



PERSONAL NAMES, IRANIAN V. SASANIAN PERIOD

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In the examination of the anthroponomastic situation of Sasanian times, priority treatment must be given to the names attested in non-literary, i.e., epigraphic sources (in the broadest sense of the word). The main reason for this is that only a small part of the personal names appearing in the Zoroastrians' books in Middle Persian language or in the Manichean literature has a direct connection with the Sasanian empire. In the Pahlavi literature several hundreds of personal names or of patronymic formations are indeed attested, but the persons mentioned there are of a very different character, a great many of them being alleged ancestors of Zarathustra, members of his family, literary characters, or other legendary or historical persons known already from the surviving books of the Avesta. With the Sasanian kings and princes, provincial governors, high officials, and military leaders things are clearer, but the religious and juridical authorities appearing there, the Zoroastrian priests (*mōbeds*, *hērbeds*) and scholars, the authors and scribes of Zoroastrian writings, and the persons mentioned in connection with some juridical case can be put in chronological order only in exceptional cases. Of the Manichean literature of Central Asia, it is important to consider the writings concerning ecclesiastical history, which deal with the Sasanian state



and sometimes mention kings and dignitaries of that time by name. Among the Iranian (Middle Persian, but also Parthian or Sogdian) personal names of Manicheans (for which see Sundermann, 1994), those of Manichean churchmen, which go back to the 3rd century CE, are particularly characteristic formations derived from theonyms or anthroponyms. But the bulk of the Manichean names (of laymen) belong to the 8th–11th centuries and thus in terms of onomastics have very little to do with the Sasanians. As to their formation they correspond in all essentials to the personal names attested elsewhere in Middle Persian sources, including even the so-called ‘dummy dvandvas’ (see iv., above), as we find them in names such as *Mihr-Wahman* or *Tīr-Mihr*.

A comprehensive treatment of all the Middle Persian personal names attested in inscriptions, papyri, ostraca, coins (for which see also Alram, 1986, pp. 186–214), seals, etc. is available in Gignoux, 1986 (with a supplement [up to 2001] of 2003), who concerned himself in particular with hunting out the evidence from the countless seals and bullae so widely distributed over public and private collections. For the late Sasanian period the economic and administrative documents from Egypt (which was occupied by the Persians in 619–28 C. E.), both Greek (see Huyse, 1990) and Middle Persian papyri, parchments, and ostraca are of special interest. Moreover, there are also ostraca from various sites in Persia itself, mostly receipts issued for goods. Unfortunately, the interpretation of all these texts is rendered difficult by their fragmentary character and their extremely cursive writing (see Weber, 1992, and Huyse, 1995).

Middle Persian names, and all the various types known from the native tradition, are found also in some branches of the collateral tradition, especially in Armenian (where, however, they take second place to the Parthian onomastic borrowings [for which see section iv., above]) and in Syriac. The evidence of Iranian anthroponyms attested in the Syriac [Acts of the Persian Martyrs](#) heretofore has been somewhat neglected since the epoch-making text edition by Hoffmann (1880; see, however, Gignoux 1975–1976 and 1982).

Typology and morphology of names. Among the Middle Persian anthroponyms attested in the religious sources (both Zoroastrian and Manichean) as well as secular sources, all the inherited types of names are found, as their morphological analysis has clearly shown (cf. Gignoux, 1979; Gignoux, 1987; Zimmer, 1991; Sundermann, 1994, pp. 255 ff.). In addition there are also



younger formations of a secondary origin, which took place only on the Middle Iranian level. A remarkable peculiarity of the Zoroastrian tradition is the names that are mere transcriptions of Avestan forms into Pahlavi (cf. Cereti, 2000; Cereti, in prep.). Altogether it must be said, that the frequency of the various types of names has changed if compared with Old Iranian. Two-stem names are still extant, but no longer prevalent, and there is only a relatively small number of forms which may be understood as direct continuants of Old Iranian names: thus, e.g., MPers. *gwnd-ply Gunda-farr* from OPers. *Vinda-farnah-*, *hwslwb*, etc. *Hu-srav* from OIr. **Hu-sravah-*, *mtrd'tMihr-dād* from OIr. **Miθra-dāta-*. In many cases of names such as MPers. *d'tpl Dād-farr* and OIr. **Dāta-farnah-* (as attested in El. *Da- [ad-]da-bar-na*, Gk. *Dataphérnēs*) an independent new formation cannot be excluded in spite of the exact formal correspondence to be seen.

The inherited types of personal names may be illustrated by the following examples, which are taken mostly from Gignoux, 1986 (followed by the relevant number, for further information):

A.i. (single-stem full names). *plhw Farrox* (no. 352) from OIr. **Farnah-vant-* ‘Being full of splendor (of happiness)’; *štrp Šahrab* (no. 868) from the title MPers. *šahrab*, based on OIr. (non-Pers.) **xšaθra-pā/ā-* ‘satrap’;

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

A.ii.1 (possessive compounds): *twlpln Ādur-farr* (no. 53) from OIr. **Ātṛ-farnah-* (cf. Av. *Ātərə-xvarənah-*) ‘Possessing the splendor of the fire’ (see section iii., above); *gwštsp Guštasp* (no. 423), *wšt'spy Vištāsp* (no. 1013) from OPers. *Vištāspa-* and Av. *Vištāspa-* respectively;

A.ii.2 (determinative compounds): *twrp't Ādur-bād* (no. 33) from OIr. **Aūtær-pāta-* ‘Protected by the Fire-god’ (cf. Av. *Ātərə-pāta-*); *twrd't Ādur-dād* (no. 46) from OIr. **Ātṛ-dāta-* ‘Given by the Fire-god’ (cf. Av. *Ātərə-dāta-*); *mtrbwht Mihr-buxt* (no. 638) from OIr. **Miθra-buxta-* ‘Saved by Mithra’; *mtrd't Mihr-dād* (no. 639) from OIr. **Miθra-dāta-*, whereas names like *wḥrmzdd't Ohrmazd-dād* (no. 709) are secondary formations (replacing, in the case given, OIr. **Ahura-dāta-* and/or **Mazdā-dāta-*);

A.ii.3 (governing compounds): *gwndply Gunda-farr* (no. 401) from OPers. *Vinda-farnah-* ‘Being blessed with splendor’; Man. MPers. *Nox-dār* ‘Holding the first rank’;



A.ii.4 (inverted forms): *d't'wḥrmzd Dād-Ohrmazd* (no. 292) formed by inversion of *Ohrmazd-dād* (see above); this and other examples of the type are clear signs of mechanical joining of the two elements and indicate that theonyms, in particular, could be used *ad lib.* as the first or second element of a name;

B.i.1 (single-stem short names): *d't Dād* (no. 270) from OIr. **Dāta-* (attested in El. *Da-ad-da*), based on the many compounds containing this element; *mtl(y) Mihr* (no. 613) from OIr. **Miθra-* and the theophoric names with this theonym;

B.ii.1 (single-stem hypocoristics): *bwhṭkyBuxt-ag* (no. 254) based on some compound in OIr. **-buxta-* “saved by” (see A.ii.2, above); *mtlky Mihr-ag* (no. 629) based on OIr. **Miθra-ka-* (as in Aram. *mtrk*, Gk. *Mithrákēs*); *chlyt(-'n) Čaxrīd* (no. 267) based on OIr. **Čaxr-ita-*, i.e., **čaxra-* “wheel” and the hypocoristic suffix *-ita-*; *mtr't Mihr-ād* (no. 615) based on the theonym and suffixed by **-āta-* as OIr. **Miθr-āta-* (reflected by Bab. *Mi-it-ra-a-tu*, Gk. *Mithrátēs*, etc.).

Apart from certain cases that are difficult to judge (such as *bwlc'c't Burz-āzād* [no. 237], seemingly “Grand-and-noble,” but presumably not a real copulative compound), there are special innovations of Middle Persian anthroponomastics, among them the peculiar type of the ‘dummy dvandvas’. These new formations so typical for Middle Iranian are characterized by containing two (or even more) theonyms. Suffice it here to illustrate this rather frequent type (for a fuller treatment, see Gignoux, 1979, pp. 72 ff.) with a few examples: *Ādur-Anāhīd*, *-Māh*, *-Mihr*, *-Ohrmazd*; *Mihr-Ādur*, *-Ohrmazd*, *-Vahrām*; *Tīr-Māh*, *-Mihr*, *-Ohrmazd*, etc. Two particular points must be stressed in this connection: firstly, that the names of the sacred fires of Sasanian Iran (esp. *Farrbay* and *Gušnasp*) are also part of this anthroponomastic subsystem, and, secondly, that there are forms containing the element *bg-/bgBay/-bay* (from OIr. **baga-* “god”), the supposed theonymic character of which is rather controversial. Moreover the interpretation of the ‘dummy dvandvas’ as a whole is in dispute, and it seems to me over-optimistic to keep several groups of such formations apart and to identify a basic stock of genuine dvandvas (pace Zimmer, 1984, pp. 292 ff.). Also the reference to the calendar, namely, to the names of days and months, as proposed by Schmitt (1988, p. 271) is mere speculation. Not least, the numerous three- and four-part formations like *Ādur-Farrbay-Gušnasp*, *Burz-Māh-Gušnasp*, *Māh-Ādur-Frāy-Gušnasp*, *Māh-Ādur-Ohrmazd*, or *Mihr-Ādur-Farrbay* seem to indicate that originally they were shorter forms and only expanded by some additional element (in an agglutinative manner, as it were), or even are newly-formed



compounds based on a two-stem full name as their first or second element.

Motives of name-giving; use of the names. Examples for the traditional customs of name-giving can be found also in Middle Persian in large number. Thus the names of father and son often have one element in common, e.g., in “*Dād-Farrox*, son of *Dād-Ādur*,” or are even fully identical in cases like “*Dād-Ohrmazd*, son of *Dād-Ohrmazd*” (see Gignoux, 1979, pp. 57f.; Zimmer, 1991, pp. 114f.). Here the various ways of giving the father’s name or the family name may be mentioned. For this purpose the patronymic (or “propatronymic”) formations in *-n-ān* and *-k’n -agān* were used, normally joined to the son’s (or daughter’s) idionym by means of the relative particle *ī* (e.g., *Ardaxšīr ī Pābagān* “*Ardaxšīr*, son of *Pābag*”), or partly without *ī* owing to Parthian influence. Sometimes the father’s name is added to the son’s idionym unchanged, with or without the word for “son” (MPers. *pus*). The family name is expressed by a construction such as *Dād(a)rōy ī az Husravdād-ān* “*Dād (a)rōy* from [the family] of *Husravdād*” (cf. Huyse, 1995, p. 363).

Theophoric personal names are already very common in the Old Iranian period, but their percentage may have increased later. A number of theonymic elements (including the names of the great sacred fires [see Zimmer, 1991, pp. 138 f.]) appear most frequently: *Ādur*, *Anāhīd*, (*Ādur*-)*Farrbay*, (*Ādur*-)*Gušnasp*, *Māh*, *Mihr*, *Ohrmazd*, and *Vahrām*. The same is true for the names of some of the Sasanian kings, which obviously have frequently been re-used (esp. *Ardaxšīr*, *Šābuhr*, *Narseh*, *Vahrām*, and *Husrav*). A special problem connected with part of the theophoric anthroponyms is posed by those names that are supposed to be related to the calendar. All interpretations, however, that go beyond the type of name formed by a divine name plus the element *-dād* “given by” as, e.g., MPers. *Māh-dād* “Given by *Māh* [the Moon-god] (as genius of the 12th day)” (for which see Schmitt, 2000) are pure speculation: e.g., the supposed allusions to the names of planets, of the zodiac and the like.

As women’s names, several types of new formations have become productive; they were intended to characterize these names more clearly and to distinguish them better from men’s names, since the inherited distinguishing features had become unrecognizable. These new formations are of the following types: (1) theophoric short names consisting only of the name of a goddess (e.g., *Spandarmad*) or two-stem forms with such a name as their second element (e.g., *Ādur-Anāhīd*); (2) determinative compounds formed with MPers. *-duxt* “daughter” (attested in dozens of examples), which should not be taken too literally, however, as becomes clear, e.g., in *Yazdān-duxt* “daughter



of the gods” or in cases where the real father’s name, known from some other source, is not the one appearing before the element *-duxt*; but the actual meaning of *duxt* in those forms remains uncertain, all the more so since we find quite different first elements, not only theonyms (as, e.g., in *Ohrmazd-duxt*) or names of persons (as, e.g., in *Narseh-duxt*), and therefore may suppose that it is only the frequent occurrence of the elements that matters; (3) similar compounds with the adjective *anōš* “sweet, charming, dear (lit. immortal)” corresponding to Armenian names in *-anoyš* such as *Xosrov-anoyš*, etc. (as assumed by Schmitt, 1988, pp. 268 f.).

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