

Ērān and Ērānšahr

The Pārsīg term *ērān* means ‘the Aryans’, and *ērānšahr* was the name of the Persian kingdom in the Sasanian period.¹ Šābuhr in his great inscription presents himself as the ‘ruler of Ērānšahr’².

Pārsīg *ēr* comes from OPA *arya-* (or, possibly, *ārya-*).³ Five nations are recognized among the Perso-Aryans, namely the *a’rya* ‘Aryan’, *tū’rya* ‘Tūr(ān)ian’, *sa’rima* ‘Sarmatian’, *sāini* ‘Sāinyan’, and *dāhi* ‘Dāhyan’.⁴ Despite this division, these Perso-Aryans all also belonged to the Aryan lands and nations and they were called thus⁵, distinct from the non-Aryan lands and nations⁶. This is not strange, for we notice that in later times the term *pārs(īg)* ‘Persia; Persian’ was used to designate all Aryan peoples and lands; the name Pārs became synonymous with the name Ērānšahr.⁷

The extension of the term Aryan reveals itself in two respects, royal and religious:

1. Where there is the law of the (Aryan) king⁸, we may call there the Aryan land.
2. An Aryan is the one who at the proper time has chosen the Good religion⁹, and wears the sacred girdle. He who has not

¹ . *ērān* < **aryānām* ‘(land) of the Aryans’; *ērān-šahr* < **aryānām xšaθra*. Parth. *šahr cē aryān* cf. DA 4381; Pers. *ērān x’adāyīh* (≈ **aryānām xšaθra*), cf. Dk vii, M 657 *hanzābišn ī ērān x’adāyīh az ērān-šahr*.

² . ŠKZ 1 *ērānšahr x’adāy* ≈ *aryānšahr x’adāy* ≈ τοῦ Ἀριανῶν ἔθνους δεσπότης. Cf. VZ 4.4 *manušcihr ērānšahr dahyubed*.

³ . Av. *airya-*, OPers. *ariya-*, Skt. *ārya-*. The term Aryan is used for three branches, namely the Perso-Aryans, Indo-Aryans, and Gulo-Aryans. This term is also used to designate the languages of the Aryans. Darius (DB 4.89) called his own language “Aryan”.

⁴ . Yt 13.143-144 *airyanqm daxyunqm ... tūiryanqm daxyunqm ... sairimanqm daxyunqm ... sāininqm daxyunqm ... dāhīnqm daxyunqm*. Cf. also Bd 106-7.

⁵ . Cf. Yt 19.56 *airyanqm daxyunqm*, Dk ix M 792 *ērān dehān*.

⁶ . Cf. Yt 19.68 *anairyā dařhūs*, Yt 18.2 *anairyā dařhāvō*, Bd 106 *anērān dehān*.

⁷ . See for example Syr. ܐܪܝܢܫܗܪ ≈ *ērānšahr*.

⁸ . Pers. *dād ī xvadāyīh* ‘law of kingdom’, cf. Vd 20.1 Z, J4. For example, the law of the king in Achamaenian Babylon (OPers. **dāta_h xšāyaθiyahyā*, Bab. *dātu ša šarri*). Cf. also DB 1.23 *manā dātā* ‘with my laws’. The Sasanian province of Babylon (Āsūrestān) in which there were the royal towns of Seleucia (*vehardašēr*) and Ctesiphon was called *dil ī ērānšahr* ‘the heart of Persia’. See Ibn Khordādhbeh: “We start our description with Sawād, for the kings of Persia had named it *dil ī ērānšahr*, that is to say, the heart of ‘Irāq.”

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⁹ . Av. *vañ’hī- daēnā-*, Pers. *veh dēn, dēn veh*.

performed the “initiation” by wearing on the girdle¹⁰ becomes “non-Aryan”.¹¹ The Aryans thus represent the community of the Good, distinct from the wicked.¹²

In the ideal Aryan society is revealed the union of (royal) power and (good) religion under the divine protection; this divine element is called *x^varənah* (Pers. *farr*), meaning *grosso modo* ‘Fortune’ or ‘Glory’.¹³ The king represents three members (Av. *pištra-*, Pers. *pēšag*) of the Aryan society, and also imposes the “law of the king” to the non-Aryans of his kingdom.

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¹⁰ . Av. *aiβyāṅhana-*, Pers. *kustīg*.

¹¹ . Cf. Dk iii, M 332 *abēbann anērīh*.

¹² . Pers. *vehān* ‘the good’. Cf. Dk vi, M 496 *kustīg-barišnīh ēd baved ka az vattarān jud baved*.

¹³ . Yt 19.56 *taḥxvarəno isō yaḥasti airyanəm daxyunəm zātanəm azātanəmca yaḥca ašanonō zaraθuštrahe* ‘the Fortune which belongs to the Aryān lands, the born and unborn, and which belongs to Truthful Zaraθuštra.’