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An Old Letter from Khotan: A Review of an Early Judeo-Persian Letter Called Dandān-Uiliq II

Nima Asefi¹ 

Abstract

This paper deals with an old Judeo-Persian letter called Dandān-Uiliq II (Abbreviated as DU II); which probably dates back to 9th century CE and further to its contents, has some important linguistic features, often without existence in later Persian texts written in Arabic script, for instance, the use of the adverb *bē* = but (as in Qur'an-e Qods translation), use of the conjunction *kū*, the use of the verb *h-* (to be) and ancient subjunctive mood. This paper also presents a new translation of the letter and its ancient linguistic features discussed in comparison to Early Persian texts (in Perso-Arabic script) and some early Persian translations of Qur'an, especially Qur'an-e Qods (probably written in Sistan in 12th CE). These features represent language transmission from Middle Persian to Neo-Persian (Dari). The given translation is not the same as previous English and Chinese versions and reflects my understanding of its syntax and morphology.

Keywords: Judeo-Persian; Middle Persian; Early New Persian; Dandān-Uiliq.

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Introduction

Persian is the only Iranian language that has written documents from its three historical periods, namely, ancient, middle, and modern. Because of this evidence, the evolution of this language from Old Persian to Middle Persian and, in the next stage, from Middle to Early New Persian is considered a very important issue, and researches have been conducted to better understand this evolution.

Despite the evidence left over from the three historical periods of Persian language, we face difficulties in understanding the complete evolution of this language because in passing from Late Old Persian to Middle Persian, i.e. from inscriptions of the late Achaemenian kings to the inscription of Ardashir I, we do not have good documents to follow the evolution of this language. Although in the next stage of evolution, that is, the distance between Late Middle Persian to Early New Persian, our evidence is not insufficient, meaning we are not without evidence. If we leave aside Persian words and phrases written in Arabic sources (which are also very important), our most important sources for understanding this evolution have been scripts other than Persian-Arabic script. Among these sources are Judeo-Persian documents. The term Judeo-Persian does not mean a linguistic variety of Persian but includes different types of Persian language written in Jewish script by Jews. One of the oldest Judeo-Persian documents is two documents known as Dandān-Uiliq I (probably the 8th century AD) Dandān-Uiliq II (probably in the 9th century AD). Both these documents are personal letters. In this article, Dandān-Uiliq II is discussed. The letter of Dandān-Uiliq II has 38 lines and is almost healthy and very important both in terms of content and in studying of the Persian evolu-

tion. But despite Paul's good grammatical analysis (see Research background), there is no good translation of this document, and there are many difficulties with translations by previous researchers. Also, some grammatical cases can be studied with more exactitude.

Research Background

Unlike DU I, which has been the subject of much scientific works since its discovery in 1901 by Sir Orel Stein¹, DU II has only been studied specifically by Zhan Zhang & Guang Shí. It was first published in Chinese:

张湛、时光：《一件新发现犹太波斯语信札的断代与释读》，载《敦煌吐鲁番研究》第11卷，上海：上海古籍出版社，2009年9月，第71—100页（Zhang Zhan, and Shiguang, 2009）.

This is the most detailed work on DU II and contains historical background, linguistic descriptions, spelling, transliteration, notes, and references. After this work, more scholars focused (but not completely) on DU II and published essays on different aspects of it.

In addition to these researches, some parts of the letter have also been translated; Ludwig Paul in his valuable work entitled “A Grammar of Early Judeo-Persian”, published in 2013, reviewed and translated many parts of the letter. In 2016, in a book section, Zhan Zhang published the first English translation of the DU II (without any further information):

Zhang, Zhan (2016) *The Silk Road: A New History with Documents*. In V. Hansen (Ed.), *The Silk Road: A New History with Documents* (Pp. 381-382), Oxford University Press.

¹ Or. 8212 (166) in British Museum.

One year later, Yutaka Yoshida, in an article reviewing some words of DU I, made some new suggestions about DU II, quoting the same Chinese translation of Zhan Zhang & Guang Shí in his Japanese work:

吉田豊「コータンのユダヤ.ソグド商人?」土肥義和.氣賀澤保規編『敦煌.吐魯番文書の世界とその時代』査読あり東京: 東洋文庫 2017/3: 263-285 (Yoshida, 2017).

New Translation

In the following translation, many differences are found compared to previous translations into English, Chinese and other languages due to differences in morphological and syntactic understanding of the text.

1. pnn'm yzyd kwdh' y qrbqr sd hzr šlm' by kwdh' rb nysy cyl'g by 'zrmy
2. 'bw šlq by gr'my br'dr šw'prdr by ychq w by mwšq w by hrwn by
3. kšq by kwłrq kwdynq by hmgyn mrdwm'n yš m'² bzwrg w qwdq 'z mn
4. rbyy drwd w drwsty 'ghy yš mr' nbyswm qw mn w hqym w pyrw³ w mmzyr šbly
5. drwst w nyqwm⁴ w mrdmq'n 'y k'nł p' nyrw yzyd kwdh' t' ymrwz⁵. ps 'z yn
6. 'ghnwm by br'd šw'prdr qw nwrby 'ndr kwtn 'md w n'mł yšm' 'wrd w yptwm
7. w br kwndwm 'n y nbyšt bwdy⁶ hmgyn' qw yš m' p' tn 'y kyš⁸ drwst w nyq
8. hyd m' 'z dwr skt š'd b'šym w sb's d'ry qwnym 'pyš yzyd kwdh'
9. w ps tw 'gh b'š qw m' gwspnd 'yptwm 'z dyhg'n skt 'zdyhł hdyh 'y
10. prmwdy bwdym⁹ yš 'rst cwn¹⁰ tyb 'ndr bwrwł hmnrd zm'n tyb p'n
11. by qr dyd¹¹ w mr cykšy r' prmwł qw zwd gwspnd yn swgdy by dyh
12. w cykšy w 'n bd pywstn¹² by dyhg'n kyšm qrypt w cyz skwn 'y bd mrdwm
13. n' grypt¹³ čhr mrdnd d'd šbly w hqym w dw gwl'm rptn p' qwh

14. šš my mł p' dł sgd dyhg'n r' yqy gwlyq w yq qpyz qbr w pnc šg
15. dwgbyk w yq šg dmbyr w yq styw bwy 'y cyny h(dy)h 'z mr syky r'¹⁴ yqy
16. prny'n w yqy šmsy hdyh cy nyyq qrdyd syky (cy)k'šy 'y dwktr 'y dyhg'n r'
17. ...ryq qr'q n'm łst yqy prny'n w dw gnd w dw lymcw hdyh yq pnkw'n
18. 'y br gwspnd myłtr' yqy lyqyn w yqy gnd yqy lymcw hdyh dw mrdnd
19. r' qw sr šmr 'y gwspnd myłtr bwdn yq yq lyqyn w yq yq gnd wd lymc(w)
20. hdyh šb'n'n r' bgdw w gnd w lymcw hdyh w šdn p' qwh by nwz gwspnd
21. by dyst m' n' rsyd w pdyrptn qw gwspnd skt nyyq dyhym w p' n'mł
22. nbyšt bwdy qw nyz pšyz kwstn p' gwspnd w n' d'dwm¹⁵ w n' nyyq qrdy
23. 'g(r) yn n'mł by šm' rs'd¹⁶ w dwktr 'y dyhg'n by rwn n' młh b'd
24. ...(c)nd pšyz kw'(h)...(p)' gwspnd 'š by prmy d'dn w b' wy byrwn 'yy¹⁷
25. ... cyšm w rwšny'y¹⁸ łm yn dwktr łst dyhg'n r' w skt sb's qwn
26. ...r sb's 'y wr' qwny cyz gwm n' bwd mn skt bysy'r n'mł prystwm
27. ... šm' ps n' d'nwm qw by šm' n' rsd (p)...(c) my m' p' hzdł sgd
28. šbly 'ndr 'md p' byst w pnc sgd dw qynq'k¹⁹ dyhg'n nzdyq 'y
29. dwktr prystyd mn p' dyst 'y hm 'n qynq'k syh n'mł prystydwm
30. by šm' hr cy 'ghy 'y šłr w ny q'šgr bwd hmgyn nbyšt bwdwm 'ghy 'y
31. (q)'šgr yn łst qw twpyty'n r' p'q by qwštn w bgdw bstn w sb'pwšy šwd
32. ... q'šgr 'b' p' sd mrdnd cy sw'r w cy py'dł w sbs 'y sb'pwšy {hb}
33. ...nb'šy łrb r' w sl'm w kzym r' bysp'n prystyd w mn łrb r' cyz
34. d'dwm p' m'ył 'y sd ptqw pšyz wndrz qr dydwm 'z swy 'y dwyd r'²⁰
35. psr 'y nysy w kłr z'dł yš m' r'²¹ łm łrb r' wsl'm w kwz'm r' qw
36. ... 'gr 'młh b'd p' q'šgr łr cnd kwzynł kw'hnd cyz b'z m'

37. m' d'ryd²² by²³ ydwn šnydwm qw ħm
dwyd w ħm
38. kw'ħr z'dh

Translation¹

1. In the name of Divine-God, the beneficent, one hundred thousand greetings to master rabbi Nisi Chilag, to Abu-Sahak,
2. The reverend, to dear brother Shavapardar, to Issac and to Mushak and to Harun, to
3. Xašak, to little sister Khudenak, to all your people, adults and children, sent by me
4. O Rabbi, peace and health (be upon you). I'm writing to inform you that I and Hakim and Pairu and Mamzir(?) Shabli
5. are healthy and well, (so are) the servants of the house, by the power of Divine-God, until today. Hence
6. I inform brother Shavapardar, that Nurbak came to Khotan, brought your letter and I received (it),
7. and I read all of (what) you had written; that your body is healthy and well
8. we are very happy and thankful to the Divine-God
9. and be aware that we obtained the sheep from Dihgān (local ruler) with many thanks. About the gift
10. which you ordered, we did exactly what you said. When I brought it to Tib immediately, because of that (gift), Tib ('s mood)
11. changed and commanded *Cyk' šy* "Quickly! Deliver the sheep to this Sogdian."

¹ In this article, wherever there is talk of reading Zhang & Shí, this article is meant (Zhang Zhan, and Shiguang, 2009 [张湛 and 时光, 2009]) and wherever there is talk of Zhang's translation, this article is meant (Zhang 2016). Due to the frequent repetition of this phrase, in-text references have been avoided.

12. *Cyk' šy* and other (people) started to vilify (and oppose), but Dihgān got angry and did not pay attention to their bad words.
13. He gave four men²(?): Shabli, Hakim, and two slaves, (they) went to the mountain
14. on the tenth day of the sixth month. To Dihgān, one vase, one *Kafiz*³ of *Kabar*, and five šag (Chinese measure) of
15. *dwgbyx*, one šag of *dmbyr*, one stir of Chinese scent, as a gift. To *Syky*, one Parniyan (patterned silk fabric),
16. and one Shamsi (one unit of raw silk)⁴, as a gift. How well you done (on the gifts). The gift for *syky* (*cy*)*k'šy*, daughter of Dihgān
17. whose name is ...*ryq qr'q*, one Parniyan and two (measures of) sugar, and two *lymcw*. To a panxwan (administrative assistant) who
18. is the keeper of the sheep, one *lyqyn* and one (measure of) sugar and one *lymcw*. To two men
19. who were the elders of the sheep-counters, for anyone one *lyqyn* and one sugar and two *lymcw* as a gift.
20. For shepherds, the gift is *bgdw* and sugar and *lymčw*. (They) have gone to the mountain but we
21. have not obtained the sheep yet and they accepted (promised and said) "we will give (you) very good/a lot of sheep" and in the letter
22. you have written that "They demanded some extra fee for sheep again, but I did not give it to them", and you did not do well
23. If this letter reaches you and the Dihgān's daughter has not come to an

² Based on comment of Paul (2012: 105).

³ In the Middle Persian, *kabiz* is a grain measure (MacKenzie, 1971: 47)

⁴ The explanation about *Shamsi*, *panxwān*, and *Sabapushi* is according to Zhang Zhan (2016).

- agreement,
24. As much money as she asks for the sheep, then command to give her and make an agreement with her.
 25. The eyesight and light of Dihgān is this girl (she is the apple of Dihgān's eye) and thank her a lot
 26. ... [If] you thank her, nothing will be lost. I send many letters
 27. ... [to] you, but I do not know whether these reach you [or not], on the eighteenth day in the fifth month
 28. Shabli came. On the twenty-fifth day, Dihgān sent two maids
 29. to the daughter. I sent thirty letters by the same maid
 30. to you. I wrote all information about the cities except Kashgar. News about
 31. Kashgar is that (they) killed all the Tibetans and tied up bgdw. Sibāpushi (the vice commander)
 32. went to Kashgar with five hundred men, mounted and on foot. After Sibāpushi
 33. *bashi* sent a courier for war, peace, defeat, and for war I
 34. gave something worth a hundred Peto coin and you advised me on behalf of David,
 35. Nisi's son, and your nephew about all War and peace and defeat.
 36. If It [= war] comes to Kashgar, whatever money they demanded,
 37. do not hesitate, but this is how I heard that both David and
 38. and nephew...

Commentaries

1. *kwdh*: the final *h* can be found in some words in Abu Nowas's poetry and also in some titles such as "بخارا خذاه" The ruler of Bukhara that is mentioned in Arabic books. The final *-h* has remained after the long vowel in some EP words like آشنه *Āš(e)nāh*, آسیه *Ās(i)yāh* and چراه *čērāh*. (Šādeqi 1978, 79).

2. *mrdwm'n yš m'*: Zhang & Shí have read *mardumān iš ~ mā*. The first problem is that the *-y* Eḏāfe (genitive sign) in the expression has been ignored. The second problem is that the pronoun (second person plural) in some lines like the 30th, has been transcribed as *šumā*. In other words, the pronoun has been transcribed into two different pronunciations. According to line 7 ... *qw yš m'* ... the pronoun should be *išmā* in the whole letter. Indeed, in some phrases in which the preceding word ends in final *-y*, the writer has not written two *ys* (one as genitive sign and the other as the initial letter of *yšm'*); so *y* in lines 3 & 6 should be considered and read both as a short form of Eḏāfe and the initial letter of the pronoun and in the lines similar to 30 it should be transcribed as *bē išmā*. Such short forms can be seen in lines 10 & 18 in words *p'n* [= *p' n* / *pa ān*/] and *myhtr'* [= *myhtr r' / mihtar rā*/] too.

3. *pyrw*: Zhang has considered this word as an adjective for *hqym*, but the conjunction *w* [*u*] is clearly recognizable between these two words. Therefore, *hqym w pyrw* is more accurate than *hqym pyrw*.

4. *nyyqwm*: It is interesting to note that both endings *-ym* and *-wm* (the first person plural ending) have been used simultaneously. An example of using *-wm* for the first person plural can be found in the current and the 9th line. (*m' gwspnd 'yptwm*). The ending *-wm* for the first person plural can also be seen in Middle Persian Manichaean texts, for example, *'wš'n 'wh gwpt kw nmbrwm tw* (Boyce 1975: 63) as well as in the Paikuli inscription, the Pazand text of *Škand Gumanik Vizār* (chapter 2- paragraph 3) and *Tafsir-e Shonghoshi*.

5. *p' nyrw yzyd kwdh t' ymrwz*: Zhang has translated "By the power of the Lord

God, servants of the house are well till today,” nonetheless “the power of the Lord God” includes all the people mentioned in the sentence.

6. *nbyšt bwdy*: In the letter of Dandān-Uiliq I, the past perfect verb has such a construction “frwkth bwd [frōxta būd]” but in the present text *nbyšt bwdy* [nibišt būdē] is mentioned.

7. *hmgyn*: Zhang & Shí have read *hamagīn* and translated “all of you are physically healthy and sound”. It should be considered that the conjunctive *kū* is followed by *hmgyn*, so their translation cannot be accurate. If *hmgyn* means ‘all’, the translation should be “You wrote about all (of you), that you are healthy and well”. Another suggestion is to consider *hmgyn* as an adverb, and in this case, the translation should be “I read all you have written”, which is more preferable.

8. *kyš*: Zhang & Shí have transliterated *kwš*, transcribed as *x^waš* and translated “healthy and sound”. I believe that according to the following evidence, it should be read as *kyš* [xēš] not *kwš* [x^waš]:

a) Syntactically, the word *x^waš* cannot fit into this sentence. Because if the writer wanted to say “you are healthy and sound”, there would be no need for an Eḏāfe (i) between *tan* and *x^waš*.

b) It should also be noted that the author has only used the words *drwst w nyyq* in paragraph 5 to talk about his health and we don’t see the word *x^waš*.

c) As we know, *y* and *w* in EJP are written in a very similar way and as it has been noted by Utas, they have sometimes been used instead of each other (Utas 1968, 125); Therefore, I think the best choice here (Fig. 1) is to read *y* instead of *w*. Although the *y* has an uncommon

long tail, it’s not unknown. One more example can be found in line 14 *yqy* where the second *y* is written with a longer tail than the first (Fig. 2):



Fig. 1. *kyš* line 7 Fig. 2. *yqy* line 14

Therefore, it’s better to read the word with *y* rather than *w*. So the word would be *xēš* > *x^wēš* “self”. But the question is why this word is written without *w*, though it is very common in Perso-Arabic spelling of Early Persian texts to write the word with *w* [xwēš / خویش]?

To answer this question, we should consider the word *xāhar* < *x^wāhar* “sister” in line 35 which is written without *w* (= *chr*) -although in line 38 there is another form as *kw’hr*- despite the fact that it is often written with *w* in Early Persian texts. This kind of multiple writing shows the process of *x^w* being simplified and changing to *x* in the dialect of the author. As Gindin (2016, 46) has noted too, in Early Tajiki of Jews and Neo-Persian the consonant cluster of *x^w* has a unified sound with *x*. As it’s clear, the author of the letter belongs to Sogdiana.

It is also noteworthy that *x^wā* in *x^wāstan* in DU II is written with two different spellings, both with ‘ and without it. For instance, cf. line 25 *kwstn* vs. line 37 *kw’hnd*, which we know through a poem by the 12th-century poet Sayf-al-Dīn Farghānī, where *x^wāham* is written as *xw’hm*:

ay dustān xuham (خوهم) ke be nikī doā-ye Sayf

yak ruz bar zabān-e šomā nīz bogzarad

In my opinion, here the author wanted to say “... pa tan i xēš ... (in your body)”. The phrase *tan ī xwēš* is extensively used

in the Middle Persian texts (for example, in paragraph 29 of the Pahlavi text of *Andarz ī Pōryōtkēšān*: ... *abar tan ī xwēš* ...

As Paul has mentioned, in some Judeo-Persian letters from Bamiān, the word *x^wēštan* is written without *w* as *kyštñ* (Paul 2013, 101). Paul does not have a definite view on this word. In his opinion, the transliteration of the word is *kwš* (which is incorrect in my opinion). Although he translates the word as the pronoun *x^wēš*, he has accepted the second reading as *x^waš* in the footnote.

d) It is also useful for understanding of line 21 from DU I (Fig. 3), where Utaš has read it as *bē tō az šumār ī x^waš čiz andōh mā far[māi]*: but you, for a good reckoning (do) not (suffer) any anxiety (Utaš 1968, 129 & 130 L.21).

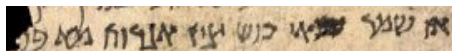


Fig. 3. DU I line 21

Salemann suggests *xwš* [*x^wēš*] (1905, 49). Lazard (1995, 207 f.4) considered Salemann's suggestion very tempting but believes it is odd that *y* is not seen in the spelling. In this case, my proposal for reading *xyš* [*xēš*] can be applied to this.

9. *prmwdy bwdym*: Zhang & Shí have considered it as a verb and translated “we ordered”. Even if it is a past verb, it should be translated as pluperfect “we had ordered”. It is important to say that the pluperfect structure in this letter must be: 1) past stem + auxiliary (cf. *nibišt būdē* in line 22), therefore *frmwdbwdym* would be the correct form, or at least it could be 2) past participle + auxiliary (cf. *frwtkth bwd* in Dandān Uliq 1). The first follows MP structure and the second follows ENP structure. But the final *y* here challenges Zhang & Shí's

remark and the pluperfect hypothesis.

Similar to Zhang & Shí, Ludwig Paul (2013) has also considered this phrase as a verb, but with two translations: 1) “You had ordered” *prmwdy bwdy* without *m*; page 46); 2) “the gifts that we have ordered (for) him are right” *prmwdy bwdym* including *m* (page 98).

In my view, these two are separate verbs:

A) *prmwdy*: past simple verb, second person singular, with *šw^{prdr}* (the letter recipient) as its subject and *hdyh y* ... as its object, meaning “the gifts that you ordered”. Since there was no ergative structure in that period, the past transitive verb inflected similar to the past intransitive verb. This sentence can be compared with *q^r y prmwdy š skt qwnwm* [*kār ī farmūdē aš saxt kunum*] “the work you ordered, I shall work hard” in DU I line 29. Probably in DU II, the second verb has been moved to the initial position for emphasis.

B) *bwdym*: past simple verb, second person plural, referring to those who said “, we with respect took delivery of the sheep from dihgān.” The *iš* after the verb refers to the gift, meaning “that (gift)”, and is also the object of *rāst būdan*. *rāst būdan* “to be honest (about something)” has some evidence in Early Persian literature. In this text, it probably means “to adhere to something properly.” In conclusion, the whole sentence can be translated as such: “the gift that (you = *šw^{prdr}*) ordered, we were faithful to it (we did exactly as you said= exactly as you said, we distributed the gifts).” There is

¹ Probably he has considered *m* as an accusative enclitic pronoun for 1st singular person, therefore meaning “You had ordered me.”

another evidence in paragraph 16 that reinforces this view. As it is well known in Persian, the main meaning of *kardan* کردن is “to make/do”. In line 16, the author, recounting the gifts, says *čy nyyq qrdyd* (how good you did (made), which can refer to the provided gifts by *šw'prdr*, not to the author of the letter. In other words, the author of the letter tells *šw'prdr* “you made/did good gifts”.

10. *cwn *tyb 'ndr bwrđwm*: Zhang has considered *cwn* as a causative adverb and translated “because”, but here it is an adverb of time that means “when”. Therefore, a better translation might be “When I took the gift to **tyb*.”
11. *ḥmndr zm'n tyb p'n by qr dyd*: Zhang has translated “As soon as Tib worked on that” The reason why he had this understanding is not clear to me. In my view, the phrase can be read in three different ways:

- A) *ham andar zaman tib bi kardid*
- B) *ham andar zaman tib bē kār dīd*
- C) *ham andar zaman tib bi gardid*

In A & C, *by* is considered as a preverb and in B as a preposition. A is fully rejected semantically; also its person and number does not match with the preceding and following sentences.

Although B brings to the mind of the Persian speakers the meaning: “At the time, Tib saw it useful” and it is consistent with the general context of the sentence, there is an important syntactic problem. The usage of “by” in this phrase is not correct and it should be replaced by *pa*.

C is the best semantically and its person and number match with the preceding and following sentences. It should be noticed that *gardidan* گردیدن also means “to change; to alter” in Persian and due to this meaning, is used to mean “to change the mood”. For instance,

(Dehxodā 1998, V.12 19057):

ای دوست به صد گونه بگردی به زمانی
که خوش سخنی گیری و گه تلخ زبانی
Farrokhi Yazdi

ey dūst be sad gūneh begardī be zamānī
gah xoš-soxanī gīrī -o- gah talx-zabānī ~
Farroxi Yazdi

My friend, your mood changes a hundred times in a moment, sometimes you become eloquent and sometimes you become bitter

اگر سپهر بگردد ز حال خود تو مگرد
وگر زمانه نسازد تو با زمانه بساز
Mas'ūd-e Sa'd-e Salmān

agar sepehr begardad ze hāl-e xod to magard
vogar zamāneh nasāzad to bā zamāneh besāz ~ Mas'ūd-e Sa'd-e Salmān

If the sky rotates, you do not change your mood

And if the time is incompatible, be compatible with it

Therefore, the sentence is trying to tell us when the gift was brought to Tib, due to its value, the mood of Tib changed and he ordered to take delivery of the sheep. To answer why *qrdyd* is transcribed as *gardid* (we know that *q* in EJP represents *k*), it should be noticed that the initial *g* in EJP is usually shown with *g* and *q* is often used to show *k*, but in line 12 of DU II *girift* is written as *qrypt*; also in line 31 of DU I *guftē* is written as *qwpty*. Therefore, it is correct if we consider *q* to represent *g* here.

12. *pywstn*: If we consider it as an infinitive, its use is not justified here because it does not follow the grammar of the Persian language. It is probably a third-person plural verb that does not

end in *d*, similar to *rptan* in lines 13 and 21, and *an* is a later form of *any*, similar to some evidence in some Manichaean texts (for example, in the text H in the reader in Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian by Mary Boice). Therefore, the author is saying *cyk'šy* and other people started to vilify and oppose."

13. *grypt*: It is known that one of the meanings of *grifan* گرفتن in Persian is "to count / assume" (see to Dehxodā's dictionary). Also in Persian, the verb phrase *be čiz i na grifan* means "to not pay attention". For example, we can refer to Baba Taher Hamadani:

نمی‌گیرد کسم هرگز به چیزی
در این عالم ز هر کس کمتر استم

nemīgīrad kas-am hargez be čizī
dar-in ālam ze har kas kamtar astam

Nobody counts me as an (important) being. I am the most insignificant person in this world.

So, I think the letter says "Dihgān got angry and did not pay attention to their bad words."

14. *ʔ mr syky rʔ*: It is important to note that the combination *az mar...* is used in Document No. 15 of the Berkeley University Middle Persian Collection (Berkeley MP Archive) next to the name of the governor (...*az mar ī dūdag ōstāndār...*) (Weber 2004: 136) and somehow shows the history of the use of *mar* in late Middle Persian.

15. *nʔ d'dwm*: The Negative article for the verb in DU II is *na*, e.g., L. 22 *nʔ d'dwm* and L. 23 *w nʔ nyyq qrdy*; but for the noun is *ny*, L.30.

16. *rs'd* and *mdh b'd* show an old structure of subjunctive mood of Middle Persian that has not reached Modern Persian, but its singular third person is used in

Modern Persian as the privative mood.

17. *ʔy*: The second /y/ at the end of *ʔy* is the sign of the optative mood similar to Middle Persian *ē(h)*.

18. I have already compared the structure of this word with "dušmenyādih" (Asefi, Shafiee: 2020), this comparison is not correct although I still think this word is *rōšnyā(y)ī* (روشنایی) not as reading Zhang & Shī *rōšni-ē*.

19. *qynq'k*: Zhang has translated "messenger" and Paul has not mentioned anything new about it (Paul 2013, 162). Two Sogdian words *kncq* and *knc'k* mean "small girl, child" (Qarib 2004, E. 190 & 4752) and *qynq'k* is probably related to these Sogdian words and means "bondmaid".

20. *ʔ swy ʔy... rʔ*: This phrase means "on behalf of..." (Utas 1968, 133 N.15) so the whole sentence means "You advised me on behalf of David...". Zhang has considered David and Son of Nisi, as two different persons and understood Son of Nisi as the nephew of *šw'prdr* and translated the phrase "David, and Nisi's son, your nephew".

It is quite obvious that there is no conjunction between "David and Nisi's son" in the letter, but there is a conjunction between "Nisi's son" and "your nephew".

It's noteworthy that the final line shows that the author is telling the addressee about David and the nephew and due to this evidence, David is the son of Nisi and the second person is the nephew of *šw'prdr*.

21. *psr ʔ nysy w khr z'dh yš m' rʔ*: Zhang has translated "you have given me advice for the sake of David, Nisi's son, your nephew, also for the war, for peace and victory". this translation shows he has considered *hm hrb r' wsl'm w kwz'm rʔ* as a continuation of *ʔ swy ʔy...* In other words, he has considered *ʔ swy ʔy...* for all, (including) David, Nisi's son, the

nephew and the phrase *ḥm ḥrb r' wsl'm w kwz'm r'*, though it seems *ʔ swy ʔ*... works only for David, Nisi's son and the nephew and the next phrase do not relate to it. So in my opinion the whole sentence means “, you advised me on behalf of David, Nisi's son, and your nephew, about all War and peace and defeat.”

22. *b'z m' m' d'ryd*: The main meaning of *bāz dāštan* in Persian is “to avoid; to prevent”. Its formula is *bāz dāštan* *something/ someone from *(doing) something/ someone, for instance:

اگر از من تو بد نداری باز

نکنی بی نیاز روز نیاز

agar az man to bad nadāri bāz

nakoni bi-niyāz ruz-e niyāz ~

Abušakur balxī

(If you don't prevent bad (things) from (happening to) me, (and) do not make (me) gratified in (my) time of need)

the two most important things that should be considered are:

- a) To avoid repetition and duplication, it is possible to eliminate either * or ** from the formula.
- b) Due to semantic development, *bāz dāštan* can also mean “to withhold, to spare”. For instance: *farmud ke yā 'ezrāil, man behešt rā az dustān-e xod bāz nadāram, ān rā rahā kon tā dar behešt bāšad* “He ordered O, 'ezrāil! I do not withhold paradise from my friends; release it so that he will be in paradise.” ~ Qeşaṣ al-Anbiyā, p. 32 cited by (Dehxodā 1998, V.3 4103).

In DU II, the correct meaning is the second. So, Paul has translated the sentence “do not keep anything

back from us.” (Paul 2013, 143) and it means that he has considered the first *m'* as a first person plural pronoun and the second one as a prohibitive article. Although both seem to be prohibitive articles due to the end of the line, the author repeats the word. Therefore, the meaning is: “Don't withhold anything (from them)” and as it has been said, “from them” can be eliminated since it is very common in Persian (more examples can be found in Dehxodā's entry for *bāz dāštan*).

23. *by*: Here it means “but”, same as Middle Persian. Zhang has translated it “but” in Line 20, whereas in *by ydwn šnydwm*, translated “I followed your advice” He may have considered it as a verbal prefix.

Conclusion

The linguistic form of this text has a mediating structure, which means that it shows the evolution of the Persian language - from Middle Persian to Early New Persian - well. We can see some features identical to Middle Persian and some identical to Early New Persian. The most important phonological feature that can be seen in this text is the various spellings of words, which reflects the various pronunciations of the words by the writer and again indicates the language transmission period. You can see these features in the lists below.

1.1. ~ Some features Identical with MP

- 1.1.1. The MP characteristic features of DU II, which have not been reflected in early NP texts in Perso-Arabic script or rarely used in some dialectical ENP texts such as the Quran translations and commentaries in NP, including:

- 1.1.2. The use of the ancient construction

of MP subjunctive verb mood.

- 1.1.3. The use of the adverb *bē* = but (as in Quran-e Qods translation).
- 1.1.4. The use of *ī* as relative and *Eḏāfe* (as in Quran-e Qods translation).
- 1.1.5. The use of the verb *h-* (to be) (as in Quran-e Qods translation)
- 1.1.6. The use of the conjunction *kū* (e.g. L.7 & 9). This conjunction is sometimes replaced by the relative *kē* and this shows the interchanging process of the two words. For instance, in L.19 *dw mrnd r' qw sr šmr 'y gwspond myhtr bwdn*.
- 1.1.7. The use of the adverbial suffix *-ihā*.
 - 6.1.8. The use of the preposition *ō* (𐭥).
 - 6.1.9. The use of suffix *-īd* instead of *-ād* in L.29 in verb *prystyd* '(he) sent' (this suffix has also been used in many ENP texts; This form corresponds to MP).

1.2. ~ Identical with NP

- 1.2.1. The loss of ergativity.
- 1.2.2. The use of preposition *rā* as direct object sign.
- 1.2.3. The use of postposition *rā* next to the preposition *mar*.
- 1.2.4. The use of *yakē* "a/one" instead of *yak* "one".

1.3. Phonological features

1. L.9 the verb *'yptwm* with the initial *a*

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(<**abi-/ady-āfta-*) and L.6 without the initial *a* as *yptwm*.

2. The preposition *abāg* in L.32 has preserved the initial *a*: *'b'p'sd mrnd* but in L.24 lost it.
3. *x^w* pronunciation and spelling is reduced to *x*.
4. The initial *a* is dropped in the word *nyz* "also" <**anī-z* (Cf. DU I:13 *any*).
5. The final *d* in three Plural endings is dropped (except L.36).
6. The consonant *g* in the relativistic suffix *-īg* is removed, while the verbal suffix *-ihā* is completely preserved.
7. The verbal prefix and the preposition *abar* is without the initial *a*: *'y br gwspond *myhtr*'. Cf. DU I:X *abar xāstumē*.

1.4. Orthography

The difference between *x* and /k/ in DU II can be the sign of the earliness of this text; just like DU I, the letter 𐭥 *k* represents the sound of *x* and the letter 𐭪 *q* represents the sound of *k* in DU II. For instance, L.6 *kwtn* /Xutan/ and L.3 *qwdq* [kōdak] (Orsatti 2019, 61). While in the texts of later periods, such as the legal text of Ahvaz, the letter 𐭪 *q* is used to indicate *Qāf*.

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