy. Despite the challenging cabochon surface and the circular layout of the text, as well as the hardness of the stone (Mohs scale hardness 7), the letters are carefully executed, evenly distributed, and all but three survive in perfect condition (see Fig. 5). They are arranged in a radial design along the outer perimeter of the crystal, totaling originally twenty. The inscription begins at five o'clock and proceeds counter clock-wise. Only one letter, a final *ʿayn* (-ʿ) is stretched at the end of the third word, visible at nine o'clock. The rest of the letters are spaced relatively evenly, occupying circa 3 mm on average.[31] Today, only seventeen letters are intact. The chipped damage impacted three letters, eliminating the last two letters (*ḥ and *ʾ) in the fourth word and part of the first letter (*m*) in the first word. Although the starting portion of the latter letter is gone, the preserved end is clearly that of an *m* at the beginning of the name *Mani*. An intact version of the same letter can be seen at eight o'clock as it starts the last word, allowing us to estimate the overall length of the damaged *m*. The last visible letter in the fourth word is a *y*. This letter is seen four additional times, including the second and third letters in the third word, *dyyšwʿ* 'of Jesus.' Their length confirms that, within the available space, there is room for only the last two letters of the fourth word to complete the inscription with the noun *mšy[ḥʾ]*, 'Christ (lit. Messiah).'

The content of the inscription forms the basis of the attribution of the seal to Mani and the dating of this work of art to a period of 37 years during the middle of the 3rd century, between 240 and 276 CE. The inscription unquestionably names Mani, and so already identifies the crystal as a Manichaean work of art.[32] The four-word Syriac phrase, *mʾny šlyḥʾ dyyšwʿ mšyḥʾ*, i.e., 'Mani, apostle of Jesus Christ,' is an epithet of Mani. It is well attested in early Manichaean literature as Mani's self-designation in the starting formula of his epistles, surviving in Coptic, Latin, and Greek translations.[33] As we have seen, the custom of providing the name, together with the title of a seal's owner is routine in Sassanian official seal inscriptions and is in agreement with the attested function to certify documents created by the seal's owner. Based on this practice, the most likely interpretation of the crystal seal's inscription is that it, too, names the owner of the seal, the prophet Mani (the founder and ranking

[26] On the recent discovery of Syriac Manichaean texts at Kellis in the Dakhla oasis, see Iain Gardner 1997, 161-176. For the early 20th-century finds, see David Samuel Margoliouth 1915, 214-216; Walter Ewing Crum 1919, 207-208; and Chapter I in the present volume.

[27] Al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist* (987 CE), see John C. Reeves 2011, 91.

[28] For an alternative view, see Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst 2000, 161-178.

[29] Menasce and Guillou consider the language to be the most important evidence for the attribution of this crystal as a Manichaean work of art and as an ancient object (1946, 83).

[30] For a study on the language of Mani, see Riccardo Contini 1995, 65-107.

[31] The height (ca. 1.5 mm) of the script engraved on this seal is comparable to the smallest examples of Manichaean script written on the manuscript fragments discovered at Turfan (Gulácsi 2005, 78).

[32] Menasce and Guillou 1946, 83.

[33] For a list of examples, see Gardner 2007, 40.

authority of his church during the mid 3rd century), and provides his title, in this case, the epithet preferred by him that designated him as a "messenger of Jesus."

Jesus references in association with Mani are frequent in early Manichaeism. Mani was exposed to various forms of Christianity in southern Mesopotamia, where he grew up among the Elchasaites, but also had contact with Bardaisanites and Marcionites.[34] In this western region of the Sassanid Empire, the dominance of Zoroastrianism was significantly less than in the central provinces, allowing for the existence of alternative religious traditions. Within the cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic milieu of late ancient Mesopotamia, Mani had a chance to consider the teachings of other prophets in relation to his own. While Zoroaster and the historical Buddha are also discussed,[35] Jesus received the most attention in Mani's writings. He gave sermons on Jesus' life.[36] With a uniquely Manichaean take, Mani explained Jesus' suffering to be symbolic of the suffering of the Light, the elemental component of the Good and the Divine in the universe that the Manichaeans aimed to liberate from its captivity by Darkness through what they called "the work of [their] religion."[37] After Mani's passing, his death was discussed in comparison with that of Jesus, as documented by Parthian, Coptic, and Greek sources,[38] including the originally Syriac prose behind the Greek *Cologne Mani Codex*.[39] Mani's ties to Jesus fall into three major themes: "Jesus as a personal savior of Mani" (as seen in the *Cologne Mani Codex*), "Mani as the Paraclete of Jesus" (as seen in designations by his disciples) and "Mani as the Apostle of Jesus Christ" (as seen as a self-designation in his letters and on his rock-crystal seal at the focus of this study).[40]

The hypothesis that the now-chipped portion of the inscription originally included an additional word, the noun *mar* 'lord' prior to the name Mani, was raised by Menasce and Guillou.[41] Two reasons require us to reject this idea. First, the analysis of the letters' distribution confirms that this inscription could not have contained an extra word. As noted above, there is not enough room for any additional letters within the area of the text. Second, the phrase *Mar Mani* 'Lord Mani' is not attested together with the phrase inscribed on this crystal ("the apostle of Jesus Christ"). Moreover, it remains undocumented from the literature produced by the first Manichaeans. Not only is it unattested in Syriac (or Coptic), but also it is used only in Middle Iranian Manichaean texts. Although *mar* has a Semitic etymology, and was

[34] For a discussion of the religious environment of Mani, see BeDuhn and Paul Allan Mirecki 2007, 1-22.

[35] The "Primary Manichaean Prophets," including the Historical Buddha are mentioned in the variety of Coptic Manichaean texts. For a list, see Michel Tardieu 2008, 15 and Fig. 1.

[36] An example of such a sermon is preserved in Coptic translation in the *Kephalaia* 12,21-13,11 (see Gardner 1995, xviii-xix). In this brief sermon, Mani begins with an introduction followed by a reference to Jesus' incarnation and ministry. The bulk of the text is devoted to the passion and concludes with a brief discussion of the resurrection. For a more detailed discussion, see Gulácsi 2008/2012, 159.

[37] BeDuhn 2009, 51-70.

[38] A Coptic example is found in the *Manichaean Homilies* 42,9-85,34, see Pedersen 2006. The codex itself dates from the second half of the 4th century and contains a collection of sermons that were originally composed in Mesopotamia probably soon after the death of Mani, to which it refers. For other proposed dates, see Pedersen 1996, 80-87. For the Parthian example see Sundermann 1968, 386-405; and Gulácsi 2008/2012, 143-169.

[39] The text of the *Cologne Mani Codex* follows hagiographic convention and in many places it is based on themes analogous to the life of Christ (see Albert Henrichs 1979, 339-367; and Werner Sundermann's entry on the *Cologne Mani Codex* in *Encyclopædia Iranica* (1992)).

[40] For a recent book on the subject, see Majella Franzmann 2003.

[41] Menasce and Guillou 1946, 82.

borrowed from Aramaic into Parthian and Middle Persian, *Mar Mani* is known only from medieval Manichaean literature surviving from East Central Asia.[42]

Although Menasce and Guillou state that future studies will have to verify the attribution of this seal, they also note that, in light of its inscription, its owner could have been either Mani or one of his successors.[43] The latter possibility is negated by interpreting the actual words engraved on this crystal in light of the documented usage of seals in late ancient Iran, where, in order to fulfill its intended function, an official seal must contain a clear epigraphic reference to its owner (name and title) supplemented by an image with the type portrait of the owner (most often as a bust).[44] The inscription on this seal unambiguously identifies Mani as the person for whose use this seal was made, leaving no factual basis to hypothesize another person, who could have been recognized as the owner of this seal based on the words of this inscription. Analogously, any of Mani's first successors most certainly would have had their own official seals to authenticate the documents and correspondences written by them.

(3) THE IMAGE

The image on Mani's seal displays an innovative design while still following the basic trends observed in the representations of human beings on seals and coinage of late ancient Iran. Considering its style, composition, and iconography is essential before contemplating its symbolic connotations (see Figs. 1-2 and 6-7). Based on such a foundation and in harmony with the meaning of the inscription and the function of the object, I suggest that the image on this crystal is a sigillographic reference to Mani as the head of the religious community established by him, as indicated by the two elects shown at his side. While the inscription already identifies this seal as the official seal of Mani, the image extends this identification by giving an unambiguous visual reference to the community of the Manichaean church headed by Mani at the time, when the seal was made and used. Conveyed textually and visually, the message engraved on this seal is identical to what is found at the beginning of Mani's epistles, where he as the writer identifies himself and points to two groups of elects in his company.

The style of representation employed within this engraved image is abbreviated (see Fig. 6). Plain outlines capture the faces and double the contours of the robes. Sets of parallel lines are employed to define the headbands, the hair of the elect, and even the two strands of Mani's beard. Texture is indicated only in the case of Mani's long hair, where wavy lines vary in length giving a more realistic impression of hair. This linear and abstract approach results in a simplified style that, nevertheless, is suited to serve the function of the seal medium and is not uncommon in late ancient Iran.[45] Its characteristics compare favorably to the style of imagery used on late Parthian coinage, as seen for example on the obverses of the silver coins of Vologases II (r. 105-147 CE) in a private collection (Fig. 11a) and Vologases III (r. ca. 148-192 CE) in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Fig. 11e). Despite their different media, the definition of the figures on these silver coins and on Mani's seal relies

[42] Occurrences are listed in *CFMD 3*, 226.
[43] Menasce and Guillou 1946, 84.
[44] Gyselen 2008, 9 n. 8.
[45] In her recent study on the monuments and artifacts of the Sassanid Near East, Harper provides a brief discussion of this Manichaean seal, including its style (2006, 67 and Fig. 37), with an illustration after Klimkeit 1982.

heavily on outlines and parallel lines, reaffirming the dating of the seal to the mid 3rd century CE.

As customary on seals of late ancient West Asia that feature both text and image, the composition of this engraving observes two principles of design to support the overall visual message, equating the main figure of the carving with the owner of the seal identified in the inscription (see Figs. 1-2). Encircled by the writing, three figures occupy the middle of the crystal surface. All three are shown as busts with the heads in profile and the upper bodies in frontal views.[46] In contrast to the letters' radial pattern of distribution (that orients each letter towards the center, see Fig. 6), the figures roughly are parallel to one another. The two on the sides are approximately similar in size, located at the same level, and shown facing the central axis in mirror symmetry (Fig. 7). Between them, the third figure is distinguished not only by its central location and larger scale, but also by being oriented to the right, and positioned somewhat closer to the viewer on the picture plane. This multifaceted visual emphasis already sets Mani's figure apart as the focus, which is taken further in the iconography of the image (discussed below).

The composition of the image on Mani's seal is analogous to what is observed in a popular emblem of Zoroastrianism in ancient Iran. A design that makes use of three figures, hierarchy of scale, and symmetry, is relatively rare on Parthian, Sassanid, and Kushan seals and coins. A notable exception is the Zoroastrian symbol often found on the reverse of Iranian coins, which consists of a fire altar flanked by two attendant figures, as seen on an example of a late Parthian coin discovered at Dura-Europos (Fig. 11i).[47] This Zoroastrian image continued to be favored on imperial coins that circulated during the life of Mani, starting with the coins of Shapur I (r. 241-276 CE) and Bahram II (r. 276-293 CE). Mani's teachings offered an alternative to, and for a while directly competed with, Zoroastrianism for the sponsorship of the Sassanid court, as chronicled by the story of Mani's audience with Shapur in early Manichaean literature.[48] Based on Mani's awareness of this rivalry, it is not impossible that the unique composition of his seal was not only informed by, but also consciously intended to echo the design routinely employed as the numismatic symbol of the religion that ultimately won the favor of the Sassanid kings. The iconography of the image on Mani's seal uses facial hair and hair length to distinguish two ranks within the early Manichaean community: the rank of founder and the rank of his disciples (see Fig. 6). Mani's long forked beard presents a striking contrast to the lack of facial hair on the two flanking elects, effectively conveying the latter's junior and subordinate status. This beard is shown combed into two thick strands spiraling downwards and resting on the chest. As suggested by their gradually narrowing shapes, the two stands originally concluded in thinning tips on the now-chipped area of the crystal, most likely just above the lower edge of Mani's robe. In addition to its double strands, this beard is emphasized by the diagonal double outlines of the robe that parallels it. Hair length is used for a similar effect. Mani's long hair is shown tucked behind his ear and falling behind his shoulders, possibly all along his back as indicated by a faint wavy line that seems to continue downwards along the edge of his robe. Although this faint wavy line may indicate intent, it remains an insignificant element of the iconography in this medium, unperceivable by

[46] This combined projection (profile head and frontal upper body) is often seen on the busts of figures shown on Sassanid seals (see Fig. 7). Philippe Gignoux notes additional examples housed in the Cabinet des Médailles (1978, 3.17-3.19 and 3-29-30).
[47] Jennifer Chi and Sebastian Heath 2011, 66-67.
[48] See Tardieu 2008, 22-30; and Samuel N.C. Lieu 1992, 76-78.

the naked eye both on the carved gem and the sealing impression produced by it. Nevertheless, Mani's long hair contrasts with the elects' cut hair, which curls outward above the neckline of their robes.

The iconography of this image does not copy royal attributes referenced on contemporaneous Parthian and Sassanid coins, where long pointed beards are relatively rare (see Figs. 11a and 11d-f) and the hair tends to be shown cut above the shoulder and covering the ear (see Figs. 11a-f). Distinguishing the hair length of Mani from that of his disciples may signal not only a difference in age, but also in time of commitment to the sacerdotal precepts characteristic of Mani and his elect. Seniority among the male elects continued to be indicated in the presence and length of beards, just as in the length of hair during the medieval phase of Manichaean art.[49]

A unifying element in the iconography of the figures is a wide headband shown here in two different ways (see Fig. 6). Mani is portrayed wearing this headband stretched across his forehead and around his hair, tucked behind his ear. It is indicated by five parallel horizontal lines etched one above the other, with the first line above his eye and the last just beneath the top of the head. These parallel lines originate from the line of the nose-ridge in a direct angle, spread across the forehead, and conclude above the helix of the ear. A sixth, shorter line is visible between the eyebrow and the ear. These lines together seem to capture the folds of a wide cloth wrapped around Mani's head. Unlike most representations of headbands on Iranian seals and coins, here the ear remains visible (since neither the hair nor the headband covers it) and no ribbons are shown fastening the band at the back of the head. The two elects are portrayed with headbands that are analogous to that of Mani, covering their foreheads, but also their ears. What is shown above their headbands can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, it is possible that the quasi-vertical lines seen above the headband indicate hair.[50] If so, the headgear of the elects would be identical to Mani's, albeit covering the ears. On the other hand, it is also possible that the texture of the headband is repeated on the top of the head in order to capture what may be a cloth head-cover with a relatively tall and bulging appearance. If so, the headband and the head-cover were portrayed made of the same cloth. Either way, the headband is a dominating element in the iconography of the figures.

Most data on ancient Iranian headgear derive from a royal context, referencing either cloth or metal bands (Old Persian *tiyārā*) of various widths. Starting with the era of Alexander the Great, Persian headbands gained popularity across the East Mediterranean and became a symbol of prestige as documented in the arts of the Hellenistic and Roman era. Headbands with and without a hat are portrayed in the arts of various Iranian dynasties.[51] An example of a wide headband worn on the hair, similar to Mani's, but fastened with a large bow at the back of the head, can be seen on late Parthian coins, such as the silver coin of Vologases II (r. 105-147 CE) in a private collection (Fig. 11a). A headband tied around the base of a hat, possibly similar to that of the elects on the crystal seal, but again fastened with a large bow, is commonly seen on late Parthian, Sassanid, and Kushan coins (see Figs. 11b, d, and f-h, respectively).

[49] This symbolism is still followed in the Manichaean art of East Central Asia, when large groups of elects are shown in book paintings (e.g., MIK III 4979 verso) and wall paintings (e.g., MIK III 6918), see Gulácsi 2001, 71, 74-75, and 198-201, respectively. The hierarchy within the ranks of female elects is obscured by the fragmentary nature of the available sources.

[50] Gyselen 1995, 138.

[51] For a discussion of the *tiara* in Parthian art, see Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis 1998, 61-73.

The image engraved on Mani's seal is our closest documentary evidence on early Manichaean headgear, since primary textual records are silent on the question and the next surviving phases of Manichaean art production is circa 600 years after this seal, about 4000 km to the northeast in East Central Asia, and in a different medium (painting). Wide headbands tied across the forehead either around the hair or a hat, as shown on this crystal engraving, are not part of the iconography surviving on the currently known examples of East Central Asian (Uygur) and Chinese Manichaean art.[52] Moreover, although undoubtedly a different type of headgear does become an important Manichaean ecclesiastic symbol,[53] the currently known painted and sculpted images of Mani feature no headgear over Mani's long hair; the latter is, however, shown tucked behind the ears and falling behind his shoulders as on the seal.[54]

A powerful symbol of community in the iconography on this seal is the uniform shape of the garment. The details concerning the cut and the possible layers of this garment are minimal due to the abbreviated style of representation. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to assume that the upper bodies are shown from frontal view, as often seen on contemporaneous seals and coins (see Figs. 8, 10, and 11 g-h). If so, each set of trapezoid contour lines and each symmetrical pair of zigzag lines engraved on the crystal are abstract references to silhouettes of garments. We may interpret the horizontal lines along the necks as the necklines of the robes and the zigzag diagonal lines as the open fronts of cloaks worn hanging over the shoulders. The hands are not shown.[55]

Contemporaneous images of Iranian rulers routinely reference garments, in some cases with considerable details, as seen for example on a silver coin of Phraates IV (ca. 38-2 BCE) in the British Museum, London (Fig. 11c), where four curving lines indicate the neck of a robe worn beneath a cloak decorated with a heavy hem and insignia at the shoulder. The Parthian coin of Vologases I (66-67 CE), that was found at Dura-Europos and is housed today in the Yale University Art Gallery (Fig. 11b), also shows the ruler wearing a robe under a simpler cloak with an open front. Mediaeval Manichean art produced in Uygur and Chinese Manichaean contexts also features robes worn beneath cloaks as the uniform garments of the elect (both sexes), indicating the necklines of the robes and the hemlines of the cloaks by sets of parallel lines, appropriately shaped. In that art, the hemlines and shoulder insignia of the cloaks get increasingly elaborate in the case of high-ranking elects and deities.[56]

The interpretation of the image on this seal has presented a problem in previous studies, starting already with its first publication. In their 1946 article, Menasce and Guillou do not consider connecting the inscription to the image, just as they do not compare the engraving on this Manichaean seal to the seals of late ancient and early

[52] For what appear to be thin headbands in later Manichaean art (both East Central Asian and Chinese), see Ebert 2009, 35-47.

[53] For headgears used in this role within the illuminations of two Episcopal letter scrolls, see Gulácsi 2005, 213-216 and Fig. 6/5.

[54] In addition to the main figure on this seal, there are three positively identified images of Mani known today from Manichaean art, including (1) a rubbing made from a now-lost metal stamp from Central Asia, see Sundermann 1985, 172-174; (2) a painted stone statue near Quanzhou in Fujian Province of China, see Lieu 2012, 61-82; and (3) an image of a statue shown within a register of a complex silk painting from Southern China, see Yutaka Yoshida 2009, 697-714 and Gulácsi 2008a, 1-16.

[55] Unless in an active pose, the hands of the elects are not shown in mediaeval Manichaean art. For references to the *Seal of the Hands* in early Manichaean literature and Augustine's writings, see BeDuhn 2000, 33-37.

[56] For a discussion of Manichaean ceremonial cloaks, see Gulácsi 2009, 110-112 and Figs. 8-9.

mediaeval Iran. While expressing the need for further studies to identify the figures, Menasce and Guillou cautiously state only that the image may show either human beings or deities.[57]

The hypothesis that the central part of the image on this crystal represents a "portrait of Mani on the *Bēma* throne" was introduced by Adam in 1954, popularized by Klimkeit in 1982, and also adopted by Ebert in 1994.[58] In his influential, catalogue-like iconographic study of Manichaean painting, Klimkeit includes Adam's interpretation of "The *Bēma* Picture on Rock Crystal" in an appendix. Both Adam and Klimkeit explain the three figures as three busts (heads only) placed on top of three pedestals covered with embroidered cloths. They both interpret the largest pedestal in the center as "the 'throne' mentioned in the Manichaean *Bēma*-hymns" with the bust of Mani on it, and the two smaller daises as those of "church leaders or savior figures."[59] Their identification is based on the supposed notion that textual sources discuss an image of Mani displayed on a *bēma* (Gr. 'throne') in the course of an annual celebration that commemorated Mani's death and celebrated the hope for his second coming. On closer examination, the idea that literary sources record such a display turns out to be a fallacy in Manichaean studies that has been repeated in later scholarship without presenting any evidence to substantiate it.[60] While "the *Bēma* throne" is indeed discussed in primary sources[61] and one polemical secondary account,[62] we are yet to find any texts stating that an image of Mani was displayed on this throne.

Two additional reasons negate the interpretation of the main figure on this seal as a bust of Mani on the *bēma*. Firstly, the iconography of the engraving is detailed enough to see that the carving here is not a representation of a bust atop a cloth-

[57] Menasce and Guillou 1946, 84.

[58] Adam 1954, 105-106; Klimkeit 1982, 50; and Ebert 1994, 23.

[59] Klimkeit 1982, 50. Adam connects the engraved image to literary witnesses of the *Bēma* Festival, including the account of Augustine and the questionable reference made by Eusebius. While noting that Augustine does not mention a head, Adam hypothesizes that it might have been shown only to the elect. He further suggests that Eusebius could have seen this head, when once he observed Manichaeans gathered around an image of Mani (Adam 1954, 106). Paralleling Adam's argument Klimkeit asserts that "the fact that there was a portrait of Mani on the *Bēma* throne in the Western tradition is known to us from primary and secondary sources like the Coptic *Psalm-Book* and Eusebius (*Letter to Empress Constantia*)" (Klimkeit 1982, 50). It must be noted, however, that these textual references, including the Coptic *Psalm-Book* II, 16,24; 26,5) are highly imaginative interpretations of the actual words, none of which actually state what is claimed here (see quotes below).

[60] Jes Peter Asmussen in his *Encyclopædia Iranica* entry on *Aržang* (1987) writes: "it [i.e., the *Aržang*] is distinguished from the picture (Gr. *eikon*, M.Pers. *phykyrb*, Parth. *padgyrb*, Uyg. *körk*) of Mani which, at the time of the *Bēma* Festival was placed on a throne in front of the community", referring to the Manichaean *Bet- und Beichtbuch* in Walter Bruno Henning 1937, 9, and to the *Compendium* in Gustav Haloun and Henning 1952, 210 n. 4. Most recently, this claim is repeated by Reeves (2011, 231 n. 47), who also relies on previous Manichaean studies scholarship, such as that of Klimkeit.

[61] Manichaean sources on the *bēma* throne include the above-mentioned *Psalm-Book*, which does not contain the phrase "image of Mani," and the above-mentioned *Bet- und Beichtbuch* (Henning 1937), which provides only a long list of deities that the community praises in the context of the prayer, performed on the occasion of the *Bēma* Festival, but makes no reference to any image or portrait of Mani.

[62] Augustine, *C. Ep. Fund.*, Chapter VIII,9: " … you celebrate with great honors your Bema, that is the day on which Mani was killed, with the lectern raised up by five steps, adored with precious cloths, placed in the midst and facing towards the worshippers" (Roland J. Teske 2006, 239-240). There is no mention of a *bēma* throne by Eusebius in his *Letter to Augusta Constantia*: "It is said that Simon the Sorcerer is worshiped by godless heretics, painted in lifeless material. I have also seen myself the man who bears the name of madness (Mani) [painted] in an image (Gr. *eikoni*) and escorted (or 'attended,' Gr. *doruphoroumenon*) by the Manichaeans" (Cyril Mango 1972, 18).

covered pedestal, since a bust featuring a head and neck only would not be shown with a long beard extending (circa twice the length of the head) downward along the side of the pedestal. In light of imagining what could have been shown atop the *bēma*, Adam's interpretation disregards the essential need to observe what is actually shown on a work of art before interpreting it – in this case, the upper body of a bearded man. Secondly, by accepting that this object is a seal and that the inscription identifies Mani as the owner of this seal, one must also accept that this seal was made for its owner, Mani, to be used by him during his life. Therefore, if this seal is Mani's, the main figure in the image cannot possibly reference a festival commemorating his death. While Adam acknowledges that the seal was originally held in a band setting and that its engraving is visible from the other side, both he and Klimkeit stop short from discussing its engraved components as parts of a seal. They state only that this crystal "resembles a seal stone" with an image and a text engraved on its convex side in "reversed view" ("mirror inversion" in Klimkeit).[63] Their interests remain on the image and not *the object* with its text and image.

The iconography engraved on this crystal can be better explained in the context of the inscription, the function, and the overall design of this Manichaean seal. The evidence of the inscription together with the seal's function confirms the identification of the main figure as Mani. Although lesser ranking and younger than the main figure, the secondary figures are linked to Mani via their uniform cloaks and headdresses, both of which are analogous to those of Mani. Their uniformity signals community. Their differences signal distinct ranks. Based on this reading of the visual language, the figures flanking Mani are most likely his disciples. By showing them together with Mani, the image references the church founded and headed by Mani. In light of this reasoning, what the figures connote is not simply Mani and two elects; rather the three figures together symbolize the Manichaean community, appropriately abbreviated for the seal medium.

The hypothesis that the image on this crystal is a sigillographic reference to the religious community established by Mani is supported by textual evidence preserved in the greeting formula of Mani's epistles. Written by Mani during the era when the seal was produced, these letters specifically note two groups of elects in Mani's company – males and females. All currently known letters of Mani do so by starting with this formula:

> "(I) Manichaeus, apostle of Jesus Christ, and all the saints [male elects] and virgins [female elects] who are with me …"[64]

While the first half of this greeting is equivalent to the inscription engraved on the seal, its second half corresponds to the image, where the two side figures provide an abridged reference to the two groups to which Mani points as his community. The two figures flanking Mani symbolize the community of elects in general. At the same time, they *may* signal specifically the two orders established by Mani, the order of the male and female elects, "the saints and virgins, who are with [Mani]." On the one hand, this nuanced interpretation is weakened by the fact that the two side figures

[63] Klimkeit 1982, 50; and Adam 1954, 105. Adam further notes that the image is visible from the other side of the crystal as printed in Menasce and Guillou (1946, 81). The illustration published by Menasce and Guillou is not an actual photograph of the crystal, but the negative of a photo taken from the convex side in frontal view. Adam does not provide any illustration. Klimkeit's illustration is a reprint from Menasce and Guillou.

[64] Gardner 2007, 36.

engraved on the crystal lack any gender-specific iconography. After all, in light of later Manichaean art, one would expect to see at least scarves covering the headgear of the female elect and/or short beards to indicate younger men.[65] On the other hand, not acknowledging the genders might be the point here. As if their sexes were irrelevant, the two elects share the same facial features, hair length, headgear, and garment on this mid 3rd-century engraving.[66]

A closer examination of the placement and sizes of the elects confirms their equal significance and equally shared secondary rank in relation to Mani (see Fig. 7). To be sure, a difference of size can be measured between the three figures: Mani (19.2 mm), Elect 1 (14.5 mm), and Elect 2 (13.2 mm). This creates distinct locations on the picture plane, which give the impression that Mani is placed into the foreground with Elect 1 slightly behind him, followed by Elect 2 somewhat further back. The difference between the elects (1.3 mm), however, is too subtle to play a significant communicative role. Instead, it seems to result from the difficulty of evenly distributing three figures while engraving them onto a cabochon surface. The implied trapezoid outline of Mani's figure occupies circa one millimeter extra space on the right, leaving the artist to carve the figure of Elect 2 slightly smaller in order to fit it between Mani's beard and the isocephalic level that aligns the elects' heads beneath that of Mani. This alignment of the elects' heads is the primary communicative feature here. Supported by their shared iconography and symmetrical positioning, the isocephalic distribution signals most effectively the equal significance of the elects, leaving the viewer to perceive only two ranks in this image: the rank of the founder and the rank of the two elects in his company.

[65] It seems that in East Central Asian Manichaean art, female elects are portrayed wearing scarf-covered headdresses that conceal the hair completely (as seen e.g. on the book paintings on MIK III 7285 recto and M 559 recto, and the silk painting on MIK III 4815 a-d & III 141c); in one case however, the cut hair is visible along both side of the face (MIK III 6286 side 1[?]), see Gulácsi 2001, Figs. 52, 37, 82, and Figs. 81).

[66] Buddhist monastic practice provides an analogous case, since gender remains undistinguished by the garment and hairdo of the monks and nuns, who are united by their red-orange robes and shaven heads within the *sanga*.

TABLE I

Fig. 1: *CRYSTAL SEAL OF MANI*
Sassanid Dynasty, mid 3rd century CE, Mesopotamia; rock crystal, diameter: 2.9 cm, height 0.9 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (INT. 1384 BIS)

TABLE II

Fig. 3: *CRYSTAL SEAL OF MANI*
Sassanid Dynasty, mid 3rd century CE, Mesopotamia; rock crystal, diameter: 2.9 cm, height 0.9 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (INT. 1384 BIS)

TABLE III

Fig. 3: *CRYSTAL SEAL OF MANI*
Sassanid Dynasty, mid 3rd century CE, Mesopotamia; rock crystal, diameter: 2.9 cm, height 0.9 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (INT. 1384 BIS)

Table IV

Fig. 4: MODERN IMPRESSION MADE FROM THE *CRYSTAL SEAL OF MANI*
Sassanid Dynasty, mid 3rd century CE, Mesopotamia; rock crystal,
diameter: 2.9 cm, height 0.9 cm; Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (INT. 1384 BIS)

TABLE V

Fig. 5: ANALYSIS OF INSCRIPTION
AS SEEN ON FLAT SIDE OF CRYSTAL (FIG. 1)

TABLE VI

Fig. 6: DETAIL OF IMAGE AS SEEN ON FLAT SIDE OF CRYSTAL (FIG. 2)

Fig. 7: ANALYSIS IMAGE AS SEEN ON FLAT SIDE OF CRYSTAL (FIG. 2)

TABLE VII

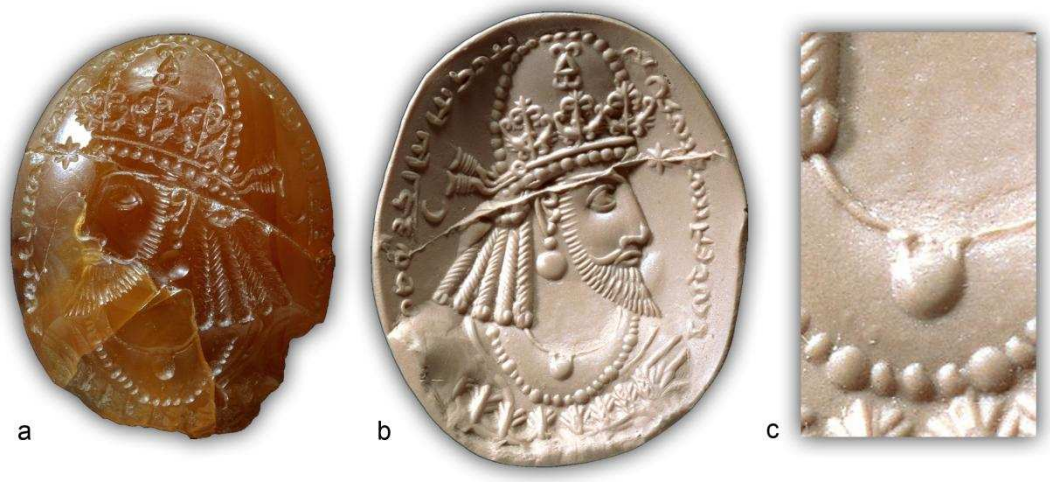

Fig. 8: *CARNELIAN SEAL OF VEHDIN-SHAPUR*
Sassanid Dynasty, 5th century CE, carnelian,
length: 4.7 cm, width: 3.7 cm, thickness: 0.5 cm; British Museum, London (ME 119994)
a: seal, **b:** modern impression, **c:** detail of figure on modern impression

Fig. 9: *SASSANID FOOTED PLATE KNOWN AS THE "CUP OF CHOSROES"*
Sassanid Dynasty, 6th-7th centuries CE, Iran; gold, rock crystal, garnet, and green glass;
diameter: ca. 28 cm, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (Camée 379)
a: plate, **b:** detail of figure on central disk

TABLE VIII

Fig. 10: *SASSANID BULLA WITH IMPRESSION OF SEAL IN BEZEL SETTING*
Sassanid Dynasty, ca. 7th century CE, Qasr-i Abu Nasr, Iran; un-backed clay,
diameter of impression: 2.69 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (36.30.100)
a: original clay bulla, **b:** diagram of bezel setting with granule

Fig. 11: *PARTHIAN, SASSANID, AND KUSHAN COINS* (diameter: ca. 2 cm each)
a: *Silver coin of Vologases II* (r. 105-147 CE), obverse, Parthian Arsacid dynasty; Private Collection (CoinArchives.com); **b:** *Silver coin of Vologases I* (66-67 CE) found at Dura-Europos, obverse, Parthian Arsacid dynasty; Yale University Art Gallery (1938.6000.46); **c:** *Silver coin of Phraates IV* (r. ca. 38-2 BCE), obverse, Parthian Arsacid dynasty, British Museum, London (1900,0706.62); **d:** *Gold coin of Ardashir I* (r. 224-241 CE), obverse, Sassanid dynasty, British Museum, London (OR.9662); **e:** *Silver coin of Vologases III* (r. ca. 148-192 CE), obverse, Parthian Arsacid dynasty, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (99.35.2963); **f:** *Silver coin of Vologases V* (r. ca. 207–222 CE), Parthian Arsacid dynasty, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (99.35.2964); **g:** *Gold coin of Huvishka* (r. ca. 150-190 CE), obverse, Kushan Dynasty, British Museum, London (1988,0808.8); **h:** *Gold coin of Huvishka* (r. ca. 150-190 CE), obverse, Kushan Dynasty, British Museum, London (1894,0506.53); **i:** *Silver coin of Shapur I* (r. ca. 241-256 CE) found at Dura-Europos, reverse, Yale University Art Gallery, New Heaven (1938.6000.47)