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SOME PROBLEMS OF SYNTAX IN MIDDLE PERSIAN.
THE NON-FINAL POSITION OF THE PREDICATE IN THE
SENTENCE

Middle Persian is a very important link in the history of Iranian languages since it contains structures which do not exist in any Old Iranian or Middle Iranian language and are the origin of the language system in the Modern Iranian period.

Under the influence of the word stress in Old Persian, which never fell on the last syllable, there had been many changes in the morphology of the language¹. These changes could only be seen in the Middle Iranian period, in Middle Persian which was the direct continuant of Old Persian or of a dialect close to Old Persian². The differences between these periods are clearly seen because no written documents have come down from inscription period which certainly existed. The last Old Persian inscription dates back to the 4th century B. C. (the inscription of Artaxerxes III of Persepolis, 359—338 B. C.)³ while the first Middle Persian text comes from the times of Ardashēr's reign (224—241 A. D.)⁴.

In Middle Persian, the inflectional endings were lost. The language had to adopt other formal means of differentiating

¹ C. Saleman, *Mittelpersisch*. In *Grundriss der iranischen Philologie*. Bd. I abt. 1 Strassburg 1901 K. Trübner Verlag p. 275.

² I. Oranskij, *Iranskiye jazyki*. Moskva 1963 Izd. Vostočnoj Literatury p. 71.

³ R. Kent, *Old Persian. Grammar, Texts, Lexicon*. New Haven, 1950, American Oriental Society, pp. 6, 155—156.

⁴ V. Rastorgujeva, *Srednepersidskij jazyk*. Moskva 1966 Nauka, p. 8.

syntactic categories and of performing the appropriate functions in the sentence. From being an inflectional language at the stage of Old Persian, it became an analytical one in the Middle Persian period. The function of the Old Persian cases was taken over in Middle Persian by prepositional phrases or word order; the rich verbal categories were replaced by periphrastic forms, etc.

One of the important factors in the change of the type of language was the fixed word order⁵. The almost completely free word order in Old Persian was possible because of the rich morphology which defined the syntactic relations in an unambiguous way. In Middle Persian such grammatical categories as genetivus possessivus and subiectivus, noun qualifier, apposition qualifying a name may sometimes be differentiated only on the basis of word order; the general rule of placing the predicate at the end of the sentence⁶ helps in analyzing nominal clauses without the copula, etc.

Of course, in some conditions these rules are not applied without exception. The actual of deviation from the fixed word order is discussed below.

The tendency to place the predicate at the end of the sentence could already be seen in Old Persian⁷; it was common, for instance, in subclauses. The state of Modern Persian shows that such a sentence structure was established in the Middle Persian stage.

Cases of placing another member after the predicate depend on special conditions. These are syntactic-stylistic problems. I have studied them by examining the Middle Persian texts of *Kār-nāmak i Artaxšēr i Pāpakān* (ed. by H. Nyberg in *Hilfsbuch des Pehlevi*, Uppsala 1928) and *The Supplementary Texts to Šāyest nē-šāyest* (ed. by F. Kotwal, Copenhagen 1969)⁸.

⁵ W. Henning, *Mitteliranisch*. In *Handbuch der Orientalistik* Bd. IV Leiden—Köln 1958, p. 90. V. Rastorgujeva, *Srednepersidskij jazyk*. Chapter: Sintaksis pp. 133—151.

⁶ V. Rastorgujeva, *Srednepersidskij jazyk*. p. 133.

⁷ A. Meillet, E. Benveniste, *Grammaire du vieux-perse*. Paris 1931, Champion, pp. 237, 239, 242. R. Kent, *Old Persian*, p. 96.

⁸ The abbreviation *Kn* will henceforth be used for the former text and *ŠnŠ* for the latter.

Among the 1300 sentences which the texts consisted of I met over a hundred which formed a deviation from the rule of placing the predicate at the end of the sentence.

The most important reason for changing the position of the predicate from a final to a non-final one are the expressive — impressive considerations. Thus such a construction appears mainly in optative sentences as an unmarked form⁹. The character of these sentences is more clearly seen thanks to the different than in other sentences word order. The phrase following the predicate is then the object, subject or an adverbial or prepositional phrase.

Optative sentences of the predicate — subject order are sporadic: *anōšak bēt Artaxšēr* (Kn III 20) — „immortal be Artaxšēr!“ *windād-kāmag bawād wispān yazdān* (ŠnŠ XXII 30) — „may all the Yazad's have obtained desire!“.

The above examples are rarely found in both texts. However there is generally a considerable difference of the range of usage of the optative sentences in these documents. *Kār-nāmak* being a historical narrative is written in indicative sentences. *Šāyest nē-šāyest*, on the other hand, contains many religious and moral recommendations and instructions, and thus there are more optative sentences in it.

Usually the phrase coming after the predicate is then the adverbial or prepositional clause: *wizīnēnd mādagwar abar huhēmih ud rāst-gōwišnīh ī mard ud kunišn ī mādayānag* (ŠnŠ XII 22) — „they should especially choose on account of the man's good character and truthful speech and performance of essential (rituals)“. *tištr-it raftār girād pad haft-kešwar būm* (ŠnŠ XXII 13) — „may Tištr preserve thee as traveller on the earth of seven regions“. Such word order can also be found in imperative sentences: *nūn-ič bōžišn gōš pat patitik mārīk* (Kn I 43) — „and now ask for forgiveness in penitential formula!“ *ōštāp tāk ō drayāp* (Kn II 18) — „hurry to the sea!“.

The direct object, rarely the indirect one, when placed after the predicate also strengthens the intention of a sentence: *be barišn az ātaš angašt ī afsard ud abārig* (ŠnŠ XII 3) — „one

⁹ H. Hirt, *Indogermanische Grammatik*. T. VII Syntax II, p. 254.

should carry away from the fire cold charcoal and other“. *padīrišn ōyšān dād ud āyāft ī mäh ī xʷadāy ud abārīg yazadān rāy hāyag ud abārīg xʷarišn* (ŠnŠ XII 8) — „they should undertake (to give) eggs and other food for those gifts and favours of the lord Mäh and other Yazad’s“. *ōhrmazd dahād pādrōz mehtar pāyag ud gāh* (ŠnŠ XXII 1) — „may Ōhrmazd give (thee) higher position and dignity day by day“.

As it can be seen in these sentences the adverbial or prepositional phrase can squeeze in between the predicate and the direct object. In sentences in which the object or the adverbial or prepositional phrase follows the predicate the subject takes the pre-predicate position because the demand of its non-final position has already been fulfilled.

The non-final position of the predicate is also used in affirmative and interrogative sentences which are not of an optative character.

If these are sentences which emphasize the fact of existence then they have a verbum existentiae „ast“ (būt) before the subject and, considering their contents, they have a specific character: *ast az wēh-dēnān* (ŠnŠ XII 21) — „there are some Zoroastrians“. *ast kas ī wēhtar* (ŠnŠ XII 27) — „there is a very good person“.

This group also contains nominal clauses with no copula, expressing the idea that „something is something“ and where the stress is put on the predicate: *gāhān bun ahyā yāsā* (ŠnŠ XIII 50) — „(is) the... beginning of the Gāthā’s ahyā yāsā“. *pahrom čiš rāstih* (ŠnŠ XX 14) — „(is) the best thing truth“. The opposition to these sentences is formed by nominal clauses with a regular word order: *dušman dōst kardan ēd* (ŠnŠ XX 7) — „to make an enemy a friend (is) this“. *gyāg ī garōdmān wēh* (ŠnŠ XI 3) — „the place Garōdmān (is) best“.

In sentences which emphasize the fact of completing an action the predicate may also appear before the subject: *frazāmēnīd hom man dēn-bandag mihr-ābān ī kai-husraw ērbad-zād* (ŠnŠ XXI 8a) — „I have finished, I, the servant of the Faith, Mihr-Ābān son of Kay-Husraw, priestly-born“.

Sentences in which the predicate has a non-final position unaccounted for stylistically may be divided into two groups.

The most characteristic and uniform is the group of sentences

where the verb is followed by an infinitive. The verb is usually the non-finite *tuwān*, *šāyēt*, *āpayēt*, etc.; the combination should therefore be treated as a predicate formed of an auxiliary verb plus an infinitive. The auxiliary will be of the *tuwān*, *šāyēt* type. A distinction should be made between the auxiliary verb — infinitive predicate and the nominal one, where the auxiliary is placed after the nominal phrase making the meaning of the whole predicate more precise: *Sāsān šupān ī Pāpak būt* (Kn I 6) — „Sāsān was Pāpak’s shepherd“. This difference, however, is of no significance in the matter discussed here.

The auxiliary verb — infinitive predicat could be explained grammatically: *dušman pat dušman hān nē tuwān kartan* (Kn I 43) — „one enemy could not do it to another“. *kaδ šāyēm grifan* (Kn III 5) — „when we can catch“. *čiš ī ōhrmazd kāmēd abzūdan* (ŠnŠ XV 7, 9, 12, 14, 20) — „who wishes to promote the things of Ōhrmazd“. *hangām kadār ka gōšt nē abāyēd xʷardan* (ŠnŠ XVII 1) — „at what time ought one not to eat meat?“.

Verb complements can be grouped directly around the infinitive both together forming a group placed after the auxiliary verb or they can precede it: *pas hač hān Artaxšēr nē hišt ō asp nišastan* (Kn I 38) — „then he did not let Artaxšēr mount the horse“. *harw kas pad ēn abē-gumān ud hamdādistan abāyēd būdan* (ŠnŠ XI 3) — „every person ought to be without doubt and in agreement as regards this“.

However, there are also sentences in which the infinitive has the same function as in the above instances but is placed before the verb. This points to the fact that the finite verb — infinitive order is not a marked form but, in such sentences as below, the infinitive is placed before the finite verb to emphasize its meaning important for the contents of the sentence: *harw čiš wardīdan šāyēd be bagō-baxt* (ŠnŠ XX 17) — „all things can be averted but the Divine Decree“.

Placing the adverbial or prepositional phrase after the predicate may or may not be a stylistic feature.

Putting the sentence stress on the adverbial or prepositional phrase has obviously an influence on the place it occupies in a sentence. However, the adverbial or prepositional phrase has no fixed place in an even stylistically unmarked sentence; it can

occupy a position before or after the object, a initial position. For emphasis it can be placed at the beginning or at the end of a sentence. The latter alternative is not easy to grasp because it is not always possible to state whether in a given sentence the stress is actually put on the adverbial or prepositional phrase at the end. The above discussed position of the adverbial or prepositional phrase can be illustrated by the following sentences: *ē hamē vēnēt pat ēiš i haftān u duvāzdahān u ēstišn u ravišn i stārakān* (Kn II 4) — „what do you see in connection with the numbers 7 and 12 and the stopping and movement of stars?“ *nē kas az ān i asrōšdār mard ... rasēd ō ān i pahlom aχuān* (ŠnŠ XII 2) — „no one among disobedient men ... shall attain to the Best Existence“.

More numerous, however, are examples of sentences where the adverbial or prepositional phrase occupies the position after the predicate while it is not stressed: *api-š andar zamān Artaxšēr ārāstak apāk 10 bandak u vas ēiš* (Kn I 27) — „and he in time provided Artaxšēr in 10 servants and many things“. *srūt nāzīk* (Kn II 2) — „he sang nicely“. *stōr-pān mat ō Arđavān* (Kn III 2) — „the equerry came to Arđavān“. *ēōn gōwēd pad sakātūm* (ŠnŠ XII 2) — „as is said in Sakātūm“ (this sentence structure is always used for referring to a source). *tā rasēnd ō garōdmān mēhan i ōhrmazd mēhan i amahraspandān mēhan i ōyšān ahrawān* (ŠnŠ XIII 8) — „that they attain to Garōdmān, the abode of Ōhrmazd, the abode of the Amahraspand's, the abode of the Just“. *ayāb barsom sar ō abāxtar dārēd nigīrišnīg* (ŠnŠ XIV 2) — „or keeps the top of the barsom deliberately towards the north“. *kē ō wināh wizārdan šawēd druz be barišnīh rāy* (ŠnŠ XIX 5) — „who goes to atone for sins in order to expel the druz“. *andar hamāg abistāg yaθā-ahū-vairyō mēh ud pērōzgartar pad harwisp rōd ud harwisp bēšazišnīh ud harwisp pānagīh* (ŠnŠ XIX 14) — „in the whole Avesta, yaθā-ahū-vairyō (is) greater and more victorious for all rivers, and all healing, and all protection“.

This type of the sentence seems to be proving the continuation of the free word order in Old Persian. In Middle Persian there is great freedom of choice in the position of the adverbial or prepositional phrase. This is why its final position cannot be treated as exceptional.

I have presented here the problems connected with the non-

final position of the predicate in selected Middle Persian texts which can be treated as representative of the language considering their length and heterogeneous character.

Bearing in mind the rule that in Middle Persian the predicate takes the final position, the deviations from it need some consideration.

Placing a member after the predicate in optative sentences is general Indoeuropean phenomenon and the regular word order in this type of sentences.

It is in the other sentences that we have to examine the conditions under which the changing of the regular word order took place. Several types can be distinguished in sentences where the predicate is followed by a subject, object, adverbial or prepositional phrase, or an infinitive which is the part of the predicate.

When the sentence stress falls on the predicate, the subject is placed after it.

The stressed adverbial or prepositional phrase may be placed at the end of the sentence if it has not been put at the beginning.

All other instances which cannot be explained on stylistic grounds seem to be the relics of the Old Persian free word order. This has been shown by comparing the two texts: *Šāyest nē-šāyest* being a religious text might have been under the greater influence of the old texts and this is why more sentences with the non-final position are found in it while the later *Kār-nāmak* being written in a narrative style is closer to the language used in its own times.