



ARZŪR

ARZŪR, Mid. Pers. form of Avestan Arəzūra-, the name of a demon of unclear origin or function in Zoroastrian tradition. In the Avesta the name occurs only in the genitive singular, as part of the place name “head, summit of Arəzura” (with *kamərəda-*) of “neck, ridge of Arəzura” (with *grīvā-*). The demon himself is mentioned in the Mid. Pers. text *Dādistān ī mēnōg ī xrad* 27.14-15 (ed. D. D. P. Sanjana, Bombay, 1895, p. 44.12-14); the foremost beneficial act of Gayōmard is there said to have been his killing of Arzūr. Bīrūnī, relating the same story, makes the demon Ahriman’s son (the name is corrupted; see A. Christensen, *Le premier homme et le premier roi dans l’histoire légendaire des Iraniens I*, Uppsala, 1918, pp. 53-54). This scant tradition of the demon might indicate that there existed an etiological legend explaining the name of the mountain Arzūr.

Vd. 3.7 mentions the ridge of Arəzūra first among the five most unpleasant (*ašāišta-*) places on earth; there the *daēvas* come together. *Vd.* 19.44-45 refers to the assembly of Angra Mainyu and his followers at its summit. According to the commentators of the Pahlavi *Vendidād*, Mount Arzūr is “at the gate of hell” (ed. Jamasp, Bombay, 1907, I, p. 59; ed. N. M. Kanga, Bombay, 1900, p. 61; tr. B. T. Anklesaria, Bombay, 1949, p. 41). Other Pahlavi texts repeat this claim (*Bundahišn*, ed. B. T. Anklesaria, pp. 77.15, 78.3; *Dādistān ī dēnīg* 32.6, p. 69.15, tr. E. W. West, *Pahlavi Texts II* [SBE XVIII], Oxford, 1882, p. 75). The Arzūr Grīwag is even stated to be the gate of hell (F. M. P. Kotwal, *The Supplementary Texts to the Šāyest Nē-Šāyest*, Copenhagen, 1969, p. 47). The exact locations of Mount Arzūr is not known. The *Dādistān ī dēnīg* (loc. cit.) places it in the inauspicious northern direction; and some *Bundahišn* manuscripts locate it in



the Harburz range (see Darmesteter, *Le Zend Avesta* II, p. 35, n. 11). But the latter indication may be due to confusion with another Mount Arzūr, the Ahurian Ǝrəzura- (*Yt.* 19.2; *AirWb.*, col. 354); in the *Bundahišn* (p. 78.5), the latter is placed in the direction of the Byzantine empire (*pad kust ī Hrōm*). If the evil Mount Arzūr is sought in the Alborz, one might think of the volcanic Damāvand (Gray, *Foundations*, pp. 200-01). There would thus be a parallel to the German Brocken/Blocksberg as a rallying ground of the demons, also to the volcanic mountains connected in Greek and Roman tradition with hell.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

See also F. Windischmann, *Zoroastrische Studien*, Berlin, 1863, pp. 5-6.

J. J. Modi, "Mount Arezūra of the Avesta, a Volcanic Mountain," *Spiegel Memorial Volume*, Bombay, 1908, pp. 188-96.

(J. P. Asmussen)