



PERSONAL NAMES, IRANIAN II. AVESTAN NAMES

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In the [Avesta](#) at least 400 personal names are attested. The bulk of these names is found in the second part of the Fravardīn Yašt (Yt. 13.95–142) (q.v.) in a litany-like enumeration of the *frauuāšis* (see [FRAVAŠĪ](#)) of Zarathustra's first disciples and followers in the Iranian and non-Iranian countries or, in a sense, of the religious 'heroes' who had rendered outstanding services to the spread of Zoroastrianism. This list of partly historical persons and partly figures of legendary traditions is the most extensive catalogue of anthroponyms known to us from one of the early Indo-Iranian languages and in this respect is an important text for studying the actual use of personal names (see Schmitt, 2003).

More recently the Avestan anthroponyms have been brought together by Mayrhofer (1977b), who analyzed them systematically, taking into account the then state of Avestan philology and linguistics. Here belongs also his preliminary work (*Namengut*, 1977a) dealing mainly with several special problems of Avestan personal names.

Typology of Avestan names. The inherited types of personal names (as listed in section i above), to which belong more than the common two-stem compounds



(as postulated inter alia, Wikander, 1941, p. 63), are more or less preserved in the Avesta; the following examples (to which has been added the relevant number in Mayrhofer, *Iranisches Personennamenbuch*) may illustrate this:

A.i. (single-stem full names): *Arəjārvhaṇt-* (no. 20) “The estimable one” (from OIr. **arjah-uant-*); *Dāṇha-* (no. 101) “The Dāha” (based on the ethnonym OIr. **Dāha-*); *Kauui-* (no. 210) “The wise man”; *Saēna-* (no. 274) “Mr. Eagle, Hawk” (see above); *Tqθriiāuuant-* (no. 305) “Being full of darkness”; *Tūra-* (no. 309) “The Turanian” (based on the identical ethnonym); *rita-* (no. 315) “The third (man)”; *Varāza-* (no. 355) “Mr. Boar” (see above); *Yima-* (no. 406) “The twin”;

A.ii. (two-stem full names):

A.ii.1 (possessive compounds): *Aiβi-xvarənah-* (no. 6) “Possessing splendor lavishly”; *Aša.nəmah-* (no. 37) “Showing reverence to the Truth” (cf. above); *Hao-srauuah-* (no. 167) “Possessing good reputation” (cf. above); *Kərəsāspa-* (no. 216) “Possessing slender horses” (cf. above), *Vīštāspa-* (no. 379) “Possessing horses untied (for racing)” (based on an ancient technical term of Aryan horse-racing; cf. above) and a number of other names containing *-aspa-* “horse”; *Paršaṭ.gu-* (no. 248) “Possessing spotted bullocks”; *Pərəθuu-aršti-* (no. 255) “Possessing a far-reaching spear” and other forms with *-aršti-* “spear”; *Pouru-čistā-*, fem. (no. 263) “Possessing much insight” (from Av. *čisti-* = Ved. *cītti-* “insight”); *Siiāuuaršan-* (no. 282) “Possessing dark stallions”; *Spəntō.xratu-* (no. 289) “Having redeeming will-power at his disposal”; *Spitāma-* (no. 291) “Possessing brilliant attacking strength”; *Srīraoxšan-* (no. 295) “Possessing handsome bulls”; *Srīrāuuauṇhu-* (no. 296) “Possessing beautiful goods”; *Vohuu-asti-* (no. 391) “Having the good one (the Fire-god?) as his guest”; *Zaraθ-uštra-* (no. 416) “Possessing aging camels” (thus according to Thieme, 1981) and other names containing *-uštra-* “camel”; as a special case (namely a dvandva-like bahuvrīhi) here must be added also *Vīrāspa-* (no. 370) “Possessing men and horses”;

A.ii.2 (determinative compounds): *Ātərə-dāta-* (no. 69) “Given by the Fire-god (as the genius of the 9th day)”; *Dūraē-srūta-* (no. 111) “Far-famed” (cf. above); *Huuarə-čiθra-* (no. 181) “Splendid like the sun”; *Pairi-štūra-* (no. 240) “Being strong all around”; *Spəntō-δāta-* (no. 288) “Given by redeeming [Ārmaiti] (as the genius of the 5th day)”; *Uštā-zaṇta-* (no. 330) “Wanted child” (with an adverbial first element, Av. *uštā/ā* “as desired”); *Vī-srūta-* (no. 376) “Far-famed”;



A.ii.3 (governing compounds): *Dāraiaṭ.raθa-* (no. 102) “Stopping the (enemy) chariot”; *Frādaṭ.vanhu-* (no. 135) “Furthering the good(s)”; *Frādaṭ.xvarənah-* (no. 136) “Furthering the splendor”; *Frāraiaṭ-raθa-* (no. 141) “Starting up the chariot”; *Isaṭ.vāstra-* (no. 190) “Wishing for pasture land”; *Uxšiaṭ.ərəta-* (no. 335) “He who makes Truth growing”; *Uxšiaṭ.nəmah-* (no. 336) “He who makes reverence growing”; *Vīdaṭ.gu-* (no. 364) “Gaining cows, being blessed with cows”; *Vīdaṭ.xvarənah-* (no. 365) “Being blessed with splendor”; *Vīspa-tauruši-* fem. (no. 372) and *Vīspa.tauruuarī-* fem. (no. 373) “Overcoming all [obstacles]”;

A.ii.4 (inverted forms): probably *Nəmə.vanhu-* (no. 231), inverted from *Vohu.nəmah-* (no. 387) “Showing reverence to the good one”;

B.i.1 (single-stem short names): *Aršan-* (no. 26) based on compounds with Av. *aršan-* “male, man, hero”; *Friia-* (no. 146) from Av. *friia-* “dear, own”; *Kāta-* (no. 211) from compounds with Av. *-kāta-* “desired”; *Pəšana-* (no. 256) from Av. *pəšana-* “battle, fight”; *Spiti-* (no. 292) perhaps shortened from **Spitiiaspa-* “Possessing white horses” (since his brother is named *Ṛəzrāspa-* “Possessing fleet horses”); *Taxma-* (no. 304) from compounds with Av. *taxma-* “brave, courageous”; *Uštra-* (no. 331) based on the compounds containing *uštra-* “camel” (cf. above); *Uxšan-* (no. 333) from Av. *uxšan-* “bull” (as, e. g., in *Srīraoxšan-*; see above); *Vanhu-* (no. 350) from Av. *vanhu-*, i. e. Ir. **vahu-* “good”; *Zairita-* (no. 413) based on Av. *zairita-* “yellow, dun-colored” and perhaps on OIr. **Zaritāspa-* = OInd. *Haritāśva-* “Possessing dun horses” in particular; *Zaoša-* (no. 415) from Av. *zaoša-* “pleasure, affection”; B.ii.1 (single-stem hypocoristics): *Kauu-āta-* (no. 209) based on *kauui-* “wise”; probably also *Arš-iiā-* (no. 28), i. e. OIr. **Rš-īya-* based on some compound with **ršan-* “male, man,

hero” as in OPers. *Ršāma-* and *Xšaya-ršan-*;

B.ii.2 (two-stem hypocoristics): *Frā-č-iiā-* (no. 132) based on *Frā-čiθra-* (no. 133) “of an outstanding descent.”

There are also “meaning-less” or irrational formations that merely combine lexemes commonly used in anthroponyms with no regard to their semantic appropriateness. Such is *Mqzdrā uuanhu-* (no. 225) with the elements *mqzdra-* “wise, intelligent” and *vanhu-* “good; the good(s)”; since it is attested next to *Srīrāuuanhu-* (the two persons perhaps being brothers), it seems to be a secondary replica of this name.



Here we should also mention the widespread custom of renewing and modernizing the onomastic lexicon, not least by introducing synonyms or similar means of expression for a variety. Thus the striking rarity of Old Iranian anthroponyms with the element **sravah-* (Av. *srauuah-*, OPers. **çavah-*) “fame, reputation” may be explained by such a change, namely by the substitution of Av. *xvarənah-*, OPers. *farnah-*. This seems to be the case in, e.g., Av. *Haomō.xvarənah-* (no. 166) instead of **Haomō.srauuah-*, the virtual equivalent to OInd. *Soma-śravas-*. In the same way one may also explain OIr. **Agžiti-farnah-* (attested in El. *Ha-ik-ši-ti-pir-na*), which looks like a modernized variant of an anthroponym based on the primeval poetic formula living on in Ved. *ákṣiti- śrávas-* “unfading fame” (cf. Schmitt, 1972b, pp. 83–86). Similarly Av. *Siiāuuaršan-* (no. 282) “Possessing dark stallions” may be merely replacing the older **Siiāuuāspa-* (as is required by the patronymic *Siiāuuāspi-* anyway) which is the inherited parallel of Ved. *Śyāvāśva-*. Likewise Av. *spāda-* “army” seems to be a substitute for older *haēnā-* (= Ved. *sēnā-*) in the name *Srūtō.spāda-* (no. 298), since the equivalent of *Śruta-sena-* would be (the unattested) **Srutō.haēna-*.

Original patronymics (or “propatronymics” referring to a previous ancestor) became independent normal idionyms (or names of individuals), e.g., in *Māiiauua-* (no. 222) = Ved. *Māyavá-* seemingly based on IIr. **Māyu-* (cf. Av. *māiiu-* “skillful”), and perhaps in *Friiāna-* (no. 147), too, which name in the context of Y. 46.12b is to be interpreted rather as an idionym than as a patronymic (based on the short name *Friia-*). For a woman’s name of this kind one may compare *Huuōuu-ī-* (no. 189) “The one from the *Huuōuuu* family.”

A peculiarity of Avestan anthroponomastics is presented by those names that are formed from groups or mere sequences of words, and in fact are quotations from passages of some Avestan text. This type of name derived from a particular (even if loose) context has no closer parallels in other ancient Indo-European languages. The words quoted in such a name (partly in an Old Avestan form), which in the original passage follow one another, may even dispense with their syntactic relations. Thus, e.g., the name *Ašāhura-* (no. 44) is based on the words OAv. *ašā ahurā*, which are found next to each other, though without inner connection, in Y. 50.5a *mazdā ašā ahurā* “O wise one through Truth, O Ahura.” Three such names are listed in Yt. 13.120: *Ašəm.yeṇ’he.raočā*, *Ašəm.yeṇ’he.varəza*, and *Ašəm.yahmāi.ušta* (nos. 48–50); and since all three of them are indeclinable (notwithstanding their genitival function), the adverbial qualification *nqma* “by name” is added to them (in a



way similar to that attested in the Old Persian texts). *Ašəm.yeṇ'he.raočā* is alluding to Y. 12.1 *yeṇ'he ašəm, yeṇ'he raočā* where these words, however, are part of two different relative clauses (“to whom the Truth, to whom the light ...”); in *Ašəm.yahmāi.ušta* incoherent parts of a Gathic verse are quoted, *ašəm* from Y. 43.1d, and *yahmāi uštā* from Y. 43.1a; the source of *Ašəm.yeṇ'he.varāza* is not traceable at all in the surviving books of the Avesta. A similar special case are also “phrasal” anthroponyms like *Staotar- vahištahe ašahe* (no. 299) “He who prays the *Aša vahišta* prayer” and *Həm.barətar- vanhūuqm* (no. 170) “He who gathers goods.”

Motives of name-giving; use of the names. The choice of a particular name often is motivated, not primarily by a desire to characterize the individual person specifically, but by reasons far from onomastics. The decisive factor may be the intention of the name-giving parents to emphasize the family ties (see section i., above). This can be done by repeating one of the two elements of the father’s full name in the son’s name (as in *Vanhu-δāta-*, son of *Xva-δāta-* in Yt. 13.119) or by choosing partly identical names for brothers. This custom can be demonstrated by a number of Avestan examples, where the names of brothers (or sisters) share either their first or their second element: in Yt. 13.108 three brothers *Dāraiaṭ.raθa-*, *Frāraiaṭ.raθa-*, and *Skāraiaṭ.raθa-* are named in such a way that their names are linked by both rhyme (cf. *raθa-* “chariot”) and internal rhyme (with forms in °*āraiaṭ.-*); in Yt. 13.112 the names *Aiiō.asti-*, *Gaiiaδāsti-*, and *Vohuu-asti-* of three brothers are attested; in Yt. 13.114 two sons of one *Katu-* by name *Vohu.nəmah-* and *Vohuuazdah-* are mentioned; in Yt. 13.97 we hear of three sons of one *Frāniia-* called *Vohu.raočah-*, *Ašō.raočah-*, and *Varəsmō.raočah-*; similar cases are, in Yt. 13.127, the two brothers *Paršaṭ.gu-* and *Dāzgrō.gu-* as well as in Yt. 5.34, etc., the two sisters *Arəna-uuāčī-* and *Sanḡha-uuāčī-*. In this last example the two names are connected still more closely by the dual form, which may show that we have to do here with twin sisters. In other places of the Fravardīn Yašt list, where such names sharing one common element are mentioned next to each other without explicit information on any relationship (e.g., in Yt. 13.128 *Uxšiaṭ.ərəta-* and *Uxšiaṭ.nəmah-*), we can only deduce and suspect such a family relationship, but we cannot definitely prove it.

Other factors may produce a more or less mechanical combination of lexemes commonly used in names, regardless of the syntactic and semantic relations between them. In principle the result is the same if a particular word for some reason was regarded as an essential component in some name. In Vd. 18.52



such a scenario is made explicit; it is stated that the man in question shall get “the name *Ātrə.dāta-* or *Ātrə.čīθra-* or *Ātrə.zaṇtu-* or *Ātrə.dahīiu-* or some other name related to the Fire-god.”

The custom of a replica name-giving after some famous (historical) model can be illustrated by the four different women by name *Frə'nī-* mentioned in *Yt.* 13.140. It cannot be pure chance that this one name is of such importance (or at least such frequency) among the few women known by name from the Avestan texts. But, because in *Yt.* 13.139 it is said that one of *Zaraθuštra's* daughters was so named, we can be quite sure to have found the model for this favorite name.

In the Iranian languages it is a hereditary characteristic trait that one single name, the individual name or idionym, is sufficient for identifying any individual person and for distinguishing him or her from all other persons. However, to these obligatory idionyms optional additions may be added in all the ancient Indo-European languages, so that such multi-part onomastic formulas likewise may be regarded as a heritage from the proto-language. Notwithstanding their insoluble problems, Schmitt (2003) on the basis of the name list in *Yt.* 13, has shown that Avestan exhausted, too, all the possibilities existing in the cognate languages. The persons listed in this catalogue are cited either by their idionym alone or (i) with the father's name added in the genitive (whether or not governed by the word for “son,” *puθra-*) or (ii) with the father's or an ancestor's name given in (pro)patronymic form by an adjective derived from that name, or even (iii) with the family's name added in the genitive plural.

The form of these patronymic adjectives is relieved by means of various suffixes, particularly Av. *-i-*, *-aiiana-*, *-ā/āna-*, and *-iia-* (which suffix alone has an Old Persian parallel), as the following examples plainly show: with *-i-* *Siiāuuāsp-i-* (= Ved. *Śyāvāśvi-*) from **Siiāuuāspa-* (= Ved. *Śyāvāśva-*), *Dāzgrāsp-i-* from **Dāzgrāspa-* (parallel to the attested *Dāzgrō.gu-*), *Haṇhauruš-i-* from *Haṇhauruš-*, *Maiδiiōi.māṇh-i-* from *Maiδiiōi.māṇha-*, *Auuāraoštr-i-* from **Auuāraoštra-*; with *-aiiana-* *Frāšaoštr-aiiana-* (showing *vṛddhi* besides) from *Frāšaoštra-*, *Karsn-aiiana-* from *Karsna-*, *Vaṇhuδāt-aiiana-* from *Vaṇhuδāta-*; with *-ā/āna-* *Frāiiāzəṇt-ana-* from *Frāiiāzəṇta-*, *Frii-āna-* from *Friia-*, *Haēčəṭ.asp-āna-* from *Haēčəṭ.aspa-*, *Jāmāsp-ana-* from *Jāmāspa-*, *Kahrk-ana-* from **Kahrka-*, *Tūmāsp-ana-* from **Tūmāspa-*, *Xšuu iβrāsp-ana-* from *Xšuiiβrāspa-*, but also *Gaiiaδāstaii-ana-* from *Gaiiaδāsti-* and *Gaoraii-ana-* from *Gaori-*; with *-iia-* *Naotair-iia-* (with enlarged *Naotairii-āna-*) from



Naotara-.

Moreover these patronymic formations have extended their range, if their reference was transferred improperly from the children's generation to the grandchildren or still further. By becoming a hereditary name the patronymic will become a "propatronymic" according to the less ambiguous terminology propagated by Schmitt (1972a, pp. 337–39).

To illustrate those various expressions indicating descent a selection of examples may be given: (i) Genitive of father's name with *puθra-* "son": *Ašauuazdā puθrō Pouruδāxštōiš* "Ašauuazdah, the son of Pouruδāxšti" (Yt. 5.72); *Ātrəm Ahurahe Mazdā puθrəm* "Ātar, the son of AhuraMazdā" (Y. 2.12, etc.); without explicitly using *puθra-*: *Vohuuastōiš Snaoiiehe* "of Vohuuasti, (the son) of Snaoiia" (Yt. 13.96); *Dāṇhahe Zairitahe* "of Dāṇha, (the son) of Zairita" (Yt. 13.98); *Daēuuō.ṭbōiš* (grammatically wrong genitive form) *Taxmahe* "of Daēuuō.ṭbiš, (the son) of Taxma" (Yt. 13.98). (ii) Patronymic adjective: *BuδraheDāzgrāspōiš* "of Buδra, the Dāzgrāspi, i.e., the son (or descendant) of Dāzgrāspa" (Yt. 13.106); *H uš'īiaoθnahe Frāšaoštraīianahe* "of Huš'īiaoθna, the son (or descendant) of Frašaoštra" (Yt. 13.104); *AšauuazdāṇhōPouruδāxštaiianahe* "of Ašauuazdah, the son of Pouruδāxšti" (Yt. 13.112). (iii) Alternatively it is possible also to indicate affiliation with a particular family or ancestral line by naming this in the genitive plural of the patronymic: *Yōištahe Friīānanqm* "of Yōišta from the Friīāna family (i. e. from Friīa"s descendants)" (Yt. 13.120).

"Gentilic names" of this kind (to use the Latin term) could easily become a sort of hereditary by-name or second name; in Avestan this is found in the *Huuō.guua* (YAv. *Huuōuua*) and *Spitāma* families (cf. *Jāmāspa-* *Huuōuua-* and *Zaraθuštra-* *Spitāma-* respectively). But there are other family names, too (at least *Saēna-* and *Sāma-*), which are based on idionyms of the same form and for this reason probably are of the same origin.

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