



BIBLE III. CHRONOLOGY OF SELECTED PERSIAN TRANSLATIONS OF PARTS OR THE WHOLE OF THE BIBLE

BIBLE

iii. Chronology of Selected Persian Translations of Parts or the Whole of the Bible

The Bible contains the Scriptures of Jews and Christians and is regarded by Muslims as “former scriptures” (cf. Qur’an, 20:133: *ṣoḥof al-ulā*). Parts or the whole of the Bible have been translated into Persian by Jews, Christians, Muslims, and even others throughout the past fifteen centuries. Many translations are primary, rendered from the original languages of the Bible, including Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek; but when these languages were unknown to potential translators, they produced secondary translations by turning to existing renditions from other languages, usually languages in regular use by known religious communities, or from international languages whose translators have benefited from the results of biblical scholarship. Some translations are difficult to categorize because they have used both primary and secondary sources as their base.



The following selection of translations, for which there are existing manuscripts, represents the diversity of translators as well as translations of particular historical significance or usage. For a detailed chronology, see Appendix A in Thomas, 2015.

5th century. Middle Persian translation from Syriac Psalter of Psalms 94-99, 119-36 (the “Pahlavi Psalter,” q.v.), possibly by Ma’na Shirazi. The extant manuscript was found at Bulayiq near Turfan in Central Asia; pub. Berlin, 1933 (Andreas and Barr; Thomas, p. 39).

9th to 11th centuries. Judeo-Persian translations from Hebrew in various commentaries found in the Cairo Geniza; pub. Shaked, 1982; idem, 2003; Gindin.

10th century. New Persian-Syriac bilingual translation from Syriac of Psalms 131-32, 146-47 in Sogdian Syriac script, found at Bulayiq near Turfan; pub. Berlin (Müller; Sundermann).

13th century. Harmony of the Gospels, tr. from Syriac by Iwannis ‘Ezz-al-Din Moḥammad, cop. by Ebrāhim b. Šammās ‘Abd-Allāh, a Jacobite priest, in Ḥeṣn Kayfā, 954/1547; Laurentian Library, Florence, XVII 81; pub. by Messina, 1951 (Assemanus, 1742, p. 59; Pizzi, p. 301).

14th century.

(712/1312-13). Gospel of Matthew, tr. from Syriac, cop. by Mas’ud b. Ebrāhim, taken to India by Chaldean Bishop Mār Yusof in 963-64/1556; Vatican Library, Vat. Pers. 4 (Rossi, p. 29).

716/1316. Psalms (except end of Ps. 58 to Ps. 62) in Hebrew script, found by Giambattista Vecchiotti in Shiraz in 1009-10/1601, transliterated into Persian script by him; Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. (Blochet, I, p. 1 n. 1).

718-28/1318-28. Gospels, tr. from Greek by Sarkis Luj b. Amir Maleik, possibly an Armenian member of the Dominican Order of Preachers in Urmia, Academy of Sciences Library, Lisbon, 623; Casanatense Library, Rome, 2322 (Bonelli, pp. 434-35); Gregorian University Library, Rome, 86; Leningrad Library, 248 (*Catalogue*, pp. 241-43); Vatican Library Pers. 1-4, 52, 56, 73, 74, 100 (Rossi, p. 27); and Royal Library, Brussels (Van den Gheyn, pp. 38-39). Pub. by Abraham Wheelocke, London 1657 (Darlow and Moule, p. 1201).



719/1319. Pentateuch, tr. and cop. by Joseph ben Moses, British Library, Or. 5446; pub. by Paper, 1972 (Darlow and Moule, p. 1201, Gregory, pp. 577-78: Margoliouth, pp. 119-20; Seligsohn, pp. 278-86.).

742/1341. Gospels, tr. from Syriac by the Jacobite or Nestorian cleric Yuḥannā b. al-Ḳāṣṣ Yusof al-Ya'qubi, cop. "828"/1425? by Simon b. Yusof b. Ebrāhim Tabrizi, possibly an Armenian Catholic of the Unitor Brothers of St. Gregory (Dominican), in Kaffa, Crimea. Bodleian Library, Oxford, Pococke 241 (Gregory, pp. 1322-23). Copies by Jeronimo Xavier in National Library, Lisbon, 7964, 7965 (Basset, p. 7); Escorial Library, Madrid, 1921 (Casiri p. 344); Capuchin Fathers Library, Agra, India (Hosten, p. 137). Pub. by Bishop Brian Walton in London Polyglot Bible 1657 (Darlow and Moule, p. 1201).

14th-15th centuries.

—Four Judeo-Persian Pentateuch codices in Paris (Zotenberg, nos. 70-71), Leningrad Saltykov-Shchedrin Library, B141 (Harkavy and Strack, p. 166), the Vatican Library Pers. 61 (found by Vecchiatti in Lār in 1606: Assemanus, 1719, I, p. 435; Horn, p. 7; Le Long, pp. 232-33; Maio, p. 650; Rossi, p. 87; Paper, 1965-68), and Jewish Theological Seminary New York (Adler B63, translation identical with that in Vatican Pers, 61: Paper, 1973, preface).

—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Lamentations, Baruch, found by Vecchiatti in Hamadān; Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Hebr. 97 (Zotenberg).

—Megilloth (Proverbs, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, Ruth, Esther), found by Vecchiatti in Lār in 1012-13/1604; Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Hebr. 117, and Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, Adler B46. Proverbs pub. by Paper, 1982; Ecclesiastes pub. by Paper, 1973; Song of Songs pub. by Asmussen and Paper (Asmussen, 1973; Zotenberg).

15th century. 803-04/1401. Accounts of the resurrection from Mark and Matthew, tr. in Armenian characters by Friar Hovhannes Abaranerec'i Tabrizi, of the Order of St. Dominic, along with transcription of Armenian Bible. Matenadaran Machdotz, Yerevan, Armenia, no. 184; pub. by Papazian, pp. 220-23.

16th century. 952-53/1546. Pentateuch, tr. by Jacob ben Joseph Ṭāvus, Persian professor at Jewish Academy, Constantinople. Pub. in Hebrew characters by Eleazar ben Gerson Soncino in Constantinople Polyglot Bible 1546, transliterated into Persian characters by Thomas Hyde; pub. in London



Polyglot Bible 1657 (Darlow and Moule, p. 1202; Paper, 1973).

17th century.

1027-28/1618. Psalms, tr. from Hebrew, ordered by Shah ‘Abbās I in 1024-25/1616, by John Thaddeus, Carmelite bishop of Isfahan, assisted by three mullahs and one rabbi; Bodleian Library, Oxford, Mss. nos. 1827 and 1828 (Sachau and Ethé, p. 1050); Vatican Library, Vat. Pers. 42 (Rossi, pp. 72-73); Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Ms. n. 339 (Aumer, p. 132), Oesterreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Cod. A. F. 85 (Flügel, III, n. 1550).

1027-28/1618. Gospels, tr. from Greek, ordered by Shah ‘Abbās I in 1024-25/1616, by John Thaddeus. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Persan 2 (Blochet, IV, p. 7 n. 8), Oesterreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Cod. A. F. 85. Note that this was mistakenly identified by Gustav Flügel, III, p. 11 n. 1550, as a translation made by a Frenchman and brought from Georgia for Louis XIV of France (Thomas, pp. 130-31, 439).

1063/1654. Genesis 1-6, tr. from Hebrew by Abhai Kānd, a convert to Judaism from Hinduism, in India, ed. by Moḥammad Sa‘īd Sarmad; pub. in *Dabestān al-maḏāheb*, 1809 (Asmussen).

106?/165? Gospels, tr. by Father Peter of Mother of God, Flemish Carmelite monk; Bibliotheca Lindesiana Collection, 337, in the John Rylands University Library, Manchester (Crawford, p. 171).

106?/165? Gospels, tr. from Arabic in Armenian characters by Hovhannes Merkovz, Armenian bishop of Jolfā (d. 1715), with Hovsep Joulayec‘i; Bishop’s College, Calcutta (Gulbenkian 1980, p. 69).

1108/1698, Gospels, tr. from Arabic in Georgian characters, by order of Shah Solṭān Ḥosayn Ṣafawi; Tbilisi, Oriental Fund, Institute of Manuscripts PK 55/60; specimen passages pub. by Marr (Gulbenkian, 1980, pp. 69-70).

18th century.

1115/1703. Gospels, tr. from Arabic by Mir Moḥammad-Bāqer b. Esmā‘il Ḥosayni Kātun Abadi; pub. by Rasul Ja‘fariān, 1995.

1132/1720. Gospels, tr. from Armenian by Ḥakim Ya‘qub Laqab Bardijān, physician from Jolfā, in Tbilisi. Erevan, Matenadaran, Mss. 3044, 8492



(Anassian, col. 539; Gulbenkian, 1980, p. 70).

1153-54/1741. Pentateuch, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, tr. by Mirzā (Moḥammad-) Maḥdi Astarābādi, court historian, assisted by two other Persian scholars, Mir Moḥammad Ma'ṣum Ḥosayni Kātunābādi and his son 'Abd-al-Ġani, by order of Nāder Shah Afšār; translated from Hebrew assisted by [Bābā'i ben Nuri'el](#) and three other rabbis; Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Persan 1780 (Blochet, IV, pp. 166-67); British Museum 1893, nos. 4729, 2452 (Margoliouth, pp. 120-21, nos. 159-60; Darlow and Moule, p. 1210).

1153-54/1741. Gospels tr. by Mīrzā Maḥdi from Arabic text of Vulgate, with the assistance of Bishop Philip Mary, Father Urban of St. Elisacus (vicar provincial), and Father Thomas Aquinas, by order of Nāder Shah; Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, copy made in 1746 (Blochet IV, p. 6 n. 7); Vatican Library, Borgiani Pers. 18 (Rossi, pp. 172-73), Golestan Palace, Tehran, Reg. 2801; pub. by Ja'fariān, 2009.

1793, Matthew, chs. 1-13, tr. from Greek by William Chambers, chief judge at Fort William, Bengal, chs. 5 to 7; pub. by Francis Gladwin, Calcutta (Darlow and Moule, p. 1202).

19th century.

1805, Matthew, tr. from Hindustani (?) by Mīrzā Moḥammad Feṭrat, an ethnic Persian from Lucknow, under the supervision of R. H. Colebrook, professor of Sanskrit at the College of Fort William in Bengal and surveyor-general of Bengal, and William Hunter; pub. in Calcutta, in Devanagari script (Darlow and Moule, p. 1202).

1809. Matthew, tr. by Nathaniel Sabat, an Arab from Baghdad, under the direction of Henry Martyn, chaplain of the East India Company; pub. in Serampore, India (Darlow and Moule, p. 1202).

1812. Gospels and Epistles, tr. by Leopoldo Sebastiani, head of the Roman Catholic missions to Persia and Qandahār; pub. by Calcutta Corresponding Committee, repub. 1813 (Darlow and Moule, p. 1203).

1812. New Testament, tr. from Greek, Psalms tr. from Hebrew, by Henry Martyn, chaplain of the East India Company, with the assistance of Mīrzā Sayyed 'Ali Khan of Shiraz. New Testament, pub. in St. Petersburg, 1814; with Psalms pub. Calcutta, 1816 (Darlow and Moule, p. 1203).



1827. Genesis, tr. from Arabic by Mirzā Ja‘far, lecturer in Persian and Arabic at St. Petersburg University, rev. by S. Lee, professor, and Mirzā Ebrāhim, lecturer in Persian, both of East India College, Haileybury; pub. in London (Darlow and Moule, p. 1204).

1828. Pentateuch, tr. from Hebrew by Thomas Robinson, chaplain at Poona, India, and archdeacon of Madras, with the assistance of an unidentified scribe (*monši*), pub. in Calcutta (Darlow and Moule, p. 1204).

1830. Psalms, tr. from Hebrew by William Glen of the Scottish mission at Astrakhan, with the assistance of Ḥāji Mirzā Ṭāleb, rev. by W. Greenfield; pub. in London (Darlow and Moule, p. 1205).

1831. Proverbs, tr. from Hebrew by William Glen, with the assistance of Mirzā ‘Abd-Allāh of the Persian consular service, ed. by W. Greenfield and F. J. V. Seddon, professor of Oriental languages, King’s College, London; pub. in London (Darlow and Moule, p. 1205).

1834. Isaiah, tr. from English by Mirzā Ebrāhim, ed. by Francis Johnson, lecturer in Sanskrit, Bengali, and Telugu at East India College, Haileybury, pub. in London (Darlow and Moule, p. 1205).

1835-38. Old Testament, tr. from Hebrew by Thomas Robinson, archdeacon of Madras, India. Isaiah and Jeremiah, pub. in Calcutta, 1835; Isaiah to Malachi, pub. 1836; remainder pub. 1838 (Darlow and Moule, p. 1205).

1845. Old Testament, tr. from Hebrew by William Glen and Mirzā Moḥammad-Ja‘far with the help of Fāzel Khan Hamadāni, pub. in Edinburgh, and in 1846 with Henry Martyn’s tr. in 1812 of New Testament; the first Bible with both the Old and New Testaments pub. in Persian (Darlow and Moule, p. 1206).

1882. New Testament, rev. of the 1812 Martyn’s version by Robert Bruce, Christian Missionary Society missionary in Punjab and Persia and the representative of British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) in Iran, with the assistance of Edward Henry Palmer, professor of Arabic, Cambridge University, pub. in Leipzig (Darlow and Moule, p. 1207).

1895. Bible, Glen translation revised by Robert Bruce with the assistance of A. W. Wollaston, of India, and J. Bassett and J. L. Potter, of American Presbyterian mission, pub. in Leipzig (Darlow and Moule, p. 1209). Transliterated into Hebrew characters by Mirzā Nur-Allāh and Mirzā Ḳodādād of Tehran, pub. in



London (Darlow and Moule, pp. 1210-11).

20th century.

1962-64. Pauline Letters and Gospels Harmony, tr. from Greek by Edwin Jaeger, an American missionary teacher, and Ebrāhim Mehmāndār (a pseudonym), privately published in Tehran with the titles *Nāmahā-ye jāvdān* and *Foruḡ-e bi-pāyān*.

1968. Song of Solomon, tr. from French translation of Joseph D. Mardrus by Aḥmad Šāmlu, a Persian poet, as *Ġazal-e ḡazalhā-ye Solaymān*, Tehran.

1970. Proverbs, tr. from English Living Bible by Tateos Michaelian, pastor of Evangelical Church of Iran, M. Tajber, and others, pub. in Wheaton, Ill.

1970. Selected Psalms, tr. from English Living Bible by Ma'ṣum-'Ali Ḳosravi and Joel Slaughter, of International Missions, pub. in Wheaton, Ill.

1971. Gospels, tr. from Greek by Natale Del Mistro, an Italian Salesian priest in Tehran; pub. in Tehran with the title *Enjil-e Masih*.

1976. New Testament, tr. from English and Greek under general editorship of Mehdi Abhari, pastor of Evangelical Church of Iran, pub. in Tehran, with the title *Možda barāye 'aṣr-e jadid*.

1979. New Testament, tr. from English Living Bible and Greek under the general editorship of Sāro Ḳačiki, of Assemblies of God (Philadelphia) Church of Iran, pub. by with the title *Tarjama tafsiri*.

1985. Bible, tr. from English Living Bible, Hebrew, and Greek under the general editorship of Sāro Ḳačiki, of Assemblies of God (Philadelphia) Church of Iran by Ḳāčiki, Mehdi Dibāj, Farida Eršādi, and Ārmān Rošdi; pub. with the 1979 New Testament in Colorado Springs, Colo., with the title *Ketāb-e moqaddas: Tarjama tafsiri*.

1985. Pentateuch, tr. from Hebrew by Māšā'-Allāh Raḥmān Purdāvud, a Hebrew teacher, and Musā Zargari, a Jewish scholar, pub., Tehran, in 5 vols. in Persian script parallel with Hebrew text with the title *Torāt bā tarjama-ye fārsi*.

1999. Psalms, tr. from Hebrew by Soliman Hakakian, a scholar of Judaism, pub. Tehran, in Persian script parallel with the Hebrew text.



21st century.

2001. Deuterocanonical Books, tr. from French by Piruz Sayyār from the 1998 *La Bible de Jérusalem*, as *Ketābhā-i az 'Ahd-e 'atiq: Ketābhā-ye qānuni-e ṭāni*, pub. in Tehran; the first Persian tr. of the Deuterocanonical books.

2003. New Testament, tr. from Greek and English under the general editorship of Mehrdād Fāteḥi, pub. in Surrey, England, with the title *Tarjama-ye hazāra-ye now*.

2004. Deuterocanonical books, tr. from English by 'Abbās Rasulzāda and Jawād Bāḡbāni, as *Apokrifā-ye 'Ahd-e 'atiq*, pub. in Tehran.

2007. Bible, tr. from Hebrew, Greek, and English under general editorship of Mehdi Abhari, pastor of Evangelical Church of Iran; Pub. with revision of 1976 New Testament with the title *Ketāb-e moqaddas: Moḡda barāye 'aṣr-e jadid*.

2008. New Testament 2008, tr. from French by Piruz Sayyār from *La Bible de Jérusalem*; pub. in Tehran with the title *'Ahd-e jadid*.

2013. Bible, tr. from Hebrew, Greek, and English under the general editorship of Mehrdād Fāteḥi; pub. with 2003 New Testament, Surrey, England, as *Ketāb-e moqaddas: Tarjama-ye hazāra-ye now*.

2014. Torah, tr. from French by Piruz Sayyār from *La Bible de Jérusalem*, pub. in Tehran as *'Ahd-e 'atiq: Ketābhā-ye šari'at yā tawrāt*.

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