



DRUSTBED

DRUSTBED (Pahl. *drwdstpt*; Syr. lw. *drwstbyd*; Margoliouth, p. 94; Ar. lw. *drwst'bḏ*) “chief physician” in the Sasanian period. As the title does not occur in the early Sasanian sources and those who are known to have held it were all recorded as having lived toward the end of this period, it seems reasonable to assume that it was a late innovation, on the model of such official titles as *dibīrbed* “chief secretary.” Sometimes *drustbed* was used in the Pahlavi texts simply as a synonym for *bizešk* “doctor, physician” (e.g. *Dēnkard*, ed. Madan, p. 14.19; tr., p. 37; *Škand-gumanīg Wizār*, ch. 4.102, p. 58), though it seems to have referred to a higher rank and social status, as may be inferred from some passages in the *Dēnkard*. For example, it is stated (ed. Madan, p. 159.1-2; tr., p. 159) that in the material world the function of medicine (*gētīg bizeškīh*) is treating the bodies of individuals according to the teachings of the chief physicians (*drustbedān *hammōg*). Another distinction was made between the two terms: The *drustbed* was said to have the function of protecting (*pādār*) the souls of men against sin and their bodies against illness, whereas the latter was simply healing (*bēšāzēnīdārīh*; *Dēnkard*, pp. 159.19-160.5; tr., p. 160). This distinction seems to have been based on etymological suppositions, however (i.e., *drustbed/pādār*, *bizešk/bēšāzēnīdār*).

Non-Zoroastrians could be promoted to the rank of *drustbed*, for example, the Christian Gabriel of Šiggār, the private physician of Khosrow II (591-628), who enjoyed the king’s favor (Hoffmann, p. 66; Labourt, p. 219; Christensen, *Iran Sass.*, p. 488; Ebn al-Qiftī, p. 133, where the title is recorded in Arabic as *drwst'bḏ* for *drustabaḏ*; see Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems*, p. 85 n. 3).



The chief *drustbed* was called *ērān-drustbed* “chief physician of Iran, archiater” and was probably nominated by the king himself. The selection and appointment of a chief physician and his appointment to the position of “the chief physician of Iran” (*ērān-drustbedīh*) depended on his perfection in treating people of high rank (*Dēnkard*, p. 163.7-9; tr. pp. 162-63). The *ērān-drustbed* was expected to be “soul loving” (*ruwān-dōst*); “possessed of subtle insight” (*bārīg-wēnišn*); “reading much” (*was-xwānišn*); “knowing books by heart” (*warm-nibēg*); “knowing about the power of the substance, transformations, and nature of the body” (*nērōg ī gōhr, wihērišn ī jadagān ud čīhr ī tanān āgāh*); “knowing about changes” (*wardišn-šnās*); “knowing about illnesses and their remedies” (*wēmārīh ud darmān-šnās*); “free of envy” (*nēst-arešk*); “soft in speech” (*čarb-ēwāz*); “friendly to the ill” (**wēmārān dōst*); “willing to give service” (*paristīdār*); dextrous (*sbuk-dast*); and the like (*Dēnkard*, p. 161.7-16; tr., p. 161). The examination, selection, and authorization of a physician to treat the body (*tan bizešk*) were the duty of the *ērān-drustbed* (*Dēnkard*, p. 165.3, tr., p. 164).

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