

## An Aramaic inscription from Cappadocia (Arebsun B1)

The Arebsun inscriptions in Royal Aramaic, engraved on two black stones (A-B), belong to the late Achaemenian period or the early Parthian period.<sup>1</sup> The inscriptions commemorate the marriage of BYL (Bêl) with his sister in its two aspects: one, the marriage of the king with his sister, such as that of Vištāspa with Hutaosā<sup>2</sup>; the other, the symbolic marriage of the solar twin, Sun (Ahura Mazdā) and Dawn (Daēnā Māzdayasniš), reflected in the junction of Kingdom and Religion.

### B1

- 1    [’hwr]mzd w-dynmzdysnš \_  
      [mlk]t’ ’hth w-’ntth zy byl  
      kn ’mr ’nh ’ntt zy byl mlk’  
      ’hr byl kn ’mr l-dynmzdysnš  
      ’nt ’hty šgy’ h̄kym  
6    w-špyr’ ’nt mn ’lhn  
      w-’l zk ’nh šwyt lky  
      \_ \_ ’ntt zy l-  
      by \_ \_

‘Ahura Mazdā<sup>3</sup> and Daēnā Māzdayasniš<sup>4</sup>  
The queen, the sister and wife of Bêl,  
said thus: “I am the wife of Bêl<sup>5</sup>, the king.”  
Then Bêl said thus to Daēnā Māzdayasniš:  
“Thou, my sister, art very wise,  
And good<sup>6</sup> art thou, (better) than the (other) Yazata<sup>7</sup>;

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<sup>1</sup> These inscribed stones were discovered by Y. I. Smirnov in 1895, and are now in the Istanbul museum. For the bibliography of the editions and studies, see André Lemaire, “Les pierres et inscriptions d’Arebsun, nouvel examen”, *Irano-Judaica* V, Jerusalem, 2003, 138-64.

<sup>2</sup> AJ 14 *pas vištāsp šāh ka-š hān* + *soxan* + *ašnūd bramīd*, + *vāng kird*: “*hutōs x’ah ī man!*”

<sup>3</sup> ’hwr̄mzd < OPers. *aḥuramazdā*. DB IV 55-6 *aḥuramazdā θuvām dauštā biyā, utātaḥ taumā vasaḥ biyā, utā dargam jīvā*: ’hwr̄mzd yb[rkkn wyr̄mkn m̄zr’k y]šg’ wywmyk y’rkwn.

<sup>4</sup> Dynmzdysnš < Av. *daēnā māzdayasniš* nom./1.

<sup>5</sup> Byl < Akk. *Bêl* (Aram. *Baelā*, OPers. *baīraḥ*) ≈ OPers. *baga*.

<sup>6</sup> špyr’ ‘good, beautiful’. Aram. ŠPYL = Pers. *veh* ‘good; better’. Av. *vaḥ*<sup>v</sup>hī (Pers. *veh*) is an epithet of Daēnā: *vaḥ*<sup>v</sup>hīm *daēnqm mazdayasnīm* (Y 9.26), *veh dēn ī mazdesnān* (SS 7).

And for this I have made thee worthy<sup>8</sup>  
(of being) the wife of  
My heart.’

According to M.N. Bogoliubov this text is a fragment of an Avesta prayer, written down in Aramaic script.<sup>9</sup> H. Reichelt rendered it into Pārsīg (“Ich gebe nun den Text im Pahlavi”)<sup>10</sup>. Here is another rendering of it into Pārsīg:

*ohrmazd ud dēn mazdesn, bāmbišn, x’ah ud zan ī bay, guft kū: “an ham zan ī bay šāh.”*

*pas bay guft ō dēn mazdesn kū: “tū, x’ah ī man, vas zīr hē, ud veh andar yazdān hē. ēd rāy cē-m arzān kird tū, zan ī hān ī man dil!”*

(Raham Asha)

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<sup>7</sup> In the Ard Yašt, 16, Ahura Mazdā is the best of the Yazata. It is possible that here Daēnā is called the best among the Goddesses.

<sup>8</sup> Swyt. Syr. (‘)šwy is rendered by Sogdian ’yžn qθ’r- (C2), and by Pers. *arzān kun-* (Ps 96C).

<sup>9</sup> M.N. Bogoliubov, “An Old Iranian Prayer to Ahuramazda in Aramaic characters on the Undeciphered Inscription from Cappadocia”, *Istoriya Iranskogo Gosudarstva i Kul’turi* (ed. V. Gafurov), Moskva, 1971, 277-85, 347-48.

<sup>10</sup> H. Reichelt, « Aramäische Inschriften aus Kappadocien », *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, xv, 1901, 51-6.