

The Origin of DB Aram. 66-69 – As shown by Nicholas Sims-Williams, lines 66-69 of the Aramaic version of the Bisitun Inscription (DB Aram.) are a translation of the last paragraph (9) of the lower tomb inscription of Darius I (DNb).¹ Yet the origin of the insertion of a section of DNb in DB Aram. is not clear. The presence in DB Aram. 66-69 of two Old Persian words in transcription, *prtr* (line 67) and *ʔymnš* (line 69) proves that the Babylonian version did not serve as source-text for this section. Sims-Williams summed up three possibilities. Firstly, that the Aramaic version of paragraph 9 was copied from an Old Persian version of DNb; secondly, that it was copied from an Elamite version of the same inscription; thirdly, that it was dictated in Old Persian and written down immediately in Aramaic by the scribe.

At first sight the occurrence of these Old Persian words contradicts the theory that this text is translated from the Elamite version of DNb. Yet the Elamite text, which is unfortunately damaged at the relevant places, may have contained those two words in transcription and in that case still is a possible source-text.² Hinz expressed doubts about this «nach dem epigraphischen Befund»³ without, however, specifying this «Befund».

1) *prtr*

The relevant phrase in Old Persian is *avašāO(c;:;)iy : āxšnūdiy : hya : para[tar : qahy]ātiy* «Rather listen to what is said openly» (53-55). The Elamite phrase (DNb 38) is partly damaged: *a-ak hu-be te[?]-u[m-ti ap-pa ...] šá [...ti]-ri-man-ra* «listen to what one says ... ».

It is unlikely that in the first lacuna one should restore *nu-in* «to you». In the Old Persian version of this phrase an expression for «to you» does not occur. The *šá* is clearly visible on the photograph (E.F. Schmidt, *Persepolis*, III, 1970, Pl.35), but the restoration *šá-[rák]⁴* is unlikely. El. *šarak*, which mostly represents OP *patiy*, does not mean «in public», but «ever, in case, *etwa*».⁵

Precisely the presence of this *šá* offers some problems to restore an Elamite transcription of OP *paratar* in the gap. Such a transcription would be *pa-ra-tar*, *ba-ra-da-ir*, ... but certainly would not contain a *š*. Yet, if the transcription only needs three signs, there is still space enough in the lacuna before *tirmanra*. Thus the presence of an Elamite transcription of OP *paratar* is not entirely impossible.

2) *ʔymnš*

Here the Old Persian sentence is *mā[patiy : š]iyātiyā : ayaumainiš : bavā* «Do not be unfit in prosperity» (58-59). The Elamite context is heavily damaged: *a-[nu] šá-rák [x⁶-da[?]] nap[?] te [... .. a-ak v.ma]-ul-[l]a [ak]-ka₄ li-na-a[k-k]án me-ni a-nu me-te-in*, «Do never [be unfit] in prosperity. A young man (*ma-ul-la*) who conducts disobediently will have no success» (41-43).

Since OP *šyāti-* always appears as *ši-ia-ti-* in the Elamite versions of the Achaemenid royal inscriptions and since these Elamite versions mostly have the same word order as the Old Persian texts, one would expect also here [*ši-ia-ti-ia*?]. There is, however, in the first gap of this phrase only place for two (maybe three) signs. A restoration [*šá-da*] (the Elamite transcription of the OP adjective *šyāta-* «happy» in XPh El. 39; also attested in Fort. 2649: 3-4) is also excluded, as the partly visible first sign of that lacuna cannot be *ša* or *šá*.

If one accepts here a different word order between the OP and the Elamite version it is still possible that a [*ši-ia-ti-ia*?] stood in the second gap, which contains five signs. In that case the Elamite transcription of *šiyātiyā* is the last word of the sentence: *nap? te x [ši-ia-ti-ia? a-ak v.ma]-ul-[l]a ...*

Whether it is possible to restore an Elamite transcription of *šiyāti-* or not, the text most certainly did not contain an Elamite transcription of OP *ayaumainiš*. This means that the Elamite version of DNb was not the text from which this passage was copied. Hinz was right in assuming this.

One could be inclined to think that the text was copied from an Old Persian version kept in the Royal Archive. It is, however, equally possible that the king dictated the text in Old Persian and that the scribe wrote it down directly in Aramaic. This process is parallel to the system of creating the Old Persian versions of the royal inscriptions: ⁸ the king dictates in Old Persian, the scribe writes it down in Elamite and retranslates it later in Old Persian. This explains also the high frequency of Elamite transcriptions of Old Persian words in the Elamite versions of the royal inscriptions.

It is sure that the source-text was drafted at the royal court. Since there were only a few persons who could read and/or write OP,⁹ it looks probable that the influence of this language was confined to Persia proper. There is thus no reason for the presence of an Old Persian copy in Egypt.¹⁰

From the royal court the text was sent to the different provinces of the Achaemenid empire. It surely remains possible that the archive in Egypt contained an Aramaic version of the last paragraph of DNb and that the insertion of that paragraph in DB Aram. was done in Egypt. Nevertheless I believe that the text which came into the hands of the scribe in Elephantine and which was copied later on the papyrus, already contained the little section of DNb.

The date when this translation of DB, including the part from DNb, was first written, is uncertain. Perhaps the source-text was drafted somewhere between 520 and 425 BC, but only sent to Egypt around the throne accession of Darius II (the latest on 13 February 423). More likely, however, it was written shortly after this date, when Darius II had successfully occupied the throne, to celebrate the 100th birthday of the victories of Darius I.¹¹ Together with the Aramaic version probably a new Babylonian and Elamite version were recorded. These versions also included the insertion of the last paragraph of DNb.¹² The Aramaic text was then sent to Egypt and some other satrapies. In Egypt a scribe wrote it down on a papyrus (around 421 BC)¹³ which was later used for the accounts on the verso.

1. N. Sims-Williams, *The Final Paragraph of the Tomb-Inscription of Darius I (DNb, 50-60): The Old Persian Text in the light of an Aramaic Version*, BSOAS 44 (1981), pp. 1-7.
2. N. Sims-Williams, BSOAS 44 (1981), p. 2.
3. W. Hinz, *Grosskönig Darius und sein Untertan*, A Green Leaf: Papers in Honour of Professor Jes P. Asmussen (Acta Iranica 28), Leiden, 1988, p. 476.
4. W. Hinz, *Altiranische Funde und Forschungen*, Berlin, 1969, p. 58.
5. I. Gershevitch, TPS 1979, pp. 168-188. According to him, *šarak* is the Elamogram of OP *patiy*.
6. Two horizontal and one vertical wedge are visible on the photograph. Possibly *su*, *rap*, *tur*, ...
7. Possibly *pír*.
8. I. Gershevitch, TPS 1979, pp. 114-155.
9. I. Gershevitch, TPS 1979, p. 116.
10. W. Hinz, A Green Leaf, 1988, p. 477 believes that DB Aram. was translated in Elephantine from the Old Persian text of DNb.
11. J. C. Greenfield and B. Porten, *The Bisitun Inscription of Darius the Great: Aramaic Version*, (Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum 1/5/1), London, 1982, p. 3; B. Porten and A. Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt*, III, Jerusalem, 1993, p. 59.
12. Maybe one of the two fragments of DB Bab., found in Babylon, was a part of this version. They did not belong to it both of them, since they are not fragments of the same exemplar of DB (E. Von Voigtlander, *The Bisitun Inscription of Darius the Great: Babylonian Version* (Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum 1/2/1), London, 1978, pp. 65-66.
13. B. Porten and A. Yardeni, *Textbook*, III, 1993, p. 61.

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