



ARANG

ARANG, a river in ancient Iranian tradition. Middle Persian Arang/Arag renders Avestan Raṅhā, which is cognate with the Scythian name Rhâ (*Rahā) transmitted by Ptolemy and with Old Indic Rasā́ (cf. Rása- “sap, juice, marrow;” on other Indo-European connections, see M. Mayrhofer, *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen* II, Heidelberg, 1964, p. 48). The river is primarily mythical: the Scythian application of the name to the Volga is probably a secondary use, not the original source of Indic and Iranian legend. Similarly, Old Indic Rasā́ usually denotes the beneficent “great mother” of waters which surrounds the earth’s land surface (*Rig Veda* 5.41.15, 9.41.6; this body of water is viewed as a sea in 9.33.6 and 10.136.5), and also designates a stream in northwest India, near or tributary to the Indus (ibid., 5.53.9, 10.75.6). The Avestan Raṅhā is described as “bounded afar a thousand men deep” (*Yt.* 14.29), with “waters” (i.e., a course) and a source (*Yt.* 10.104, 12.18-19). It is located to the north, at the ends of the earth, and so is closely related to the mythic Vourukaša sea; both are the dwelling of the equally mythical *kara* fish (*Yt.* 14.29, *Vd.* 19.42; cf. *Bundahišn* 24.1, p. 144. 14ff.). The region “at the waters of the Raṅhā, which the headless ones watch over” is chiefly afflicted by winter and robbers (*Vd.* 1.19). The river figures in several myths. Yōišta of the Fryānas sacrificed to Anāhitā on an island in it (*Yt.* 5.81). Kərəsāspa sacrificed to Vayu on a tributary, the Gu’a (*Yt.* 15.27). The boatman Pāurva apparently worked on it (*Pursišnīhā* 32/33, ed. K. M. JamaspAsa and H. Humbach, Wiesbaden, 1971); when seized by Ɖrāetaona, he invoked Anāhitā for rescue and promised to offer libations at the river (*Yt.* 5.63).



In later Zoroastrian tradition, Ohrmazd is said to make the Arang flow west and the Weh flow east from the northern point of the world-encircling Alburz range. They themselves circle the earth, receiving the waters of the navigable rivers and passing into the Frāxwkard (Vourukaša) sea, their original source (*Bundahišn* 6B. 17ff., p. 65.1-3; 11, p. 84.11-12). They flow however, only during the limited span of time needed to defeat the Evil Spirit. (Cf. *Bundahišn* 11C.1, p. 90.13 [the word is lacking in ms. TD2], where “Arang” may be read as Harē. See J. Markwart, *Wehrot und Arang*, Leiden, 1938, pp. 119-21.) The Arang, being at the earth’s end, is the wind’s path to the Above (*ulīh*, *Bundahišn* 21A.1, p. 131.15f.); the watchful god Burz dwells at its source (*ibid.*, 24.24, p. 154.2-5). The Arang tends to be identified with the river Arvand (i.e., “Swift”), whose name is written almost identically in Pahlavi, and which is usually identified with the Tigris. (For this identification, see, e.g., *Zātspram* 3.22, *Dādistān ī dēnīg* 92.2, Pahlavi *Vd.* 1.19.) In *Bundahišn* 11A.1, p. 45.10-13, however, the Arvand/Arang is identified with the Nile.

See also [Arvand-rūd](#).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

See also A. Christensen, *Le premier chapitre du Vendidad et l’histoire primitive des tribus iraniennes*, Copenhagen, 1943, pp. 55-59.

H. Lommel, “Rasa,” *ZII* 4, 1926, pp. 196-206.

H. Humbach, “Die awestische Länderliste,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens* 4, 1960, pp. 36-46.

R. Ghirshman, *L’Iran et la migration des Indo-Aryens et les Iraniens*, Leiden, 1977, pp. 73-5.

(C. J. Brunner)