



AXTARMĀR

AXTARMĀR (or AXTARĀMĀR, Pahlavi; AXTARMAR, Man. Mid. Persian) “astronomer.” The astronomers were included in the category of the third of the four Sasanian social classes, i.e., the class of the scribes, together with the physicians and poets (*Nāma-ye Tansar*, p. 12; *Ahd-e Ardašīr*, p. 54; *Ketāb al-tāj*, p. 25). In the *Kār-nāmag* (ed. Antia, p. 11, par. 4, p. 13, par. 10) the astronomers are mentioned in conjunction with the wise men. Their head had the title *Axtarmārān sālār* (*Kār-nāmag*, p. 12, par. 5, p. 16, par. 6). The astronomers studied the positions of the stars, established and defined horoscopes, and predicted events (*Bundahišn*, pp. 50.15, 57.11, 60.3, 66.9). This last duty gave them special respect and influence at the royal court, where they would foretell the future of a new-born prince and read his horoscope (Ṭabarī, II, pp. 854, 1052ff.; Ṭā‘ālebī, *Gorar*, pp. 539, 712; Dīnavarī, p. 113). According to Ṭabarī (pp. 1009-10), Kōsrow Parvēz kept 360 priests, magicians, and astrologers around him, and when he was concerned about a matter, he would ask for their opinions. Unfavorable opinions concerning someone close to the king usually brought unpleasant consequences for that person; when Kōsrow’s astrologers predicted that his death would be by the hand of someone from Nīmrūz, Mardānšāh, the governor of Nīmrūz, was executed (Ṭabarī, II, pp. 1058ff.). In Sogdian sources the *ḥyrks’yt* “astronomers” were charged with similar responsibilities (*Vessantara Jātaka*, ed. E. Benveniste, Paris, 1946, p. 104).

Similar terms are Pahl. (Parthian) **simaspār* “soothsayer” (*Ayādgār ī Zarērān*, in *Pahlavi Texts*, p. 7, par. 2), Sogd. *sambatsar* (D. N. Mackenzie, in *Acta Iranica*



23, pp. 284-85); Pahl. *kēd* “soothsayer, astrologer” (*Kār-nāmag*, ed. Antia, p. 52, par. 2, etc.), Man. Parth. *qydyg* (W. B. Henning, *BSO(A)S* 9/1, 1937, pp. 84, 91-92); Pahl. and Man. Mid. Pers. *kandāg* “magician” (Henning, *ibid.*, p. 84).

See also [Astronomy and Astrology](#).

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