

DIETER WEBER

The Vienna Collection of Pahlavi Papyri

It is a great pleasure and honour to have been given the opportunity by Hermann Harrauer to present a contribution to the Congress that actually deals with a topic at the outskirts of papyrological studies.

When you are visiting the Coptic Museum in Old Cairo the guide will lead you downstairs to the Roman relics showing you both the old mill that was driven by horses and the stables above which the Hanging Church was built a few centuries later. Especially remarkable is the water that penetrated in post-Roman times, and the guide will eventually tell you of the coming of the Arabs by that way of water, and by treachery, from the Nile into the town, in 641 A.D. This story reminds one of the coming of the Persians, in 617 A.D., to Alexandria, when a man called Peter, who originated from Bahrain on the Persian Gulf, showed a similar way to the Persians: they gained the town by disguising themselves as Alexandrian fishermen, penetrated the northern watergate just before dawn, went fighting westwards to the "Gate of the Moon" and opened it to the Persian troops. As Alexandria did not capitulate voluntarily the Persians sacked the town and murdered a great number of people, also in monasteries in the neighbourhood of Alexandria as we are told by Syriac chronicles. Some people were even deported to Persia. Gold, silver, and jewels were confiscated, and together with the keys of the town, sent to the Persian king, Xusrō II, presumably in 618 A.D.

But Byzantium, the rival of the Persians, had a new ruler since 610 A.D., stronger than the predecessors, who turned against the Persians with courage and luck and who did not repeat the mistakes of earlier kings. He landed on the eastern shore of the Black Sea in the region of the Caucasus, marched through Armenia and Azerbaijan, and destroyed a religious centre in that northwestern part of Iran. He attained to reach the royal residence at Ktesiphon in 628 A.D. The Persian realm was in total disorder now, the troops slew the king in a very cruel manner, and his followers underwent the same fate. Within ten years the whole kingdom had fallen into ruins¹.

Though the exact point of time of the coming of the Persians is somewhat disputed it seems to be certain that Persian rule over Egypt was fully established since 619 A.D.

It is that small space of time between 619 and 629 A.D. that supplies us, from Egypt, with an amazingly great number of documents of papyri and parchments and some also of linen, in Middle Persian language and script, generally known as Pahlavi, in which the bulk of Zoroastrian literature and religious texts were written in Sassanian and also afterwards in early Islamic times. Therefore, it is only natural that all attempts made by now to decipher those fragmentary texts from Egypt were undertaken by scholars who first studied Iranian languages and especially Persian and its pre-decessor Middle Persian or Pahlavi. What the term Pahlavi writing means will be clear from the following table (Fig. 1) taken from Mac-Kenzie's *Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*² where the different characters are given together with their equivalents in a scientific transcription.

As a matter of fact the almost only reason for dating the documents into the above said period of only ten years is the fact that they originate in Egypt under Persian occupation. The documents, as a rule, are not dated. There is only one document from the Berlin collection that contains a dating formula known from other juridic documents from Iran proper from later times, i. e. the late 60ies to 80ies of the 7th century. Such juridic documents were normally written on parchment or leather, usually having a little hole on the top of it for the possibility of being bound together by a string and accompanied by a bulla. This is clearly to be seen

¹ The geographical situation is roughly shown on Map 1 of my book *Pahlavi Papyri, Pergamente und Ostraca*, (Textband), (*Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum*), London 1992 (= Weber 1992).

² D. N. MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*, London 1971 (reprints 1986, 1990), p. xiii (= CPD). Specimens of Pahlavi writings are also given in D. Weber, *Pahlavi Phonology*, in: A. S. Kaye (ed.), *Phonologies of Asia and Africa (Including the Caucasus)*, Winona Lake, Indiana 1997, vol. II, 607–610.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

on the parchment P. 81 from the Heidelberg collection (Fig. 2), P. 188 (from Berlin, not shown here) and on P. 373a, a famous piece from the Vienna Collection (Fig. 3). The Berlin document contains the dating in the first two lines: *ēn mäh Šahrewar ī sāl 30–(5) rōz Amurdād* ... “this month *Šahrewar* (6th month) of the year 35, day *Amurdād* (7th day)”³; so it is clear that if the document comes from Egypt (and there is no doubt about it) the era used here can only be that of Xusrō I thus dating the document in the year 625/6 A.D. falling exactly in the period of Sassanian occupation³.

But there is another possibility to ascertain the dating of the documents. In dated Greek papyri, for example P.Oxy. 3637 (19[?]th October 623)⁴ or P.Oxy. 3797 (26th April/25th May 624)⁵ there is mentioned a certain *Σαραλανεοζαν* who obviously had a high rank within the Persian fiscal bureaucracy in Egypt at the time in question. This name has puzzled the editors of the Greek texts since its first appearance but was established as the name of a high rank administrator of the Persian occupation presumably located at Arsinoë in the Fayyūm oasis; he obviously was the chief tax-collector in Egypt. The name was indeed interpreted as the Persian name (not title) *Šahr-Ālānyōzān* by A. Perikhanian⁶ as it appears in quite a number of the Pahlavi papyri and parchments found in Egypt (see e. g. P. 81 [Heidelberg], line 2,⁷ and P. 373a [Vienna], line 10). Thus we do have a direct correspondance between Greek and Pahlavi documents regarding that time of Persian occupation.

My contribution will contain two major parts. At first it seems adequate to give a short survey of the Pahlavi papyri we have in various collections. It will become clear that Pahlavi papyri, in most cases, were found together with Greek, Coptic or even Arabic papyri and that they did not play a significant part in papyrological studies on the whole although they are first-class documents for the life under Persian occupation as well as, naturally, for the study of Middle Persian.

In the second part of my contribution I will give some specimen of Pahlavi documents, some from the Vienna and some from other collections.

Collections of Pahlavi papyri are spread over various parts of the world but mostly in Europe⁸:

	Idigraphic	Iranian	Corrupt
𐭠	A	·	𐭠
	H	h	
𐭡	B	b	𐭡, 𐭢, 𐭣
	G	g	
𐭢	D	d	𐭢, 𐭣, 𐭤
	Y	y	𐭢, 𐭣, 𐭤
𐭣	E	(n, n, etc.)	
	W	w	
𐭤	N	n	
	O	—	
𐭥	R	r	
	I	i	
𐭦	Z	z	𐭦, 𐭧, 𐭨
	K	k	
𐭧	K	γ	
	L	l	
𐭨	t	t	
	M	m	
𐭩	Q	—	
	S	s	
𐭪	P	p	
	C	c	𐭪, 𐭫
𐭫	S	s	
	T	t	𐭫, 𐭬

Fig. 1

³ Unfortunately, at the time of presenting this paper to the Congress, a complete reading and understanding of the Vienna parchment P. 373a was not yet reached. Meanwhile, by the help of newly found juridic documents, it is possible to interpret it as an *ayādgār* “a memoir” and even to date it in the year 625/626 A.D. Thus it is the only dated document in the Vienna collection; it will be published with full details in D. Weber, *Eine spätsassanidische Rechtsurkunde aus Ägypten*, *Tyche* 17 (2002) 185–192.

⁴ *The Oxyrhynchos Papyri*, vol. li, ed. with translations and notes by J. R. Rea, London 1984, 101–104.

⁵ *The Oxyrhynchos Papyri*, vol. lv, ed. with translations and notes by J. R. Rea, London 1988, 75–78.

⁶ In *Vestník drevnej istorii* 1961/2, 88f. For the name see especially D. Weber, *Ein bisher unbekannter Titel aus spätsassanidischer Zeit?*, in: *Corolla Iranica* (Papers in honour of Prof. Dr. D. N. MacKenzie), ed. by R. E. Emmerick and D. Weber, Frankfurt am Main e. a. 1991, 228–236 (with lit.).

⁷ The parchment was first given in Weber 1992, plate XX.

⁸ During the Congress I was informed by Rosario Pintaudi that in Prague, in the former *Wessely Collection*, there exists another papyrus with Pahlavi writing; details, however, are not known yet.

P a r i s (Louvre) The Louvre has only a small collection of Pahlavi papyri but it seems to be the oldest we know of; it is said that the collection goes back as early as 1851, and it may be possible that there are still some more fragments not yet catalogued.	18
G ö t t i n g e n (Handschriftenabteilung der Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek) including one nice letter of 30 lines, almost complete but written in a very cursive Pahlavi writing	3
S t r a s b o u r g (Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire)	7
H e i d e l b e r g (Papyrussammlung)	48
B a s e l (Universitätsbibliothek) There is only one magnificent parchment in the University Library that shows a list of recruitment for garrisons in various towns on the Nile; the names of the towns in Greek are the following: Elephantine, Herakleia, Oxyrhynchos, Kynôn, Theodosiopolis, Hermoupolis, Antinoë, Kossôn, Lykos (Lykopolis), Diospolis and Maximinianopolis ⁹	1
M a n c h e s t e r (John Rylands University Library)	1
L o n d o n (British Library)	1
O x f o r d (Bodleiana), a small collection of Pahlavi fragments, only partly published	7
N e w Y o r k (The Brooklyn Museum), found by the way under Aramaic material	3
P h i l a d e l p h i a (The University Museum)	24
C a i r o (Bibliothèque Universitaire)	2
M o s c o w (–) In 1918 a first notice of the collection, the former collection <i>Goloniščev</i> , was given by Frejman in the <i>Izvěstija Rossijskoj Akademii Nauk</i> , 1918, 1925–1928, followed only in 1961 by an article by A. Perikhanian in the <i>Vestnik Drevnij Istorii</i> who published 14 of 40 fragments mentioned there; but no further information about the other fragments is available at the moment. No. 1 of her edition must be mentioned here because it is the largest Pahlavi papyrus we know of; the measurements are 15 × 75 cm with 28 lines, the width being of a standard size (normally varying from 14 to 17 cm).	14 (40)
B e r l i n (Papyrussammlung, Ägyptisches Museum) The largest existing collection of Pahlavi papyri is that one of the former Staatliche Museen in Berlin with more than 200 items. A complete list of all Middle Persian papyri, parchments and linen fragments then known is to be found apud Hansen in his 1938 edition ¹⁰ where the best preserved and most eminent ones were presented with translation and commentary. Almost all fragments were bought in Cairo in the seventies and eighties of the 19 th century, and most of them are said to come from the Fayyûm. There are no exact statements with regard to the places where or to the circumstances by which they had been found. Very few are said to derive from excavations in Krokodilopolis.	219

Up to this point almost nothing has been said about what I announced in the title of my paper, that is the Vienna collection of Pahlavi papyri.

Today only some 30 items with Pahlavi script, mostly very fragmentary, still exist in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer) in Vienna though, in 1936, 577 signed items were counted.

⁹ See Weber 1992, pp. 159–160 (as P. 55).

¹⁰ O. Hansen, *Die mittelpersischen Papyri der Papyrussammlung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin*, Berlin 1938, Abh. der Preuß. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1937, Nr. 9 (= Hansen).

It can be said without any exaggeration that this collection was the largest one of Pahlavi papyri and parchments a museum ever had, after a new numbering now 604 items are counted. The Pahlavi collection belongs to the oldest part of the *Papyrussammlung*; at least a great part of it dates from the so-called “1st found of Fayyûm” that was brought by Th. Graf to Vienna as early as 1882. In the following year, in 1883, Karabaček reported of 200 objects already, in 1884, even before the “2nd found of Fayyûm” was bought, 300 were reported. The steady growing of the number of fragments was at least partly not due to the fact of new acquisitions but to the fact of new findings of Pahlavi material during working on uncatalogued material in various languages. In 1922 Grohmann counted 375 papyri, 167 parchments and 30 documents on leather, altogether then 542 objects; when Till took over Grohmanns position in 1931 he counted 554 objects, and in 1936 there were 577 to which could be added three other fragments that were found after World War II and catalogued accordingly as P. 578, 579 and 580¹¹.

In 1936 almost the complete collection (with one exception: P. 577) was given to O. Hansen in Berlin who wanted to work on it; besides, one had also in mind to have it restored by Ibscher at the same time. What actually happened to the collection we do not know, and we only hear of the fact of “saving” the collection during the War but where it was “saved” remains a question still to be answered.

In the year 1964 some 30 fragments of that collection reappeared in archives of the *Staatliche Museen* (then East Berlin, German Democratic Republic) which could be, during the following time, identified as being indeed some of the Vienna collection. After long negotiations that small relic could be restored to the National Library in Vienna on 19 February 1981. They were published by the present speaker in the Centenary Festschrift of Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer in 1983. After having finished that work some fragments of papyrus and parchment with Pahlavi script were found in the archives, and they were incorporated in a text volume (Weber 1992) to the facsimile edition of Pahlavi papyri and ostraca by de Menasce (published in 1957)¹². With regard to that lost collection there were some rumours in 1990 that it did in fact reappear in the Ermitage in St. Peterburg (the former Leningrad). The present speaker has to thank Professor Nikitin of St. Peterburg for having provided him with negatives of all fragments in the *Ermitage* so that a preliminary survey was possible during the last years. But the main problem is and will be the restoration of the collection, i. e. new glassing so that the fragments will survive for another millenium. In addition to the preserving procedure it seems absolutely necessary to digitize them; how important the digitising of papyri is has become a well known attitude under papyrologists by now. As an additional step for the future it has perhaps to be envisaged to put the digitised photos into the internet for scientific research worldwide. With regard to saving and preserving the Vienna collection it is to be hoped that it will, in the near future, be given back to the place where these tasks could be carried out at best.

What is most amazing is the fact that we have, in various museums, almost 1.000 known fragments covering a period of ten years only. Such a thickness of documentation is really unique for antiquity because, averaging the number of the fragments for the time in question, we get two fragments per week. On the other hand, of the whole material known to us, only 40% (roughly speaking) have been published by now thus leaving the bulk of the Vienna collection still unpublished.

It may be conjectured that, in private collections also, some objects might be found or might exist still unrecognized. Thus in the last ten years or so a great number of Pahlavi documents, on parchment and linen (some possibly also on silk), have been offered by antique dealers in Europe and America; but they certainly do not come from Egypt but from Iran proper and date mainly from the second half of the 7th century, i. e. from early Islamic times.

Most founds of Pahlavi papyri were made, or better to say: bought, in the second half of the 19th century, mainly from the seventies to the nineties. Since the study of Pahlavi was, at that time, relatively young first attempts of interpretation were undertaken with some hesitation, namely by Sachau and Horn (both studying the Berlin fragments) and Kirste (who worked on the Vienna collection). Their readings were mostly tentative, and nothing happened with regard to the Pahlavi papyri until, in the year 1938, O. Hansen edited a substantial part of the Berlin collection. Further plans which included an edition of the Vienna collection and of the large Göttingen papyrus were not continued by Hansen because of his interest

¹¹ An excellent overview over the history of the Pahlavi collection was given by H. Loebeinstein in: *Festschrift Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer (P.Rainer Cent.)*, Wien 1983 (Textband), 31f.

¹² *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum*. Part III: *Pahlavi Inscriptions*, vol. IV, Ostraca, and vol. V, Papyri, London 1957.

in things Sogdian, another Middle Iranian language. It was only in the fifties of this century when Father de Menasce attempted to understand these papyri better; he published the Bâle parchment in 1953 together with corrective notes on other fragments, and later on, in 1957, in facsimile, on behalf of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum*, all material apart from that of the Berlin, Vienna, Moscow and Heidelberg collections and the minor Göttingen fragments. Since then, only few articles on Pahlavi papyri did appear.

Thus it is clear that a great part of the existing Pahlavi Papyri and parchments has not yet been read; beside this negative statement it must be said that in spite of Hansens edition of 1938 the Berlin collection deserves a new treatment in which all fragments ought to be facsimilized und fully interpreted. This has been done by the present speaker in a text volume of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum* that will be published this year (2003). An earlier publication in the same series already appeared in 1992 comprising readings and interpretations of the 1957 edition by de Menasce including the Heidelberg collection and additional documents from Göttingen and Vienna.

But let us now return to the papyri themselves and to what they tell us.

With regard to the contents of the Pahlavi papyri we have to state that there are no literary texts at all; thus we do not find any translation e. g. of Homer or Vergilius in Middle Persian as well as no textual reminiscences of the Zoroastrian religion. As a matter of fact, it seems rather unlikely that such texts were written in Egypt though we cannot, of course, exclude this possibility completely.

The Persians who came to Egypt were soldiers of the occupation force, and others were perhaps traders. The whole life as it was under Byzantine rule continued without being heavily interrupted. We know of a Greek landowner family, Apion by name, who carried on their business just as before the invasion of the Persians. Thus we have mainly official documents in their widest sense, e. g. military orders, informations for soldiers in the various garrisons, lists of provisions to be given to the soldiers and quite a number of letters on trading business. Of course, a great number of private letters seems to exist, too, but very fragmentarily in most cases; from them it may be inferred that even some Persian families had perhaps moved to Egypt; but that must have been rare instances.

As we have already seen when referring to the Bâle parchment that the text provides us with a number of names of places, all in their Greek form¹³. And we even possess a fragment of a short geographical text where distances between some places around Lycopolis are given in Roman miles (P. 148 Recto); the short text runs as follows: *Apolanos šahristān az Hapsilā pad 14 mīlag Hapsilā šahristān az Luk(o)s pad 3 mīlag* “the town of *Apolanos* (is) from *Hapsilā* at (a distance of) 14 (Roman) miles, the town of *Hapsilā* (is) from *Lukos* at (a distance of) 3 (Roman) miles”¹⁴.

The documents contain — and this is quite natural — a great number of names, especially personal names. Though the Persians ruled over Byzantine Greeks, Copts and others the corpus of personal names as it can depicted from the documents is exclusively Persian, i. e. Zoroastrian Middle Persian as Zoroastrianism was the state religion in Sassanian Iran. This means that there are no Greek personal names at all in the Pahlavi papyri.

There are only three exceptions but these are very informative: (1) In two documents (one from Heidelberg, the other from Berlin) the name *Samuel* is attested in its Semitic form *Šəmū’ēl*; in the Berlin document he is, in Middle Persian, characterized as a *bāzargān* “merchant”, a fact that made me, in an earlier publication¹⁵, think of a Jewish merchant, maybe even coming from the Jewish colony of Elephantine which was already known in Achæmenian times. But since Sassanian Christians freely used names of the Old Testament the possibility that it could be a Christian is not wholly ruled out. (2) The same holds good for the name *Abraham* occurring in one or two Berlin fragments; in this case one can even not be sure whether or not this is a personal name or the name of a village; a glimpse at Calderini’s *Dizionario dei nomi geografici e topografici dell’Egitto greco-romano* will inform us that there are at least three places bearing this name and one of them lay in the neighbourhood of Arsinoë. (3) There is another famous exception: In a very well preserved fragment from the Vienna collection (P. 572, also with one line in Greek) we

¹³ Map 2 in Weber 1992 roughly shows the expansion of Persian occupation by means of Greek towns mentioned in the documents.

¹⁴ Cf. Hansen No. 31; corrected readings by J. de Menasce in *Recherches de papyrologie pehlevie*, Journal Asiatique 1953, 185–196 (1 planche) = *Études Iraniennes*, Paris 1985 (Studia Iranica, Cahier 3), 169.

¹⁵ D. Weber, *Einige Beobachtungen an Pahlavi Papyri*, Acta Orientalia (Copenhagen) 35 (1973) 83–88.

find a number of persons who are given a certain amount of wheat¹⁶; besides them, all typical Zoroastrian Middle Persian names of Sassanian times, there is one that must be read *Nazrīk* (written <nzlyk'>) which immediately reminds one of the term *Ναζορᾰίος* (with an additional *-k*-suffix in Middle Persian). The same Middle Persian form reoccurs (only slightly differently written) in documents from the Louvre (Paris), Berlin and Moscow. Thus it may be that we here encounter a real Christian name or — what is perhaps also probable — a general designation for *christianus*; the last mentioned possibility may be corroborated by the fact that, in the Vienna document, *Nazrīk* is followed by the postposition *rāy*, meaning “for”, which is missing with the other names.

In the following second part of my contribution I will give some examples typical for those Pahlavi documents like letters, military or economic documents.

The writing — as could already be seen — runs from right to left as is clearly shown by the right margin. Most papyri reveal writing only on one side which then can easily be considered as *Recto*, but in instances where both sides had been written on it seems necessary to refer to the nature of the papyrus, i. e. whether the writing goes parallel with the fibre or not; thus the signs ↑ (vertical arrow) and → (horizontal arrow) will be used in editions of Pahlavi papyri as is customary in papyrological studies. Here, in the examples to follow, we restrict ourselves to giving a transliteration of the text, followed by a transcription of it (as it should have been read in Middle Persian), and a tentative translation.

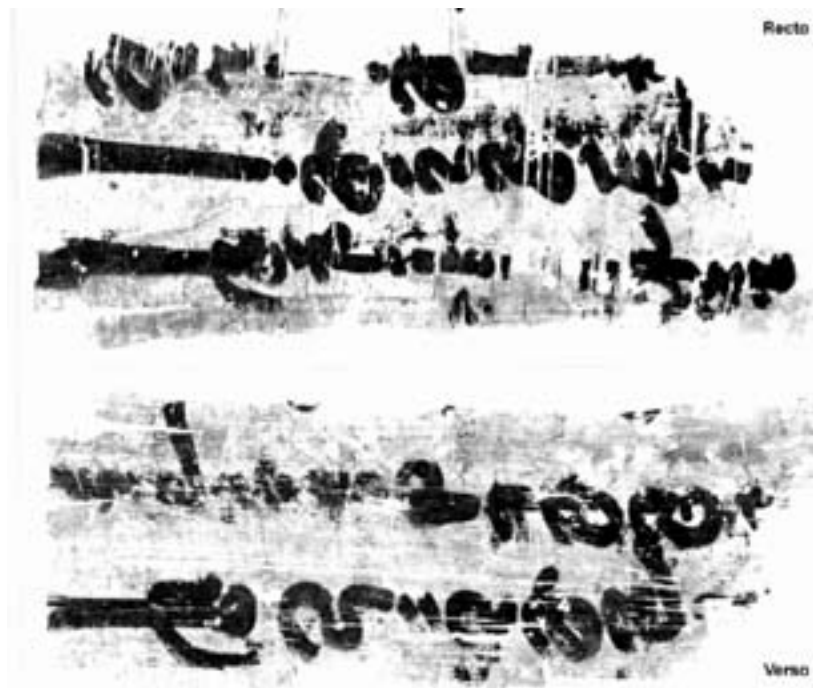


Fig. 4

The writing in Pahlavi looks — if compared especially with Greek texts — rather coarse and heavy, the distance between the lines usually varying between 0.5 and 3.5 cm; one object from the Vienna Collection (P. 320), which was, by the way, refound under the Berlin material in 1996, is written on both sides of the papyrus with a distance of 4.5 cm between the lines (Fig. 4). Even the thickness of the brush by which it was written measures by 0.7 to 0.8 cm, as already Hansen noticed in a typewritten list of a part of the Vienna collection he made in the late 1930ies. This example may be shown here because of this singularity. The text itself is not quite clear yet — as can be seen it is very fragmentary — but seems to be, at first sight, a kind of a letter of appointment.

¹⁶ Published in *Die Pehlevifragmente der Papyrussammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Wien*, in: *Festschrift Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer (P.Rainer Cent.)*, Wien 1983 (Textband), 220–222.

¹⁷ This is explicitly shown in Weber 1992, 235f. (with examples).

When we speak of letters we must be aware of the fact that Persian letters, private or not, had a long tradition with a special form of ordering the text to be transmitted and the greeting formulæ used. We are well informed on this topic by a Middle Persian text entitled *Nāmag-Nibēsišnēh* “How to write letters” (but only known from a manuscript of the Middle Ages, i. e. 14th century at earliest), and our documents show what we gain from that text very exactly. There existed a scheme for a Middle Persian letter containing three main parts: (A) *Address (with greeting formulæ)*, (B) *Communication*, and (C) *Address (with repetition of greeting formulæ, often shortened)*¹⁷. In the Moscow papyrus No. 2 (a large document of 16.5 × 58 cm with 22 lines) this scheme is prettily to be seen, especially at the end of the document¹⁸. But even from short fragments it is possible to determine to which part the fragmentary text belongs: [Vienna] P. 287 (Fig. 5), from the beginning of a letter the first line running as follows: ‘L yzd’n ’byd’t gwndsrd’l Y [“to the officer of ..., reminded by the god(s), ...”, or P. 327 (Fig. 6), where, after a break, the last part of the letter (C) starts with the repetition of the address: ‘L hwt’k’ bwhtk’ Y gwndsrd’l **nc** “to Sir *Bōxtag*, the officer, reverence!” and P. *431 (Fig. 7), a fragment that is written on both sides, by the way showing the proper name **Razbānag* on the *recto* page (line 2), which is also encountered in a Greek form in the document P.Oxy. 3637 (the same document where the Persian official *Σαραλανεοζαν* is attested). Another very interesting fragment of a letter, again with mentioning of **Razbānag*, is P. 577 (parchment, 28 × 20 cm, Fig. 8) which contains in the first six lines only greeting formulæ of a very elaborate kind, presumably of a letter to a high rank official, and we only have, in the remaining three fragmentary lines of the document, the text of the communication which remains unclear unfortunately¹⁹.



Fig. 5

There is another interesting parchment, with the signature P. 578, obviously also a letter but incomplete, too, though it seems reasonable that only a few lines at the bottom are missing. It is especially worth mentioning because of its size: measuring only 16 × 6 resp. 9.5 cm it contains at least 26 lines of an extremely small cursive Pahlavi writing; in this form it is a unique Pahlavi document unfortunately not yet comprehensible.

In P. 571 (see fig. 9) we have attested one of the rare examples where both sides of the papyrus were written on, and obviously by different hands. Usually only that side where the fibre runs vertically was written on so that this one might be viewed as *Recto* and the other side as *Verso*. In this case, on *Recto*, the text shows the beginning of a letter (part A) clearly to be depicted from the large margin on top of the first line. The letter is, by the way, a private one, addressed to the brother of the writer as is shown by the

¹⁸ A. G. Perixanjan, *Pexlevijskie papirusy sobranija GMII imeni A. S. Puškina*, Vestnik Drevnej Istorii 1961/3, 82.

¹⁹ This, by the way, is the only object that never left Vienna (for Berlin or St. Peterburg), and was often exhibited as an example of the Pahlavi fragments of the Collection in the Museum.

greeting formula of the first two lines: “To (my) brother with immortal fortune (given) by the god(s), *Rašn* (by name), reverence!”²⁰ *Verso* reveals, in the first line, the sentence, in Middle Persian, *āgāhīh ī xʷadāy rāy nibēsēm* “for your information, Sir, I am writing this” followed, in the second and third lines, by what is not yet quite clear; at any rate, the writer says that he will be somewhere in the evening, but unfortunately the text is not complete.



Fig. 6

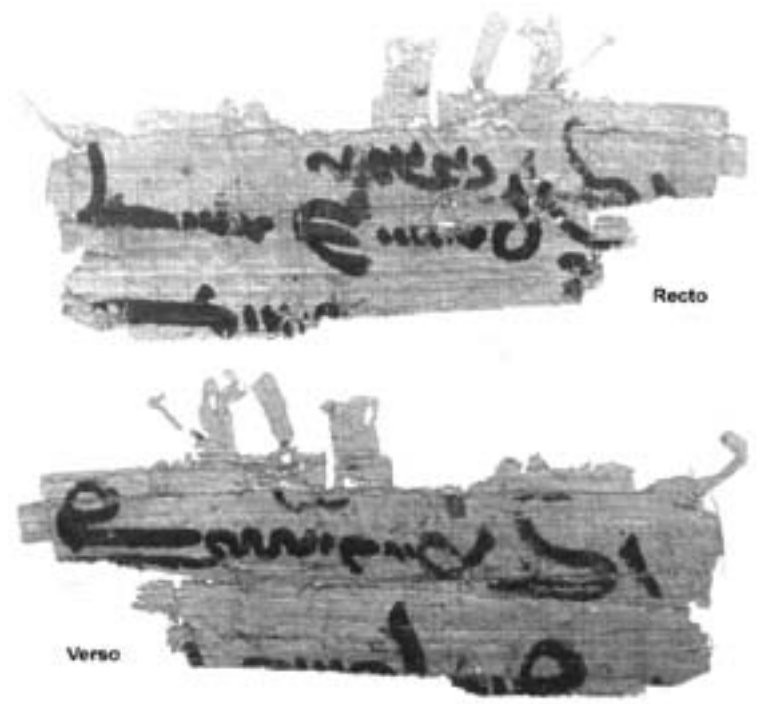


Fig. 7

²⁰ After the abbreviation *nc* = *namāz* “reverence” another word of some kind of greeting formula is written (beginning with an *r*-) not yet understandable followed by the ideogram for *drōd* “health”.



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

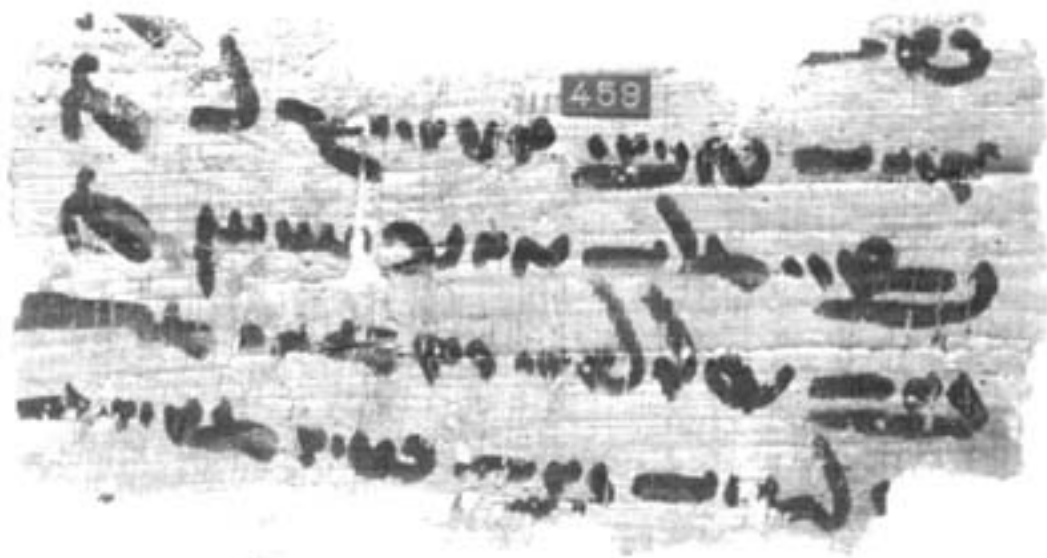


Fig. 10

Transliteration:

R 1 'L yzd'n 'nwšbht 'HY
 2 lšn' nc l... W ŠRM
 3]l[

V 1 'k'syh Y hwt'k' l'd YKTBWNm
 2 'YK L 'MT-c pt'
 3 HWHm 'dyb'lk' l'd
 4 [---]

Transcription:

R 1 *ō yazdaān-anōšbaxt brād*
 2 *Rašn namāz r... ud drōd*
 3]-r-[

V 1 *āgāhīh ī x^wadāy rāy nibēsēm*
 2 *kū man ka-z pad
 3 hēm ēbārag rāy*
 4 [---]

Many letters have military character, especially when dealing with pay or benefit for a soldier. Others have orders to be given to single soldiers or to garrisons, especially located on the Nile. Several documents end with the sentence *mākāhīd!* “Do (2nd pl.) not make any delay!”²¹ We have already seen, in one papyrus from Vienna, a list of names with the amounts of wheat the listed persons got as provisions. There are other, more elaborate documents, with a clearly juridic background because of the *termini technici* used.

P. 570 (see fig. 10) is a very good example of this kind; though uncomplete on top and at the bottom (end) we learn from it that a certain amount of money should be used for provisions for a certain period:

Transliteration:

1[]..
 2 gwnd Y dynbwt' gwpt' 'YK L MN
 3 bhk' ml Y ZWZN 34 MN
 4 BYRH plwltyn' W YWM 'whrmzd
 5] Y BYRH spndrmt W YWM

Transcription:

1[]..
 2 *gund ī Dēnbūd guft kū man az*
 3 *baxtag mar ī drahm 34 az*
 4 *māh Frawardīn ud rōz Ohrmazd*
 5] ī māh Spandarmad ud rōz

Translation: “[1] ... [2] troop of *Dēnbūd*, namely²²: I, from [3] the apportionment number of Dirhams: 34, from [4] the month *Frawardīn* (1st month) and day *Ohrmazd* (1st day) [5] ... of the month *Spandarmad* (5th month) and day [...]”.

The text obviously gives some information about the period for which provisions, worth of 34 *Dirhams*, should be given or bought; actually one would also expect the year to be mentioned in this document, but either it is not mentioned at all (because months and days refer to the year when the document was written so that it was superfluous) or the number of the year stood in that part of the document not preserved.

With this document another one from the Berlin collection may be compared, P. 141 (see Fig. 11)²³:

Transliteration:

1 'L yzd'n'byd'ṭ yzd'nkrt' nc gy'np'n(?) ..'lyh ŠRM
 2 KBD 'ṭ'nyh PRŠY' Y MN gwnd Y PRŠY''n-d'l'(n)
 3 pws'nwyh PKDWNbhk' B'YHWNstn' l'd
 4 pt' 'lc x;xW MN bhk' ml Y ZWZN x;xX-III-III Y
 5 ŠG- x;xx;x'lt'p' W HŠ-x;xx;xx;xlkynk' MKBLWNty
 6 [W pt'] (mkw)k'— Ī HNHṬWN[ty W w](t)l-n'mk'
 YNSBWNty
 7 [l' d 'l MR'Ḥ n'mk' (B')[YHWN](s)t'

Transcription:

ō yazdānayyād Yazdānkard namāz
gyān-bān(?) drōd
was ābādānīh aswār ī az gund tāsawārān-
dāraān
Pusānweh paymār-baxtag x^wāstan rāy
pad arz 20 ud az baxtag mar ī drahm 38 ī
jaw 40 ardeb ud may 60 lagīnag padīrēnd
[ud pad] makōg-ē nihfēnd(?) ud
wi]dar-nāmag stadan
[rāy] ō x^wadāy nāmag x^wā[st]

²¹ See e. g. P. 110 apud Weber 1992, 201f.

²² The sequence *guft kū* literally means “spoke: ...” or “spoke thus”; but it is clear from other occurrences, e. g. from the parchment document P. 373a, line 2, that the meaning in this context must be as translated here.

²³ By courtesy of the *Ägyptisches Museum (Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz)*, Berlin-Charlottenburg. This document will be re-edited in *Berliner Papyri, Pergamente und Leinenfragmente in mittelpersischer Sprache*, unter Mitarbeit von W. Brashear herausgegeben von Dieter Weber (Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum) II, London 2003, as P. 141 (in Hansen's 1938 edition as No. 6).

Translation: “[1] To *Yazdānkard*, reminded by the gods, reverence, protection of the soul(?), ..., health, [2] much prosperity. Because the horseman of the troupe of the leaders of the horsemen, [3] *Pusānweh*, wishes a share of transfer, [4] worth 20, one shall take out of the apportionment 38 Dirhams for [5] barley: 40 *artabs*, and wine: 60 *laginags*, [6] [and] load [on] a ship, [and] for getting a letter of (free) [pass]age, [7] a letter was ask[ed] for from the Lord”.

How important every scrap of papyrus is for the understanding and for the study of the development of the Pahlavi script will be understood when discussing the following problem of Middle Persian writing. The word for “Lord” or “Sir”, the usual address to a person in letters and other communications, is written either by the ideogram <MR’H>, or in Pahlavi by the sequence <hwt’k>, (sometimes with an additional vertical stroke after the <-k>, which has no significance whatsoever); the word has to be read *x^wadāy* as is shown by the Manichæan Middle Persian spelling *xwd’y*. The only Pahlavi dictionary we have (the CPD) notes only the Pahlavi spelling <hwt’y>, but does not know of the spellings of the papyri; even more puzzling is the fact that in the papyri we do find another spelling of the word as <hwt’yk>, in Vienna P. 559 R (Fig. 12), line 3 (end), and P. 414 (Fig. 13, second word), a badly damaged piece of parchment from the beginning of a letter with the starting sentence: ‘L hwt’yk lšn’ *nc* “to Sir *Rašn* reverence!”²⁴ Though this spelling is not mentioned in the Pahlavi dictionary it is encountered in Pahlavi texts, thus e. g. in the *Nāmāg-Nibēsišn*, chap. 1 (in the pl. <hwt’yk’n>), that is the book on “How to write letters” already mentioned. The reproductions very neatly show that it is to be read <hwt’yk>, and not simply <hwt’k>. Thus we get the information that the spelling with additional <-y> before the final <-k> is of Sassanian times already and not a possible mistake of a copyist in later centuries.

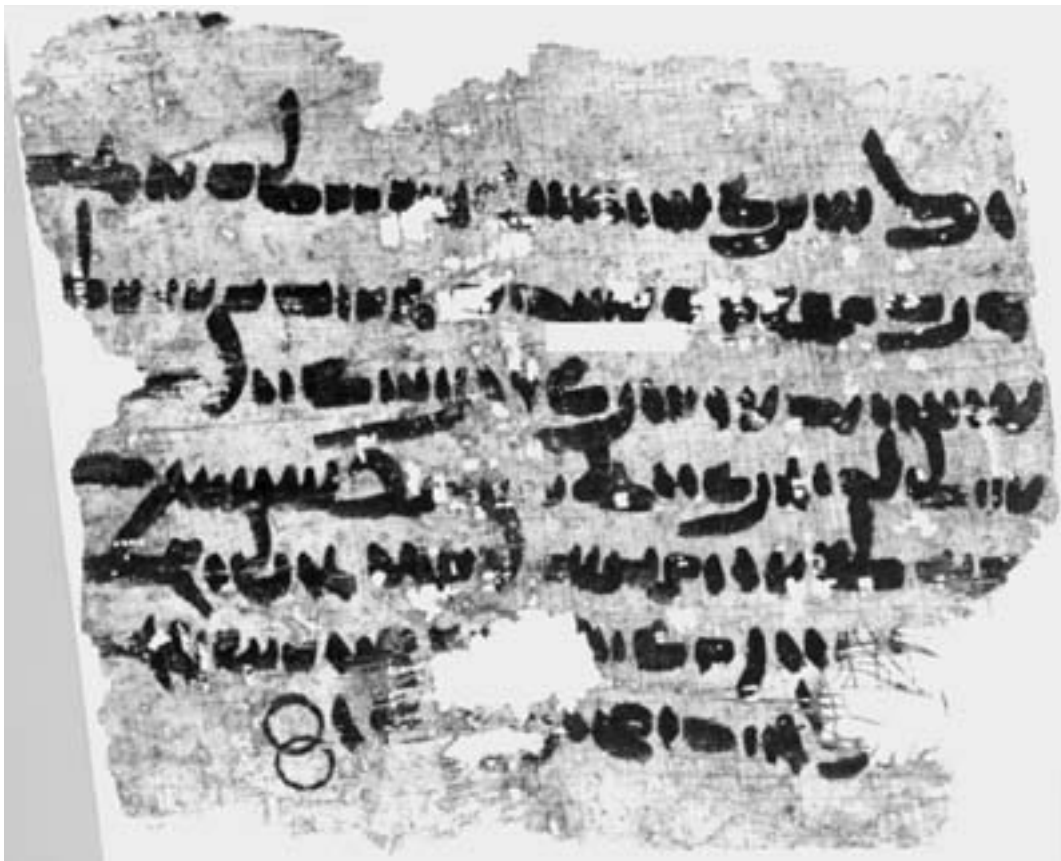


Fig. 11

²⁴ This specific spelling is also encountered in a fragment from the Bodleian in Oxford, Frgm. 2, line 3 (not yet published).



Fig. 12

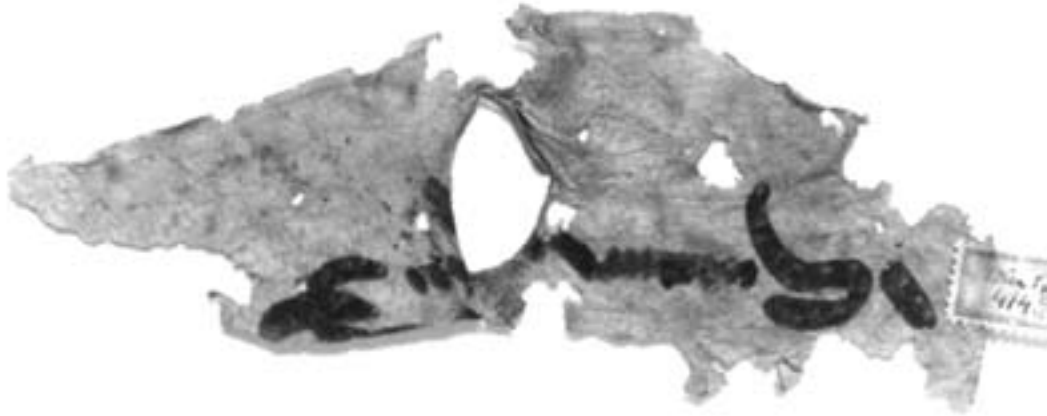


Fig. 13

Though most of the Pahlavi papyri only reveal one writing on them, i. e. Pahlavi, we do possess some with both Pahlavi script and Greek or Coptic, and even some palimpsests. Furthermore, it may be possible that in many a collection some Pahlavi papyri still live their life in the dark without being recognized as such. It is my great hope that thorough investigation and rearrangements of collections will possibly reveal hitherto unknown Pahlavi papyri. With this call to the papyrologists I would like to bring this short Persian excursion to the Egyptian soil to an end.