

Relying on some European languages, such as English Language, to translate Classical Greek into New Persian (Farsi) might incorrectly transfer the true sense of the Greek texts into New Persian. And, it is necessary to conduct some studies about probable direct translations from Classical Greek into New Persian, eliminating any medium except the Iranian Languages. One way is to look for ancient bilingual texts in Greek and one of the Iranian Languages. According to the discoveries over more than a century in Iran and her neighbour countries, there are some bilingual or trilingual inscriptions and documents composed in one or two Iranian Languages and Koinē Greek. Noticing that New Persian is a following phase of older Iranian languages, namely Parthian and Middle Persian (Brunner, p. xi), of which the latter was used in the composition of some or all inscriptions of Sassanid era (224-651 A.D.; Daryaei, pp. 187 ff), if we focus on inscriptions or documents which composed by both Koinē and Middle Persian, we might find a way to reach direct Persian translations from Greek. In addition, the former, i. e. Parthian, was used to compose ancient inscriptions and documents both in Parthian era (ca. 247 B.C. - ca. 230 A.D.; Ibid, pp. 168-178) and Sassanid era (Brunner, p. xiv). Therefore, we can use both Parthian and Middle Persian to reach direct Persian translations from Koinē Greek and to a better understanding of Classical Greek.

An important inscription is the trilingual inscription of Šāpūr I, the second Sassanid king who reigned from 240 A.D. to 270 A.D. (Daryaei, pp. 189-191), inscribed on the outer face of the walls of an ancient building named as Ka'ba ī Zardošt in Fars Province in Iran. The inscription, including information about Šāpūr's wars against the Roman armies and Šāpūr's wishes and his asking of gods for himself and for his family, includes Middle Persian, Parthian, and Greek texts. Though the texts are not completely correspond to each other, but help us to find important equivalents and correspondences, regarding translation.

Here, we will compare the last Middle Persian sentence, the last but one Parthian sentence, and the last Greek sentence with each other (Back, pp. 369-71). We should notice that Middle Persian and Parthian utilize ideograms in writing, and therefore both writing with ideograms and a possible reading, or may be the only possible reading, will be written here.

A) Middle Persian Sentence with Ideograms:

'YK MNW 'ḤR LNḤ MR'ḤY YḤWWN ZK yzt'n ḥwprst'tly W ḥwk'mktly YḤWWNd 'YK 'LHc yzty ZNH 'wgnw ḥdbry YḤWWNd cygnw LNḤ YḤWWN. (Brunner, p. 210)

Its Reading:

kū kē pas amāh xwadāy bēh ān yazadān huparistātar ud hukāmagtar bēh kū ōy-iz yazad ēn ōwōn ayār bawēnd čiyōn amāh būd.

And, its Translation into English:

"In order that, whoever may be lord after us, he may be pious and of great good will toward the gods, so that to him the gods will also be friends thus as they have been to us." (Ibid, p. 210)

B) Parthian Sentence with Ideograms:

LḤwyš MNW B'TR MN LN YḤYH W prnḥw ḤWYt LḤwyš 'pr y'ztn CBW W krtkny twḥšywd 'YK y'zt 'dywr YḤYHnt W dastkrt 'BDWnt. (Ibid, p. 211)

Its Reading:

hau-iš ke pas aḥ amāh bawēndēh ud farraxw ahēd, hau-iš abar yazadān xīr ud kardagān tuxšēd kū yazad ayār bawēnd ud dastgird karēnd.

And, its Translation into English:

“He, also, who may be after us and may be fortunate, he, also, should exert himself in the affairs and rites of the gods, so that (to him) the gods will be friends and will make (him their) ward.” (Ibid, p. 211)

C) Greek Sentence:

κάκεϊνος δέ ὅστις μεθ’ ἡμᾶς ἔσται καὶ εὐτυχὴς ἔσται κάκεϊνος ἐπὶ τὰς χρείας καὶ θρεσκειάς τῶν θεῶν σπουδασάτω ἵνα οἱ θεοὶ βοηθοὶ αὐτῷ ἔσονται καὶ δαστικιρτην ἑαυτῶν ποιήσωνται. (Ibid, p. 211, footnote 2)

Noticing the Greek phrase as a Koinē sentence, we may assume the conjunction “ἵνα” to act instead of “ὥστε” to form an adverbial clause of result, not to form a subordinate clause of purpose with the conjunction as a final or purpose conjunction (See, for example, LSJ, ἵνα, B.II.1). In addition, we have another reason to treat the Greek sentence as a compound sentence with an adverbial clause of result. The reason is based on the structures of two corresponding Middle Iranian, i. e. Parthian and Middle Persian (Brunner, p. xi) sentences, showing compound sentences expressing results. If there had been no enough evidences to treat the Greek sentence as a consecutive clause, the sentence would have been translated as a final clause, as the following:

“And also that man who will be after us and will be fortunate, also let that man be eager for the affairs and rites of the gods in order that the gods may be assistant to him and may make a settling for themselves.”

(For the use of ἵνα with indicatives, see: LSJ, ἵνα, III. In addition, notice that there is no word in LSJ corresponding to the word δαστικιρτην, and therefore, in order to translate the word here into English, its probable Greek corresponding word, according to the line 16 of the Parthian version of the inscription, is used, which is the Greek word κτίσματα. See: Back, p. 326.)

However, as stated formerly, the Parthian and the Middle Persian corresponding subordinate sentences are result clauses composed by the subordinate conjunction “kū” that states a result here (Brunner, p. 236). Therefore, a true correspondence between the adverbial sense of the Middle Iranian subordinate clauses and the Greek phrase being assumed, the Greek phrase can be translated into English as the following:

“And also that man who will be after us and will be fortunate, also let that man be eager for the affairs and rites of the gods so that the gods will be assistant to him and make a settling for themselves.”

As a result of such a correspondence, a New Persian translation of the Greek phrase have to be composed as a result phrase, using the conjunction «که» (ke) that might interpret results better than the conjunction «تا» (tā) that may be used to interpret the destination (Mace, p. 156):

«و آن مرد نیز که پس از ما خواهد بود و خوشبخت خواهد بود، آن مرد نیز بر امور و آیینهای خدایان مشتاق باشد، که خدایان یاور وی خواهند بود و برای خود اقامتگاهی بسازند.»

Note 1: Michael Back has translated the Parthian and Middle Persian sentences into German, using ‘Damit’ as the result conjunction (Back, pp. 369-371). (We thank Ms Foradi for her explanation of the item.)

Note 2: What has been said above, is an example of a comparative study between the Iranian Languages and Greek, both Classical and Koinē, regarding translation. It is worth noting that there is a comparative study in Farsi on the Greek and Parthian versions of Šāpūr’s inscription, which is done by Abbas Mir-abol-fathi as his MA thesis in 2011, though it deals only with the first half of the inscription. In his study, Abbas Mir-abol-fathi has compared words and phrases in Greek and Parthian to reach a critical assessment of the Greek words and phrases used instead of their Parthian equivalents. And then, he has listed the equivalent words and phrases in tables with their New Persian (Farsi) translations.

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