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The Manichaeans of the Roman East: Manichaeism in Greek anti-Manichaica & Roman Imperial legislation

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This dissertation is the first research project that investigates the totality of the Greek anti-Manichaean corpus and the anti-Manichaean Roman imperial legislation to reconstruct the history of the Eastern Roman Manichaeans, from the time their first missionaries arrived in the territory of the Roman East (late 3rd to early 4th cent.) until the disappearance of Manichaeism from the Eastern Roman Empire (6th cent.).

By the systematic comparative examination and analysis of the sources of the two above corpora with other anti-Manichaean texts (Latin, Syriac, etc.), and with genuine Manichaean sources, the emergence of a more complete and inter-subjective image is achieved. The thesis is also in constant dialogue with the secondary bibliography taking into account the latest research findings. In this context, it also revises clichés and generalizations present in previous scholarship regarding the value and importance of Greek anti-Manichaica as historical sources for Manichaeism. It contextualizes insufficiently clarified key terms (such as heresy and religion), critical for the correct interpretation of the data, especially on the issue of the classification of the Manichaeans. Further, the thesis highlights some key parameters for the reconstruction of the Manichaean religious identity that have not been taken adequately into consideration in previous research. The thesis analyses thoroughly for the first time the relationship between Manichaean and Christian ascetics as projected by both ecclesiastical and legal sources, suggesting a possible Manichaean impact on the rise of ascetic manifestations among Christian ascetics, monks, and individuals in society. Lastly, by taking into account the dimensions of the phenomenon of crypto-Manichaeism, this study argues that the death of Manichaeism in the Eastern Roman Empire seems to have been not as abrupt and violent as modern scholarship commonly implies, but was a rather slow process of absorption, assimilation, and dissolution into Christianity.

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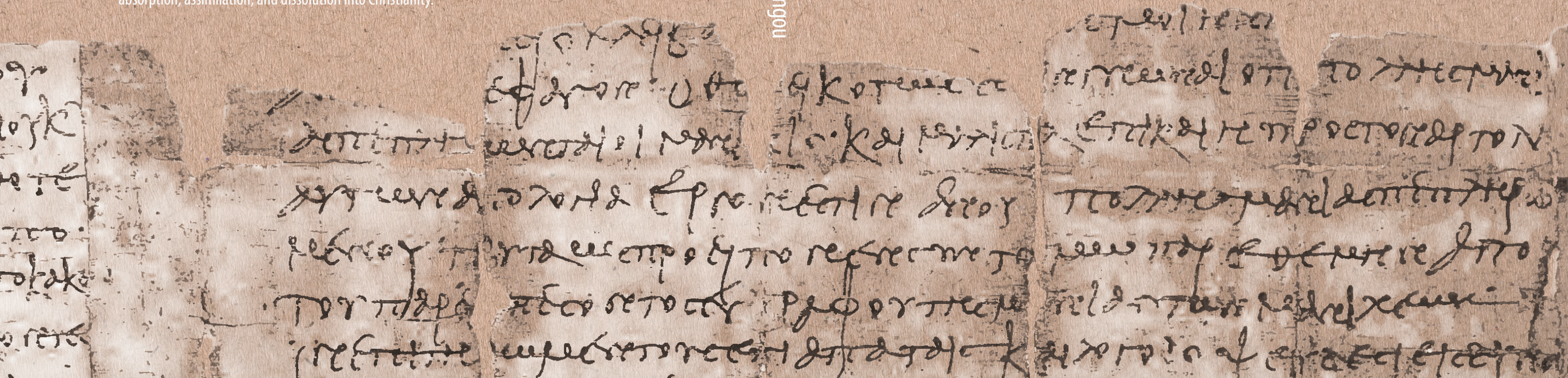
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