





xšnaoθrahe ahurahe mazdā

Detail from above the entrance of Tehran's fire temple, 1286š/1917–18. Photo by © Shervin Farridnejad

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Hanns-Peter Schmidt (1930-2017) Gedenkschrift

The 6th volume of DABIR is a Gedenkschrift to honour Hanns-Peter Schmidt (1930-2017), an excellent German scholar of Indo-Iranian studies, who mainly worked on the Vedas and the Gāthās, as well as Indian mythology and the Zoroastrian religion.

This volume of Dabir was supported by Ms. Mary Oloumi in memory of her father, Iradj Oloumi

A Newly Identified Sogdian Fragment from the Legend of Saint George

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The legend of the martyrdom of St George seems to have been favourite reading for the Christians of the Turfan oasis, where fragments of the text are known in Syriac (Maróth 1991), Sogdian (Hansen 1941; Gershevitch 1946; Benveniste 1947) and Uygur Turkish (Le Coq 1922, 48-9; Bang 1926, 64-75). The Sogdian version is contained in the manuscript formerly known as C1, re-numbered E23 in my catalogue of the *Iranian manuscripts in Syriac script in the Berlin Turfan collection* (Sims-Williams 2012, 68-72). The surviving part of this manuscript, or more precisely the part of this manuscript which survived up to the time of the Second World War, included a sequence of eight nearly complete folios (E23/3-10) with 15 lines on each page, as well as larger or smaller fragments of several other folios. Unfortunately most of the double-folio E23/4-5, containing lines 91-150 of Hansen's edition, together with several smaller fragments, can no longer be found and is presumed to have been destroyed during the war.

Although Hansen's edition was evidently intended to be complete, he overlooked the three small fragments listed in my catalogue as E23/18-20. The one with which we are concerned here is E23/18, shelf-number n8, which contains parts of 3 lines on each side, as follows:

Side B (fig. 1)

1](n)yšt qwn'[
2]c s'ršty' ·[
3]·sq(w)[

Side A (fig. 2)

1]w'št š[
2]rd'rt pr št·[
3]'ny (cynt)[

I noticed recently that these few words fit perfectly into a lacuna near the top of the lost folio E23/4, “Side B” of n8 (which turns out to be the recto) adding to the text of lines 94-96 and “Side A” to that of lines 109-111. Since the rest of the folio is only known from Hansen’s edition one cannot check whether there is a close join between the fragment n8 and the lost part of the folio, but at least in lines 95, 109 and 111 it seems that certain letters are partly preserved on one and partly on the other.

The text, with its immediate context, can be reconstructed as follows, the letters wholly or partly preserved on the fragment n8 being underlined):¹

Recto

92 sqw’t wdy *mnt² šm’r[’m
 93 šy pr cw mrc nyšt qw[n’m
 94 ’tšy nyšt (n)yšt qwn’[m
 95 tyw’q mync s’ršt[’
 96 xrt šyrqty [’sq(w)[
 97 wyd’wc ’ync x’ny ÷ w’n γwd’rt qw
 98 wy’ s’r ÷ ...

“[*King Dadian, St George’s persecutor, is speaking:*] ‘... let him dwell there until [I] think by what (kind of) death [I shall] destroy him and [I shall] totally destroy his ... childlike beauty’. [And when] the saint went [to] dwell in that widow woman’s house, he said to her ...”³

Verso

108 [ZY c’nw]nyžt’ qt xwžy nγny ÷
 109 []w’št šyrqty pr nm’c
 110 [ZY pc p]rd’rt pr št(w)[n] sqy cw
 111 [m’t wy’ x]’ny c(yn)tr ÷ ywn pr
 112 w[y’q] rwšty wn’ ZY nyšqwγd’rt
 113 brw ZY šxt ÷ ...

“... [And when] she went out to ask for bread, ... the saint stood in prayer [and rest]ed upon a pil[lar] which [was] in [her] house, immediately on the spot the tree grew and produced fruit and branches ...”⁴

Between the lines of n8 recto, one can see clear traces of the beginnings of two lines in mirror image (see fig. 3), which evidently represent text from another page which was formerly pressed hard against this fragment:

1- Brackets and parentheses follow the usual conventions. The bullet (·) indicates an illegible letter.

2- Hypothetical correction for Hansen’s *myt*. As pointed out in Sims-Williams 2012, 69, Hansen also has *myt* for *mnt* in line 158.

3- Syriac text (Brooks 1925, 85): ... *kd mt’sr tmn: ‘dm’ d-mthšb ‘n’ ykn’ wbdywhy. w-kd zlnšyḥ’ l-‘wmrh d-hy’ rmlt’: ‘mr lh’* ... “... whilst he is imprisoned there, until I think how I shall destroy him’. And when the illustrious one went to that widow’s dwelling, he said to her ...”.

4- Syriac text (Brooks 1925, 86): ... *w-kd npqt d-tš’l. qm nšyḥ’ g’wrgys b-šlwt’: w-štmk ‘l’ mwd’ d-’yt hw’ b-byt’: w-bh b-‘dn’ wld’ yln’ w-’pq ṭṭp’ w-šwk’* ... “... And when she went out to ask (scil. for bread), the illustrious George stood in prayer, and leaned upon a pillar which was in the house; and at that very moment the tree produced and put out leaves and branches ...”.

1 (xšywn)c·[
2 q(θ')ry w(y)'[

These words do not belong to the original facing page, i.e. E23/3 verso, as one might have expected, but to the recto side of the folio which Hansen calls “Fragment A”, i.e. n7 = E23/13 (Hansen 1941: 15-16). In fact, the words just quoted are exactly those reconstructed by Hansen to fill the lacunae at the beginning of Fragment A, r7-8. Since n8 is glassed together with n7, and both bear the same signature T II B 66, it seems likely that they were formerly stuck together and that the part of n7 containing these words was destroyed during the process of separating them.

Reconstructed text in its context:⁵

Fragment A, recto

5 [w']n [γwd'rt]
6 [xšywny qw w](y)ny s'r ∴ ZY ms
7 (xšywn)c (f)[ny](š)d'ry qty⁶ nyst
8 q(θ')ry w(y)'[]cymyt žw⁷ ∴ yw'r w'n
9 [γrb'](s)q'tr qt ny brt
10 [qwn'](m) q'n tw' xypθ y'twqy' ∴

“[Thu]s [said the king] to him: ‘You [led astray] the queen too, so that you destroyed her out of this life; but [know] thus: I will not [be able to] endure your sorcery any more ...’”⁸

A few words and phrases in these fragments are worthy of comment:

93-94 The phrase *nyst qwn*- “to bring to nought, annihilate” is the regular translation of Syriac *’bd* (*ap’el*) “to destroy”. In line 94 we seem to have an otherwise unattested variant with reduplication, *nyst nyst qwn*-, which may have the intensive sense “totally destroy”. On the other hand, in view of the careless copying which is characteristic of this manuscript, it may be that the repetition of *nyst* is merely a scribal error.

95 For *tyw’q mync* Gershevitch 1946: 180 cites a suggestion by W. B. Henning, who translated “having a child”, assuming that this refers to the widow, whose son appears a little later in the story. I adopted this interpretation in my *Dictionary* (Sims-Williams 2016: 197), but with considerable hesitation, since the formation of the adjective *tyw’q-mync* is not that of a possessive. Benveniste 1947: 100 offered the more plausible translation “enfantine (?)”, but was unable to fit this into the context. Now that it is clear that *tyw’q-mync* qualifies *s’rsty* “beauty”, the translation “childish, childlike” is no longer problematic, though the sentence “I shall destroy his ... childlike beauty” is not present in the Syriac text edited by Brooks.

5- Incorporating the corrections to Hansen’s readings listed in Sims-Williams 2012: 71.

6- Sic, error for *qt.

7- Sic, error for *žw’n.

8- Syriac text (Brooks 1925, 93): *qr’ mlk’ l-g’wrgys w-’mr lh. h’ p l-mlkt’ t’yth d-t’bd mn hlyn h’y’. mkyldyn hwyt yd’ d-l’ (±twb) msybr n’ hršwtk ...* “The king called George and said to him: ‘Lo! you led astray the queen too so as to destroy her out of this life; but know now that I shall no longer endure your sorcery ...’”.

96 Since the preceding word is not preserved it is not clear what form of the verb *sqw*- “to be, stay, dwell” should be restored here.

110 The verb in this line translates Syriac *štmk* (root *smk*, *etp’el* or *etpa’al*) “he leaned, rested”, which is translated by *pšyd’rt* “he rested, reclined” (to the present stem *pšyd*, *pršyd*) in Luke 24.30 (= E5/72, v12, see Barbati 2016:145). To restore an equivalent form here is only possible if one assumes that the first visible letter, which appears to be *r*, is a mispointed *d*, thus: *[*pšy*]*dd’rt*. The restoration [*pcp*]*rd’rt* has the advantage of not requiring an emendation, though the verb *pcpr*- “to settle, alight, rest” is not exactly what one would expect in this context. — The noun *st(w)[n]* “pillar, column”, here translating Syriac *mwd* “id.”, was not previously found in Christian Sogdian, but is attested as *štwny* and *št’wnyh* (obl.) in Manichaean and Buddhist texts in Sogdian script. It seems to be governed by *pr...sqy*, an unusual combination of preposition and postposition, here translating Syriac *l* “upon”.

“Fragment A”, r7 (*f*)[*ny*](*š*)*d’ry* translates Syriac *ṭ’yt* (root *ṭ’y*, *ap’el*) “you caused to go astray”. The traces of the first and fourth letters, slight as they are, seem to be compatible with this reading.



Fig. 1. n8, recto.



Fig. 2. n8, verso.



Fig. 3. n8, recto, flipped to show the mirror-image impressions from "Fragment A", r7-8.

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