



## ASWĀR

---

**ASWĀR** (Middle Persian) “horseman,” Old Persian *asabāra*, Parthian (Nisa) *’sbry*, Persian *savār* and *sovār*. In Old Persian *asabāra* designated the horseman as opposed to the foot-soldier. Thus Darius says (DNb 44-45, Kent, *Old Persian*, pp. 139-40) “(as) a spearman I am a good spearman both on foot (*pastiš*) and on horseback (*asabāra*).” The same concept is expressed by “man and horse” (*asp ud mard*, heterographically Mid. Pers. *GBRA W SWSYA*, Parth. *GBRYN W SWSYN*) in the Sasanian inscriptions (Kirdēr at Sar Mašhad and on the Ka’ba-ye Zardošt and Narseh at Paikuli), where the word *aswār* is not found. In the Zoroastrian Pahlavi books *aswār* also designates only the “horseman,” and it is not till in the later, Arabic sources that the term is said to have a more specialized meaning, cf. K̅vārazmī, *Mafāteḥ al-’olūm* (ed. van Vloten, Leiden, 1895, p. 115): “*al-asāwera*, plural of *al-oswār*, i.e., horseman, because the Iranians give the name *oswār* only to a brave, heroic, famous man.” The terms *aswārān* or *aswāragān* (Christensen, *Iran Sass.*, p. 265 n. 4) do not appear to be attested in the sense of the arabicized *asāwīrāt* “knights” (see *Asāwera*) in the Sasanian Middle Persian literature, where the warrior class is the *artēštār(ān)* (q.v.). Note that the reading *andarzbed ī aswāragān* in the *Kār-nāmag*, proposed by T. Nöldeke in his translation (*Bezenbergers Beiträge* 4, 1878, p. 62 n. 3; cf. J. Darmesteter, *Le Zend Avesta* I, p. 31 n. 17; M. Boyce, *The Letter of Tansar*, Rome, 1968, p. 41 with n. 4 comparing Ar. *mo’addeb al-asāwera*), is an emendation of the manuscript’s *andarzbed ī wāspuhragān* (see H. S. Nyberg, *A Manual of Pahlavi*, Wiesbaden, I, 1964, p. 11 l. 19 and II, 1974, p. 94).



In modern times the *Borhān-e qāṭeʿ* (ed. Moʿīn, I, p. 135) reports that the term *asvār* is used in the language of Gilān to designate a group of soldiers of the lowest rank who carry axes and wooden clubs with which they strike each other on the heads. This kind of battle they call *asvārī*.

See also [Army](#); [Artēštār](#); [Asāwera](#); [Asb](#); and [Cavalry](#).

*Search terms:*

□□□□	aswar	aswaar	asvar
------	-------	--------	-------