THE PERSEPOLIS
MIDDLE PERSIAN INSCRIPTIONS FROM
THE TIME OF SHAPUR II

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As a modest tribute to the vast learning of Professor Kaj Barr, I offer the texts and some notes about the two inscriptions on a doorpost in the ruins of Persepolis.

The texts in drawing are included in Professor Nyberg's *A Manual of Pahlavi*, where a short bibliography about them is given.¹ Although he correctly states that the interpretation of the inscriptions is not open to doubt, several words are unclear, and the reader can see at once the differences in my readings below from the text as given in the *Manual*. The photographs used for the reconstruction of the texts were those in the *Corpus*, plus those in the *Persepolis* volume.² My own squeezes made in 1948 were ruined and could not be used.

Since the transcriptions of MP words in my article on the Naqš-i Rajab inscription (see addendum) roused protests, I have abandoned here any transcriptions and give only transliterations. I retain the letters which are on the stone, thus MDM for QDM, but I do distinguish between *ç*, *w*, and *r* for the same sign. Otherwise a *lam* is always *l*, etc.

¹ *Part I: Texts* (Wiesbaden 1964), XXIII. The texts are found on pages 126 and 127.

² *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum*, ed. W. B. Henning, Part III, vol. II, portfolio III (London, 1963) plates 75 through 77, and E. Schmidt, *Persepolis I* (Chicago 1954) plate 157.

The Inscriptions

(Italicised words are unclear, though traces exist, while parentheses indicate missing words which are restored.)

Persepolis I

1. BYRH spndmt[1] MDM ŠNT II mzdysn bgy šhpwḥy[1] MLK'n MLK' 'yr'n.
2. W 'nyr'n MNW čtry MN yzd'n PWN ZK y'wly[2] 'MT' šhpwḥly sk'n MLK' ḥndy
3. skstn W twrstn (')D YMP dnby[3] BRH mzdysn bgy 'whrmzdy MLK'n MLK' 'yr'n W 'nyr'n.
4. MNW čtry MN yzd'n MN BB' 'RHšn 'RH'y'n[4] SGDH YBLWN W PWN ZNH P'sy ZY MDM
5. stḥly[5] BYN 'L skstn 'ZLWN W PWN krpkyl'y LTNH[6] 'L ststwny Y'TWN 'Pš
6. L)HMP[7] BYN LZNH BYT' 'ŠTH 'Pš wlḥl'n ZY nḥw 'whrmzdy skstn ḥndrčp(ty)
7. (W)nršy ZY mgw ZY wr'č'n W wyny[8] ZY lywmtr'n ZY zlngy štrp W nršy ZY dp(ywr)
8. (W)'p'lyk p'ls'z't W sk'z't W zlngk'n W plystky ZY MN[9] p'tkws'n W sldry[10] LWTH
9. YHWWN HWHnd 'Pš LB' š'tyḥy krty 'Pš yzd'n krtk'n prn't krtay 'Pš
10. 'BYtr W nyd'k'n 'plyny krty 'Pš šhpwḥry MLK'n MLK' 'plyny krty 'Pš NPŠH
11. rwb'n[11] 'plyny krty 'Pš 'RHč 'plyny krty MNW ZNH m'ny krty
12. (yz)dty y'd... (?) [12]

Notes to Persepolis I

- [1] For *spndrmt* and *šhpwḥry*.
- [2] Nyberg's *y'yly* must be a *lapsus*.
- [3] One would expect either *sk'n MLK'* or *MLK' ḥndy* etc. Here both expressions are combined with one word *MLK'*.
- [4] Read *L* for *R* in both cases, and in line 11.
- [5] Nyberg has *st'ḥly*.
- [6] Nyberg: *LPNH* 'forward to'.
- [7] Nyberg: *HML'*.

[8] Nyberg: *dyny*.

[9] Nyberg: *hmk̐y*.

[10] One would expect *srd'r*. The meaning here must be either "petty chiefs" (family heads), or the word may go with the preceding word and then mean "district", or the like. Nyberg reads *mldwy*, from *mard* "man" (?) or emend to *marz* "border" (?).

[11] This word, written above the line, might be read with Nyberg as *wvhy* (i. e. 'LHY' *bag*), but the sense is unclear. After *krt̐y* Nyberg forgot 'Pš.

[12] Nyberg's reading.

Free Translation

In the month of Spandarmad, in the second year of the Mazda worshipping lord Shapur, King of Kings of Iran and non-Iran, who is a scion of the Gods (311 A.D.). At that time, when Shapur the Saka king, of Sind, Seistan and Turan, up to the edge of the sea, son of the Mazda worshipping lord Ohrmazd King of Kings of Iran and non-Iran, who was a scion of the Gods, departed (bore homage) from the court of His Majesty, he went on this road, between Istakhr and Seistan and graciously came (here) to Persepolis. Then he had lunch in this building. With him were Bahram son of Nahv Ohrmazd, the Seistan councillor, Narseh the magus, of the Varāz (family), Vēn son of Rēv Mithra, satrap of Zarang, Narseh the scribe, and other Persian and Saka knights, people of Zarang, messenger(s) from the provinces, and chiefs. He caused great rejoicing, and ordered rites performed for the Gods. He gave blessings to his father and ancestors. Then he offered blessings to Shapur the King of Kings, to his own soul, and also to him who built this structure. May God remember (them?).

Persepolis II

1. BYRH tyr MDM ŠNT 10 8[1] YWM 'wḥrmzdy 'MT 'NH slwky ZY
2. y')wyšhpwḥry W k'wly[2] d'twbl 'L ststwny Y'TWN ḤWHm
3. 'Pm ḤN' n'mky MH MN MDM npšty YK'YMWN MH šhpwḥly ZY

4. sk'n MLK' plm'ty npštny 'Pm plm'ty ptpwrsyt 'Pm
5. 'plyny krty 'YK šhpwḥly ZY MLK'n MLK' GBR'n p'lswymy
'nwšky
6. W y'wytšty[3] YḤWWNt W šhpwḥly ZY sk'n MLK' 'LYK
YḤW't W ḥmyw krt(y)
7. 'BYDWNt MH[4] yzd'n W šhpwḥly ZY MLK'n MLK' ḥwpy
MDMHt W 'NHč 'BDy[5]
8. (ḤN)' krty 'BYDWNn[6] MH yzd'n W 'LHšn 'RḤY'n
šhpwḥly ZY MLK'n MLK' klpky
9. (š)st[7] W MN TNH drwdst p'č 'L BB' ZY 'LHšn 'RḤY'n
YḤMYTWNn W 'LH 'RḤY'
10. (š)ḥpwḥly ZY MLK'n MLK' PWN klpkyḥy (W)[8] drwdst
ḤZYTNN W TWB PWN klpkyḥy drwdst
11. ('L k'wly Y'TWNN.

Notes to Persepolis II

[1] I find room for only one "ten" sign, not three "twenty" signs; hence read "ten" for "sixty". The stone has cracked, giving the impression that there were two "ten" signs.

[2] Nyberg reads l)stšhpwḥry, a personal name rather than a place name.

[3] Uncertain reading, but better than Nyberg's *wy'k BYN šlly*.

[4] I prefer MH to Nyberg's MNW. Compare MH in lines 3 and 8. On the usage cf. M. Boyce, "The use of relative particles in Western Middle Iranian," *Indo-Iranica*, mélanges présentés à Georg Morgenstierne (Wiesbaden 1964) 28-31.

[5] 'BDy, *bandē* for 'BDk *bandak*? Nyberg's W BYN makes no sense.

[6] Usually explained as the subjunctive in -n, but perhaps better understood as a verbal noun. Other occurrences I have found are:

1 — the MP Psalter ed. K. Barr (Berlin 1933) 22, Psalm 131, 5 (folio 9r line 3) 'D ḤŠKHWNn gyw'k M(R')ḤY Pdy; *vindān* "till I find . . .".

2 — Kartir KZ 1: 'NH . . . ḥwk'mky ḤWYTNn for N. Raj. 2: YḤWWN ḤWHm. Most commentators on KKZ change ḤWYTNn to YḤWWNt. I would prefer to retain ḤWYTNn, and interpret

it as *dānān*, in the passive sense of *dānistān* whereas YD'YTN represents the active sense, either of the same verb or another similar to it. In Book Pahlavi the two masks H̄WYTN and YD'YTN were confused since they were written in the same manner. Thus the sense of KKZ 1 would be "I being known as well-wishing".

3 — Paikuli A 12, 3 = A'6, 3 and D 3, 2 = C'6, 5, MP: YH̄BWNN (*dahān*) = Parthian YNTNWN. In the latter example YH̄BWNN 'D 'lmm'n = YNTNWN H̄N 'rmnyn. Also in line 3 (A 6) of MP only: W RB'N W 'z't'n YK/TLWNN "and killing (of) lords and nobles." Next line (A 3) 'BYDWNN (*kunān*).

[7] I see only two final letters *-st* with preceding room for only two more. Therefore I propose the non-ideographic reading *sahist* for Nyberg's (MDM)Ht. Another verb, of course, could be intended.

[8] The cracks in the stone make it possible that a W stood here, but it would be more difficult in the second crack below.

Free Translation

(It is) in the month of Tīr of the year 18 on the day of Ohrmazd, that I Seleucus, the judge of Javedshapur and Kabul have come to Persepolis. This inscription, written above, which Shapur the Saka king ordered engraved, was ordered by me to be examined. Then I gave a blessing, namely, that Shapur, the King of Kings, be the best of men, immortal and with eternal rule. And that Shapur the Saka king live long and always perform acts which seem good to the Gods and to Shapur the King of Kings. That I also (the slave) do that which to the Gods and to His Majesty Shapur the King of Kings may appear pious. And from here may I arrive in safety to the court of His Majesty (Pl.), and may I see His Majesty (Sing.) Shapur the King of Kings in piety and health. And may I return in piety (and) health to Kabul.

The first inscription contains a number of interesting items which may be elaborated briefly. In line 3 the existence of a son of Ohrmazd II, Shapur king of the Sakas, is known only from this inscription. On the title of the Saka king in line 3, compare

the inscription of Shapur on the Qa'bah of Zoroaster line 24 (Parthian line 19 and Greek line 42). The title of *frestak* in line 8, translated as 'messenger', is more than a bearer of letters. He was an official of some rank and with legal authority according to the Talmud.³

In the second inscription Seleucus, the judge of the cities of Javedshapur and Kabul, indicates that the area of Kabul was under Sasanian jurisdiction at this time. The name 'Javedshapur', which city I cannot identify, further implies a victory of a Shapur in the east, possibly Shapur I rather than Shapur II. There are many interesting historical problems as well as philological matters raised by the two Persepolis inscriptions which cannot be discussed here.

Addendum

After the proofs were returned, I discovered several errors in my article "The Middle Persian Inscription of Kartir at Naqš-e Rostam," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 8 (1965) 211-225. I should like to draw attention to them here, plus several additional remarks to the article.

P. 213, line 2, 218 line 2, and 221 line 11: read *avišt* for *ham-bašad*.

P. 213, line 7 from bottom: read *Zartoshti Medresa Volume* for *Unvala Memorial Volume*.

P. 214 line 3: read "if with the help."

P. 214 line 5 *et passim*: MHWHyt is not a happy reading, nor is **mahrihēd*; compare *mahr* (*mar-*) "word", Armenian *margarē* "prophet", Sogdian *m'rkr* "sorcerer". I have not found the word of our inscription elsewhere.

P. 217, last word of line 19 of the inscription, and index for other occurrences: in reaction against Sprengling's practice of M = Q, I write what I see MDM for QDM, although the reader will understand what is meant.

³ *Berakoth* 58a in the story of R. Shila and the Persian official who has some judicial functions.

P. 217 line 20 of the inscription: Again I see *ḥwslbyḥy* for *ḥwslwbyḥy*.

P. 218, last word of line 24 of the inscription: the reading *nyw'kyḥy*, about which I had doubts, was given by Sprengling. Faint traces in line 57 of Sar Mašhad, however, seem to confirm Sprengling's reading.

P. 219 line 31 of the inscription: read *dpywr* for *dpyr*.

I have not tried to correct the transcriptions, since several principles are involved.

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