

## 'THE LANGUAGE OF THE MEDIANS'

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In his article 'Caucasica'<sup>1</sup> Professor H. W. Bailey drew attention to an interesting article by A. Shanidze, 'The newly-discovered alphabet of the Caucasian Albanians and its significance for science', in a sadly inaccessible periodical.<sup>2</sup> 'The discovery of the lost alphabet was made by I. Abuladze in an Armenian manuscript of the fifteenth century containing a miscellany of alphabets, Greek, Syriac, Latin, Georgian, Coptic, Arabic, and Albanian.'

'In the same Armenian manuscript is preserved in seven different languages the Monophysite liturgical prayer "Άγιος ό θεός, άγιος ισχυρός, άγιος άθάνατος, ό σταυρωθείς δι' ήμās, έλέησον ήμās. One version is said to be in the language of the Medians (*Marac'*). . . . The other versions, all in Armenian script, are in Greek, Syriac, Georgian, Persian, Arabic, and Turkish.'

At first glance one would expect the 'language of the Medians' to mean that of the Kurds, the only sizeable nation of the area not otherwise mentioned. And surely, in Shanidze's words, 'there is no doubt that we have before us a Kurdish text'. Shanidze has established that the MS was copied in the first half of the fifteenth century, probably between 1430 and 1446, from a presumably much older original brought to Armenia from Feodosia in the Crimea. Since the earliest Kurdish literary work extant is the *Dīvān*<sup>3</sup> of *Malāe Jizvī*, who probably died c. 1480,<sup>4</sup> these few words, for what they are worth, may constitute the earliest record of Kurdish.

It may be of interest to reproduce here, for comparison, some of the other versions. They are given here in transliteration, from the excellent plates illustrating Shanidze's article. The accompanying interpretations follow those of Shanidze only in part. It will be seen that the original translations and transcriptions into Armenian letters had varying success.

Persian. *P'ak'ī xudā, p'ak'ī t'eva*  
*na, p'āk'ī bēmark, avār*  
*xāc' šādī bahri ma. Rāh*  
*māt k'ən'ār ma.*

\**Pāk-ī xudā, pāk-ī tavānā, pāk-ī bēmark, avar xāc' šudī bahr-ī mā, rahmat kun 'var mā.*

Arabic. *Γəδūs allāh, γəδūs*  
*əlyadər, γəδūs mayidūx*  
*əlmōt', əladī ən salāp, řa*  
*hamna.*

\**Quddūs allāh, quddūs al-qādir, quddūs mā-yizdūh[ < ya'xuduhu]-al-mawt, allādi inšalab, řhamnā.*

<sup>1</sup> *JR.AS*, 1943, 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestija Instituta Jazyka, Istorii i Material'noj Kul'tury im. akad. Marra Gruzinskogo Filiala Akademii Nauk SSSR* (Tiflis), iv, 1938. I am most grateful to Professor Bailey for the loan of his copy.

<sup>3</sup> Ed. Martin Hartmann, *Der kurdische Dīwan des Schēch Aḥmad*, Berlin, 1904.

<sup>4</sup> See Alauddin Sejjadi, *Məz'ūy adabī kurdī*, Baghdad, 1952. 155-61.

Turkish. *Arî t'anŷri, arî guč  
lu, arî aŷalsəz, yisa ki  
xač'á čaxtónk. Rahmat  
ŷəlgül biza.*

\**Arî tanŷri, arî güčlü, arî aŷalsəz, yisa ki xača čiqŷiy, rahmät qilŷil bizä.*

'Median'. *Pakšž xodč, pakčž zähm,  
pakčž vémark, kóy hat'  
i xač'č, əškərma. Rahmät'  
ē ma.*

Professor Henning has recently<sup>1</sup> quoted from this text, characterizing it as 'ein nordiranischer Dialekt allerdings nicht sehr alten Gepräges'. There can be no questioning his etymology of *əškərma* 'for us' (< *ač-kərd-*, cf. MPers., Parth. *ač ed kird* 'for this (reason)'), a form now replaced in Northern Kurdish by *zi bō ma*, or *bōnā ma*. But the word *hat'* allows of a simpler explanation than his "hanged" (older *haxt*, cf. NPers. *āhixt* etc.). Comparison with the phrase from John xix, 20,

(i) *au ŷi . . . lə k'ō k'i Isa hat'ə xač' k'ərən,*

(ii) *āu ŷiē Yisus lē hat'ā xač'k'ərən,*<sup>2</sup>

*ὁ τόπος . . . ὅπου ἐσταυρώθη ὁ Ἰησοῦς,*

with the normal Northern Kd. periphrastic passive 'came to crucifixion', shows that we have here also the verb *hāt'in* 'to come' (< \**ā-gata-*). *pākiž*, *pāqiž* 'clean, pure' and *zərm* 'strong' are common Northern Kd. words. It seems, therefore, that the text is to be read as

\**Pākiž xudē, pākiž zəhm, pākiž vēmarg, kōy hātī xāčē 'z kir ma, rāhamatē ma.*

A modern translation of 'who was crucified' might read *kō yē hātī(a) salb kirinē*, with the 'Demonstrative Izafe' *yē* serving as a relative pronoun. The *koy* of the text may well also contain a relative element *-y*, beside the subordinating particle *kō* (MPers. *kw*).

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<sup>1</sup> *Handbuch der Orientalistik, Abt. I : Der Nahe und der Mittlere Osten, IV. Bd. : Iranistik, I. Abschnitt : Linguistik, Leiden-Cologne, 1958, 78.*

<sup>2</sup> From Kurdish translations of the Gospels in Armenian script, (i) BFBS, Constantinople, 1857 ('translated by Stepan, an Armenian of Hainch'), (ii) ABS, Constantinople, 1911 ('translated by Messrs. Amirkhanian, Der Ghazarian and Abalahadian').