



AḲŠONVĀR

AḲŠONVĀR, The imperfect recording in Arabic (Ṭabarī, I, p. 874ff.) of an eastern Middle Iranian term for “king;” it is used as a proper name. The underlying word occurs in Sogdian as *ʼxšʼwnδʼr*, *əxšāwanʼār* (literally, “holding power;” see W. B. Henning, *Ein Manichäisches Bet- und Beichtbuch*, APAW 1936, pp. 95-96; idem, *ZDMG* 90, 1936, p. 17, n. 2; I. Gershevitch, *A grammar of Manichean Sogdian*, Oxford, 1954, par. 1135). This title, among others, was adopted by the Hephthalite tribes which occupied Transoxania and Ṭokārestān in the 5th and 6th centuries A.D. and underwent the influence of Iranian culture. This Hephthalite use was transmitted by the Middle Persian *Xwadāynāmag*, ultimately to the Muslim historians. In Persian, besides being treated as a proper name, the term was subjected to popular etymology. It takes the form “*Ḳʼvošnavāz*” by analogy with such compounds (found in the *Šāh-nāma*) as *Ḳʼvošāvāz*, etc.; and this form of the word is more common. For example, Masʼūdī writes of “*Aḳošnavāz*, king of the Hephthalites” and similarly of “*Ḳāqān*, king of the Turks” (*Les Prairies d’Or* II, pp. 200-03).

The principal Aḳšonvār ruled at Balk; he succeeded the king (named Faḡānīš in the *Šāh-nāma* [Moscow] VIII, p. 8) who had supported Pērōz’s struggle for the Sasanian throne in 457. Ca. 480 Pērōz warred against Aḳšonvār and the Hephthalites, chiefly “regarding boundaries” (Procopius, *Wars* 1.3-4; on the eastern Sasanian boundary, see J. Markwart, *Ērānšahr*, pp. 52-53). Much of the Iranian army was lost through attrition; Pērōz sued for peace and was allowed to return home. In violation of his pledge, he prepared a second campaign in 484, which led to the army’s destruction by the Hephthalites and his own



death. The Muslim historians and Procopius agree in representing AḲšonvār as honorable and moderate in behavior, in contrast to the arrogant and dishonorable Pērōz. The *Šāh-nāma* also briefly reflects this point of view but abandons it for a pro-Sasanian stance. Zoroastrian writings provide only a brief notice: “Then Xušnawāz, lord of the Hēvtāls, came and killed Pērōz. Kawād and his sister presented a Fire to the Hēvtāls as a pledge” (*Bundahišn*, p. 215.7-9; see A. Christensen, *Les Kayanides*, Copenhagen, 1932, pp. 61-65). As a result of negotiations, with or without battle, AḲšonvār later returned his captives and the booty from the Iranian camp. According to the *Šāh-nāma* ([Moscow] VIII, p. 39), he had been succeeded by another king by 488, when Kavād fled to the Hephthalites for aid. The *Šāh-nāma* refers to two later rulers contemporary with Ḳosrow I—Ġātfar and a second Faḡānīš; it is unclear whether either was “of the lineage of Ḳvošnavāz” (VIII, p. 160). Mas‘ūdī attests the continued use of the title. He asserts that Ḳosrow, before his joint victory with the Turks in 557, had previously campaigned as far to the northeast as Ḳottalān and had killed AḲošnavāz, king of the Hephthalites (II, p. 203).

See also [Hephthalites](#).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

See also Ta‘ālebī, *Histoire des Rois des Perses*, pp. 578-83.

Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch*, p. 13.

A. Christensen, *L’Iran sous les Sassanides*, pp. 293-94.

G. Widengren, “Xosrau Anošurvān, les Hephthalites et les peuples turcs,” *Or. Suec.* 1, 1952, pp. 69-74.