

## The Name *mspt* in the Aramaic Documents from Egypt

One of the Aramaic letters published by G.R. Driver in his *Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B.C.* (1) is a letter from *wrpš* to *nḥthwr*, an officer in Egypt (*AD*, XII). The content of this letter can be summarized as follows: *wrpš* has received a letter from *mspt*, whom he refers to as « my officer » (*pqyd' zyly*, *AD* XII, line 1). This officer *mspt* has several complaints about *nḥthwr*: the latter should have delivered five Cilicians to *mspt*, but has omitted to do this. Moreover, *nḥthwr* seems to have appropriated (*'bd lnpšh*) « the wine which is in Papremis and the crop from the land, all of it » (*AD*, XII, lines 5-6: *ḥmr' lm zy bpprm w'bur 'rgt' kl'*) and to have beaten up the domestic staff of the lady of *mspt*, while taking property from them (*AD*, XII, lines 8-9: *grd' lm zy mr'ty ktš wnksn lqh mnh*). Through the interposition of *wrpš*, *mspt* urges *nḥthwr* to restore everything he has taken.

The personal name *mspt* occurs in the summary on the outside of the leather document and in lines 1, 4, 7, 8 and 11 of *AD*, XII. The same name occurs twice in a fragmentary Aramaic document, although in one case it is misspelled as *mpt* (2). Although there exists a general agreement on the Iranian origin of this name, no accurate explanation has been given of it.

According to Driver, the name « is clearly not a genuine Aram.

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(1) I will quote from the abridged and revised edition: G. R. DRIVER, *Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B.C.* (with help from a typescript by E. Mittwoch, W. B. Henning, H. J. Polotsky and F. Rosenthal), Oxford, 1957. This edition will be referred to as *AD*, followed by a Roman number referring to the letter(s) in question.

(2) See *AD*, Glossary, p. 102. From the context it is clear that the erroneously spelled name *mpt* refers to the same person denoted by the name *mspt*.

nor even an Eg. name, and no exactly equivalent Iran. name has been found; possibly the Greek  $\text{Μασσαβάρης}$  reflects it » (3). In his inventory of proper names attested in the Aramaic documents from Egypt, W. Kornfeld (4) lists the name *mspt* among those of Iranian origin (5), but does not propose a personal explanation of the name. Instead, Kornfeld mentions two interpretations: 1) *mspt* « von Mithra beschützt », connected with Old Persian *Miça-pāta-*, Elamitic *Mišša-badda* (6), and 2) *mspt* « vom Grossen beschützt », connected with *Masa-pāta-*, and Greek  $\text{Μασσαβάρης}$ . For the latter interpretation Kornfeld refers to the explanation proposed by Grelot and Hinz (7). Within this view, *Masa-* should be connected with the Iranian adjective *mas-* « great » (8), followed by the participial form *pāta-*. However, this name-formation is unknown in Iranian.

The first explanation (*mspt* = Old Persian *Miça-pāta-*) has to be preferred, since a consistent linguistic argument can be provided for it. As a matter of fact, the Old Persian name *Miça-pāta-* is the expected Old-Persian realization of the Old Iranian name *Miθra-pāta-* « protected by Mithra » (Elamitic *Mi-ut/tur-ra-ba-da*, Greek  $\text{Μιτρο-$

(3) *AD*, Philological notes, p. 81. Driver refers to Greek  $\text{Μασσαβατική}$ , Arabic *m'sbd'n* and Syriac *msbdn* (« presumably called after someone bearing this name; the otherwise prohibitive *-p-·-b-* may be due simply to assimilation, since *-p-* is found also in the Armen. (\**Masapatan* =) *Masptan*, if this form of the name of the district may be trusted »).

(4) W. KORNFELD, *Onomastica Aramaica aus Ägypten*, Wien, 1978. See the reviews by E. LIPÍŃSKI, *Etudes d'onomastique ouest-sémitique*, « Bibliotheca Orientalis » XXXVII (1980), pp. 3-12 (here pp. 5-10) and P. SWIGGERS in « *Onoma* » XXIV (1980), pp. 265-270.

(5) W. KORNFELD op. cit., p. 108. The references to *AD*, XII should be corrected as follows: *AD*, 12, 4<sup>+</sup>. 1. 4. 7. 8. 11.).

(6) See M. MAYRHOFER, *Onomastica Persepolitana. Das altiranische Namen-gut der Persepolis-Täfelchen*, Wien, 1973, 8. 1138. For names composed with the theophoric element *Miθra-*, see the fundamental contributions by M. MAYRHOFER, *Die bisher vorgeschlagenen Etymologien und die ältesten Bezeugungen des Mithra-Namen*, and R. SCHMITT, *Die theophoren Eigennamen mit Altiranisch Miθra-*, in *Etudes mithriaques* (Acta Iranica, I: IV), Leiden - Téhéran - Liège, 1978, pp. 317-325 and pp. 396-455.

(7) See P. GRELOT, *Documents araméens d'Égypte*, Paris, 1972, p. 478 (s.v. *Masapāta*); W. HINZ, *Altiranisches Sprachgut der Nebenüberlieferungen*. Wiesbaden, 1975, p. 165 (s.v. *miçapāta-*).

(8) See C. BARTHOLOMAE, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, Strassburg, 1904, col. 1154.

βάρης) (9), reflecting the spirantization and alveolarization of Iranian *-tr- > -θr-* in Old Persian (> ς). The Old Persian form of this name is attested in Elamitic as *Mi-(iš-)ša-ba-(ud)-da* (10). The correspondence between Aramaic <s> and Old Persian <ς> (11), shown in *mspt* = *Miça-pāta-*, can also be recognized in the Aramaic writing 'rḥšsš for *Rtaxšaça* (12).

Interestingly, two Iranian variants of the same name are attested in the Lycian inscriptions as *Miθrapata-*, and *Mizrppata-* (13). The latter variant indicates an alveolarization of the dental sequence *-θr-*, which resulted from a spirantization of original *-tr-*. In Old Persian the first member of the alveolarized sequence fully assimilated the *r*; the result of this process can be seen in the formative theophoric element *Miça-*, accurately transcribed in Aramaic as *ms* in the proper name *mspt*.

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(9) Concerning *Miθra-pāta*, see M. MAYRHOFER, *Onomastica Persepolitana*, op. cit., 8. 1168.

(10) W. BRANDENSTEIN-M. MAYRHOFER, *Handbuch des Altpersischen*, Wiesbaden, 1964, p. 133, also refer in this respect to Greek Μεσορομάσδης (= *Miθra* and *Auramazda*).

(11) The signs < > are used to denote graphemic units (in transcription).

(12) Official Aramaic <s> can represent Iranian <s> and <ς>; Official Aramaic <š> represents Iranian <š>, <č>, <ς>, and <s>.

(13) See R. SCHMITT, *Iranische Namen in den indogermanischen Sprachen Kleinasiens (Lykisch, Lydisch, Phrygisch)* (= *Iranisches Personennamenbuch*, Band V, Faszikel 4), Wien, 1982 (see my review of this book, to appear in « *Onoma* »).