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Detail from above the entrance of Tehran's fire temple, 1286š/1917–18. Photo by © Shervin Farridnejad

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Two Words in the Sogdian Version of the *Antirrheticus* of Evagrius Ponticus

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zmyx “earth”

Parts of a Sogdian version of the *Antirrheticus* of Evagrius Ponticus, which was certainly translated from Syriac, are attested amongst the fragments of the manuscript E27 (formerly C2). One of these fragments, f. 102, R18-19, contains a citation of Proverbs 17:3: *zmyx x(wz)t (n)[ʔq](t)[w ʔt ʔ]t(p)n w(z)yn. ʔt xwtw b(y)y (xwz)t žyʔwr* “The *zmyx* tests [silver and the] furnace gold, and the Lord God tests the heart” (Sims-Williams 1985: 170). The Syriac text of the *Antirrheticus*, in agreement with the Peshitta, reads: *šrpʔ bqʔ lsʔmʔ wkwʔ ldhbʔ. wmyʔ bħr lbʔ* “The crucible assays silver and the furnace gold, and the Lord tests the heart” (Frankenberg 1912: 490). This short passage contains several rare Sogdian words, including *xwz* “to assay, prove, test, examine” translating the two synonymous Syriac verbs *bqʔ* and *bħr* (cf. Armenian *xoyz* “search”, *xowzem* “to seek”, see Schwartz 1969: 447; Sims-Williams 1985: 85), and a *hapax legomenon*, possibly to be restored as *[ʔ]t(p)n* (Sims-Williams 1985: 177), which translates Syr. *kwʔ* “furnace”. Here we are concerned with the first word, *zmyx*, which apparently translates Syr. *šrpʔ* “crucible”.

The problem is that Sogd. *zmyx*, in its only other attestation in a fragmentary Manichaean glossary, is highly unlikely to mean “crucible”. The word occurs in M356, R5, in the collocation *xwrm ʔty zmyx* “dust and *zmyx*” (Morano 2005: 217; the reading *zmyk* given in Gershevitch 1942: 101 was corrected by

Sundermann apud Gershevitch 1985: 278). Although the column which would have contained the Western Middle Iranian equivalents of these words is unfortunately missing, the context indicates that *zmyx* must be a near synonym of *xwrm* “duṣt, soil”, as is confirmed by its evident etymological connection with Iranian **zam-* “earth” (Avestan *zam-*, Parthian and Middle Persian *zamīg*, etc.).

It thus appears that the Sogdian text has replaced the word “crucible” in the passage from the *Antirrheticus* by a word meaning “earth”. In my edition I proposed that *zmyx* may be “a copyist’s error for an unknown word meaning ‘crucible’, possibly a derivative of *zm’y* ‘tempt, test’ (as suggested by Schwartz apud MacKenzie)” (Sims-Williams 1985: 177, referring to MacKenzie 1970: 119). That solution remains possible. However, an alternative or additional explanation may be provided by the Peshitta version of Psalm 12.7 (12.6 in the English bible, 11.7 in the Vulgate), which includes the strange phrase *s’m’ gby’ dbhyr’ b’r’* “pure silver proved by earth”. The underlying Hebrew text is partially obscure, perhaps corrupt, but at any rate appears to include the word *’rṣ* “earth”, represented in the Peshitta by its Syriac cognate *’r’*. Since both the translator and the copyist of our Sogdian text were no doubt monks, they would certainly have known by heart the text of the Psalter, which they heard or recited twice a week from beginning to end (Dickens 2013: 361). I suggest, therefore, that the word for “crucible”, either in the Sogdian text or in the the Syriac text from which it was translated, was replaced by the word for “earth” as a result of the writer’s familiarity with the wording of Psalm 12.7.¹ This could have happened particularly easily if the Sogdian text originally contained a word for “crucible” which resembled the word *zmyx* “earth”, but this assumption is not essential.

If this argument is correct, it follows that the entry *zmyx* “crucible” in the Christian Sogdian dictionary (Sims-Williams 2016: 239) should be replaced by *zmyx* “earth” in conformity with the equivalent entry in the dictionary of Manichaean Sogdian (Sims-Williams & Durkin-Meisterernst 2012: 232).

***swm* “burn (on the skin), brand-mark, cauterization”**

Another folio from the Sogdian version of the *Antirrheticus* (E27, f. 111, R7-9), contains in fragmentary form a translation of the following Syriac passage (ed. Frankenberg 1912: 506, with Greek “retroversion” on the facing page): “To the Lord, concerning the demons which fall upon the skin of the body, and place upon it burns (*kwy’*), as if from fire, and *impress (*msqqyn*)² upon it round stamps (*tḅ’ glyl’*) like those which are from a cupping-glass (*swqy’*), which I have seen many times with my own eyes and have been amazed”.

Here we are concerned with the Sogdian rendering of the sentence *kwy’ yk hw dmn nwr’ symyn bh* “burns, as if from fire, they place upon it”, of which the following words survive: ... *w](nc’)nw cn ätry swm* [... “... as if from fire *swm* ...”. In my edition I noted *srm* as a possible alternative reading for the last word, but preferred *swm* [sōm], suggesting that this might be a loanword from an unattested

1- There is an allusion to this verse in a service-book from Turfan, in a poem for the commemoration of Saints Sergius and Bacchus: “And like silver that is tried with earth (*s’m’ dbhyr’ b’r’*) their teaching shone forth by tribulations” (MIK III/45, ff. 18V-19R, in Hunter & Coakley 2017: 100-101, 206).

2- If it is not a mere error, the unique root *sqq* may be denominative from *swqy’* “cupping-glass”, itself a loanword from Greek σικύα “id.” (originally “gourd”), see Sokoloff 2009: 990, 1041. Possibly the lost original text of Evagrius used the denominative σικυάζω “to cup”, though Frankenberg in his “retroversion” from the Syriac chooses the unspecific ἐμποιέω “to cause, produce”.

Middle Persian word **sōhm*, **sōm* < Old Iranian **sauxman-* “burning” (Sims-Williams 1985: 175, 180). At the time no such word as *swm* or *srm* was attested in any other Sogdian text. Recently, however, *swm* has come to light in a similar context in a Manichaean Sogdian calendar fragment: *(kyw)yδ myδ s(w)m s(w)cy xwrnyy ʾs nyy ywṭ kyy kwnyy iii srδ jwṭ* “On this day one ought not to burn *swm* (nor) take blood; he who does so will live (only) three years” (M142, R3-7, ed. Morano & Reck, forthcoming). The editors’ parentheses round the second letter of *s(w)m* mark the *w* as damaged or unclear, but no other reading seems possible; certainly one cannot read it as *r*. If the Christian text attests the same word, therefore, its second letter must likewise be a *w*, with a superscript point indicating the pronunciation [ō].

A clue to the meaning of the Manichaean Sogdian expression *swm swc* is provided by an Uygur calendar from Turfan which contains similar advice against carrying out particular medical procedures on certain days of the month: “On that day, if one should take blood (*kanasar*), (or) cauterize (*tügnäsär*), (or) perform surgery (*baš kilsar*) ... he will die” (Rachmati 1937: 33, Text 21, lines 13-15). Morano & Reck translate both Sogdian *swm swc* and Uygur *tügnä-* as “to employ moxibustion”, perhaps on the supposition that *swm* may be a word for *moxa* (mugwort), but this interpretation is hardly appropriate for Christian Sogdian *swm*. I know of no alternative to the etymology of *sōm* suggested in my edition of the Sogdian *Antirrheticus* fragments, which still seems to me likely to be correct. However, my former assumption that Syr. *nwr* “fire” is here translated by the words *ättry swm* “*burning of fire” no longer seems plausible. In general *nwr* is translated simply by *ʾtr* “fire” (Sims-Williams 2016: 323), and the addition of a rare loanword such as *swm* would be both unnecessary and inexplicable. It is much more likely that the Sogdian translator has made a slight change in the order of words, perhaps in order to bring together the verb and its object, and that *swm* translates Syr. *kwy* “burns, scars, cauterizations” (Sokoloff 2009: 605). This meaning also fits the Manichaean calendar fragment perfectly.

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