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Syriac into Middle Iranian: A Translation Studies Approach to Sogdian and Pahlavi Manuscripts within the Church of the East

Abstract: Based on a corpus coming from the Turfan oasis (in present-day Xinjiang, People's Republic of China) and consisting of Christian Middle Iranian literature in several languages (Middle Persian, Syriac and Sogdian) and scripts (East Syriac, Pahlavi and secular Sogdian), the present paper is aimed at identifying and outlining the translation techniques for the transmission of religious knowledge, based on a literary tradition as well as on a manuscript tradition, from one context to another. The religious knowledge is that which belongs to the "Church of the East" and which is written in its official liturgical language, i.e. Syriac in East Syriac script. The general context is that of the missionary activities of the "Church of the East" along the Silk road between late Antiquity and early Middle Age. The particular context is that of the converted Iranian communities.

Keywords: Translation Studies, Middle Iranian Languages, Eastern Christianity

1 The corpus and its cultural-historical background

Christian Middle Iranian literature is almost entirely translated from Syriac, involving languages—on the one hand Syriac and on the other hand the Middle Iranian languages—which are genealogically and typologically quite different. The result of this process of translation is a religious literature expressed in different languages and scripts, which are selected depending on the text typology, its function and its addressees. It is a faithfully translated literature which aims at a very close formal and semantic correspondence.

This religious literature belongs to the "Church of the East".[1] This Church started from Edessa (present-day Urfa, Turkey) in the 2nd century, separated from the patriarchate of Antioch and broke with the Monophysitic Jacobite Church of Syria in the 5th century, and spread to the east reaching Central Asia, China and India[2] between the 6th and the 8th centuries. To spread its own universal message the Church had to be able to communicate: religious teachings, scriptural texts etc. needed to be made accessible to new audiences. It is not surprising that Patriarch Timothy I (780–823), who played a crucial role in the

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1 For a complete overview, among a vast literature, see: Baum-Winkler (2003); Gillman & Klimkeit (1999); Hunter (1996); Lala Comneno (1995); Le Coz (2010).

2 The evangelization of India follows the spice trade routes through the sea. Following a well established tradition, the gospel was first preached in India by the apostle Saint Thomas. For a brief survey, see: Baum & Winkler (2003: 51–57); Brown (1956); Le Coz (2010: 242–244).

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evangelization of Central Asia, had always focussed on the education of missionaries in several fields, i.e. theology, languages, bookbinding and calligraphy.[3] Dickens (2009: 112) writes regarding the role of the Syriac Bible in Central Asia: "The evidence, fleeting as it is, clearly shows that Christianity in Central Asia was not merely a thin veneer over the animistic and shamanistic religious core of the Turkic peoples. There was sufficient spiritual vibrancy and knowledge within community to support teachers and interpreters of Scripture". This process required a translational activity which meant making decisions on language, script and images[4] as well as on a book's copying, composition and production. In fact, the thesis I share in this contribution is that the translation process — an essential tool for the evangelization of a vast and heterogenous area — has implied not only the translation of content, i.e., a particular religious message, but also the translation of the whole knowledge and τέχναι[5] that led to the creation of a manuscript[6] and, in so doing, of a manuscript tradition. So far, the content has been translated through the choice of language, script and image whereas the manuscript has been translated through a particular know-how including, for instance, the choice of formal factors as well as the choice of a particular *mise en page* and *mise en texte*, as well as that of a particular book-binding.[7] In other words, what I mean for translation activity is a translation approach which has involved at the same time a translation of a literary religious tradition as well as a translation of a manuscript religious tradition.

The official liturgical language of this Church was Syriac, the Aramaic dialect of Edessa, but local vernaculars were also allowed in the Church service. Among them, the main role was played by Sogdian. A language spoken by the most important group of traders along the Silk road (see Hansen 2012: 113–139; La Vaissière 2005), Sogdian was adopted by the missionary communities to spread their religious message. We have some evidence on the controversies between Syriac and Iranian speaking monks in regard to the choice of the language to be used in the liturgy in several fragments of a Sogdian version of the life of John of Deylam, an Eastern Syrian saint and founder of monasteries in Fārs (see Sims-Williams 1996: 336–337). Moreover, taking into account the scarcity of the primary sources, secondary sources indicate that Middle Persian was used as a liturgical language in the territory of Iran proper. For instance, John Chrysostom asserts that during his time the Bible was translated into the language of the Persians; Theodoret of Cyrus mentions the fact that Persians had knowledge of the Bible. According to the *Chronicle of Seert* Bishop Mana of Rewardašir translated the *corpus* of Syriac literature into Middle Persian at the end of the 5th century, and the Catholicos Aqaq seems to have translated a survey of Christianity into Middle Persian for the Sasanian ruler Kawād I. Through the quotations of the Bible which are attested by the Pahlavi apologetic text Škand-gumānīg wizār (9th century) one can infer the existence of other Sasanian versions of biblical texts (see Shaked 1990: 206–207).

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3 See Berti (2006); Suermann (2004); Pinggéra (2011: 28–29) "Eine eigene Ausbildungsstätte für die Mission errichtete Katholikos Timotheos I. (780–823) im Kloster Bet Abe, wo geeignete Mönche in den Sprachen der verschiedensten Völker Asiens unterwiesen wurden".

4 Concerning the choices of images, see paragraph 3 *"Kulturbildwissenschaft als Translations-Forschung"*.

5 Technai – the Greek word meaning expertise, area of expertise.

6 From a theoretical as well as methodological point of view, I share the definition of manuscript studies as a "cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural field of study" where the manuscript "is not to be read only as a vehicle for information conveyed mainly through text or images, but studied as a physical object or artefact" and where "the social and cultural context of the manuscript, as a material object, must be studied and reconstructed as completely as possible" and where the context has to be regarded as "the particular manuscript culture to which a given manuscript belongs: the milieu in which it was and it is produced, used and transmitted. It is, in turn, influenced by the artefacts it produces, and thus constitutes a highly complex whole changing in time". All these quotations come from the introduction (p. 5; p. 1; p. 1; pp. 1–2 respectively) of the first volume of a new studies series focused on this field and significantly entitled "Studies in Manuscript Cultures". See Jörg B. Quenzer (2014: 1–7).

7 These last issues are still under investigation and therefore I am not going to discuss them. In fact, it should be noted that the material taken into account in this contribution has never been studied focusing on the manuscript tradition which the material itself belongs to. So far, with particular regard to the Christian Sogdian manuscript tradition, the project I undertook last year at the *Institute of Iranian Studies* in Vienna is the first one. In the same way, to the best of my knowledge, with particular regard to the Pahlavi psalter, the research currently carried out by Durkin-Meisterernst is the first aimed at a broader contextualization of it. As we can infer, we are at a very early stage. Nevertheless, it seems very important at this occasion to introduce the matter under discussion presenting the theoeretical framework which lie behind it.

Within the Middle Iranian Christian tradition, the state of the sources is quite different: the Sogdian *corpus*[8] is much better attested than the Middle Persian one, even if none of the texts belonging to it survive in anything near a complete form. In fact, the Sogdian *corpus* consists of ca. 500 fragments in the Sogdian language in East Syriac script (see Barbati 2014b; Sims-Williams 2012) and ca. 50 fragments in the Sogdian language in Sogdian secular script (see Reck 2008; Sims-Williams 2014), all coming from the ruined monastery of Bulayïq (Turfan oasis)[9] and probably belonging to the 9th–10th centuries. The Middle Persian *corpus* of Christian literature, however, consists of one text in the Middle Persian language in Pahlavi script (see Durkin-Meisterernst 2006) and the so-called "Nestorian crosses"[10] coming from Afghanistan, India and Sri Lanka (see Cereti 2003). As is shown by this religious tradition, the Sogdian language together with the East Syriac script was used to write liturgical and hagiographical texts: sometimes the result was a monolingual text, often also a bilingual Syriac-Sodgian one. The stories of life, conversion and martyrdom of several personalities are monolingual. Among the Gospel lectionaries, one shows a monolingual Sogdian text with the rubrics given in Syriac, and there are nine cases where the original Syriac text is immediately followed by the Sogdian translation (see Barbati 2010). Other Gospel lectionaries are bilingual presenting the original Syriac alternating with the Sogdian translation sentence-by-sentence; a lectionary of the Pauline epistles is also bilingual. A psalter including the East Syrian psalm-headings has the first verse of each psalm given in Syriac as well as in Sogdian. Finally, two fragments belonging to the Melkite Book of Psalms have Greek lines, which generally agrees with the *Septuagint* (see Sims-Williams: 2004; 2011; 2013), while all other Sogdian translations depend on the Syriac Peshitta version with few isolated exceptions related to Tatian's *Diatessaron* and to the Old Syriac version of the New Testament.

Concerning the Christian Sogdian tradition in Sogdian secular script, the best preserved fragment of this group contains the *Credo*, published by Müller in 1913, and the end of an as yet unidentified prayer with a shortened version of the final *Gloria Patri* "in the will of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever, amen", which usually follows psalms. There exist some pages of the Book of Psalms, edited by Martin Schwartz in 1974 and revised by the same scholar together with Nicholas Sims-Williams in 2014. It is remarkable that this was the only Christian Sogdian text written in Sogdian script. It seems to be a text that had a wide circulation and popularity, since the Iranian versions of the Psalms are preserved in Middle Persian in Pahlavi script and in a New Persian and Syriac bilingual in Syriac script. As already noted by Ch. Reck (2008: 197), we find the same situation for the Manichaean fragments in Sogdian script: in fact, Middle Persian and Parthian hymns were transcribed into the Sogdian script to be read by people who presumably were not able to read the Manichaean script.

Returning to an overview of this literary corpus, we find two fragments of a Melkite Book of Psalms as already mentioned above. According to Sims-Williams, this text was possibly brought to Turfan from the Tashkent area where a Melkite community existed. There are also several fragments of diverse content, such as prayers, homilies, and secular texts (for example commercial transactions in which the priests took an active part), as well as 28 fragments of as yet unidentified content, yet belonging to a single manuscript written by one hand. It is known that almost all the names in the texts or in the glosses in the margins are Turkish or combinations of Turkish and Middle Persian. According to Sims-Williams (1992), this indicates two things: first, the community of the final period of the monastery was Turkish; second, the existence of Middle Persian name elements confirms the Persian background of the Christian community at Bulayïq.

Finally, with regard to the Christian Middle Persian tradition, we have only one text in Middle Persian language in Pahlavi script (4th–6th–7th centuries?)[11] which is a translation of the psalter discovered in the

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8 For a complete and up-to-date bibliography, see Sims-Williams (2009; 2012).

9 See Sims-Williams (1990). It is well known that not even a fragmentary text of such kind has been ever discovered in the region called Sogdiana proper (that is in modern Uzbekistan and Tajikistan). Both literatures are part of the Berlin Turfan collection that is housed in the Academy of Sciences of Berlin and Brandenburg. Apart from the Berlin Turfan collection, there are few other Christian fragments in Sogdian secular script which are housed in London at the British Library. Finally, it must be kept in mind that texts in Old Turkish in Uygur script as well as in New Persian in Eastern Syriac script have been found in the same site. For an overview see, respectively, Dickens (2009: 108–109) and Orsatti (2007: 128–147).

10 On the use of the term "Nestorian" with regard to the Church of the East see Brock (1996).

11 About dating, see Durkin-Meisterernst (2006: 6–7).

Turfan oasis but, according to D. Durkin-Meisterernst (2006: 7–8), since it is the only one and since in that area Middle Persian is attested as a liturgical language only in the Manichaean tradition, it seems to have been brought to Turfan rather than having been produced locally. The psalter consists of 13 fragmentary pages and is written in a variant of Pahlavi script whose *ductus* is similar to that of a Pahlavi inscription attested in a cross coming from Herat (Afghanistan) and studied by Gignoux.[12] Besides this, we have six crosses (6th–9th centuries) bearing the same Pahlavi inscriptions and coming from India (one from Mount Thomas in Mylapore near Madras, four from Kottayam, one from Travancore in Kerala); the seventh cross was found in 2001 in Goa. In Sri Lanka one cross was found on a pillar in the ancient royal city of Mantota, the port of the capital Anunadhapura.

In the next section, which is devoted to the study of the translation process with particular regard to a literary religious tradition, I will address the following questions: why are some texts bilingual while others are monolingual? Are there any differences within the translational process? Why is the same concept expressed at times by a Syriac loanword and in other instances by its correspondent Sogdian and/or Middle Persian word? Could the answers to these questions help to define the authors, addressees/readers as well as the speaker design paradigm? In other words, could the answers to these questions help to contextualise the Christian Sogdian literary religious tradition ?

2 Searching for the translation approach

This literature satisfies all principles governing a formal equivalence oriented translation, quoting Nida (2004: 161) it attempts to outline several elements of the source text, such as: "1) grammatical units, 2) consistency in word usage, and 3) meanings in terms of the source context. The reproduction of grammatical units may consist in: a) translating nouns by nouns, verbs by verbs, etc.; b) keeping all phrases and sentences intact (i.e. not splitting up and readjusting the units); and c) preserving all formal indicators, e.g. marks of punctuation, paragraph breaks, and poetic indentation". Besides this peculiar investigation which is basically aimed at outlining the differences in language structures, I am going to analyze the Christian Middle Iranian material by applying what has been called by Nida (1994: 191) "the sociolinguistics of translating canonical religious texts" together with the new issues elaborated by the third wave of sociolinguistics[13] as a means of answering the questions outlined above[14].

2.1 A word by word translation

How faithfully the Middle Iranian Christian tradition translated from its Syriac source can be seen in the Sogdian gospel lectionary *E5*.[15] This text is written in the Sogdian language in East Syriac script and shows a peculiarity which we do not find in other Christian Sogdian manuscripts. Usually, the Syriac rubrics which are never translated into Sogdian are immediately followed by the first Sogdian sentence of a gospel text. On the other hand, the manuscript *E5* shows 9 cases where the opening words are in Syriac and are

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12 See Gignoux (2001). For further interesting remarks see Berti (2006: 155–156, n.61).

13 See http://www.oeaw.ac.at/sociolinguistics/.

14 Moreover, If we want to take a further step thinking about the common background of some kind of translation process with particular regard to the Middle Iranian area — and not only the Christian one — during Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, it seems noteworthy to quote what has been clearly pointed out by Cantera (2004: 243), with particular regard to the Pahlavi translation of the Avesta and its sociocultural-historical background. In this passage the scholar quotes in turn Spiegel who first asserts that the Pahlavi translation of the Avesta — quotation *apud* Cantera — "eine Frucht der Studien (ist), welchen während der Herrschaft der Sâsâniden die Perser in den syrischen und arabischen Schulen oblagen, eine Anwendung der Principien der der jüdisch-christlichen Übersetzungskunst im Oriente auf die altêranischen Religionschriften". Cantera notes that "Obwohl diese Behauptung vielleicht zu weit geht, ist dennoch nicht von der Hand zu weisen, dass die aramäische Übersetzung der Bibel, die man als *Targum* bezeichnet, grosse Ähnlichkeit zu der Pahlavi-Übersetzung des Avesta aufweist...".

15 It corresponds to *C 5*, according to the new classification system, i.e., catalogue number, as well as *E 27* corresponds to *C 2*. *E* means "[Church of the] East". See Sims-Williams (2012: 16; 28; 99). On the concordance of different classification systems regarding the Christian Sogdian fragments in East Syriac script, see Sims-Williams (2012: 13-16; 211-214).

immediately followed by the Sogdian translation. These 9 cases clearly show a translation word by word which keeps the source sentence intact. I have already analyzed these in detail (see Barbati 2010: 1–10), therefore on this occasion I will consider one example:

1) *E 5/83 a–b*[16] /r/8–10/ (Luke, 24:36)

> Syriac: *w   kd   knÿšyn hww [tlmÿdʾ] (m)ḥdʾ*
> Sogdian: *ʾt   cʾnw ʾwšt mʾtnt žwxšqtʾ pr wyʾq*
>   'and when the disciples were gathered immediately'

Word-by-word commentary:

Syriac *w*	=	Sogdian *ʾt*	'and'
Syriac *kd*	=	Sogdian *cʾnw*	'when'
Syriac *knÿ*šyn hww	=	Sogdian *ʾwšt mʾtnt*	'were gathered'
Syriac *[tlmÿdʾ]*	=	Sogdian *žwxšqtʾ*	'disciples'
Syriac *(m)ḥdʾ*	=	Sogdian *pr wyʾq*	'immediately',

i. e. the Syriac adverb *mḥdʾ* is translated in Sogdian by the prepositional phrase *pr* 'to, in, on, at, upon, for' + *wyʾq* 'place'.[17]

In the same way, the accuracy of the Sogdian translation can be argued by taking into account the bilingual texts, as for instance, a lectionary of the Pauline epistles[18] alternating Syriac and Sogdian where we can read:

2) *E6/3*[19] /v/12–16/ (part of the Epistle for Christmas)[20]

> Syriac: *kd (ṃṭʾ) dyn šwlmh dzbnʾ*
> Sogdian: *pyšt cʾnw prʾyt žwmnẏʾ spwnẏʾq*
>   'Als aber die Vollendung der Zeit kam'

> Syriac: *šdr   ʾlhʾ   lbrh*
> Sogdian: *fšmdʾrt byγ   xy(pθ) zʾtγ*
>   'sandte Gott seinen Sohn'

Word-by-word commentary:

Syriac *kd*	=	Sogdian *cʾnw*	'als'
Syriac *ṃṭʾ*	=	Sogdian *prʾyt*	'kam'
Syriac *dyn*	=	Sogdian *pyšt*	'aber'[21]
Syriac *šwlmh*	=	Sogdian *spwnẏʾq*	'die Vollendung'
Syriac *d-zbnʾ*[22]	=	Sogdian *žwmnẏʾ*	'der Zeit'
Syriac *šdr*	=	Sogdian *fšmdʾrt*	'sandte'
Syriac *ʾlhʾ*	=	Sogdian *byγ*	'Gott'
Syriac *l-br*	=	Sogdian *zʾtγ*	'Sohn'
Syriac *-h*	=	Sogdian *xypθ*	'seinen'

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16 According to the new classification system, i.e., catalogue number, see Sims-Williams (2012: 37). It corresponds to *T II B 66* (find-signature), and to *n159b* (shelf-mark), sentence n.4 of my work: see Barbati (2010: 3). On the concordance of find-signatures regarding the Christian Sogdian fragments in East Syriac script, see Sims-Williams (2012: 214-220). In the same way, on concordance of shelf-marks, see Sims-Williams (2012: 199-211). Morover, all these fragments are digitalized and available (according to the shelf-mark) at: http://turfan.bbaw.de/dta-i-en

17 On the use of the phrase *pr wyʾq* as adverb see Sims-Williams (1985: 230).

18 See Sundermann (1981: 171–195). According to the new classification system, this lectionary is listed as *E6*: see Sims-Williams (2012: 44–47).

19 See Sims-Williams (2012: 44).

20 The following transliteration and translation are that of Sundermann (1981: 175–178).

21 I can assert that in the Christian Sogdian texts the conjunction *pyšt* is usually at the beginning of the sentence whereas the corresponding Syriac conjunction *dyn* (from Greek, see Brock: 1975) is always postposed.

22 See Ciancaglini (2008: 169–170).

2.2 Retention of all formal indicators[23]

For the study of the formal aspects I advocate for an extensive approach going from grammatical units to codicological aspects. Generally speaking, we can assert that in the use of ink, headlines, punctuation, decorative punctuation points, columns and quires the Christian Middle Iranian manuscript fragments show a high degree of preservation of the characteristics of the Syriac manuscript tradition.[24]

For instance, black ink is used for writing Christian Sogdian texts as well as the Pahlavi psalter (see Durkin-Meisterernst 2006: 3). Brown ink is also attested, i.e., the twenty-eight fragments in Sogdian script belonging to the same handwriting are written with brown ink (see Reck 2008: 194). Red ink is used for writing headlines, titles, rubricated titles and canons in all Christian Middle Iranian manuscript fragments. In the Sogdian lectionary *E 5*, the reference to the passages of the Syriac New Testament, which are in Syriac and never translated into Sogdian, are written in red ink too. Generally speaking, Syriac manuscripts are usually in brown or black, and the black ink is sometimes glossy or shiny (see Hatch 1946: 10–11). In the same way, headlines, titles, rubricated titles and canons are generally red or green and occasionally yellow or blue, rarely with gold ornamentation (see Hatch 1946: 10).

The Christian Sogdian tradition as well as the Pahlavi psalter retain the system of punctuation of the Syriac tradition. In fact, as in the Syriac book tradition, a single point dot or a double point dot indicate a short pause.[25] In some manuscripts one dot stands directly above the other, and in others, most common, the upper dot is a little to the right or to the left. The full stop is denoted by four small circles and usually one or two of these circles are not only in black ink but also in red ink, especially when they are placed at the end of a lesson or at the end of a paragraph. In the two most extensive and well preserved Sogdian manuscripts in East Syriac script, namely, *E 5* and *E 27*, decorative punctuation points are also used as quire-marks. The difference is that in *E 5* they only enclose the quire number (see Barbati, forthcoming), whereas in *E 27* they extend right across the page (see Sims-Williams 1985: 15). They are in black and in red ink. The typical shape is that of a rhombus of four dots, two of which (always in opposition) can be written in red ink. These are used for ornamental reasons.

The layout of the Christian Sogdian texts as well as that of the Pahlavi psalter is one single column. According to Dickens (2013: 7), this is the standard form attested in all Syriac texts from Turfan with few exceptions where the format consists of two and six columns. Generally speaking, the Syriac manuscripts are sometimes arranged in one column and sometimes in two or three columns. According to Hatch (1946: 13–14), the earliest dated Syriac manuscript (411 A.D.) coming from Edessa is arranged in three columns on each page whereas from the 7th to 10th century single columns and double columns are more common in all Syriac traditions with a preference for the single column by Melkites.

In accordance with the Syriac tradition, in the Christian Sogdian texts the quire is numbered with Syriac letters.[26] Usually the number is placed at the bottom of the page[27] and is marked by decorative punctuation points in red and black ink. According to Dickens (2013: 12) the Syriac manuscript fragments coming from Turfan show the same situation. Concerning the system of numbering quires, there are two examples which differ from that of the Syriac tradition which sometimes shows the number at the end of the quire and sometimes at the beginning and at the end (see Hatch 1946: 23). The first example is attested in the Sogdian lectionary *E 5*, and the other one is attested in a Syriac manuscript, the so called

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23 I have already discussed this topic trying to contextualize it within the Turfan *milieu*. Therefore I am focusing only on the Christian traditions, leaving aside other religious traditions coming from Turfan, for instance, the Manichaean and the Buddhist traditions as well as another Iranian religious tradition, i.e., the Avestan tradition. See Barbati (2014b: 273–277). At the same time I have argued elsewhere (Barbati 2013) that the Christian Mediaeval Iranian manuscript tradition calls for a complete codicological investigation.

24 With regard to the Syriac manuscript tradition as a whole, the main reference is Hatch (1946: 3–47). With regard to the Syriac manuscript tradition coming from Turfan in particular, the main reference is Dickens (2013).

25 According to Hatch (1946: 42), in the Syriac tradition from the sixth century two points are employed to mark a short pause.

26 Because of the fragmentarity of the Pahlavi psalter, nothing can be said on this point.

27 According to Hatch (1946: 23), in the Syriac tradition, Syriac letters were sometimes placed at the bottom of the page and Greek letters at the top; we can also find Syriac arithmetical figures (at least before the ninth century), or Coptic or Arabic letters.

"psalter C"[28] presently preserved in the Staatsbibliothek, Berlin. Both manuscripts are coming from Bulayïq. For this reason, N. Sims-Williams (1985: 14–16) has pointed out the existence of a peculiar system of numbering quires at the Bulayïq scriptorium. The existence of *recto* and *verso* sides with quire numbers indicates that in these two manuscripts the first and last pages of a quire were numbered, with the end number of a quire being identical with the number of the following quire. Taking an example from the Sogdian lectionary *E 5*, ‹y› = 10 on the *verso* side of the fragment *E 5/100*[29] means that it is the last page of the ninth quire whereas ‹y› = 10 on the *recto* side of the following fragment *E 5/101*[30] indicates that it is the first page of the tenth quire. Because of the fragmentarity of the material we are dealing with, it is very difficult to establish the length of a quire: it can be asserted with regard to the Christian Sogdian as well as to the Syriac manuscript fragments coming from Turfan (see Dickens 2013: 11–12). Until now, the only attempt has been made by Nicholas Sims-Williams (1985: 14–15). Focusing on a Sogdian manuscript fragment *E 27*, he postulates that a quire can consist of five sheets (ten folios). Generally speaking, the quires in the Syriac tradition are mostly formed from four or five sheets (eight or ten folios respectively), see Hatch (1946: 22–24). Unfortunately, with particular regard to the Pahlavi psalter, we do not have any evidence that allows us to investigate this topic.

Finally, I would like to draw attention to a graphic peculiarity with particular regard to the writing of the word for "devil, Satan". Nicholas Sims-Williams states that in the Sogdian *Story of Daniel* we have an example of upside-down writing of the Sogdian šmnw "Satan" which , as he points out (see Sims-Williams 2014: 104), "is also found in an Uygur text in Syriac script from Bulayïq, spelt šwmnw (see Zieme 1974, 666 where the reading '*yšumnu*' is due to the ambiguous writing of the initial š). Zieme refers to the same way of writing the name of Ahriman in Pahlavi; the name Iblis is similarly inverted in islamic texts." Focusing on the Christian tradition of the Church of the East, this is not surprising since we have many examples in the whole Syriac manuscript tradition[31]. In fact, it shows the strong relationship of this material with the Mesopotamian Mother Church and, above all, the translation process *lato sensu* which led to the evangelization of a wide area along the Silk road.

Of course, the translation of the formal aspects in the Christian Middle Iranian tradition calls for further research and this is only possible with an increasing knowledge of the codicological issues. Right now we have the tools needed to achieve it. In fact, the first catalogue of manuscript fragments in Iranian languages in East Syriac script belonging to the Berlin Turfan Collection has been published by Nicholas Sims-Williams in 2012 and the first correspondent catalogue of the Syriac manuscript fragments from the same collection has been published by Erica Hunter and Mark Dickens in 2014. Since both catalogues contain a lot of codicological information, mostly previously unknown, it means that we are able to deal with the whole material for the first time in order to achieve a complete overview in this regard.

2.3 Translation in context

Considering the kind of text, its function and its addressees, we find different degrees of concordance referring to the morphosyntax, syntax and lexicon and, at the same time, there also examples of mechanical translations as well as some stylistic divergences.

Taking the syntax into account , we have the highest degree of concordance: the Syriac word-order (VSO) is retained in the Christian Middle Iranian *corpus*[32] even if that is entirely contrary to the prevalent

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28 It bears *SyrHT 72* as shelf-mark and *69* as catalogue number. See: Hunter-Dickens (2014: 84-87). The Syriac fragments belonging to the Berlin Turfan Collection are digitalized and available (according to the shelf-mark) at: http://idp.bbaw.de

29 According to the new classification system, i.e., catalogue number (see Sims-Williams 2012: 39). It corresponds to the shelf-mark *n 160* (see Sims-Williams 2012: 203).

30 According to the new classification system, i.e., catalogue number (see Sims-Williams 2012: 39–40). It corresponds to the shelf-mark *n 161* (see Sims-Williams 2012: 203).

31 As clearly pointed out by Prof. Pier Giorgio Borbone during the XIIe Table Ronde de la Société d'études syriaques "Le Christianisme syriaque en Asie centrale et en Chine, Paris, Institut Protestant de Théologie, 14 novembre 2014. Discussing the Christian literature in Turkish, Prof. Zieme showed the example mentioned by Sims-Williams and Prof. Borbone underlined the presence of other examples of an upside-down writing of the word for "devil, Satan" in the whole Syriac literature.

32 According to the well-established tradition concerning the mystery of the word-order in the case of Sacred Scripture.

word-order of the Middle Iranian languages (SOV). The result is an artificial syntax in languages like Sogdian and Middle Persian which are genealogically and typologically different from Syriac.

With regard to the Christian Sogdian verbal morphosyntax, I consider the presence and the prominence of periphrastic verbal formations formed by the present participle in -*yq* + verb 'to be' *x-*, *sqw-*, *swq-/m't* as a result of the process of translation, since its presence is calqued on a similar Syriac formations used to express a progressive *nuance*. A further proof is the fact that such periphrastic verbal formations do not occur in Manichaean and Buddhist Sogdian. In the same way, the presence — only in Christian Sogdian — of the construction *pr* + present infinitive after such verbs as 'can', 'be able to' and 'wish' depends, from my point of view, on the Syriac construction *l* + present infinitive of the same verbs. For example, in John 1,30 the Sogdian sentence *nẙ qt(')wn'nq' zw 'ẙc cn mn' yrẙwẙ rẙž pr (q)rwn* 'I can do nothing on my own initiative' translates from the Syriac *l' mškḥ 'n' mn ṣbwt npšy mdm lm'bd* 'I can do nothing on my own initiative'. As already pointed out by Gignoux (1969: 243), the Syriac construction of an infinitive followed by a participle in *mhlkw mhlk* 'to go going' and *m't 't'* 'to come coming' is reproduced with the same number of words in Middle Persian: *SGYTNt SGYTNt* and *Y'TWNt Y'TWNt*, respectively; the unfamiliar Syriac construction is replaced in Middle Persian by a repetition of the indicative.

The Christian Sogdian verbal form *ž'tẙt bẙq m'tnt* 'were being talked' which translates the Syriac verbal form *mtmlln hwy* indicates a strong effort to reproduce as faithfully as possible the Syriac original form. In fact, usually, the Syriac medio-passive verbs are translated into Sogdian with a verbal formation which is constituted from past participle + the auxiliary *b(w)/qt* 'to be'. The verbal forms mentioned above is an exception. Sogdian *ž'tẙt bẙq m'tnt* translates the Syriac *mtmlln hwy* 'were being talked', i.e., past passive progressive, Ethpaʿʿal conjugation. The Sogdian sentence is the following: (Luke 1, 65) *'t pr s't yhwdẙ γrẙ y'nt 'ẙ št ž'tẙt bẙq m'tnt* 'And all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea'; it translates Syriac *wbklh ṭwr' dyhwd hlyn mtmlln hwy* 'And all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea'. In my opinion, the Sogdian uses the auxiliary *x-*, *sqw*, *sqw/m't* 'to be' to render the Syriac progressive *nuance* and then adds *bẙq < b(w)/qt* 'being' to render the passive. One should note that *bẙq* is otherwise unknown to the Sogdian language—and therefore such a construction is unknown, too—and it is attested once in the Sogdian lectionary *E 5*,[33] a text which is intended to be read to a Sogdian speaking community during the mass and which shows, in my opinion, the highest level of inculturation.[34]

Studying the Pahlavi psalter in relation to its Syriac source, Durkin-Meistererernst (2006: 13–14) has noticed that occasionally, the Middle Persian preposition *abar* 'on, over, on to, down on, in, about' stands at the end of the sentence, even if it is never at the end of the sentence in Pahlavi because that position is normally preserved for the verb.

These cases notwithstanding, we can note a strong effort to avoid grammatical Syriacisms in the Christian Middle Iranian literature: for example, the Syriac genitive construction with an additional possessive pronoun is translated correctly, i.e., the possessive pronoun is omitted.

It is well known that the lexicon is a very important source for the question of inculturation. For example, taking into account the terminology of the Pahlavi psalter, Gignoux (1969: 234) pointed out the difficulties to translate concepts from one religious system into another, and later Durkin-Meistererernst (2006: 15) noted that "clearly there was no intention of leaving the language of the original text completely behind".[35] In particular, Gignoux underlines that "ce qui est plus intéressant à noter, c'est la présence de termes transcrits purement et simplement du syriaque, et qui ne peuvent être assimilés ni à des idéogrammes araméens, ni à des emprunts lexicaux. Cela pose un problème, car même si ces termes ne sont qu'une douzaine, on ne les retrouve pas ailleurs, dans les ouvrages pehlevis: ils ont donc été utilisés ici pour parer à d'éventuelles difficultés de

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33 In more detail, it is attested in the fragment which bears catalogue number *E 5/6a/r/6-7/* (Sims-Williams: 2012: 29) and as findig- signature *T II B 38*. The fragment has no shelf-mark and is not digitalized because it is lost but there is a photographic reproduction of it. See Sims-Williams (2012: 11-13; 29).

34 On this point see Barbati (2014a) where I tried to demonstrate how this text shows an attempt to create a new liturgical terminology through the following points: use of the *Sogdian* generic terms vs. Syriac *termini technici* loanwords; creation and development of new nominal and verbal formations; and stylistic choices.

35 On the other hand, we cannot exclude other possibilities, as, for instance, a lack of skills due to an earlier phase of inculturation.

traduction. C'est surtout pour exprimer des notions religieuses abstraites qu'un tel procédé a été employé" (Gignoux 1969: 234). Moreover, interesting enough is that the translator seems to use them sometimes in alternating with the corresponding Pahlavi word. For instance, the Syriac word for "mercy, pity, compassion", ie. *rḥmˀ*, is rendered sometimes as *lḥmydy* sometimes as *ˀpẖšˀdšny*, *abaxšāyišn* (See Gignoux 1969: 237–238). In the same way, the scholar identifies cases where the translator accepts the Syriac word, for instance in the case of the Syriac word for "prophet", i.e. *nbyˀ*, rendered as *nbyˀn*,[36] and in the case of the Syriac word for "bounty, kindness (of God)", i.e. *ṭybwtˀ*, rendered as *ṭybwtˀ*.[37] It should therefore come as no surprise that at the beginning of his work, Gignoux (1969: 234) pointed out "La traduction est le plus souvent très fidèle et précise. La construction syntaxique pose assez peu de problèmes. Mais c'est le problème des équivalences entre les termes syriaques et iraniens qui mérite un examen attentif qui se révèlera instructif." So far, at the end of his work, the scholar hypothesizes that (Gignoux 1969: 244) "l'auteur du psautier a pu être l'un de ces nestoriens, connaissant certes l'iranien, mais ne l'utilisant pas comme sa langue maternelle".

A completely different case is testified by the Sogdian gospel lectionary *E 5* (10th–11th centuries when the Christian community was well established in the Turfan oasis) which shows the creation of a proper religious terminology (see Barbati 2014a). A good example of this is the creation of new periphrastic verbal formations as *snˀm θbr* 'to give a bath, to baptize' and *pr ptcng swxˀy/swxswt* 'to lift up on the cross, to crucify': both verbs appear only in the Sogdian gospel lectionary *E 5*. The first formation translates the Syriac *ˀˀmd* '1. *immersit*; 2. *baptizavit*', Aphel conjugation of the root *ˁmd* '1. *se mersit, demersus est*; 2. *se lavit*; 3. *baptizatus est*; 4. *occidit* (*sol*); 5. *penetravit*' (see Brockelmann 1928: 529). The second translates the Syriac root *zqp* '1. trans. a. *erexit*; b. *suspendit, crucifixit*; c. *excitavit*; d. *divellit, aravit* (*terram*); e. *addidit*; f. *vocali zpql pronuntiavit*; 2. intr. a. *surrexit*; b. *horruit*; c. *crucifixus est*' (see Brockelmann 1928: 204).

In examining the Sogdian terminology in relation to its Syriac source with particular regard to a Sogdian psalter (see Schwartz & Sims-Williams 2014) — a text that had a wide circulation inside and outside the monastic community of Bulaÿïq — Sims-Williams shows, for instance, that Sogdian *wyspny δˀrny* is "a literal translation of *ˀḥyd kl* 'holder of all', the standard Syriac term for 'omnipotent, almighty, παντοκράτωρ'" (Schwartz & Sims-Williams 2014: 52). In the same way, the scholar pointed out that Sogdian *ˀˀwnẓny* 'sharing the nature (of)' "is an accurate translation of Syriac *br kynˀ* 'consubstantial (with)', literally 'son of the nature (of)'" (Schwartz & Sims-Williams 2014: 52).

Generally speaking, with particular regard to the Christian Sogdian religious terminology, it seems to me that there is a trend consisting in the use of Syriac loanwords in the monastic and ascetic literature,[38] i.e., in the texts in the East Syriac script used inside the monastic community, i.e., by people who were able to understand both Syriac and Sogdian and who were able to read the East Syriac script, whereas texts that were read during the Mass as well as texts in Sogdian secular script, i.e., texts presumably used outside the monastery, show a wide use of the corresponding Sogdian term.[39]

Finally, one must keep in mind the presence of mechanical translations as well as that of stylistic choices which differ from the source text. As an example for a mechanical translation, we can note that the Sogdian conjunction *qt* 'that' usually translates the Syriac conjunction *d-* 'that' but when the Syriac *d-* is a unique unit with *mˀ* meaning 'when, at such time as', the Sogdian translation on the one hand retains this meaning using *cˀnw* 'as, while, when, because, although, since, how' and, on the other hand, adds *qt* which has no function of its own (see Barbati 2010: 3; 7–9). As an example of stylistic choices, in the Christian Sogdian texts the word *xwtˀw* 'Lord' is always used as epithet of Jesus whereas its Syriac correspondent *mryˀ* is used alone or with *ˀlhˀ* 'God' but never with Jesus.

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36 According to Gignoux (1969: 235), with the addition of the Iranian plural ending.

37 Following Gignoux (1969: 237) with one mistake since Syriac intervocalic *-b-* is rendered in pahlavi with *-p-*. On the other side, since the scarcity of the documentation and taking into account the few examples on both sides, it is also theoretically possible that the Pahlavi text just accepted the Syriac word without knowing, or probably without having very much knowledge of the archaicization process behind the Pahlavi script.

38 See the list of Syriac loanwords in Christian Sogdian made by Sims-Williams (1988).

39 I proved this with particular regard to the most well documented manuscript fragments, *E 5* and *E 27* : see Barbati (2014a). I am still working on a complete survey on this topic because of the new precious textual editions, above all, that of Sims-Williams (2014).

To conclude, if it could be possible that the Pahlavi psalter testifies an early stage of inculturation, most probably the Christian Sogdian literature testifies a later stage where a clergy and a monastic community were perfectly able to use several languages, scripts and terminologies depending on the kind of text, its use, its author, its readers and its adddresses. It should be remembered that this community was at least bilingual if not trilingual. During the early Middle Age, in the Turfan oasis, Syriac was still the official language of the Church of the East and therefore used in the liturgy as well as for literature used inside the monastic community; Sogdian was the vernacular most used in that area also as a prestige language compared to Old Turkish and therefore used inside and outside the monastery; at the latest stage, Old Turkish was the language widely spoken and therefore mostly used by the monastic community for the day-to-day documents. In fact, according to Sims-Williams (1992), this would explain the reason why we have few Christian Sogdian secular documents. In the same way, New Persianwas taking on a new role at that time, as testified by Christian New Persian material coming from the Turfan oasis (See Sims-Williams (1992)).

3 "Kulturbildwissenschaft als Translations-Forschung"[40]

Finally, just as I proposed above a broader, codicological look on formal aspects of manuscripts, I also suggest to expand the scope of translational studies from texts to images and symbols, thus arriving at the notion of *Kulturübersetzung*, in order to look at the Middle Iranian Christian *corpus* as a cultural product in an extensive way. Quoting Bräunlein (2009: 18) "the history of the global spread of Christianity is not only the history of ideas and doctrins; it is also closely connected with the history of images transfer, visual communication and the media". In particular, Bräunlein is referring to the Christian missionary activity in the Philippines in contemporary time, but his observation holds also true for the Christian missionary activities along the silk road between the 6th and the 11th centuries. This hypothesis considers that the process of translation from the Syriac tradition to the Christian Middle Iranian traditions not only involved texts but also images and symbols.

It is important to stress that *Kulturbildwissenschaft als Translations-Forschung* constitutes a completely unexplored topic with regard to the Christian Middle Iranian tradition, and our current research aims to contribute in addressing this gap. At the same time, it must be stressed that we are dealing with a material source which is scant, fragmentary and "poor" from a point of view of images at least in comparison to other religious manuscript corpora in the same environment, i.e., the Syriac and the Manichaean sources , both of which sharing approximately the same geographical and chronological origin with the Christian Middle Iranian tradition (see Gulácsi 2005). However, it is better to be careful with such remarks as none of the texts belonging to the Christian Middle Iranian tradition survive in a complete form. Of course, we cannot investigate what we do not have and, in this case, what we do not have is much more than what we do have. For example, we cannot know if Christian Sogdian manuscripts would have had a cross at the beginning and at the end of a manuscript just like the manuscripts in the Syriac tradition.[41] In any event, trying to analyze what we have, we can assert that the Pahlavi psalter does not have any kind of image whereas the main ornament attested in the Christian Sogdian texts in both East Syriac and secular Sogdian scripts, is the presence of a cross. This is not surprising because the cross takes the central position within the symbolism of the "Church of the East" (see Borbone 2006; Klimkeit 1979; Moule 1931; Parry 1996). Generally speaking, we can assert that the cross showed by the Sogdian *corpus* is always put in the same position, i.e., the corner of the upper margin of the *verso* side; it is represented by different forms and, in accordance with the iconography of the "Church of the East", it never shows the dying Christ because it symbolizes the triumph of the Christ and not the Passion.[42]

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40 See Mersmann (2004: 107).

41 See Leroy (1964: 113).

42 See Dauvillier (1957: 237–238) and Pelliot (1973: 179–180). To some level, this was misunderstood by the Franciscan missionary and author of a detailed account of the Mongols, William of Rubruck (ca. 1210- ca. 1270), who wrote (Chiesa 2011: 76-77): "Ipsi nestoriani et Hermeni numquam faciunt super cruces suas figuram Christi; unde uidentur male sentire de passione, uel erubescunt eam", i.e., "Nestorians and Armenians never make the figure of Christ on their crosses; they would thus appear to entertain some negative judgement of the Passion, or they would thus appear to be ashamed of it". As already underlined by Chiesa (2011: 392) William of Rubruck does not understand the symbolism behind the use of the cross without the figure of Christ.

Our current research tries to shed new light on this topic by investigating the different forms of the cross, the position and the function in order to bridge the images with the written text as well as to analyze its background by asking to what extent it matches or deviates from the Syriac tradition from which it arose or whether it shows particular features which may be attributed to a peculiar *milieu*. Sims-Williams (2012), for instance, calls the crosses we find in the Christian Sogdian material in East Syriac script "verso mark" because of their position, i.e., always on the verso side. Nevertheless, my impression is that this topic still requires further investigation. For instance, following the Lexicon der christlichen Ikonographie (p. 569): "In Texten dient das Kreuz zeichen "als sakrale Initiale" u. zur Trennung". I wonder if there is any relationship between the cross and the rubric/title, i. e., if the presence of the cross could indicate a new passage. In the same way, I wonder if a particular form of the cross could correspond to a particular kind of text. In other words, is the presence of the cross decorative or could it have a particular function? And to what extent is this related to the Syriac manuscript tradition? For example, we can compare the cross published by Reck (2008: 200) with the so called "leaved cross" (Parry 1996: 154 fig. 1) the use of which is, quoting Parry (1996: 145), "a distinctive, but by no means unique, feature of the art of the Church of the East". Finally to what extent is this related to the particular milieu from which the crosses under investigation arose?[43] It is not the task of this article to give answers, but it is important to introduce these questions into the translational studies discourse with regard to the Christian Middle Iranian tradition, as the Christianization of Central Asia, China and India, passed through the translation of texts as well as through that of images and symbols.

4 Conclusions

The Christian Middle Iranian material fit perfectly within the missionary framework of the Church of the East. The faithful retention — through a meticolous translation process — of both literary and manuscript tradition as well as the capacity to adapt the religious message to the context, in this case, to the particular milieu of the Turfan oasis between late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages shows the strength of the missionary character of this Church.

So far, a Sogdian monolingual gospel lectionary with headlines in the Syriac language and completely written in East Syriac script and with a terminology created ad hoc in order to avoid Syriacism as well as Syriac loanwords tell us that this text was meant to be read during mass (Barbati: 2010; 2014a). Monolingual texts (i.e. in Sogdian language) concerning the life, the conversion and the martyrdom of several personalities written in East Syriac script with several Syriac loanwords tell us that probably they were used by monks and missionaries within the monastery, i.e., by people who were able to read Syriac and to understand the Syriac language too, and possibly produced there (this issue has not yet been researched). Moreover we can interpret the bilingual lectionaries, i.e. Sogdian-Syriac language, in East Syriac script as auxiliary texts for the monastic community. In fact, the evangelization calls for a translation of the religious tradition, first of all of the Bible, and implies the necessity to create appropriate instruments for this process of translation (see Lazard 1978). It is not due to chance that the Book of Psalms has been written in Sogdian secular script instead of the East Syriac script. In fact, the translations of the Psalms which have been done using several

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43 To give an idea on thecomplexity of this topic, with particular regard to Central Asia, it is appropriate to quote in extenso what has been asserted by Klimkeit (1979: 114) "Zusammenfassend stellen wir fest, dass das Kreuzessymbol in der zentralasiatischen Religionsbegegnung Interpretationen auf verschiedenen Bedeutungsebenen gestattet. 1) In dem vom volksreligiösen Milieu her nahegelegten Verständnis kommt dem Zentralsymbol der Christen zunächst eine magisch-apotropäische Bedeutung zu. 2) Das Kreuz kann auf dieser wie auf einer mehr reflektierten Ebene auch zu einem kosmischen Symbol werden, das einem raumsymbolisch-gliedernden Denken entspricht. In diesem Sinne ist es dem buddhistischen maṇḍala zu vergleichen, wenn es eine fundamentale makrokosmische Gliederung im Mikrokosmischen spiegelt. 3) Sodann erscheint das Kreuz im nestorianischen Sinne als Zeichen des erhöhten, triumphierenden, dem Tod überlegenen Christus und als Hinweis auf die Vollendung aller Mysterien. 4) Schliesslich weist es im Sinne gnostischer Ubiquitätslehre auf den gekreuzigten Jesu hin, der das in der Welt verstreute, "gequälte" Licht repräsentiert. Auf dieser Ebene aber fügt sich die buddhistische Leidenstheologie nahtlos ins Bild ein... Es wird Aufgabe der zukünftigen Forschung sein müssen, diesen hier ikonographisch sichtbaren Verbindungslinien weiter nachzugehen". I find this last statement deeply relevant.

languages (Syriac, Sogdian, New Persian, Old Turkish) and scripts (East Syriac script, Sogdian secular, Uyghur script), tell us that this text played a big role within the monastic community at Bulayïq. Mark Dickens wrote (2009: 111): "…it is unclear whether or not the whole Syriac Bible was ever translated into Sogdian and uyghur Turkic, although portions of the former and perhaps the latter were used for reading in church services. The exception is the Psalter, one of the most important parts of the Bible for those living a monastic lifestyle, as is evident from the extant Psalter fragments in Syriac, Middle Persian, Sogdian and New Persian…". It should be considered that the Middle Persian psalter in Pahlavi script seems to look more westwards. This text is the only one written in Middle Persian in Pahlavi script at Turfan at that time. Middle Persian was a liturgical language within the Manichaean Church but not for the Christian Church, not at Turfan and not in the early Middle Ages. Finally, the text sometimes agrees with the Syriac Peshitta (like all biblical and liturgical texts coming from Turfan with few exceptions) but sometimes with the Septuaginta (see Durkin-Meisterernst: 2006).

With particular regard to the Christian Middle Iranian manuscript traditions, the research is at a very early stage. It remains to be established to what extent they are related to the Mesopotamian Mother Church and to what extent they are related to other peculiar religious environment in late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. And thusis still lacking a deeper understanding of the interplay of all these elements. Nevertheless, I would assert that these manuscript traditions are de facto a translation of the Syriac manuscript. Referring to the trend developed in late Antiquity to present Scripture as an ornamented Book, Joel T. Walker (2010: 333) wrote: "In Europe and Byzantium, this trajectory led to the regular use of luxury books as icons displayed upon the altar and, at least in the Latin West, a heightened awareness of the honour due to scribes capable of producing deluxe Bibles. East Syriac book culture took a different route, focusing far more energy on the production of smaller, less ornate, and more portable copies of Scripture and other Christian literature, which could be used for teaching and mission". Thus as a starting point for further investigations, one can assert that the Christian Middle Iranian material clearly testifies to the use of such materials for the Missionary activities of the Church of the East .

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