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The Pahlavi Psalter Fragment in Relation to Its Source*

Desmond DURKIN-MEISTERERNST

1. Introduction

Amongst the items found by the German Turfan Expeditions are 13 fragmentary pages of a small book identified by Andreas 1910 as 'Bruchstücke einer Pehlewi-Übersetzung der Psalmen aus der Sassanidenzeit' (Fragments of a Pahlavi translation of the Psalms from the Sasanian period) and on which he published a short preliminary report. Andreas worked together with some of his students on this text; his former student Barr published the edition of the text from his papers in 1933. The edition contains the Middle Persian text transliterated with Hebrew letters, the corresponding Syriac text, a translation and a comprehensive glossary giving the Syriac equivalent for each Middle Persian word. The edition also contains black-and-white reproductions of all the pages. Though they made great use of the information provided by the fact that the Middle Persian text is a translation, Andreas-Barr did not concentrate on the translation as such. Not until Gignoux 1969 was an article devoted to specific

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* This article goes back to a lecture held in German 'Das Pahlavi-Psalterfragment als Zeugnis der Inkulturation' at the conference 'Die Inkulturation des Christentums im Sasanidenreich' in Wittenberg in May 1999. For suggestions and improvements I am grateful to A. Mustafa, W. Sundermann, R. Voigt and two participants at the conference whose names I unfortunately forgot to note. In accordance with the topic of the conference the paper dealt with the adaptation of a Christian text to a Sasanian context. In its present form the paper has been slightly expanded, updated and some of the conclusions have been formulated more specifically. I would like to express my gratitude to the editors of SIAL for agreeing to publish this article.

translational details of the text. Following on Gignoux's work, which concentrated in particular on the Christian vocabulary of the text, I would like to devote further attention here to the relation between the Middle Persian text and its Syriac source.

The text is in the archive of the Turfanforschung at the Berlin Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Berlin and has now been digitised. The detailed colour images are available at: http://www.bbaw.de/forschung/turfanforschung/dta/ps/dta_ps01.html

The Pahlavi Psalter is a document that belongs both to Central Asia, where it was found, and Sasanian Iran, where its language and script places it. With reference to the Christian community in Iran where it arose, it documents the inculturation of this Syriac and Middle Persian speaking community into the dominant language Middle Persian. When that community moved outside of the Sasanian Empire it took its Syriac and Middle Persian texts with it, which eventually led to part of a document unique in a number of ways being preserved.

2. Place of discovery and form of the text

Andreas (1910, 869) reports that Le Coq found the pages in Bulayïq. He retrieved Syriac, Christian Sogdian and Christian Uigur fragments from there, too. The connection to Syriac Christianity is also clear within the text: On three pages letters (never more than two each) written in Estrangelo can be seen which connect the Middle Persian text in some way to the Syriac original (Andreas-Barr, 5 n.1) and allow the conclusion that the translation was used together with the Syriac original.[1] In addition, the Syriac word *šuḇḥā* 'praise', but written in Pahlavi script, is placed as an indication of the genre (Andreas-Barr, 5) before some psalms. Finally, the

1 Presumably similar to the Sogdian fragments of a translation of the Psalter where the first verse is also written in Syriac (s. Schwartz 1974, 258-9 and 1982, 158). In our text only one or two Syriac letters are written to remind the reader to first read the Syriac verse at that place.

canons (responses), which are, as a rule, placed after the first verse of the psalm have a Syriac origin. Andreas used them to date the text to the 6th c. CE.

Twelve pages and two smaller fragments that cannot be placed are preserved. The pages are small but very legible (11.1 x 9.6 cm). No page is undamaged but most are quite well preserved. They are written in black ink in a careful and clear manner in an otherwise unattested variant of Pahlavi script. Headlines (containing the number of the following Psalm) and the canons are written in red. The number of lines on the full pages varies between 18 and 21. Syriac punctuation is employed (Andreas-Barr, 6 see this as an indicator of a 7th c. date for the manuscript).

The pages form four groups: pages 1-2 (Psalms 94.17-96.10), page 3 (97.12-99.5), page 4 (118.124-118.142), and pages 5-12 (121.4-136.3), i.e. they represent two consecutive pages, two single pages and a longer series of eight pages (recognized by Andreas 1910, 869 as a quire) belonging to a much larger book. A small fragment may belong to page 13. Andreas 1910, 869 n. 1 says that the pages were stuck together when found though they were split by a blow with a digging instrument.[2] This may indicate that the pages had been buried. The find may therefore represent the remains of a book that was buried in this state after it became unusable,

2 There is what looks like a horizontal fold-line that divides the pages 4, 5 and 6 each into an upper and lower half. Pages 7, 8 and 9 may also have the same fold, though fainter. But the split is more likely to be the vertical damage visible on most pages running between the middle of the page and the inner margin. In any case, the split does not seem to have run vertically between pages in the sense of separating the pages stuck together. These pages were separated by the restorer, Hugo Ibscher who had to peel them apart. Andreas 1910 says nothing about the sequence in which the pages were found. Judging by the vertical damage, some of which may have been caused by the process of peeling the pages apart, pages 8, 9 and 11, 12 seem to have lain together. Only a small part of page 10 is preserved so it does not seem to have lain between pages 9 and 11 which would have offered it some protection. The pattern on pages 8 and 9 is consistent with their forming the central pages of the quire and having lain properly together. Page 7 also fits, but page 7 and page 6 will not have lain together in the correct order of the text. Since pages 4, 5 and 6 seem to have lain together ↗

the preferred method among Christians for the disposal of sacred books. This is the act of a functioning community and seems to indicate that the burial of this text does not date from the end of that community. What has survived is about 10% of the Psalter. If the manuscript contained nothing else but psalms it was probably made up of sixteen quires; parts of quires ten and eleven, nearly all of quire fifteen and possibly something of quire sixteen are preserved.

2.1 script

A lot of attention has been devoted to the script of these pages. As is well known, the script used in the Sasanian empire to write down Middle Persian has a number of characteristics. It is defective, archaising, badly differentiated and uses heterograms. Defective means that vowels are not sufficiently indicated; archaising, that historical or historicising orthography is used. Badly differentiated refers to the fact that as early as the inscriptions in the 3rd c. CE originally distinct Pahlavi letters have identical forms. The cursive script of the letters of the 7th c. also displays this phenomenon. The lack of differentiation also means that ligatures and series of letters can be divided up in different ways and therefore can only be properly understood in context. This problem is compounded for modern students of Pahlavi because most Middle Persian texts in Pahlavi script are preserved only in far younger copies which therefore do not necessarily reflect the scribal habits and conventions

↘ (as shown by the damage and the horizontal fold) they seem, as a group, to have been turned around in relation to page 7 etc. before the damage occurred. The order in which the pages were found seems therefore to be: page 6, 5, 4; then 7-9; a highly exposed page 10; and pages 11-12. The damage pattern for pages 2 and 3 seems to be consistent with their having lain together but there is no indication of how they lay in relation to the other pages (in terms of text there is a gap between these pages). Too little of page 13 is preserved. The two most soiled pages are 11 verso and 12 verso but that may not be a secure indicator that they were the outermost pages, as they are less damaged than page 1 or 3. These circumstances show that, whether the pages were stuck together or not when they were found, they represent disparate parts of a book no longer treated as a book (folding and wrong order of pages).

of the Sasanian period. The Psalter fragment, on the other hand, shows a script that is still quite well differentiated and which is therefore called archaic although this script clearly was used in the Sasanian period (and was apparently read in the post-Sasanian period as well). In the script of the Psalter two letters have been identified that in this form were used in the formation of the Avestan alphabet during the Sasanian period. This means that the developer of the Avestan alphabet was familiar with the script of the Psalter besides the 'normal' Pahlavi script.[3]

A further characteristic of the Pahlavi script is the use of heterograms, i.e. in this case Aramaic spellings are used as word masks for Middle Persian words. If necessary, a Middle Persian ending is attached to the heterogram. This phenomenon, well known from the cuneiform cultures of the Ancient Near East but also from modern Japan, has a strange result in our text. Since Syriac, as a (younger) form of Aramaic, often has the same words as the heterograms used in the Pahlavi script, the translator from Syriac to Middle Persian has often been able to use the

3 Hoffmann in Hoffmann-Narten 1989, 25 on the borrowing of the Awestan letters <d> and <j> from the script of the Psalter. But on the same page he points out that the inventor of the Avestan letter x^v did not have recourse to the form of the ligature in the Psalter which differs from that in normal Pahlavi. This shows that the script of the Psalter is just one representative of what must have been a number of (possibly local) scripts in use in the Sasanian empire. There is also the possibility that the Psalter was copied into this script and form only after some time, i.e. that it first existed in a script closer to the normal Pahlavi script. Andreas-Barr, 6 suggest spellings that may be based on cursive letter forms. A further instance of this may be the spelling <lwspy> (11/V/17/ = Ps.135.8) of a word translating Syr. *īmāmā* 'day'. This must have some connection with MP *rōz* 'day', normally spelt <YWM> or <lwc>. In Book Pahlavi <c> and <p> have the same form in ligatures: The scribe/copier of the Psalter could have construed *<lwscy> as <lwspy> (because, as Sundermann pointed out to me, he distinguishes <p> and <c>). However, *<lwscy> is not the same as <lwc(y)>. Curiously, the Pahlavi ligature <sc> is closest in form to the Avestan letter <ž>. This recalls the Parthian form of the word (*rōž* 'day') and the Pāzand use of <ž> for MP /z/. The reason for copying the text into the Psalter script may have been the desire to employ a formal script felt to be more appropriate to the character of the holy text.

same spellings as the original Syriac. This leads sometimes to almost identical lines in Syriac and Middle Persian, e.g. Psalm 134.16:[4]

translit.	Syr.	pwmʾ ʾyt lhwn wlʾ mmllyn. ʿynʾ ʾyt lhwn wlʾ ḥzyn.
	MP	PWMH̲šn ʾYTY, [W]Lʾ YMLLWNd. ʾYNH̲šn ʾYTY, WLʾ H[ZY]TNd.
transcr.	Syr.	*pummā īṯ l-hōn, w-lā mmallīn. ʿaynā īṯ l-hōn, w-lā ḥāzēn.*
	MP	*dahān-ešān ast, ud nē gōwēnd. čašm-ešān ast ud nē wēnēnd.*

'Mouth(s) they have, but they do not talk.

Eye(s) they have, but they do not see'.

This near identity may have been attractive to the translator trying to stay as close to the original text as possible but it also means that we sometimes have difficulty deciding if the translator has adopted a specific Syriac word in his Middle Persian text or is just using a heterogram.[5]

2.2 Date

Because the Pahlavi Psalter and its particular form of the Pahlavi script is unique it cannot be dated on the basis of the script. It was found in Central Asia and therefore outside the Sasanian Empire, a feature it shares with only two further Pahlavi texts to the north-east of Iran:[6] a fragment of a *Frahang ī Pahlavīg*[7] also found in Central Asia

4 In all the examples the transliteration is placed first, followed by the transcription. The source language, Syriac, is placed on top, the Middle Persian translation below it.

5 Gignoux 1969 deals among other things with a number of such cases.

6 The primary Pahlavi texts found to the west of Iran are the papyrus letters found in Egypt.

7 See Geldner in the bibliography.

and a funeral inscription in China.[8] The inscription belongs to a Sasanian aristocratic family that fled to China when Iran succumbed to the Arab invasion. The fragment of a Frahang is more interesting because it is a page from a teaching and reference book for the use and interpretation of the Pahlavi script and therefore must have belonged primarily to a scribal school. This may mean that Middle Persian in Pahlavi script was taught in a Christian community in Central Asia (but the script of the frahang fragment is different from that of the Psalter). Whether this community had been forced to flee Sasanian Iran only recently by Sasanian persecutors or Arab conquerors or had been in Central Asia already for quite a time, cannot be established.

Andreas (1910, 870-1) dated the Psalter to the 6th c. with reference to the canons (responsoria) of Mār Aḇā, who died in 552, that were translated with the text. But he regarded this version as a younger one and with reference to the archaic script he dated the initial translation to the beginning of the 5th c. Barr (Andreas-Barr, 6) rightly regards the script as irrelevant to dating the text and with reference to the Syriac punctuation marks used in the MP text suggests a date in the 7th c. but does not exclude the possibility that the translation is older. On the basis of the extensive agreement between the grammar and orthography of the Psalter with those of the MP inscriptions of the 3rd c., Skjærvø (1983, 178-9) opts for an early date, 'perhaps as early as the 4th century'.

2.3 Why Pahlavi script?

Why is the fragment of the Psalter written in Pahlavi script at all and why was it found near Turfan, i.e. outside of the Sasanian empire? The context of its discovery together with Syriac, Christian Sogdian and Christian Turkish material stresses the significance of the existence of fragments of a Sogdian translation of the Psalms and also of an

8 See Sundermann-Thilo and Humbach-Wāng in the bibliography.

early New Persian[9] version in Syriac script among these finds. Unfortunately, the Sogdian fragments do not contain the same Psalms as our text, but the method is similar in as far as the first verse is also written in Syriac.[10]

Both aspects, the language and the script, are important. Middle Persian is otherwise attested in Turfan only as a liturgical language used by the Manichean community, though that community used the Manichaen script. The use of Middle Persian as a liturgical language by Christians in Central Asia is not otherwise attested; rather they spoke Sogdian (and later, Turkish) and used Syriac as a church language. They wrote Sogdian in a slightly adapted Syriac script or in the native Sogdian script. A Middle Persian fragment in Pahlavi script is therefore a great exception in this environment and is thereby identified as a product of Sasanian Iran or the immediately following period. Does the fact that the text seems to have been buried mark the transition within the Christian community from Middle Persian to Sogdian or even to Turkish? The fact that the text is incomplete seems to tell against this. In the case of a transition we could expect that the whole manuscript would have been buried; the community would not have dared to damage it first. Since it is impossible that the extensive damage to the text (about 90% of the original extent being lost) could have occurred under the ground it seems far more likely that the damage was caused by an enemy of the community or even be the result of an attack on an individual Christian who had the book with him.

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9 See Müller 1915.

10 See n. 2 above. Schwartz 1974, 257-8 identifies important similarities in the format of the Sogdian and Early New Persian translations that distinguish them from the MP version. The Sogdian version is unlikey to be dependent on the MP one.

3. Relation of the MP to the Syriac text

The first question concerns the identity of the Syriac text from which the Middle Persian translation was made. The MP text does not always agree with the Pəšīttā but rather with the Septuaginta.[11] Even some of the canons do not reproduce exactly in MP the form attested in Syriac. The exact place of the MP text within the Syriac communities still has to be determined. It is also to be expected that the Syriac text was also present in Bulayïq, having been brought there together with the MP version, because it seems that the texts were used together (s. Sims-Williams 1991, 122). Since the fragments of the Sogdian version of the Psalter do not contain canons, that translation will probably not have been based on the same Syriac text.

3.1 The translator's approach

3.1.1 Retention of the word-order of the original

Because the translator was dealing with a holy text and because this text was available to the community not only in the translation but also in the original, the foremost task of the translator was to translate the text as faithfully as possible. Each word of the original is translated. As Gignoux 1969, 243 pointed out, in Ps. 125.6 the Syriac construction of an infinitive followed by a participle in *mhlkw mhlk* 'to go going' and *mʾtʾ ʾtʾ* 'to come coming' is reproduced with the same number of words in MP: *SGYTNt SGYTNt* and *YʾTWNt YʾTWNt*, though the unfamiliar Syriac construction is apparently replaced in MP simply by a repetition of the indicative. As part of his retention of all the words of the original, the scribe also makes every effort to retain the word-order of the original.[12] In the whole text he departs from the word-order of the

11 In footnotes Andreas-Barr comment on minor and major departures from the Syriac text. They also refer to the Hebrew text which is perhaps confusing.

12 This is comparable to the way the Pahlavi version of the Avesta follows the Avestan word-order.

original only six times: 123 canon, 126.3, 127 canon, 130.2, 131.12 and 132.1.[13] Since two of these instances are in canons, these can be put aside.[14] The others are divided here into A: those in which the MP differs from the Syriac and the Septuaginta and B: those in which the MP differs only from the Syriac but not from the Septuaginta. There are two instances of each.

3.1.1.1 A. The Middle Persian text differs from the Syriac and the Septuaginta:

131.12 Syr. ʾn nṯrwn bnyk qymy. shdwtʾ hdʾ dmlp ʾnʾ lhwn. ʾp mn bnyhwn ntbwn lʿlm ʿlmyn ʿl kwrsyk.

en neṯṯrūn bnayk qyām sāhdūṯā hāḏē ḏ-malleṗ-nā lhōn, āp̄ men bnayhōn nettḇūn l-ʿālam ʿālmīn ʿal kursayk

MP HTt NTLWNd plcndy ʾystʾm ZY LY: WZNḤ: gwkʾdyhy ZYšn ʾndlcy ʿBYDWNm: ʾDYNšn plcndc nšydʾndy BʾTL LK. MDM gʾswky ZY LK LʿLMn ZY LʿLMn.

agar-et pāyēnd frazand ēstām(?) ī man ud ēn gugāyīh ī-šān andarz kunēm, ēg-ešān frazand-iz nišīyānd pas tō abar gāhūg ī tō ǰāwēdān ī ǰāwēdān.

The Syr. 'If your sons observe this covenant (and) this testimony that I teach them, then from their sons (some) should sit for ever and ever on your throne.' contrasts with the MP 'If your sons observe my covenant and this testimony that I teach them, then their sons too will/should sit after you on your throne for ever and ever'. The difference in the position of the demonstrative between Syr. *sāhdūṯā hāḏē* (noun + pron.) and MP *ēn gugāyīh* (pron. + noun) is insignificant.

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13 Not included here are 1. the cases where a following Syriac demonstrative pronoun precedes in MP and 2. the frequent cases where the MP personal pronoun (in particular, the enclitic pronoun) has a different position in the sentence to that of the Syriac pronoun it is translating.

14 Together with a few other canons that do not seem to correspond to the Syriac.

Cf. LXX 131,12 ἐὰν φυλάξωνται οἱ υἱοί σου τὴν διαθήκην μου καὶ τὰ μαρτύριά μου ταῦτα, ἃ διδάξω αὐτούς, καὶ οἱ υἱοί αὐτῶν ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος καθιοῦνται ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου σου.

The MP text agrees with the Greek text (literal translation of the last sentence retaining the word-order: 'And their sons until eternity will sit on your throne') in a number of points but with a different word-order; but the MP 'after you' is supplementary to the Greek.

130.2b Syr. wʾyk ḥsylʾ hwt ʿly npšy.

w-aḵ ḥsīlā (h)wāṯ ʿl-ay napš

MP ʾPm cygwn ʾhšylky MDM bwty NPŠḤ CWLḤ.

u-m čiyōn axšīrag abar būd xwēš grīw.

'And like a weened baby was by me (= at my side) my soul' with Syr. *ʿl-ay* after the verb but MP *abar* (and enclitic *-m* at the beginning of the sentence) before the verb. In the Septuaginta there is no verb: ὡς ἀνταπόδοσις ἐπὶ τὴν ψυχήν μου.

Perhaps the translator wanted to avoid placing the MP preposition *abar* after the verb here. Nevertheless, MP *abar* is otherwise placed at the end of the sentence in agreement with the Syriac.

3.1.1.2 B. The MP text differs from the Syriac but agrees with the Septuaginta:

132.1 Syr. mʾ ṯb wmʾ špyr. lʾḥʾ mʾ dʿmryn ʾyk ḥdʾ.

mā ṯāḇ w-mā šappīr l-aḥē mā ḏ-ʿāmrīn aḵ ḥḏā

MP (h)wpc Wnywkc: ʾMT KTLWNd ʾ(H)[Y]t(l) ʾknyn.

xūb-iz ud nēk-iz, ka mānēnd brādar āginēn.

'How nice and how good (it is) for/with brother(s) when they live together' changes to 'Nice and good[15] (it is) when brothers live together'. Cf. in the Septuaginta: ἰδοὺ δὴ τί καλὸν ἢ τί τερπνὸν ἀλλ' ἢ τὸ κατοικεῖν ἀδελφοὺς ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό; The Greek construction is nominal (an infinitive followed by the subject in the Accusative, lit. 'the living + brothers' = 'that brothers live') but the word-order (verb before the subject: *mānēnd brādar* and τὸ κατοικεῖν ἀδελφοὺς) is the same.

126.3 Syr. yrtwth gyr dmry' bny' 'nwn. 'gr' dp'r' dmrb'.
yārtūṯ-eh gēr d-māryā b̲nayyā ennōn ag̲rā d̲-pērē d̲-marbʿā.
MP MH̲ y'ty ZY MRWHY, plc[ndy] HWH̲Nd. mzdy ZY bly ZY zh'ly.
čē ǰād ī xwadāy frazand hēnd, mizd ī bar ī zahār.

'Because sons are the inheritance of the Lord, the reward of the fruit of the womb'. Since the position of the Syriac particle *gēr* is different from that of MP *čē*, the translator cannot avoid making a change. But the text does agree with the Septuaginta: ἰδοὺ ἡ κληρονομία κυρίου υἱοί, ὁ μισθὸς τοῦ καρποῦ τῆς γαστρός. Even though MP *čē* is not the expected equivalent of Greek ἰδοὺ 'see, lo! voilà!',[16] functionally the words are not too far apart and the sentences have the same word-order. Against the nominal sentence in the two other versions, the MP text uses the copula *hēnd.*

The fact that the MP text follows a Syriac text that has moved closer to the Septuaginta allows the following hypothesis: According to Baumstark (1922,

15 The enclitic -z not only connects but lends emphasis: *xūb-iz ud nēk-iz* 'nice! and good!'.

16 The MP equivalent of ἰδοὺ (and Syr. *hā*) in Ps.131.6 is *'ynk-*, which also occurs as *'ynky* in Ps. 118.126 for Syr. *hā* but without an equivalent in the Greek text. *'ynk-/'ynky* belongs together with *ʿynk /ēnak/* 'see! lo!' in Manichaean Middle Persian.

119), Mār Aḇā translated the Old Testament from the Greek. Perhaps the Psalter fragment contains not only Mār Āḇā's canons, but also his translation.[17] The MP text as we have it could be a new translation of Mār Aḇā's Syriac text or an older one revised to include the additions made by Mār Aḇā on the basis of the Septuaginta. The date of the complete MP text is, therefore the same as that of the canons, i.e. no earlier than the 6th century; the extant copy must be younger.[18] Skjærvø 1983 came to his earlier dating of the text by using the criterion of the correct use of the casus obliquus to characterize the agent in transitive sentences in the past tense. Unfortunately, this construction does not occur in the additions, denying us the possibility of testing the chronology behind Skjærvø's assumption, at least with regard to this text.

3.1.2 Problem caused by the retention of Syriac word-order in Middle Persian:

Occasionally, the preposition *abar* is at the end of the sentence, e.g.[19]

122.2 Syr. ʿdmʾ dtrm ʿlyn.

ʿḏammā ḏa-ṯraḥḥem ʿlayn

MP (ʿ)Dmʾn ʾphšʾdʾy MDM.

tā-mān abaxšāyā abar.

'until you take pity on us'.

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17 In this case the MP version gives us indirect access to a possibly otherwise unattested Syriac version of the Psalter.

18 This does not determine the date of the use of the text in Turfan or even help to decide if the Christians using it were simply Nestorians, as Gignoux 1969, 244 argues with reference to Mār Aḇā, or possibly, in a later development, Melkites, as Sims-Williams 1991, 121 suggested. In a personal discussion S. N. C. Lieu voiced his support for the latter. There seems to be nothing in the text to decide the matter.

19 Further attestations are 122.3 (twice), the canon of 129 and 134.18.

A preposition such as *abar* is never at the end of the sentence in Pahlavi because that position is normally reserved for the verb; in those cases where a prepositional phrase is placed after the verb, it always contains a noun following the preposition.

3.1.2.1 Position of the verb

Since the Middle Persian verb is regularly at the end of the sentence and this goes almost entirely contrary to Syriac word-order, the introduction of Syriac word-order into a Middle Persian text causes problems, as can be seen in the previous example. However, in the addresses and exhortations frequent in the Psalms, the Middle Persian verb can be placed at the beginning of the sentence and thus agree with the Syriac.

3.1.3 Avoidance of Syriacisms

Despite the rigours of the word-for-word translation and examples such as Gignoux's quoted above in 3.1.1 and the introduction of individual Syriac words into the Middle Persian text, the translator tries to avoid grammatical Syriacisms. The Syriac genitive construction with an additional possessive pronoun is also translated correctly, e.g.:

121.4 Syr. lšmh dmryʾ.

la-šmeh d-māryā

MP ʿL ŠM ZY MRWHY.

ō nām ī xwadāy

'to the name of the Lord' (Syriac literally 'to his name, of the Lord').

3.1.4 Regularity in the correspondence

Nouns

For the manner in which nouns in particular are translated reference can be made to Gignoux's study, who sees in the retention of Syriac terms in the Middle Persian

version a sign that the translator had difficulties (p. 234) transposing concepts from one religious system to another. This is a central aspect of inculturation because it shows to what extent the translator and the religious community as a whole are prepared to adapt their religion to the language of the translation. Clearly there was no intention of leaving the language of the original text completely behind.

3.1.5 Variation in the translation

Prepositions

Because of their different usages there is no one-to-one correspondence between Syriac and Middle Persian prepositions. The translator applies the rules of Middle Persian. If necessary, he even inserts a preposition, e.g.:

128.6 Syr. ʾyk ʿmyrʾ dʾgrʾ

aḵ ʿmīrā ḏ-eggārā

MP cygwn gbyʾ ZY MDM bʾny:

čiyōn giyā ī abar bān

Syriac 'like grass of the roof'; MP 'like grass on the roof'.

The use of the MP postposition *rōn* in the psalter is interesting, because it translates Syr. *lwāṯ* 'together with' but narrows down the meaning: Syr. *lwāṯ* = MP *ō ... rōn* 'to ... (upwards)' (122.1 and 122.2) and Syr. *men lwāṯ* = MP *az ... ōrōn* 'from ... (away)' (129.4 and 129.7).

The translator is not afraid to introduce verbal particles such as *ē(w)*, even though they have no correspondence in Syriac; but he makes sparse use of *bē* und *hamē(w)*: *bē* is once attested as a conjunction (124.1, Syr. *ellā* 'but') and once as an adverb (135.11 MP *u-š bē ānīd* 'he led out', Syr. *w-appeq*); the adverb *hamē(w)* is also attested once:

128.6 Syr. nhwwn ʾyk ʿmyrʾ dʾgrʾ. dmʾ dnšbt bh rwḥʾ šlp wybš.

nehwōn ak̲ ʿmīrā d̲-eggārā d̲-mā d̲-nešbat̲ beh rūḥā šālep̄ w-yāb̲eš

MP YHWWNd cygwn gbyʾ ZY MDM bʾny: hmy, ywdty MDM wʾty ʾ Pš hwšky NSHWNt Whwšty:

bawēnd čiyōn giyā ī abar bān: hamēǰōyēd abar wād, u-š hušk wēzēd(?), ud hōšēd.

MP 'They become like grass on the roof, the wind always blows on it and dries it out, and it withers.' for Syr. 'when the wind blows on it'.

3.1.5.1 Choice of stylistic levels in MP

In the translation of the Syriac preposition *meṭṭol* 'because of' it is remarkable that MP *rāy* is used twice and MP *padisāy* three times.[20]

rāy

118.129 Syr. rwrbn ʾnyn shdwtk mṭl hnʾ nṭrt ʾnyn npšy.

rawrb̲ān ennēn sāhdāwāṭāk̲ meṭṭol hānā neṭrat̲ ennēn napš(y)

MP LBʾt HWH̲nd gwkʾdyhy HNʾ lʾdy NTLWNt HWH̲nd [HYʾ ZY LY].

wuzurg-at hēnd gugāyīh ēd rāy pād hēnd [gyān ī man].

'Strong are your testimonies, therefore my soul observed them'.

20 MP *rāy* in 118.127 und 118.129; MP *padisāy* in 121.8, 121.9 (partly conjectured, but very sure) and 131.10. The Syriac conjunction *meṭṭol d* is always (16 attestations) translated by MP *čē* 'because'. *Padisāy* otherwise occurs twice, 129.4 (no Syriac correspondence) and in the canon of 136: Syr. *ʿal da-ḥṭāt̲ Ōrišlēm* ... MP *padisāy čē āstard Ōrišlēm* 'because Jersualem sinned'.

padisāy

121.9 Syr. mṭl byth dmry' 'lhn. 'b' bṭbtky.

meṭṭol bayteh d-māryā al(l)āhan eḇʿā ḇ-ṭāḇāṯēḵ

MP pts['y](B)[YT]' ZYmn MRWHY yzdty: BʿYHWN'n [PWN ....]y ZY LK.

padis[āy xānag] ī-mān xwadāy yazad xwāhān [pad ...] ī tō.

'For the sake of the house of our Lord God I want to wish [for] your [happiness]'.

The reason for the variance lies in MP phraseology, because *ēd rāy* is a fixed expression: The translator has chosen a MP postposition even though Syriac *meṭṭol* is a preposition: *meṭṭol hānā* has yielded *ēd rāy*. The MP preposition *padisāy*, on the other hand, has the advantage of allowing the word-order of the original to be retained. Y. Yoshida kindly pointed out to me that two different semantic functions of Syriac *meṭṭol* are being distinguished here. Nevertheless, I would not exclude the possibility that the translator has chosen *padisāy* in order to achieve an archaic, more venerable style. Though this preposition is quite rare in Book Pahlavi[21] it occurs five times in the fragment of the Psalter. In published Manichaean Middle Persian texts *padisāy* occurs eleven times, but mostly in older texts.[22] Sims-Williams 2001 suggests that *padisāy* is a calque of an Accadian phrase *ina ṣilli ša* 'in the shadow of; under the protection of' which would give the MP word a long history. The word may have been regarded as archaic or it may have had a particular stylistic association that allowed it serve the translator as a means to stress the venerable nature of his text.

21 E.g. in MHDA 26,1 (Macuch 1981, 50).

22 Sims-Williams 2001, 60-61 gives three examples from Manichaean Middle Persian, three from the Psalter and three from *Škand gumānīg wizār*. There are at least three further instances of *padisāy* in unpublished Manichaean Middle Persian texts, but unfortunately all are in damaged contexts (M765g/R/8/; M267a/R/ii/10/ and M6945/B/3/).

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Abbreviations:

AoF Altorientalische Forschungen

Gr. Greek

LXX Septuaginta

MHDA Mātakdān i hazār dātistān, Macuch 1981.

MIO Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung

MP Middle Persian

OT Old Testament

SPAW Sitzungsberichte der (königlich) preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse.

Syr. Syriac