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THE MIDDLE PERSIAN TEXT *SŪR Ī SAXWAN* AND THE LATE SASANIAN COURT *

RÉSUMÉ

Sūr ī Saxwan est un texte en moyen-iranien de l'époque sassanide tardive qui comporte une prière de bénédiction pour l'hôte et les divers invités du banquet. Ainsi le texte fournit une liste des haut dignitaires administratifs qui étaient importants aux VI^e - VII^e siècles et étaient des proches du Roi des Rois. Cet article discute la structure du texte, et compare l'ordre des administrations par rapport à celui donné dans les inscriptions sassanides des III^e et Ve siècles. Enfin, une transcription et une traduction du texte (manuscrit MK) sont proposées, assorties de notes critiques.

Mots clés

Cour sassanide — banquet — dignitaires sassanides — *gāh-nām*g — *Sūr ī Saxwan*.

ABSTRACT

Sūr ī Saxwan is a Middle Persian text about the blessing of a banquet, and of the host and guests from the late Sasanian period. The text is important in that it provides a list of offices, which were most important in the sixth and seventh centuries CE and closest to the king of kings. This essay first discusses the structure of the text, followed by the offices and their order as compared with the early Sasanian titles reflected in the Sasanian inscriptions. Finally a transcription and translation of the text is provided with critical notes with the aid of the MK manuscript.

Keywords

Sasanian court — banquet — Sasanian dignitaries — *gāh-nām*g — *Sūr ī Saxwan*

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Most middle Persian texts tend to give an ideal and static version of the history, society and religion of the Sasanian Empire. For understanding the developments in the administrative history of Persia

in Late Antiquity, one must compare the early Sasanian inscriptions of the third and fourth centuries with seals, bullae and the late Middle Persian texts of the fifth and sixth centuries. I have elsewhere emphasized that, however late (post-Sasanian) these texts may be, they reflect the reforms of Xusrō I and thus show the administration, society and history of the *late* Sasanian Empire.¹ Indeed, the informing intention of the Middle Persian texts was not of so much accuracy for any particular period, but rather an idea of the idyllic history, society, religion and/or administration that may have existed at some time. The text examined here, the *Sūr ī Saxwan*, is one such text, the contents of which suggest that it was composed in the sixth or seventh century CE.

The text is a blessing of a banquet, and of the hosts and guests, by what later came to be known as a *maddah* / eulogist, who also continued the tradition in the post-Sasanian period. It should be noticed, however, that there is a religious / sacrificial aspect to the speech. The text is of interest for the light it sheds on Sasanian court culture, including administrative structure and courtier hierarchy. One can imagine a banquet at the court at the time of Xusrō I or Xusrō II, where the ranking of guests is apparent and their functions are emphasized. One should ask: Is the order provided in the *Sūr ī Saxwan* formulaic or real? I suggest that

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¹ Daryaee 2003a, p. 44-45.

one can see a real order, for courtiers and for those giving speeches, which became formulaic after Xusrō I. Much like other similar texts, such as *On the Manner of Letter Writing (Abar ēwēnag ī nāmag nibēsišn)*, the formula is set so that the eulogist or scribe knows how to proceed.² Eulogists were taught how to go about blessing the deities, the king and the courtiers. The order of dignitaries mentioned is also interesting in that it may provide a glimpse into the now lost Sasanian *Gāh-nāmag (Notitia Dignitatum)*, similar to the extant Armenian text (*Gāhnāmak*) regarding the Naxarars and the Armenian court. This list may also be compared with the *Notitia Dignitatum* of the Roman world, albeit a much shorter version.³

But the *Sūr ī Saxwan* is more similar in content to another text which is found in Late Antiquity in the Mediterranean world. This is the *κλητορολόγιον* of Philotheos, completed in 899 CE.⁴ The word *κλητορολόγιον* is very much linked with *κλεσις* "invitation" and *κλητοριον* "banquet," which is very much matched with our text, usually known as a dinner speech. The second chapter of the *κλητορολόγιον* is important in that it lists the highest dignitaries who join the emperor's table: the Patriarch of Constantinople, Caesar, and other dignitaries. One sees a similar list in the *Sūr ī Saxwan*, but the progression of the list of deities, heavens and offices mentioned is Zoroastrian in nature. The text begins with an order that is both spiritual and corporeal. First, Ohrmazd is mentioned, followed by the Amaharspandān (Holy Immortals) who are said to be in paradise, then Ohrmazd's name is repeated. Following this, the seven heavens are mentioned, from the lowest station to the highest where Ohrmazd resides. This is followed by a list of the seven *Kišwars* (climes or continents), finishing with the central clime of *Xwanirah*. Then, the three sacred fires are praised, followed by Mihr, Srōš, Rašn, Wahrām, Wāy, Aštād and Frawahr.

After the mention of the deities, the corporeal order of things begins. Naturally, the *Šāhān Šāh* (King of Kings) is mentioned first. Then are listed

² Zaehner 1937-1939, p. 93-109.

³ *Notitia dignitatum omnium tam civilium quam militarium in partibus Occidentis* (Latin version), for the East.

⁴ "Philotheos, Kletorologion of," p. 1662.

princes of the blood, the Grand Minister, the Generals of the four quarters of the empire, Judge of the Empire, the Chief Councilor of the Mages, and the performer of the Drōn ceremony. One may be able to make several connections between the spiritual and corporeal worlds represented, since the realm of Ohrmazd and his cohorts is mirrored by the *Šāhān Šāh* and his court. Enumerating the order of the courtiers also gives us a general view of the *gāh* or place of particular dignitaries relative to the King of Kings. The text itself may be divided into two sections: The first part (passages 1-17) which is the before-banquet speech, and the second part (passages 18-22) which is the after-banquet speech, where the eulogist is full of food and wine, and gives thanks to the deities and the host.

The list and order of rank and offices for the *Sūr ī Saxwan* is as follows:⁵

<i>šāhān šāh</i>	King of Kings
<i>pūs ī wāspuhr ī šāhān</i>	Princes of the Blood / Sons of the King
<i>wuzurg framādār</i> ⁶	Grand Minister
<i>xwarāsān, xwarwarān, nēmrōz spāhbed</i> ⁷	Generals of northeast, southwest, southeast
<i>šahr dādwarān</i> ⁸	Judge of the Empire

⁵ For a discussion of the titles which appear here see Gyselen 1989.

⁶ The *wuzurg framādār* was certainly the most important personage in the court after the King of Kings and the princes from the fourth century CE onwards. The holders of this title include Xusrō Yazdgerd (from the Syriac sources as *harmadārā rabbā*, see Chabot 1902, p. 260; Mihr-Narseh in the fifth century CE, see Henning 1954, p. 99-100. For other figures who may have been a *wuzurg framādār* see Chaumont 2001, p. 125-126).

⁷ The omission of the *spāhbed* of Abāxtar / Ādurbādagān in this text certainly suggests the religious / ritualistic nature of the text where *hamāg zōhr* can not be directed towards it. For example in the *Bundahišn* (XIV.27-28) because Mašānē poured milk as libation towards the north / abāxtar, the demons became stronger, see Pakzad 2005, p. 187-188. I would suggest that is the reason for the omission of this *spāhbed* in this text as compared with others, see Daryaee 2002, p. 7-11. For the latest and comprehensive evidence for the *spāhbeds* see Gyselen 2001.

⁸ This title echoes the early *hāmšahr dādwar* "Judge of the whole empire," in the third century CE which was held first by Kerdīr. We come across the title again for Mār Qardag who held the title of *šahr dādwar*, Bedjan 1895, p. 228. On Mār Qardag see now Walker 2006. In the *Mādiyān ī Hazār Dādēstān* we have the title of *šahr dādwarān dādwar*, which

<i>mowān handarzbed</i> ⁹	Chief Councilor Mow
<i>hazārbed</i> ¹⁰	Chiliarch
<i>drōn-yaz</i> ¹¹	Performer of the Drōn Ceremony

Let us see how this hierarchy of dignitaries compares with those of the Ka'be-ye Zardušt and the Paikuli inscriptions.¹² For Ardaxšīr I's court we have a list of local kings mentioned first, followed by the queen and Viceroy (*bidaxš*), Commander of a Thousand (*hazāruf*), and then a Raxš who is a General (*spāhbed*), and Chief Secretary (*dibīrbed*) (ŠKZ 42). This is followed by another series of lesser titles such as Chief of Armor (*zēnbed*) and Chief of the Stable (*āxwarrbed*) (ŠKZ 43). Obviously this list is much more detailed and represents the entire court at the time of Ardaxšīr. The *Sūr ī Saxwan* is representative of a much more private affair and provides a list of the most intimate members of the court. Šābuhr I's court was even larger: local kings, queens and a Walaxš, son of Pābag who is mentioned in the inscription as *walaxš ī wispuhr ī pābagān* (ŠKZ 44). By the time of the *Sūr ī Saxwan* the office has become the formulaic *pūs ī wāspuhr ī šāhān* which exactly matches the Ka'be-ye Zardušt inscription. In the Ka'be-ye Zardušt inscription it appears that the individuals' relation to the king and the royal family was more important and that a strict hierarchy of rank as it exists in the *Sūr ī Saxwan* had not come into existence. Because of this the inscription is of lesser usefulness and importance.

According to M. Shaki was introduced during the reign of Yazdgerd II (439-457 CE), Shaki 1993, p. 558.

⁹ It appears that the holder of the office had both administrative, but more importantly legal skills. We also come across this title in the Armenian sources as *mogac' anderjapet* and *mowan anderjapet* (Elišē, 8, p. 315; Lazar P'arpec'i, 2.55, 57, p. 326, 345, 349; and P'awstos Buzand, 4.47, all quoted by Chaumont, 1990, p. 23).

¹⁰ It appears that the office of *hazārbed* came into being in the Sasanian period and that in the late third, early fourth centuries CE at the court of king of kings, Narseh a Affarban held this title and was one of the two officers (along with the *hargbed*) that remained with him when the Roman representatives came to the court, see Shayegan 2005, p. 94.

¹¹ As any important dinner a *drōn-yaz*, someone who is in charge of making ritual offering of a portion of the food to the deities must have been present at the court. The office is rarely mentioned and so the *Sūr ī Saxwan* is important for this title. For the Drōn ceremony see Choksy 1996, p. 554-555.

¹² The readings for the ŠKZ is from Huyse 1999. The reading for the Paikuli is from Skjærvø/Humbach 1978-1983.

In the Paikuli inscription we have a different order. The Prince is mentioned, followed by the Chiliarch (*hazārbed*) and General (*spāhbed*). Does this suggest that by the sixth century the office of *hazārbed* had lost its importance, and the *spāhbed(s)* had increased in power? In the fourth century inscription from Persepolis, representative of the time of Šābuhr II, we have a very different list. A Chiliarch of Sīstān (*sīstān hazārbed*) is placed at the top and is followed by a Mage of Warūčān (*warūčān mow*).¹³ That could mean the office of *mowān handarzbed*, which is placed in the sixth seat at the court of the King of Kings, may have been a combination of these two important offices which existed separately at the local court of Sīstān.¹⁴ We should remember, however, that the affairs of the local court needs not be a microcosm of the royal court and that one list belongs to the fourth century (pre-reform) and the other to the sixth century (post-reform). Still, the inscription from the time of Šābuhr II and the *Sūr ī Saxwan* has one thing in common and that is that food is mentioned.

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The *Sūr ī Saxwan* has been translated into English by J.C. Tavadia¹⁵ and in Persian by S. Orian¹⁶ and, most recently, by K. Mazdapour who provides the best analysis.¹⁷ The grammar of the text shows that it is a late composition and certain words carry their Classical Persian meaning. Of course this may suggest that already in the Sixth and the Seventh centuries CE, the meaning of some of these words had made the semantic shift to their Classical Persian understanding, where McKenzie's dictionary, however invaluable, will not suffice. In terms of the critical apparatus, additions are placed in parenthesis (), while deletions are indicated as such < >, and emendations are shown with an asterisk *.

¹³ Frye 1966, p. 90; Daryaee summer 2001, p. 111-112.

¹⁴ Daryaee 2003b, p. 201.

¹⁵ Tavadia 1935, p. 1-99.

¹⁶ Orian 1992, p. 186-189.

¹⁷ Mazdapour 2004-2005, p. 103-130.

TRANSCRIPTION

pad nām ī yazdān

1. āzādīh¹⁸ ī az yazdān ud wehān andar har gāh (ud) zamān guftan ud hangārdan sazāgwār pad nāmčīšt andar rōzgar-ē pad ēn ēwēnag
2. gōš andar darēd ašmā wehān ēdar mad estēd tā abar stāyēnīdārīh ī ēn sūr āfrīn az yazdān ud spāsdārīh ī ēn mēzdbān rāy saxwan gōwēm
3. hamāg zōhr bawēd hamāg zōhr ohrmazd ī xwadāy kē pad mēnōgān ud gētīgān mahist kē hamāg ēn dām ud dahišn dād pad-iš pānag dāštār būd estēd
4. hamāg zōhr ēn 7 amaharspand ī pad garōdamān hēnd ohrmazd wahman ud ardwhišt ud šahrewar ud spandarmad ud hordād ud amurdād
5. hamāg zōhr ēn 7 wahišt kē pad *wīrāy¹⁹ bālāy ēk pad mihrag-pāyag dō pad star-pāyag sē pad mäh-pāyag čahār pad xwaršēd-pāyag panj pad harbuz-pāyag šaš (pad asar-rōšnīh)²⁰ haftom pad rōšn garōdmān ī was rōšnīh ī hu-čīhr brāzagtom ī purr-huīh²¹ ī purr-nēkīh kē pēš-gāh ī ohrmazd ī xwadāy xwad pad mēnōgān xwadāyīh kē ēn *15²² (ud) haft kišwar²³ <amahrspand>²⁴ arzah (ud) sawah ud fradadafš ud wīdadfš (ud) wōrūbarīšt (ud) wōrūjarišt kē pad mayān xwanīrah ī bāmīg was hambār ī purr-mardōm ī purr-nēkīh
6. hamāg zōhr ādur-farrōbāy ud ādur-gušnasp ud ādur-burzēnmīhr ud abārīg ādurān ātaxšān ī

¹⁸ Tavadia 'p'tyh¹⁹ Tavadia wylwk "man" and has added the number 1000 after it; Mazdapour has nylng "spell." Orian follows Tavadia and inserts the 1000 as well. I would suggest wyl'd "arrange, prepare," in the sense of arranging the heavens.²⁰ There is a lacuna here, but from Zoroastrian cosmology it is certain that we should have 'sl-lwšnyh. See Panaino 1995, p. 205-221. Orian has left the lacuna.²¹ Tavadia emends to pwl-GDE and Orian has accepted his reading. The manuscript, however, clearly shows pwl-hwyh which Mazdapour suggests as well.²² DP provides the numeral 15 which makes sense here as Ohrmazd along with the Amaharspandān and the seven Wahišts would come to fifteen (Ohrmazd counted twice).²³ Tavadia has also inserted kyšwr correctly as the list of the climes follows it. Mazdapour does not insert the word, nor does Orian.²⁴ Mazdapour and Orian do not omit.

pad dād-gāh nišāst estēnd čand ahy-tar hamēšag-sōz ī hamēšag-yazišn ud hamēšag-zōhr bawēnd

7. hamāg zōhr mihr ī frāx-gōyōd ud srōš ī tagīg ud rašn ī rāstag²⁵ (ud) wahrām ī amāwand ud wāy ī weh ud wēh-dēn ī māzdēsnan ud aštād ī frēh²⁶-dādār gēhān ud frawahr ī ahlawān
8. hamāg zōhr hamāg mēnōg ī meh ud weh kē pad sih rōzag gāh paydāgēnīd estēd
9. hamāg zōhr šāhānšāh ī mardān pahlom
10. hamāg zōhr pus ī wāspuhr ī šāhān farroxtom ī dāmān pahlomtōm andar gēhān abāyīšnīgtom
11. hamāg zōhr wuzurg framādār kē pad wuzurgih wuzurg ud pad pādixšāyīh pādixšāyīhā ud pad-iz dahišnān meh ud weh
12. hamāg zōhr xwarāsān spāhbed hamāg zōhr xwarwarān spāhbed hamāg zōhr nēmrōz spāhbed
13. hamāg zōhr šahr²⁷ <ī> dādwarān
14. hamāg zōhr mowān handarzbed ud hamāg zōhr hazārbed hamāg zōhr drōn-yaz²⁸
15. hamāg zōhr meh ud weh kē yazdān pad ēn mēzd arzānīg kard dahād zūd pad xwadāyīh ērān-šahr ud abrang pad mayān bawād čiyōn pad xwadāyīh ī jam ī šēd ī hu-ramag rōzgar farrox wehān xwašīhā rāyēnēd yazdān ēk hazār padīrād ud āfrīn pad ham mērag ī mēzdbān kunad
16. pad nāmčīštīg āfrīn ēn kunād kū abāg mardōmān ī xwad tan-drust ud dīr-zīwišn ud xwāstag pad abzōn ēdōn bawād čiyōn az abestāg paydāg

²⁵ Mazdā pour l'cystk.²⁶ Orian pr'c.²⁷ Tavadia inserts d'tbl after štr which is not necessary; Mazdapour emends the word to d't and Orian reads it as d'tbl. The MK manuscript which is now in the process of being published clearly shows that the word is štr. I would like to thank Professor A. Hintze who will publish the manuscript for providing me with the pages of MK containing this text.²⁸ Mazdapour makes the suggestion to read dlwn' as "bow."

TRANSLATION

In the name of Yazdān

1. It is befitting to say and consider gratitude for the Gods and the good ones at every moment and time, especially at such a day in such a manner.
2. Listen you good ones who have come here so that I speak to praise this banquet, of the Gods and gratitude towards this host.
3. May it be worthy of all offerings: Worthy of all the offering (is) the Lord Ohrmazd, who among the spiritual and material world is the greatest, who created all of the creatures and creations, (and) it is its guardian and preserver.
4. Worthy of all the offerings (are) these seven Holy Immortals who are in Paradise: Ohrmazd, Wahman, and Ardwhišt and Šahrewar and Spandarmad and Hordād and Amurdād.
5. Worthy of all the offerings (are) these seven heavens which through arrangement are above (one another): one at cloud-station, two at star-station, three at moon-station, four at sun-station, five at Harborz-station, six at [Endless Light], seven at Rōšn Garōdmān, full of light, beautiful radiance, full of goodness, full of beneficence, which is before the Lord Ohrmazd himself, ruling over the spiritual realm which are these fifteen (and) the seven (climes): Arzah and Sawah and Fradadafš and Wīdadfš and Wōrūbarīst and Wōrūjariš, which in the middle is the glorious Xwanīrah, is the store of many people (who are) full of goodness.
6. Worthy of all the offerings (are) Ādur-farrōybāy and Ādur-Gušnasp and Ādur-Burzēnmīhr and other sacred fires and fires seated at their place of creation (i.e., designated place), may they always be burning, always worshipped, and always (receiving) offerings first.
7. Worthy of all the offerings (is) Mihr, possessor of the wide pastures, and Srōš the strong, and Rašn the truthful, and Wahrām the powerful, and Wāy the good and the Good Religion of the Mazda-worshipping religion, and Aštād the prominent creator of the corporeal world, and Frawahr of the righteous ones.
8. Worthy of all offerings (are) the great and good spirits who at the time of Sīh Rōzag (each of their names) are revealed.
9. Worthy of all offerings (is) the King of Kings, foremost of men.
10. Worthy of all offerings (are) the principal sons of the king, most fortunate of the foremost creatures, most necessary in the corporeal world.
11. Worthy of all offerings (is) the Wuzurg Framādār, who in greatness is great and in sovereignty is the sovereign and among the created (i.e., men) is greater and better.
12. Worthy of all offerings (is) the Spāhbed of Xwarāsān, worthy of all offerings (is) the Spāhbed of Xwarwarān, worthy of all offerings (is) the Spāhbed of Nēmrōz.
13. Worthy of all offerings (is) the Chief Judge of the Empire (Šahr Dādwarān).
14. Worthy of all offerings (is) the Chief Councilor of the Mages (Mowān Handarzbed) and worthy of all offerings (is) the Leader of a Thousand (Hazārbed), worthy of all offerings (is) the performer of the Drōn ceremony.
15. Worthy of all offerings is the great and good (things) which the Gods have provided in this meal, may he quickly give sovereignty to Ērānšahr, and splendor amidst it, as it was during the sovereignty of Jamšēd of good herds, (may) the day of blessed good ones continue with pleasure, (may) the Gods accept it a thousand times, and also bless the man who is the host.
16. Especially may he bless this that for his own people, (provide) health, long life and increase in wealth, may it be in this way as it is manifest from the *Avesta*.

TRANSCRIPTION

17. ka-mān nēk stāyēnd hāmōyēn gētīg xwaštar ud hamwār āfrīn pad ēn mān kunād kū was bawād pad ēn mān was asp ī ray ud xwarrah mard ī gušn šāyēndīg ī hanjamanīg guftār abāg wihān ayād was zarr abāg asēm was jaw abāg gandum was hambār purr-nēkīh ud huram ud huniyāg bawēd nēk zamān ud nēk sāl ud nēk māh ud nēk rōz ud nēkīh az ēn mēzdbān rāy was nēktar
18. spās ī ohrmazd spās ī amahrspandān ud spās āsrōnān ud spās artēštārān ud spās wāstaryōšān ud spās hutūxšān ud spās ātaxšān ī pad gēhān spās xwargarān ud spās huniyāgarān ud spās darbānān ī pad dar spās ān mēzdbān kē ēn rōzgār handāxt ud sāxt kard ud rāyēnīd nēk-mān pihān ud stabr-mān²⁹ sūr <ī> (ud) pahlom-mān ham-rasišnīh ud stāyīšnīg ud menišnīg gōwišnīg ud kunišnīg spāsdār ī azabar spāsdārīh any čiš nēst

19. bē man saxwan wēš abāyēd guftan pēš ī ašmā wehān kū sagr hēm az xwarišn ud purr hēm az may ud huram hēm az rāmišn bē ašmā wehān stāyīšn ī yazdān ud āfrīn ī wehān bowandag guftan nē šāyēd āšmā wehān ēdar mad ēstēd har čē wehtar dānēd guft gōwēd
20. čē man har čē farroxīhātar čē man *harzag³⁰ *wasānd³¹ may azabar xward ēstēd xwaš xufsēd ud yazdān pad xwamn wēnēd ud drust āxēzēd ud pad kār ud kirbag kardan tuxšāg bawēd čē az bundahišn tā frazām kārīh ōy farroxīhtar kē yazdān ōy pad frārōnīh tuxšāgīh arzānīg dārēd
21. āfrīn čiyōnom guft bē rasād zamīg pahnāy ud rōd drahnāy ud xwaršēd bālāy bē rasād ēdōn bawād ēdōntar bawād
22. frazaft pad drōd šādīh ud rāmišn har wehān frārōn kunišnān

²⁹ Tavadia makes the suggestion to read the word as *'lt W cywk* for "flour and consecrated milk," and is accepted by Mazdapour and Orian. Tavadia himself was skeptical of the reading and indeed it does not make very much sense. Again thanks to A. Hintze I was able to read the word as *hick* in the sense of "loose" or in this context "drunk," more appropriate as in American colloquial "buzzed."

³¹ If the preceding reading is accepted the next word can be emended as *wsn'd*.

TRANSLATION

17. When they praise us, it is as if all of the material world will become more pleasant and continuously bless this house that it increase, in this house many swift horse and glory, manly man, able in a gathering to speak with reason (and) memory, and have much gold with silver, much barley with wheat, much storage of goodness and blissful and delightful, good time and good year and good month and good day and goodness for this host (and) for being better.
18. Thanks to Ohrmazd, thanks to Holy Immortals, and thanks priests (asrōnān) and thanks warriors (artēšdārān) and thanks husbandmen (wāstaryōšān) and thanks artisans (hutūxšān) and thanks the fires of the material world, thanks cooks and thanks entertainers and thanks the guardians of the palace, thanks this host who planned and prepared and arranged this day, good is our food and grand is our banquet, and excellent is our gathering and praiseworthy, and there is no other thing greater than thoughtful speech and action.

19. But I must say more before you good ones, that I am satiated from food and full of wine and blissful from pleasure; but it is not possible to praise the Gods and bless the good ones completely, you good ones who have come here, whoever knows to say it better say it.
20. Because I am evermore joyous, because I (am) buzzed on the account of much wine I have drunk, (I) will sleep pleasantly and I will dream of the Gods and will rise well and will be diligent in doing work and in deed, because from the beginning of creation to the end, his work is evermore joyous, whom the Gods value his diligence through righteousness. May it be so, it will be so.
21. May there come blessing in the manner that I have said, the width of earth and the length of river and the height of sun. May it be so, it will be so.
22. Finished with salutations, happiness and pleasure unto every righteous doer.

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²⁹ Tavadia makes the only logical suggestion as the text has *pšnwst plm'n'* to read as *pyh'n* and connect the last three letters with the next word as *W stpl*. This is followed by Mazdapour and Orian who read the first word as *pyh*.

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SHAPUR, FILS D'OHRMAZD, PETIT-FILS DE NARSEH

ABSTRACT

Publication of a sealing with the royal seal of Shapur II.

Keywords

Sasanian — clay sealing — royal seal — Shapur II.

* * *

Il y a quelques années apparut un sceau d'un roi sassanide identifié comme Peroz (457/59-484) grâce au portrait avec la couronne royale qui orne le centre du sceau¹ et la longue inscription qui l'entoure². Cette légende est disposée sur deux lignes — interrompue entre 11h et 1h par la couronne royale —, et se termine par quelques lettres à 3h, sur une troisième ligne. Si on est tenté de commencer la lecture à 11h — au début de la ligne extérieure —, c'est cependant vers 3h que la légende commence. Aussi l'enchaînement entre la première et la deuxième ligne se place-t-il à ce même endroit, ainsi que le dernier terme de la troisième ligne. La légende comporte une brève généalogie de Peroz — fils de Yazdgird <II>, petit-fils de Vahram <V> — ainsi que des titres et des épithètes pour les trois rois.

Philippe Gignoux fut le premier à proposer une lecture de cette légende³, légèrement amendée ensuite par P. O. Skjærø qui proposait la lecture : (1ère ligne) *nycny mzdysn bgy l'mštry kdy pylwcy MLKAN MLKA ZY plhwy W⁴ hw'ply W klkpky MNW yzd'n nwky GDE 'pzwty 'yr'n* (2e ligne) *W 'n>yr'n MNW čtry MN yzd'n BRE mzdysn bgy kdy*

¹ Malheureusement publié sans image.

² Illustrée dans Skjærø 2003, p. 284-286.

³ Gignoux 2000.

⁴ Écrit *plhw ZY*.

yzdk<rt>y MLKAN MLKA ZY hw'ply W klkpky npy bgy wlhl'n MLKAN MLKA (3e ligne) *ZY klkpky*.

Bien qu'il s'agisse d'un sceau royal, la légende comporte quelques erreurs de graphie, en particulier l'oubli de quelques lettres (indiquées entre <>) et le premier terme de la légende — *nycny* — reste énigmatique. Ce terme *nycny* avait été interprété différemment par Ph. Gignoux — *wycny* — qui l'avait associé au mot précédent — *'yr'n* — lisant *'yr'n wycny* i. e. *ērānvēzan*. Une telle lecture implique une erreur de graphie pour le *w* qui est écrit *n* — très courante dans les inscriptions —, mais elle a l'avantage d'éliminer un terme — *nycny* — inconnu par ailleurs. Est-ce envisageable de faire commencer la légende à 4h par ce terme *ērānvēzan* "(qui possède) le pays des aryens (?)" à l'instar de certaines légendes monétaires qui commencent par *ēr* "l'aryen"? Mais si on opte pour cette lecture, un autre problème se pose pour le passage *W 'yr'n* (2e ligne), puisque le terme *'yr'n* (sur la 1e ligne) étant associé à *wycny* ne peut plus l'être à *W 'n>yr'n*.

Dans l'état actuel des connaissances, on peut lire : (1^{re} ligne) *nycny* (?) *mazdēs n bay rāmšahr kay Pērōz šāhān šāh ī farrox *ud xwābar ud kirkakkar kē yazdān nōg xwarrah ābzūd ērān* (2^e ligne) *ud *anērān kē čīhr az yazdān pus mazdēs n bay kay *yazdgird šāhān šāh ī xwābar ud kirkakkar nab bay wahrān šāhān šāh* (3e ligne) *ī kirkakkar* "Le (... ?), le mazdéen, le Seigneur — qui (garde) le pays en paix — Kay Pērōz, roi des rois — le Fortuné, le Généreux, le Bienfaisant, pour qui les dieux ont fait croître un nouveau khvarrah⁵ — des Iraniens et *non-Iraniens, dont l'apparence⁶ (vient) des dieux, fils du mazdéen, le Seigneur, Kay Yazdgird, roi des

⁵ Nouvelle traduction proposée par Ph. Gignoux.

⁶ À propos de ce terme, voir dans ce volume p. 34-37.