Some Aspects of the Translation into Iranian Languages of the Works by Mani

Enrico Morano (Turin/Italien)

1

In his well known proclaim, in which he says that his religion is in 10 points superior to the other religions, Mani clearly states, in the first point, that his religion will be manifest in all countries and *in all languages*.

M5794+M5761
/7/ … γk kw dγn ʿγ /8/ [ʾ]hγngʾn pd yk šhr ʾwd yk /9/ ʿzwʾn bwd ∘∘ ʾγg dγn ʿγ mn /10/ ʾʾd kw pd hrw šhr ʾwd p[d] /11/ w(γ)sp ʿzwʾn pγdʾg bwʾd ∘
"Firstly: the older religions were in one country and one language. But my religion is of the kind that it will be manifest in every country and in all languages, and it will be taught in far away countries."
[Andreas / Henning 1933, p. 295]

It is common opinion that Mani wrote his books in his native Babylonian Aramaic, except for the *Šābuhragān*, which was written in Persian for the Sasanian King Šābuhr. Even so, Aramaic was never considered as a sacred language, and during Mani's lifetime, and shortly after his death, his disciples, probably under his supervision, translated all of his writings into Persian and Parthian, the two most important tongues of the empire. These translations, along with other Manichaean books, were taken to Central Asia, and were subsequently translated into Sogdian, Old Turkic and Chinese. It remains a mistery, however, why not a single line in Aramaic was found among the Manichaean Turfan texts.

2

Translating texts, especially Mani's writings, was a noble, very important, vital task for the Manichaeans. But how did they accomplish the task? Did they use particular techniques?

Discussions of the theory and practice of translation go back to antiquity. The Greeks distinguished between *metaphrase* (i.e. 'literal' or 'word-for-word', 'formal equivalence') and *paraphrase* (i.e. 'saying in other words', 'dynamic equiv-

alence'). Translators of religious texts often must consciously seek to produce a literal translation, in order to adhere as closely as possible to the source text. This seems to be the case, for instance, of the beginning of Mani's *Living Gospel*, which we have in Middle Persian (M17 and M644) and in Greek (Cologne Mani Codex, 66 ff.). In the few lines handed down by the manuscripts, the two translations, possibly from the same Aramaic source, go practically word for word, with the sole exception of the word for 'Christ', which in Persian is always "zoroastrianized" into Aryaman, the Avestan *yazata* of healing.

Mani's *Living Gospel*

M17 and M644 [Middle Persian]
ʾn m ʾnγ prystg ʿγg γγšw ʿ ʾ(r)γ ʾm ʾn pd q ʾ(m ʿγ) pdr bγ w(ʾ)b(r)γg ʾn °° h ʾ ʾn (kγ) ʾn ʾcγš bwd <hγm> {15 lines missing} ʾc ps wγsp ʾst ʾwd hrw cγ bwd w: bw ʾd pd ʾwγ zwr ʿγstγd {7 lines left blank}
'I Mani, apostle of Jesus Aryāmān, by the will of the Father, the true God, he from whom I came to be, [...] [V/ii] is after all (things), and everything which has been and will be stands by his power.'
[MacKenzie 1995, pp. 184 ff.]

Greek text (CMC)
ἐγὼ Μαννιχαῖος Ἰησοῦ **Χριστοῦ** ἀπόστολος διὰ θελήματος Θεοῦ Πατρὸς τῆς ἀληθείας ἐξ οὗ καὶ γέγονα, {ὃς ζῇ τε καὶ διαμένει εἰς αἰῶνας αἰώνων πρὸ παντὸς μὲν ὑπάρχων,} διαμένων δὲ καὶ μετὰ πάντα· πάντα δὲ τὰ γεγονότα τε καὶ γενησόμενα διὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ σθένους ὑφέστηκεν.
[Koenen / Römer 1988, pp. 44–46]

Also a litany, part of one of the two Psalms called *qšwdg ʾn ʾfrγwn* 'Blessings of the Little Ones', which we have in Parthian and Middle Persian, appears to be translated with extreme fidelity.

§25a ••••](n) w(ny)wd ʾn ʾy ʾwšt [hwm '… destructions we returned(?).'
§25b *ʾbn ʾs ° ʾzwšt hγm ʾd °°* '… we returned (to?) destruction.'

§26a *ʾb ʾg ʾbyd]g ʾn ʾbyd bwd [hwm* 'With those in need we became in need.'
§26b *ʾ[d] ʾbγdg ʾn ° (ʾb)[γ](d) hγm(ʾd) °* 'With the needy we were in need.'

§27a *ʾb ʾg wy]ptg ʾn wy(pt) (hw)[m]* 'With the deceived we were deceived.'
§27b *ʾd frnštg:n ° frn(š)[t] hγm ʾd °* 'With the destroyed ones we were destroyed.'

§28a [ˈbˈg hnjwg](ʾ)n hnjwg bwd hw[m] 'With the anguished ones(?) we became anguished(?).'

§28b ʾd ṯ ʾrɣg ʾn ° t ʾrɣg [b](wṯ) (h) ʾym ʾd ° 'With the dark ones we became dark.'

§29a [pd *wyspˈn](d)w ʾryšn:n dw ʾ(r)[yst] [hwm] 'In all the running we ran.'

§29b pd wɣsp cmg ° (t)[xt h](ɣ)m ʾd ° 'In/on all courses we ran.'

§30a p](d) wysp ʾn gryy(š)[n ʾn] [•••{?} *gryst]hwm 'In all the weeping we wept.'

§30b pd wɣsp b(rm)g ° [b](rm ʾd) hɣ°(m) ʾd (°) 'In/at every weeping we wept.'

§31a pd wysp ʾn [••]{?} [prbysyšn]:n (p)rbys ʾd [hwm] 'In all the injuring we were injured.'

§31b pd wɣs(p) [w](x)s(ʾ)g ° (wx)s ʾ(d h) ɣm ʾd ° 'In/at every wounding we were wounded.'

§32a [••{?} *pd *wysp ʾn ʾ]whng ʾn [wysp] [•••• '... in all the sorrows, all ...'

§32b (ˈw)m(ˈ)n [•••](. °) (p)d wysp ʾw(w)dj(n) ° wɣsp [•• •••](j)n ° 'And us/our ... in every harshness, every ...'

§33a •• hr](w ʾ)gw[c ••] {one line missing} '.. everywhere ...'

§33b (ʾ)[w]m ʾn hrw ʾgwc (wm ʾd) [••• •••](s ʾxš)d ° 'And we suffered everywhere ... (without?) pity.'

[DURKIN-MEISTERERNST / MORANO 2010, pp. 21 ff.]

<center>3</center>

Were then the Manichaean translators extreme metaphrasers? Already Cicero cautioned against the license of metaphrase:

> *Conuerti enim ex Atticis duorum eloquentissimorum nobilissimas orationes inter seque contrarias, Aeschini et Demostheni; nec conuerti ut interpres, sed ut orator, sententiis isdem et earum formis tamquam figuris, uerbis ad nostram consuetudinem aptis. In quibus non uerbum pro uerbo necesse habui reddere, sed genus omne uerborum uimque seruaui.*

> 'I have translated the excellent and contrasting orations of two of the most eloquent of the Attics: Aeschines and Demosthenes; nor did I translate them as an interpreter, but as an orator, with the same notions and the same forms and figures, using words appropriate to our usage. In so doing, I did not find it necessary to translate word for word, but I preserved their style and force.'

> [Cicero, *De optimo genere oratorum*, 5, 14-15]

A closer look at texts, of which we have the Middle Persian and the Parthian versions, reveals, however, how clever the Manichaean translators were.

Henning, while editing (Henning 1958, pp. 102-103) one of these bilingual texts, a litany, like the one mentioned above, from the *qšwdgˀn ˀfrywn*, had noticed this:

> „Denn die iranischen Manichäer, die überhaupt — wenn solch eine Verallgemeinerung erlaubt ist — eine literarische Ader hatten, waren ausnehmend gute Übersetzer; im Gegensatz zu den meisten Leuten des Orients begnügten sie sich nicht damit, das Original 'wörtlich' oder 'zwischenzeilig' wiederzugeben, sie bemühten sich vielmehr, eine sinngemässe, aber gleichzeitig idiomatisch tragbare und gefällige Übersetzung zu erzielen. Von der Wortähnlichkeit, etwa bei den im Mitteliranischen zahlreichen etymologisch identischen Wörtern, liessen sie sich dabei nicht täuschen; wenn die Bedeutungssphäre nicht genau übereinstimmte, wurde ein unähnliches Wort vorgezogen."

§323a *dryst wysˀγ **bšn**γwm wzrg* ∘
'Welcome, my great body[1]!'
§323b drwd] ˀbr tw ∘∘ mn **tn** wzrg [∘
'Welcome to you, my great body!'

§324a *dryst wysˀγ **cy(h)r**wm bˀmyw* ∘
'Welcome, my radiant form!'
§324b drwd] ˀbr tw ∘∘ **pˀdgyrb**[wm] nysˀgyn ∘∘
'Welcome to you, my shining form!'

§325a *dryst wysˀγ **dys**wm rwcˀg* ∘
'Welcome, my shining aspect!'
§325b drwd ˀb[r tw] **cyrg**wm rwšn ∘∘
'Welcome to you, my light-form!' [...]

§331a *(d)ryst wysˀγ swr **ˀbzˀr** ∘ kγ dwsṯˀ(n) ˀcyš phγp ˀrwm*
'Welcome, powerful banquet, with which I fill (my) friends!'
§331b drwd ˀbr tw wxrdygwm **wzrg** ∘∘ ˀc kw (ˀ)mbˀrˀm ∘∘ ˀw šyrgˀmgˀn
'Welcome to you, great banquet, with which I fill (my) friends!
M215 (Parthian) and M842 (Middle Persian)
[Durkin-Meisterernst / Morano 2010, pp. 94 ff.]

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1   Ela Filippone kindly informs me that in many New Iranian dialects *bšn*, besides 'stature, height', often means just 'body'. Among others she quotes: Kurdish Kurmanji *bejn* 1) 'heigth, stature (of a person)' (syn. *qam(et), qedqamet*); 2) 'waist' (syn. *navteng*); *bejn* [f.] 'corps, taille d'homme'; (Djabal Sindjār) *bêjin* [f.] 'corps'; Gurani *bažn* 'taille, corps'; Zaza *bejn* 'body (only for height reference)'; central dialects: Kermāni *bašn* 'body' [*tan, lālbād, sar tā pā*]; Ravāri *bašn* 'body'; Sirjāni *bašn* 'body and limbs' [*tan va andām*]; *bašn-e bar* 'all the figure' [*tamāme heykal*]; Zarqāni *bašn, bar o bašn* 'body'; Xunsāri *bašn* 'body'. I would like to thank her heartly for anticipating some results of her still unpublished research.

4

Paraphrase vs metaphrase: The beginning of Mani's Psalm: *ʿymyn ʾhynd* 'These are' [Morano 2009 and Durkin-Meistererernst / Morano 2010, pp. 116 ff.]:

In the case of the beginning of the second Psalm by Mani *Wuzurgān Āfrīwan* 'The Blessings of the Great Ones', we happen to have it in three versions: Middle Persian, Parthian and Sogdian. While the Middle Persian and Parthian ones go almost parallel, the Sogdian version is abridged and somehow condensed to a mere formula. Nevertheless, the Manichaean translators did not fail to show their skill: the figura etymologica **ʾfrywn cγ ʾfryd** (Parthian), **ysn ʿy yšt** (Middle Persian) and **ʾʾpry-wnh cwZY ʾʾpry-tδʾrt** "the blessing which he uttered", literally "the blessing which he blessed" is kept in all versions, and in the Middle Persian version the phrase *ysn ʿy yšt*, which sounds almost like 'the *yasna* which he performed', has a strong Zoroastrian flavour.

Compiled Parthian text [M790, Ch/U6546+Ch/So20501, M608b+M895b, M895e]

Headline: ʿγ(myn ʾ)[hynd]
ʿ γmyn ʾhynd **ʾfrywn ° cγ ʾfryd** mrym ʾnγ ° cγ fryštg cγ γγšwʿ mšyhʾẖ ° pd bgʾn pγdr kʾm ° kd [ʾw?] wzrgyft ° ʾwd hrwyn šhrʾn rʾz ʾbgws(t) ° [cγ bw](γd)bw(d) ʾst ° ʾwd ʾc šhrʾn ° ngwst ʾhynd ʾbdyšt ° ʾbr šhrʾn rwšnʾn rʾz ° ʾbr tʾrygʾn šhrʾn rʾz ° ʾwd ʾbr wmyxtgʾn šhrʾn [wr]dyšn nmʾd ° ʾwd kd ʿγmyn ° [ngws]tgyft ʾbgwst ° ʾdyʾn [ʿ γmyn ʾfrywn ʾfryd] ʾw wzrgyft xwdʾγ [ʾwd ʾw wyspʾn] pγdrʾn ° ʿγmyn [. . .]

"These a[re] . . ."
"These are the Blessings which Mār Mānī, by the will of the Father of Gods apostle of Jesus Christ, recited, when he revealed [the] Greatness and the mystery of the worlds [that will b]e, were, (and) are[2], and showed (things that) were hidden to the worlds: he showed concerning the mystery of the Light Worlds, concerning the mystery of the Dark Worlds, and concerning the turning of the mixed worlds. And when he revealed these [hidden] things, then [he praised this blessing] to the Lord of Greatness [and to all the] fathers: these [...]"

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2 The text at this point is badly damaged in all the manuscripts, and therefore it was heavily emended. The seemingly odd temporal sequence future-past-present, instead of the normal past-present-future, is supported by what follows, in exactly the same sequence: 'he showed concerning the mystery of the Light Worlds (ie. the paradise, what everybody *first* must aim at), concerning the mystery of the Dark Worlds, and concerning the turning of the mixed worlds'.

Middle Persian text [M379b]

*R/10/ [ˈγn ˈst] **ysn ˈγ yšt** m(r)[mˈnγ] R/11/ [prγstg] ˈγ γγšwˈ **ˈr(γ)[ˈmˈn]** R/12/ [pd k˚m](γ)šn ˈγ bγ **zr(w)ˈ[n** kˈ] R/13/ [ˈw] (w)zrgγh̲ ° w: n(h)[w](p)(t'n] R/14/ [rˈzˈ](n) ˈbhwpt ° ˈ(m)[wxt? ...] R/15/ [...](k/x. .)ˈn ˈγ b(w)γ(d b)[wd ˈst] R/16/ [ˈwd ˈz šhr]ˈn nhwpt h(γ)[nd ...] V/1/ n(h)[wpt h](γ)nd³ °[...] V/2/ r(w)[šn wh]γšt ˈ(w)[°ˈwd ˈbr] V/3/ [š](h)r t̲ˈrγg ° w: (ˈ)[br] V/4/ [š]hrˈn gwmγxtg[ˈn nmwd °] V/5/ (kˈ) ˈγmγn nhwpt(g) [γhˈn ˈbhwpt] V/6/ (h)γnd° ˈγgγš ˈst̲ˈ[γd] V/7/ [ˈ](γ)n ysn ˈw ˈwγ xwd(ˈ)[γ] V/8/ [ˈwd ˈ]w wγspˈn nγˈgˈ(n)[...] V/9/ [... h]rw kγ ˈγmγn rˈz(ˈ)[n ...] V/10 [...]° ˈγmγ<n> ˈndr ˈ(d/r/g)[....] V/11/ [...]ˈbhwpt hγnd (°)[...] V/12/ [...] hγb γzγd u ˈb[r] V/13/ [...](.)γ(.) ° (u) hmγs ˈw(.)[...] V/14/ [...](.) ° ˈ(γ) p(d) bˈrγ(s)[t ...] V/15/ [..(k/x)..]qγh̲ ˈbzwˈ(d) [...]* (end of page)

"R/10/ [This is] the Blessing recited by Mār[Mānī], R/11/ [the Apostle] of Jesus Ary[āmān] R/12/ [by the wish] of God Zurwā[n, when] R/13/ [the] Greatness and the secret [things] R/14/ [of the worlds] he revealed. He tau[ght?...] R/15/ [....] which will be [were and are] R/16/ [and which] were hidden [from the worlds] {*end of page*} {*beginning of page*} V/1/ were hidden. 19 [He showed on...] V/2/ [Light Pa]radise [and on the] V/3/ dark [wo]rld, and [on the] V/4/ mixed [wo]rlds. V/5/ When these hidden things were revealed, V/6/ then he prai[sed] V/7/ [th]is blessing to the Lord V/8/ [and] to all Ancestors[...] V/9/ [...] all those who [...] these mysteries. V/10/ Those in […] V/11/ […]are revealed. V/12/ [.....] may ye recite and upon V/13/ […]. And together to […] V/14/ […]. Who in the highest [.] V/15/ […] may increase/ be added to […]" (end of page)

Sogdian text [So14570/R/]

Headline in verso, (Parthian): *ˈγmγn ˈˈxγ-nt*

*/8/ ˈγnˈk xcγ **ˈˈpry-wnh** /9/ **cwZY ˈˈpry-tδˈrt** ˈxw /10/ xwtˈw ˈγšw ˈz-γˈnt mr /11/ mˈnγ ktxw pr rxwšnγˈ /12/ ˈz-nγ z-ˈwr ˈwstˈt °° /13/ rtγ ZKw kwcˈkh pr γwβtγˈ /14/ pwrnw kwntˈ r(t)γ wγˈβr ZY /15/ wˈnkw wˈβ °°*

"/8/ This is the Blessing /9/ which the Apostle /10/ of the Lord Jesus Mār /11/ Mānī prayed, when he was established /12/ in the power of the Light-Knowledge. /13/ And he filled his mouth with praise and spoke saying: (there follows the actual prayer)"

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3   Probably repeated erroneously (dittography).

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