

The first section of the first chapter of the book of Nadīm describes the languages of various peoples, their types of script and forms of calligraphy.¹ His remarks on Persian languages and writings are based on the authority of Jahišyārī and Ibn al-Muqaffā‘ (Rōzveh), the famous Pārsī scribes, and also on the testimony of Emēd, the well-known Pārsī high priest.

Raham Asha

From the **Fihrist of al-Nadīm**

Discourse about the Persian [types of] script

It is said that the first person who spoke Persian was Gayōmard², whom the Persians call Gil-Šāh, that means ‘King of Clay’³. He was their “Adam”, father of mankind.⁴

It is said that the first person who wrote Persian was Bēvarasp⁵ son of wnd’ sp⁶, known as Dahāk⁷, the master of dragons (Až-dahāk)⁸.

It is said that Frēdōn ī Āspiyān⁹, when he divided the earth between his sons, Salm and Tūz and Ēraj¹⁰, assigned a third of

¹ . *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, G. Flügel, I-II, Leipzig, 1871, 2-21.

The Fihrist of al-Nadīm, B. Dodge, I, New York, 6-40.

محمد بن اسحاق الندیم، کتاب الفهرست، م.ر. تجدد، تهران، ۱۳۶۶، ۷-۳۶.

² . جیومرت (Av. gaya- marētān-).

³ . Gayōmard was called ger-šāh ‘king of mountain’ and not gil-šāh. Notice that ger and gil both are written ځ in Pārsīg book-script.

⁴ . Gayōmard was the primal man (l’homme primordial); and the first man was Mašya (Pers. mahlī/ mard).

⁵ . بیوراسب < *baēvarə.spasan-.

⁶ . ارونداسب < aurvaṭaspa- (Βανάδαςπος)? Ḥamza : ونداسب < *vanataspa-

But Aurvaṭaspa was the « father » of Vištāspa. Cf. *Mujmal*:

« ضحاک بن نداسب و ارونداسف نیز گویند.» مجمل التواریخ والقصص، تهران، ۱۳۱۸، ۲۶.

⁷ . ضحاک. Pers. dahāk, Av. dahāka-.

⁸ . اجدهاک. Pers. azdahāk, Av. aži dahāka- ; aži- ‘dragon’.

⁹ . افریدون بن اثنیان. Av. θraētaonəm āθβyānəm.

¹⁰ . ایرج < *airyaēca- ; طوج (طور) < *tūr(a)ca- ; سلم < sairima-.

the inhabited land¹¹ to each one of them as a share and wrote a deed for them. Emēd the high-priest¹² told me that the deed is with the king of China, conveyed with the Persian treasures to him at the time of Yazdegird –it is God who knows.

It is said that the first person who wrote was Jim Šēd¹³ son of Vīvanghān¹⁴ who lived in Asān, a district (quarter)¹⁵ of Tustar (Šūstar). According to the Persians when Jim ruled the world, and the Daēva¹⁶ and men were subjected to the authority of him, the Evil Spirit¹⁷ also submitted to him, whom he commanded to make manifest what had in his mind, and (the Evil) taught him writing.¹⁸

I have read this in the handwriting of Abū ‘Abd-Allāh Muḥammad son of ‘Abdūs Jahiṣyārī in his Book of Vizīrs¹⁹ that: Before²⁰ the reign of Kay Vištāsp²¹ son of Luhrāsp²² there were few books and epistles, and people could not expound their discourses and express their intentions in clear words.

One of the sayings of Jim Šēd preserved [in memories] and recorded [in books] is this: From Jim Šēd son of Vīvanghān to Ādurbād²³, I order you to run the seven continents. Carry out this [order], and your policy should be that which I have ordered for you!

¹¹ . المعمورة ≈ x^vanirah, Av. x^vaniraθa.

¹² . امام الموييد . He refers to Emēd son of Ašavahišt.

¹³ . جم الشيد . Av. yima- xšaēta-.

¹⁴ . اونجهان . Av. vīvaj^vhañt-.

¹⁵ . طسوج from Pers. tasūg < *čaθru-ka-.

¹⁶ . الجنّ .

¹⁷ . ابليس .

¹⁸ . It is rather Tahmurup (Av. taxma urupi) who subjugated Ahrmen (Aṅra Mañyu), and Ahrmen taught him seven kind of scripts. Cf. MX 27.21-23 az tahmurup ī hurust sūd ēn būd kū: -š guzastag gennāg mēnōg ī durvand sīh sāl ped bārag dāšt; ud haft ēvēnag +nibēg-dibīrīh ī ōy durvand ped nigān dāšt bē ō pēdāgīh āvurd.

¹⁹ . See محمد بن عبدوس الجهشياري في كتاب الوزراء .

ابى عبدالله محمد بن عبدوس الجهشياري، كتاب الوزراء والكتاب، القاهرة، (١٩٣٨) ١٤٠١ هـ / ١٩٨٠ م

²⁰ . در زمان پادشاهی : The Persian translator has incorrectly translated . قبل .

گشتاسب

²¹ . گشتاسب / بشتاسب . guštāsp/ bištāsp, Av. vištāspa-.

²² . لهراسب . luhrāsp, Av. aurvaṭaspa-.

²³ . (؟ ادرياذ انى) ادرياذانى .

From those (sayings) of Frēdōn son of Āspiyān Purgāv son of Āspiyān [Sōggāv], to [Manušcihr]²⁴ : I have bestowed on you the land [Pedišx^vārgar] in Dumbāvand.²⁵ Receive this and make a throne of silver gilded with gold!

From those [sayings recorded, there is this]: From Kay Kayus²⁶ son of Kay Kavād²⁷ to Rustam: I have exempted you from the bondage of servitude²⁸ and made you the ruler of Sagestān²⁹. Do not bond anyone to servitude, and rule Sagestān as I have ordered you!

When Vištāsp became ruler [<of the Aryan lands>], writing was used more extensively. Zardušt son of Spitām³⁰, master of the religious law of the Magi, appeared, and revealed his wonderful book in all languages. And those who began to learn writing and scribing and became well skilled increased.

‘Abad-Allāh ibn al-Muqaffa’ (Rōzveh) said thus: The languages of the Persians are the Pahlavīg, the Darīg, the Pārsīg, the Xūzīg, and the Sūrāyīg (Syriac).³¹

The Pahlavīg (Parthian) is related to Pahlav (Parthia)³², the name which applies to five region: Spāhān, Ray, Ahmadān, Māh ī Nihāvand, and Āḍarbāyagān.³³

The Darīg was the language of the cities of “Madā’in” (Tēsifōn, ...). It was spoken by those who were at the king's court, and its name refers to the presence at the court.³⁴ Among

²⁴ . Cf. Bd 229 frēdōn ī āspiyān ī purgāv
ī āspiyān ī sōggāv (syāgāv) ī ...

²⁵ . انى قد حيوتك بير معه (/ حيوتك بيرمعة) دباوند .

²⁶ . Av. kavi- usan- / usaḍan- . كيقاوس .

²⁷ . Av. kavi- kavāta- . كيقباذ .

²⁸ . Syr. ܒܢܢܘܬܝܬܐ ≈ Pers. bannagīh ‘bondage ; servitude ; hierodulic status’ .

²⁹ . OPers. saka- . سحستان .

³⁰ . Pers. zardušt ī spitāmān, Av. zaraθuštrō spitāmaō
‘Zaraθuštra of the family Spitāma’ .

³¹ . الفهلوية والدرية والفارسية والخرزية والسريانية .

³² . OPers. parθava- . فهله .

³³ . اصفهان والرى وهمدان وماد نخواند واذريجان .

³⁴ . Pers. dar ‘door ; court’, darīg ‘of the court; courtier, court dignitary’ .

the languages of the people of X^varāsān³⁵ and the East³⁶ the language of the people of Baxl³⁷ dominates it.

The Pārsīg³⁸ is the language spoken by the [Magian] priests, scholars³⁹, and their like; it is the language of the people of Pārs⁴⁰.

The Xūzīg⁴¹ is the language spoken by the kings and nobles in privacy, at the time of play and entertainment, and with their entourage.

The Syriac⁴² is the language of the people of “Sawād”⁴³; and they wrote epistles in one type of language, the Persian Syriac.”

Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ also said that: “The Persians had seven types of handwriting:

One of them is the script for religion called Dēn-dibīrīh⁴⁴ with which they write the Abēstāg⁴⁵, and this is an example of it.⁴⁶

Another script is called Vis_p-dibīrīh⁴⁷. It has 365 letters, and is used to write physiognomy, divination, purling of water, ringing in the ears, signals with the eyes, nodding, winking, and the like. [This script has not fallen into the hand of anyone, so that none of the children of Persia write with it today. I asked

³⁵ . خراسان ‘the Levant’.

³⁶ . المشرق ≈ Pers. ušastar.

³⁷ . بلخ, OPers. bāxtri ‘Bactria’.

³⁸ . Pers. pārs ‘the province of Persis ; Persia’, mardōm ī pārs (Arab. أهل فارس), pārsīg ‘Persian’.

³⁹ . الموأبأة والعلماء. Pers. mog/ muv ‘magian’, mubed/ mōbed ‘Magian priest’, hērbed ‘teaching priest, scholar’.

⁴⁰ . فارس, Pers. pārs ‘Persis’.

⁴¹ . الخوزية. Pers. xūz/ hūz ‘Elam, Susiana’ (OPers. hūja-, hūvja-), xūzīg ‘Elamite, Susian’ (OPers. hūjiya-, hūvjiya, Armen. xuzik).

⁴² . السريانية (ܣܘܪܝܝܬܐ).

⁴³ . السواد. Sawād, the ‘Black Ground’ here corresponds to Sūrestān (cf. X^vārazmī).

⁴⁴ . دين دڤريه.

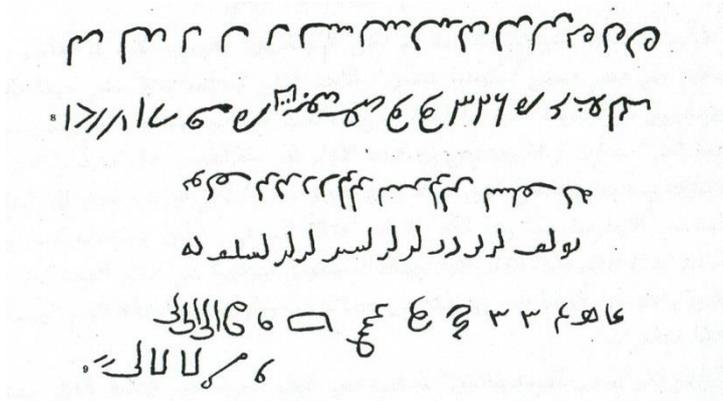
⁴⁵ . الوستاق.

⁴⁶ . The example is missing.

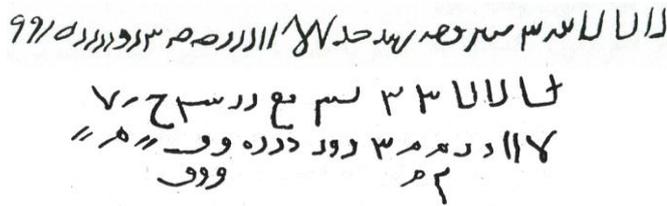
⁴⁷ . وشف دڤريه. Av. vispa- ≈ OPers. visa-. Ḥamza: وشف دڤريه.

Emēd the high-priest about it. He said: Yea, it is used for “transcription”, as there are in Arabic script transcriptions⁴⁸.]

Another script is called Gaštag⁴⁹. It has 28 letters, and is used to write contracts, advice notebooks⁵⁰, and land transactions. The rings in Persia are engraved with this script, and also embroidery on garments and rugs, and dies for gold coins and silver coins. The following is an example of it.



Another script is called Nēm-gaštag⁵¹. It has 28 letters, and is used to write on medicine and philosophy. The following is an example of it.



Another script is called Šāh-dibīrīh⁵². It was used by the Persian kings to communicate between themselves, keeping aloof from the vulgar. They prevented the other people of the kingdom from using it, lest some other than a king might get informed of the secrets of kings. It has not been preserved for us.

The script for writing epistles (treatises)⁵³ is just as the tongue speaks, without dots. Some of (words) are written in the

⁴⁸ . Arab. الترجمة ‘translation ; interpretation ; enigma’.

⁴⁹ . Pers. vaštag/ gaštag. الكشتج / الكشتج.

⁵⁰ . المورية.

⁵¹ . Pers. nēm-vaštag/ gaštag. نیم کشتج / نیم کشتج.

⁵² . الشاه دبیریہ.

⁵³ . كتابة الرسائل.

They have a kind of spelling which they call *uzvārišn*⁶¹, with which they write characters connected as well as unconnected, and it consists of about a thousand words (which are put together), in order to distinguish those which are similar. For example, if somebody intends to write *gōšt*, which is “meat” (اللحم) in Arabic, he writes BSR⁶², but reads it *gōšt*, according to this example: . And if somebody intends to write *nān*, which is “bread” (الخبز) in Arabic, he writes LHM⁶³, but read it *nān*, according to this example: . And in this manner they treat all things that they intend to write, except those things which do not require such a substitution, being written just as pronounced.

Discourse about the Hebrew script

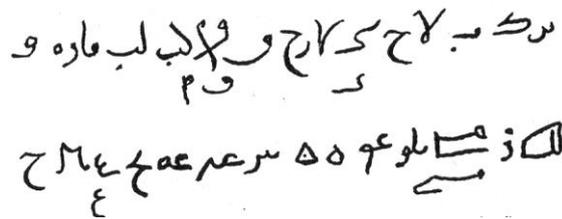
...

Discourse about the Manichaean script

The Manichaean script is derived from Persian and Syriac. It is derived by Mani whose religious doctrine is a combination of the teachings of the Magi (المجوسية) and Christianity. Its letters are more numerous than the Arabic letters. Their Scriptures (اناجيل) and law books are written with this script. The people of Transoxiana and Samarkand write the religious books with this script, and thus it is called the Script of Religion⁶⁴.

The Marcionites have their own special script. A trusted person who has seen it told me that it resembles the Manichaean script, but is different.

These are the Manichaean letters:



The image shows two lines of handwritten Manichaean script. The first line contains the word 'برك' (brk) written as 'لا ح ك ا ح و' and 'ف ل ا ب ل ب ف ا ر ه و'. The second line contains the word 'لك ز م ا ل و ع و ه ه' and 'س ر ع ر ع ه ح ع م ا ح ع'.

⁶¹ زوارشن .

⁶² [BSR^Y] (Aram. bisrā) .

⁶³ [LHM^Y] (Aram. lhmā) .

⁶⁴ قلم الدين .

The Persians fringe the nib of the pen; the scribe frays it either against the floor or with his teeth, so as to write more elegantly. Sometimes they write with the lower point of an unsharpened cane, and call this reed *xāma*⁷⁰. The ...⁷¹ which are the books of the religion⁷², the *siyāg* (السياق), etc., are written with it. ...

Discourse about varieties of leaves⁷³

... The Persians used to write on the hides of buffaloes, cows, and sheep. ...

⁷⁰ .خاما .

⁷¹ . hamā_g-dibān ? Pers. dib ‘document ; epistle ; archive’ .

⁷² . كتب الديانة .

⁷³ . الورق from Pers. varg ‘leaf’ .