



ĒRĀN, ĒRĀNŠAHR

ĒRĀN, ĒRĀNŠAHR. The word *ērān* is first attested in the titles of Ardašīr I (q.v.), founder of the Sasanian dynasty. On his investiture relief at Naqš-e Rostam in Fārs, and subsequently on his coins, he is called *ʾrthštr MLK'n MLK' yr'n*/Ardašīr šāhān šāh ērān, in Mid. Persian, *MLKYN MLK' ry'n*/šāhān šāh aryān, in Parthian. His son Šāpūr I, while using the same style for his father, referred to himself as *MLK'n MLK' yr'n W 'nyr'n*/šāhān šāh ērān ud anērān/, Parth. *MLKYN MLK' ry'n W 'n(y)'ry'n*/šāhān šāh aryān ud anaryān/. The same form was used by later kings, from Narseh down to Šāpūr III. The great trilingual inscription of Šāpūr I at the Ka'ba-ye Zardošt in Fārs, here preserved only in Parth. and Greek, but reconstructable with certainty also in Pers., contains for the first time the Pers. word *ērānšahr* (Parth. *aryānšahr*), the king declaring in Persian [**NH . . . yl'nštry hwt'y HWHm*]/an. . .*ērānšahr xwadāy hēm*/, Parth. *'NH . . . 'ry'nḥštr hwtwy HWYm/az. . .aryānšahr xwadāy ahēm*/, Greek *egō . . . tou Arianōn ethnous despotēs eimi* "I am lord of the kingdom (Gk. nation) of the Aryans" (ŠKZ, Mid. Pers. [1], Parth. 1., Gk. 1.2; Back, p. 284-85). This formulation, following his title "king of kings of the Aryans," makes it seem very likely that *ērānšahr* properly denoted the empire, while *ērān* was still understood, in agreement with its etymology (< OIr. **aryānām*), as the (oblique) plural of the gentilic *ēr* (Parth. *ary* < Old Ir. *arya-*) "Aryan," i.e., "of the Iranians." The singular form is used by Šāpūr in referring to his son *'lyl mzdysn nršy MLK' ḥndy skstn. . ./ēr māzdēsn* Narseh, šāh Hind, Sagestān. . ./, Parth. *'ry mzdysn nršhw/ary māzdēzn* Narseh. . ./ "the Aryan, Mazda-worshipping Narseh, king of India, Sistan," etc. Of other Sasanian rulers Bahrām II alone also prefixed it, on some of his coins, to the standard legend



used from Ardašīr I onwards: (ʿyry) *mzdysn bgy (wrḥr'n) MRK'n MRK' yr'n (W'nyr'n)* “the (Aryan) Mazda-worshipping god (Bahrām), king of kings of the Aryans (and the Non-Aryans).”

The combination **aryānām xšaθra-* is nowhere found in the Old Persian inscriptions of the Achaemenians. In the later Yašts there is only mention of *airiiā* and *anairiiā daiṅhāuuō* “Aryan” and (unspecified) “Non-Aryan lands.” Thus the term *Ērānšahr* was evidently an invention of the Sasanians.

A list of the countries ruled by Šāpūr I is almost entirely destroyed in the Persian version, and only incompletely preserved in the Parthian and Greek versions of his trilingual inscription. It can, however, be restored with the help of a shorter list of the provinces of *Ērānšahr* proper in the Persian inscriptions at Naqš-e Rostam and Sar Mašhad, also badly weathered, of the high-priest under his successors, Kerdīr. This comprised *Pārs Persis, Pahlaw Parthia, Xūzestān Susianē, Mēšān Mesēnē, Asūrestān Assyria, Nōdšīragān Adiabēnē, Ādurbāyagān Atropatēnē, Spāhān (Isfahan), *Ray Rhages, Kirmān Karmania, Sagestān Sakastanē, Gurgān Hyrkania, Marw Margianē, Harēw Areia, Abaršahr (Khorasan), Tūrestān Turēnē, Makurān (Makran), and Kūšānšahr tā frāz ō Paškabūr* the Kushan country up to Peshawar. Šāpūr added the names of several countries, including **Māy Mēdia, Hind India,* and “on that side of the sea” *Mazūnšahr (Oman),* and others, namely *Arman Armenia, Wiruzān Iberia (Georgia), Alān Albania, and Balāsagān tā frāz ō Kāf kōf ud Alānān dar Balasagan* up to the Caucasus and the Gate of the Alans, which Kerdīr specifically places in *'nyl'nštry, 'nyr'nštry/anērānšahr/*, denoting the “kingdom of the Non-Aryans,” the Roman empire to the west and the lands of the Caucasus.

Despite the usage of the royal titles, the empire was already referred to by the abbreviated form “*ērān,*” and the Roman west correspondingly “*anērān,*” very early. Both terms occur in a calendrical text from the pen of the prophet Mānī, probably first written during the reign of Ardašīr (M 7981 V I 30 f., II 24 f. *'yr'n, 'nyr'n*), and in no other Manichaean Persian or Parthian has the term */ērānšahr/* been met. The same short form appears in the names given by Šāpūr I and his successors to several of the towns they founded, such as *Ērān-xwarrah-Šābuhr* “The glory of *Ērān* (of) Šāpūr,” *Ērān-āsān-kard-Kawād* “Kawād pacified *Ērān*” (qq.v.) It also features in the titles of several leading administrative officials and military commanders under the later Sasanians, e.g., *Ērān-āmārgar* “Accountant-General,” *Ērān-dibīrbed* “Chief Secretary,” *Ērān-drustbed* “Chief Medical Officer,” *Ērān-hambāragbed* “Commander of the



Arsenal,” and Ērān-spāhbed “Commander-in-Chief.”

In the Pahlavi books of the 3rd/9th century the early Sasanian terminology is clearly preserved, e.g., in the *Kār-nāmag*, where Ērān is only used in the phrase *šāh ī ērān* and the title *ērān-spāhbed* (ed. Antia, 12.16, 15.9); otherwise the country is always called *Ērānšahr* (3.11, 19; 15.22, etc.). The same is true of the book of *Ardā Wirāz*, (ed. Gignoux, 1.4), where *ērān dahibed* “the ruler of the Aryans” alone appears beside the geographical name *Ērānšahr*. In the *Dēnkard*, 7, the same distinction is generally made (with *anērān* also designating the Non-Aryans). Here the phrase *ēr deh*, plural *ērān dehān*, from the Pahlavi translation of the *Yašts*, is also occasionally used for the “Aryan land(s).” Nevertheless, the fact that Ērān was also generally understood geographically is shown by the formation of the adjective *ērānag* “Iranian,” which is first attested in the *Bundahišn* and contemporary works.

In early New Persian works, especially those depending on Middle Persian sources, the form *ērānšahr* alternates with *šahr-e ērān*, (e.g., *Tārīk-e Sīstān*, pp. 6 -7). The poet *Farroḳī Sīstānī* (d. 429/1037-38), or possibly a later copyist of his poems, still uses it in contrast to *tūrān* “land of the Turanians” (pp. 99, 256, n. 8). The territory of *Ērānšahr*, however, came in time to be restricted to the western part of the former empire. In *Tārīk-e Sīstān* (tr. pp. 17 ff.) it is said that “The total area was divided into four parts: *Khorāsān*, *Irān (Kāvarān)*, *Nīmrūz*, and *Bāktar* [not “Bactria”]. Whatever is located toward the northern boundary is called *Bāktar*; whatever is located toward the southern boundary is called *Nīmrūz*; and the area in between is divided into two: whatever lies toward the eastern boundary is called *Ḳorāsān*, while whatever lies to the west is called *Īrānšahr*.” In the *Nozhat al-qolub*, (tr. Le-Strange, p. 34) it is even reported (from *Eṣṭaḳrī*) that “Arabian ‘*Erāq* used to be called the Heart of *Īrān-Shahr*” (*del-e ērānšahr*). The general designation for the land of the Iranians was, however, by this time *ērān* (also *ērān zamīn*, *šahr-e ērān*), and *ērānī* for its inhabitants.

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