



ARYA

ARYA, an ethnic epithet in the Achaemenid inscriptions and in the Zoroastrian Avestan tradition. It is used in the Avesta of members of an ethnic group and contrasts with other named groups (Tūirya, Sairima, Dāha, Sāinu or Sāini) and with the outer world of the An-airya “non-Arya.” Old Persian *ariya-* occurs in the phrase of Darius: *ariya: ariya: ciça*, “Arya, of Arya origin,” and of Xerxes: *pārsa: pārsahyā: puça: ariya: ariyaciça*, “a Persian, son of a Persian, Arya, of Arya origin.” The phrase with *ciça*, “origin, descentance,” assures that it is an ethnic name wider in meaning than *pārsa* and not a simple adjectival epithet. The corresponding Akkadian and Elamite offer the transcriptions *a-ri-i*, *ar-ri-i šitir* and *har-ri-ia*, *har-ri-ia*, *ši-iš-ša*. Elamite has also preserved the gloss to the name of the god Ahuramazdā: *u-ra-mas-da na-ap har-ri-ia-na-um* (Behistun 62), “Ahuramazdā, god of the Aryas.” In DB 4.89 *ariyā*, “in the Arya,” refers to script or language. The Avesta has the plural *aire* (Yt. 5.69): *yaθa azəm avata vərəθra hačāne yaθa vīspe anye aire* “may I possess so much force as all the other Aryas.” The archer Ǝrəxša- (NPers. Āraš) is described (Yt. 8.6) as *xšviwi.išvatəmō airyanqm* “most swift-arrowed of the Aryas.” Kavi Haosravō is called (Yt. 15.32) *arša airyanqm* “the hero (*aršan-* “male”) of the Aryas.” The *dahyu-* lands of the Aryas (gen. plur. *airyanqmdahyunqm*) are known; and once the *pāda-* “settlement” is mentioned (Yt. 4.5 *airyābyō pa’aēibyō*). The *xʷarənah-* “fortune” or (of royalty) a vague “glory,” is coupled with the gen. plur. (*airyanqm xʷarənō*) and with the adjective (*airyanəm xʷarənō*). The same adjective qualifies *vaējah-* “extensive territory,” in the name *airyanəm vaējō*, loc. sing. *airyene vaējahi* “the Aryan plain,” the first of the lands created by Ahura Mazdā (Vidēvdāt 1.3). In Yašt 13.87, the phrase *nāfō airyanqm*



daḥyunqm čīθrām airyanqm daḥyunqm “the kindred of the Arya lands, the origin of the Arya lands,” coincides in use of *čīθra-* with Old Pers. *ariyaciça*. Over against the Arya lands stand those which are *anairya-* “non-Arya” (as in *anairyā diḥhāvō*, Yt. 19.68); this dichotomy was continued later in Persian tradition.

Four place-names containing *airya-* occur in the Avesta. The *airyō.šayana-* “dwelling of the Aryas” (Yt. 10.14), comprises six names, of which four are well known: *iškātām pourutāmča mourum hārōyum gaomča suyδām xʷāirizāmča* “Iskata, Pouruta, Margu, Haraiva, Gava-Sugda, Hvārazmi.” The mountain *Airyō-xšuθa* (Yt. 8.6) was in eastern Iran: *yaθa tiyriš mainya-asā yim aṇhaṭ ərəxšō xšviwi.išuš xšviwi.išvatāmō airyanqm airyō.xsuθaṭ hača garōiṭ xʷ anvantām avi gairīm* “like the mind-swift arrow which the archer Ǝrexša shot, swift-arrowed, most swift-arrowed of the Aryas, from Mount *Airyō-xšuθa* to Mount *Xvanvant*.” The forest (*razurā*, Yt. 15.32) called *vispe.aire.razuraya* (loc. sing.) was where Kavi Haosravō slew Vāyu. The fourth name is the *airyanəm vaējō*, Zor. Pahl. *ērān-vēž*, frequent in the texts and remembered also in Manichean Sogdian *ʾryʾn wyžn* (**aryān vēžan*) and Turfan Parthian (/ / / *n wyžn*, see W. B. Henning, BSOAS 11, 1943, p. 69). In Greek, Herodotus (7.62) stated that, in the past, the Medes had been called *Arioi*. The Greek use of *Areia* (Latin *Aria*) for Old Pers. *Haraiva*, Balōči *Harē(v)*, Arm. *H(a)reu*, was likely to cause confusion.

The same ethnic concept was held in the later centuries. The *Dēnkard* (ed. Madan, p. 438.23) offers *hutōhmaktom ēr martōm* “the best-born Arya man,” associating *arya-* with good birth; cf. the Old Persian connection with birth in *ariyaciça*. Similarly *ērīh ut dahyupatīh* (ibid., 553.17) “nobility and lordship,” contrasts with *arg ut bār hač škōhišn*, “labor and burdens from poverty.” In the inscription of Šāpūr I on the Kaʿba-ye Zardošt (ŠKZ), Parth. *ʾryʾn W ʾnʾryʾn* (*aryān ut anaryān*), Mid. Pers. *ʾyrʾn W ʾnyrʾn* (*ērān ut anērān*; cf. Armenian *eran eut aneran*) comprises the inhabitants of all the known lands. The imperial title in Sasanian inscriptions is Parth. *MLKYN MLKʾ aryān ut anaryān kē šihr hač yazdān*. Mid. Pers. *kē čīθrē hač yazdān*, Greek *arianōn kai arrarianōn* (ŠKZ 1). In the singular Parth. *ʾry*, Mid. Pers. *ʾly*, Greek *arian* occurs in a title: *ʾry mzdysn nryšhw MLKʾ*, **ary mazdēzn Narēsahv šāh* (Parth. ŠKZ 19); *ʾly mzdysn nršhy MLKʾ* (Mid. Pers. version 24), Greek *arian masdaasnou*. The empire is called *ʾryʾn ḥštr* (Parth.), *ērān šahr* (Zor. Pahl.). Armenian has retained *arya-* in nom. pl. *ari-kʾ*, gem. pl. *areacʾ*, and in sing. *ari ayr* “Arya man, Persian;” the negative *anari-kʾ* is found, as well as the Mid. Pers. phrase *eran eut aneran*.



New Persian has *ērān* (western, *īrān*), *ērān-šahr*. In the Caucasus Ossetic has Digoron *erä*, *irä*, Iron *ir*, with Dig. *iriston*, Iron *iryston* (the i-umlaut modifying the vowel *a*-, but leaving the *-r-* untouched), the ancestral “Alān” and Latin (1459 A.D.) Arani. The name “Alān” is found in Greek Alanoi, Latin Alani, Chinese A-lan, Caucasian Megrel *alani k'oč'i* “brave man,” Georgian Alanet'i “Alan country,” Pers. Alān, Arab-Pers. al-Lān as the name of a people north of the Caucasus powerful until the Mongol invasion.

An ethical use of Zor. Pahl. *ēr*, *anēr* can be seen in *Mēnōg ī xraḡ* 20.15: *anērīh ī hrōmāyīkān* “the evil conduct of the Romans (i.e., Byzantines);” *Dādīstān ī dēnīg* 66.1: *mart ī ēr ī hudēn* “the Arya man of good faith” (here “noble”).

Outside Iranian there is much further evidence in the Old Indian tradition of the Vedas and later texts. A word *arya-* with three accentuations (*árya-*, *aryá-*, *aryà-*) is traditionally glossed by *īśvara-* “owner, possessor,” more vaguely “lord.” This same meaning was also offered for Rig Veda *arí-*. But to compare with Iranian *arya-* the Indian tradition has *ā́rya-*. The latter is normally taken as an adjective by lengthened vowel (*vṛddhi* formation) but could also be explained by a long *ā* before two consonants. In the Vedas occurs *Kāṭhaka āryam varṇam* “the Arya color,” contrasting with *dā'sam várṇam* “the Dāsa color” of the enemies of the Arya people (RV 2.12.4). Beside this confrontation there is also the social difference of Jaiminīya *āryam ca varṇam śaudram ca* “both the Ārya and the Śūdra color,” the Śūdra being at first the workers. In RV 1.77.3 occurs *devayántīr víśa . . . ā́rīh* “the devout Ārya houses” (if this is the feminine to *ā́rya-*; the traditional rendering is from *ar-* “to move”). In later Indian texts the drama has *āryaputra* for the wife's address to her husband: “son of an Arya” or “of a noble.” In Buddhist sources *ārya-*, feminine *āryikā-*, is a laudatory epithet of the monk and nun used in place of *bhikṣu-* and *bhikṣuṇī*. It is used in some sense of “noble” of the Buddhist *satyāni* (true doctrines) and of the *dharma-* (doctrine) in the terms *ārya-satyāni* and *ārya-dharma-*. In *ārya-dharma-* the *arya-* is translated by Khotan Saka *āysña* “of high birth.” The later Indian languages, Pali, and various Prakrits have the corresponding later forms. The Buddhist glosses confirm the sense of “high-born” or “noble” and “lord.” Thus Tibetan has *rje-po*, *rje-hu*, *jo-bo jo-hu* “lord,” with Chinese gloss “honored person;” Tibetan *ya-rabs* “high birth,” renders *āryatā* (hence “nobility”). As laudatory epithet note also Āryadésa- “noble land,” for India; and Ārya-bhāṣā- “noble language,” for Sanskrit. Note, with Suffix, *āryaka-* “honored man,” Pali *ayyaka-* “grandfather,” and *ayyakā-* “grandmother.” Hindu Sanskrit has *āryāvarta*. The contrast between *ārya-* “noble and *dāsá-*



“slave” and *dásyu-* (the pejorative epithet) is missing in the Iranian tradition. Old Persian has *dahyu-* “a land and its people;” Turfan Parth. has *dāhīft* “slavery.” But Khotan Saka *daha-* “man, virile person,” and Waxī ‘ai “hero” (**dahy-*) are used in a good sense. To this *daha-* one can compare *dāsa-* “man” (RV 6.21.11), who is set in a generation before *mānu-* “man.”

These facts are undisputed, but no decision has yet been reached regarding the earlier meaning of the Iranian and Indian words. No evidence for such an Indo-European ethnic name has been found. The Irano-Indian *ar-* is a syllable ambiguous in origin, from IE. *ar-*, *er-*, or *or-*. The only evidence that this word is from Indo-European *ar-* is in the Celtic Old Irish *aire* “the free man” in Irish law, and *aire* (gen. sing. *airech*, nom. pl. *airig*) glossed by Latin *optimas* “of the best class.” (The first component *ario-* of Germanic names may always be identified with *hario-* “army, troop.” The Celtic first component *ario-* in names is uncertain because Celtic lost initial *p-*.) On this slight evidence it has been usual to accept Indo-European *ar-* as the base. Attempts to connect *arya-* with other basic words have been many. H. Güntert, *Der arische Weltkönig und Heiland* (Halle, 1924), proposed “allied” (base *ar-* “to fit”). Paul Thieme offered a detailed proposal to trace Rigvedic *arí*, glossed *īśvara-* and *arí*, Atharvavedic *āri-* “enemy” (AV 13.1.29: *ārīr yó naḥ pṛtanyati* “the foe who fights against us”), together with *arya-* and *ārya-*, to a primitive society in which the mutual connection of host and guest was expressed by the one word; he translated it “stranger” (*Der Fremdling in Ṛgveda*, Leipzig, 1938). This was adopted by L. Renou (*Études védiques et pāṇinéennes* II, Paris, 1956, pp. 109-11) and in Wackernagel-Debrunner (the revised preface) but criticized by G. Dumézil, *Le troisième souverain*, Paris, 1949. It places the work too early in Indo-European times and hardly offers a way to advance from “stranger” to an ethnic name. A different explanation was proposed by the writer in “Iranian *arya* and *daha-*,” *TPS*, 1959, pp. 71-115 and supplementary note *TPS*, 1960, pp. 87-88. Accepting the interpretation of *arí-* and *arya-* by *īśvara-* “possessor,” these words were traced to a base *ar-* well attested in Iranian in the sense of “get” and “cause to get, give.” Avestan has *ar-* and Ossetic *ar-*; cf. Greek *arnumai* “to get,” and Armenian *arṇoun* “to take,” hence Indo-European *ar-*. (The word *ari-*, *arí-* “enemy,” however, was connected with Rigvedic *ṛti-* “attack,” and Iranian Pahl. *artīk* “attack,” and so to Indo-European *er-*.) For *arya-*, the Iranian ethnic name, it was proposed to start from the sense of “good birth” and so with Ossetic *ār-*: *ārd* “to bear young,” a specialized meaning of the same IE. base *ar-*. Cf. Old Norse *geta* “to get,” also “to bear young,” *getinn* “born.” The stage of society represented by the word was the *oikarkhia*, birth into which gave



nobility; this is expressed by the later use of *ā-zan-* as in *āzāta-* “born into the House, noble;” in the Indian tradition it is expressed by *ājāneya-* “well born” (said of man or animal). This *arya-*, Indian *ārya-* “noble,” was thus an excellent name for a people; and it favored the further development into an ethical concept of “excellence, nobility.” The identification of *ar-* with *ā-zan-* is attested by the Khotan Saka rendering of *arya-* by *āysñā-* from **ā-zan-ya-*, for which Avestan provides *āsna-* “well born,” and Man. Mid. Pers. *āznān*, Armenian *azniu* “excellent, noble.” The Celtic **ariak* “free man” and “*optimas*” fit here admirably. Note, too, that (with causative *-nu-*) Hittite *ar-nu-* “to bring an animal to copulation,” can best be placed with this same Iranian Ossetic *ār-* “to bear young, give birth,” rather than with Greek *ornumi* “to stir up, excite.” For the pregnant meaning “good birth” for *arya-*, note how Latin *gentilis*, originally simply “of the family,” was in the Romance languages changed to the meaning “noble.” Hittite *arawa-* “free, noble” could be brought in here in preference to E. Laroche, *Hommages à G. Dumézil*, Brussels, 1960, pp. 124-28, where it is traced to *ara-* “friend,” and compared with Gothic *freis* “free,” and *frijonds* “friend.”

Arya- as first component in proper names becomes ambiguous if two words existed: *arya-* “Aryan,” and **arya-* “wealth” (cf. Man. Parth. *ýr*, Arm. *ir*, Mid. Pers. *xīr*, Khotan Saka *hāra-*, all meaning “thing”). Such names are Old Pers. Ariyāramna (Greek Ariaramnēs), Ariobarzanēs, Elamite Harrikhama, Harrimade, Harrimana, Harripirtan; Lydian Arijamaña; Nisa Parthian *ʾymtrk*, *ʾybrzn*; the Sogdian name of the capital city Bukhara: in Chinese, A-lam-mit from **aryāmēθa(n)* (J. Markwart, *Wehrot und Arang*, Leiden, 1938, p. 140), later Rāmēθan.

Finally various explanations have been offered for Rigvedic *Aryamán-*, Avestan *airyaman-*, where the first component has been rendered “true, Aryan, wealth.” The supernatural being (called *ādityá-*) Aryaman has the epithet *sátpati-* “official in the house.” He is in charge of the treasury; hence this writer has preferred to explain his name as “the being in charge of riches and hospitality.”

See also [Aryans](#); [Indo-Iranian languages](#).



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