AN EXAMPLE OF THE INFLUENCE OF HEBREW ON THE PESHITTA

TRANSLATION - THE STATUS CONSTRUCTUS

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It is now generally accepted that the Hebrew Bible is the Vorlage of the Peshitta. The following essay is an attempt to support this theory using syntactical considerations.

The Syriac language expresses the genitive relation in three ways:

a) "house of (the) man;"

b) "(the) house of (the) man;"

c) "the man's house." ¹

In my study of the syntax of the Peshitta,² I concluded that type b was the most common way of expressing the genitive relation. However, certain cases were noted in which type a


² Part of this study was accepted by the Hebrew University as a doctoral thesis written under the supervision of Prof. M. Goshen-Gottstein. The Ambrosian Codex was used in ed. Ceriani, Translatio syra Pescitto ex codice Ambrosiano etc. (Mediolani 1876-83).
and type b were used in different verses to express the same Hebrew structure. In all these instances, type a was used at the first occurrence of a given expression. I claimed that this resulted from the influence of Hebrew, in which a genitive structure is predominantly expressed by the construct state (type a). Here I shall examine the suggestion that when the Syriac translator encountered a Hebrew construct state for the first time, he usually translated it by a parallel Syriac structure.

This may be illustrated from Gen. 8:9 - MT: וָלָא מִלָּא הַרְוָן רְבָּלָה רְבָּלָה אִשְׁבוּתָה לְהוֹ רְבָּלָה אִשְׁבוּתָה לְהוֹ רְבָּלָה, P: מִנָּהוּ לַכְּפָךְ רְבָּלָה. In all subsequent passages is rendered רְבָּלָה כְּפָךְ רְבָּלָה, also when pronom. suff. are attached to type a of the genitive structure (cf. Deut. 2:5, 11:24, 28:35, 56, Jos. 1:3, 2 Sam. 14:25, Jes. 1:6, Job 2:7). Only in one instance the construct state is used - Deut. 28:65 MT: וָלָא נַחֲוָה, P: רָלִית נַחֲוָה לַכְּפָךְ נַחֲוָה. In this case, the resemblance with Gen. 8:9 - נַחֲוָה לַכְּפָךְ נַחֲוָה, probably triggered the employment of the stat. constr.

An additional example may be found in Gen. 7:11 MT: כִּלְכָּל מְכַנְּבָה לָהָה, P: כִּלְכָּל מְכַנְּבָה לָהָה. Yet, ib. 8:2 MT: יִתְשַׁמֵּר מֵהַמְכַּנֵּבּוֹדְתָה לָהָה. A similar case, also involving מְכַנְּבָה, occurs in 1 Kings 18:5

3 The author wishes to thank Prof. M. Goshen-Gottstein for suggesting this explanation.
However, in 2 Kings 3:19, P has "all come together" for MT: "וכל מכל מקום המים." Further examples of such pairs are: 1) Gen. 31:21 MT: "the cattle," P: נ-indent, לשהר גלותך; as against ib. 31:23 MT: נindent, P:lichen; 2) ib., 41:3 MT: "all came," P: "לשהר הגיאור" (and likewise ib. 41:17); but in Ex. 2:3 MT: "all came" is rendered in P: לשהר הגיאור; 3) Ex. 27:9 MT: "all came," P: לשהר ראתה ו scmeha; as against ib. 27:13 MT: נ-indent, P: אשר ראתה ו scmeha; 4) Deut. 23:18 MT: "and the people," P: נ-indent, P: אשר זכרה ו scmeha, in contrast to ib. 24:14 MT: "and the people," P: אשר זכרה ו scmeha.

The proposed explanation of the phenomenon may also apply to non-similar expressions, as Gen. 20:5: נ-indent, P: הבתר עלביך בinand הרכה ו scmeha זכרה ו scmeha, followed by P: הבתר עלביך בinand הרכה ו scmeha זכרה ו scmeha = MT: הבתר עלביך בinand הרכה ו scmeha זכרה ו scmeha.

This study gives some support to the generally accepted notion that the Peshitta indeed is translated from the Hebrew text and not from an ancient version.