



PERSONAL NAMES, IRANIAN III. ACHAEMENID PERIOD

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Evidence of personal names belonging to the Achaemenid period is considerable, but in authentic sources, i.e., in the Old Persian inscriptions of the Achaemenid kings themselves, fewer than fifty names are documented in their Old Persian form (see Mayrhofer, 1979). Among these are the names of kings (beginning with the eponymous *Haxāmaniš*, then *Cišpiš*, *Ariyāramna*, *Ṛšāma*, *Kuruš*, and *Kambū/ūjiya* from the period preceding Darius I), the throne-names of Darius and his successors, *Dāraya-vauš* “Holding firm (or: retaining) the good,” *Xšaya-ṛšan-* “He who is ruling over heroes,” and *Ṛta-xšaça-* “Whose rule is through the Truth” with their respective programmatic message (cf. Schmitt, “Throne-Names,” 1982), and names of other Achaemenids such as *Vištāspa* and *Bṛdiya-*. As regards throne-names, we know from Greek and Roman literary sources as well as from Late Babylonian chronicles and astronomical texts (i.e., from two traditions not related to each other) that the Achaemenid kings changed their (birth-)name upon accession to the throne and assumed a “royal name” expressing some religious-political program or motto.

There are also several names of members of the Median royal house



(*Uvaxšt[a]ra*, *Xšaθrita*), of Darius I's fellow-conspirators together with their fathers' names (DB IV 83–86: *Vindafarnah*, son of *Vahyasparuva* [?]; *Utāna*, son of *uxra*; *Gaub[a]ruva*, son of *Mṛduniya*; *Vidrna*, son of *Bagābigna*; *Bagabuxša*, son of *Dātavahya* [?]; and *Ardumaniš*, son of *Vahuka*), of members of the court (such as *Aspacanah*), and of Darius' generals and satraps (like *Ṛtavardiya*, *Dādršiš*, *Taxmaspāda*, *Vaumisa*, and *Vivāna*). The remaining names are those of two “private individuals” (namely *Ariya-ṛšan*, on the top of a perfume-vessel, and *Ṛšaka*, son of *Aθiyāb(a)uštā* [or sim.], on a [non-royal] seal), and of the disloyal rebels mentioned in Darius's Bisitun (see [BISOTUN](#)) inscriptions, too, partly together with the names of their fathers or of those who they pretended to be (*Gaumāta*; *Āç-ina*, son of *Upad(a)rama*; *Mart-iya*, son of *Cincaxriš*; *Fravartiš*; *Çiçan-taxma*; *Frāda*; *Vahyaz-dāta*, and *Skunxa*). But to that sort belong also a number of non-Iranian names: Bab. *Nadintabaira* (or sim.), son of *Ainaira*, and *Nabukudracara*, son of *Nabunaita*; El. *Aθamaita* and *Imaniš*, and lastly one *Araxa*, son of *Haldita*, coming from the Urarto-Armenian region.

Collateral tradition. Since the Achaemenid empire covered a vast area and actually was a multinational and multilingual state, personal names, and also Old Persian or, more generally, Old Iranian personal names are available in numerous sources written in the most varied languages and writing systems from within and outside the empire: in Elamite, Late Babylonian, Aramaic, Hebrew, Hieroglyphic and Demotic Egyptian, Lycian, Lydian, Greek, etc. From later times there is historical information about the Achaemenid period particularly in Greek and Roman authors. But essentially this so-called collateral tradition of Old Iranian anthroponyms centers on Elamite and Greek sources; and, as concerns the Elamite texts found in Susa, and even more those from Persepolis — the Persepolis Fortification Tablets (PFT; see Hallock) and the Persepolis Treasury Tablets (PTT; see Cameron) — it has been rightly emphasized that this rich corpus came from the center of the empire itself, right where those names were in use (cf. Benveniste, p. 76).

More than 2,000 personal names, the great majority being of Iranian origin, are attested alone on the Elamite administrative texts found in the Persepolis archives. The largest complex is that of the Fortification Tablets from the years 509–494 BCE or 13–28 of Darius I's reign, to which must be added the much smaller corpora of the Persepolis Treasury Tablets (belonging to the years 492–458 BCE, namely the span from year 30 of Darius I's reign to year 7 of Artaxerxes I's reign) and of the tablets found at Susa, the date of which is still



at issue. As a rule, the Iranian anthroponyms differ so clearly from the main types of Elamite personal names (for which see Zadok, 1984) that they can be found among the entire onomasticon and can be assigned to Iranian quite easily. The whole of the anthroponomastic evidence (and partly including that from unpublished tablets) is of course recorded in the all-embracing dictionary of Hinz and Koch (1987), and a first summary of an Iranianist analysis and evaluation is found in Mayrhofer (1973). The interpretation of this material from the Iranian scholar's view is complicated by the fact that the graphic representation of the Iranian forms by the Elamite writing system does not follow rules as strictly as one would wish. Thus the varying spellings of the names alone have led already to different proposals in reconstructing the Old Persian (or Old Iranian) original forms, and it is always necessary to make full use of as much parallel onomastic evidence as possible.

Similarly, New and chiefly Late Babylonian texts from Achaemenid times, in particular civil law documents (contracts, economic texts, and the like) also stand out for the wealth of onomastic material. They show a large number of individuals bearing Old Iranian names from all levels of Babylonian society, from members of the royal house to higher officials and agents of commercial firms to outright chattel slaves. To these must be added the anthroponyms attested in texts of astronomical content and, furthermore, those of the Babylonian versions of the royal inscriptions, which of course must be the basis for all research into the Babylonian onomastic evidence. The linguistic analysis of this material, too, is characterized by the fact that the graphic rendering of Old Iranian names in Babylonian writing exhibits numerous variants and inaccuracies that hinder the work of interpretation. These difficulties are compounded by the fact that the corpus is not uniform in space and time, since the texts are distributed over the whole of the Achaemenid period (and beyond) and over various places and regions of Mesopotamia (see Zadok, 1977; Dandamayev). A remarkable fact is that for Babylonia (in contrast with other parts of the empire, e.g., Asia Minor) the onomastic data testify to a stronger acculturation of the Iranians there, since many individuals bear a native Babylonian idionym, but an Iranian patronymic or an ethnic indicating Iranian descent (cf. Stolper, *CAH*² VI, pp. 253 ff.).

Since Aramaic (q.v.) in the Achaemenid empire was used as the official language of imperial administration for interregional communication and correspondence (therefore being called Imperial Aramaic), sources written in this language are available in no small number. In these texts, which are



dispersed widely over the empire (but come chiefly from Egypt, Asia Minor, and Persepolis), many Old Iranian anthroponyms are recorded in their Aramaic form. However, only for the hundreds of papyri uncovered in Egypt (among them the remnants of an Aramaic adaptation of Darius I's great Bisitun inscription) is a recent compilation of the entire evidence at hand (see Porten and Yardeni). Some books of the Old Testament (written in Hebrew, such as Esther, or Aramaic, such as parts of Esra) contain dozens of Iranian names relating to the Achaemenid period.

In Achaemenid Asia Minor a number of Old Iranian personal names is found in Lycian and Lydian inscriptions, particularly in those from the Xanthos area (among them the great Xanthos stele) and from Sardis, respectively (see Schmitt, 1982a). In addition to these names Iranian anthroponyms are also attested not infrequently in Greek inscriptions, which, moreover, attest to the fact that names originating in Achaemenid times lived on for many centuries, at any rate in more strongly Persianized regions (see Zwanziger; Schmitt, 1979c).

Another focus of the anthroponomastic collateral tradition is in Greek sources, and this is valid already for the Achaemenid period (cf. [GREECE i.](#) and [xiii.](#)): The main sources of relevant information are the historians of the classical period before Alexander the Great (Herodotus, Thucydides, etc.). Most useful are those authors who dealt with the Achaemenid empire, with the Persian Wars or the Achaemenids' rule over the Greeks living in Asia Minor, and also those who wrote from their own experience in the East, such as Xenophon (see [ANABASIS](#)) or Ctesias (q.v.), who lived for some years at the Persian court. A more systematic treatment of this material remains to be written, one which would include in the discussion the plethora of onomastic information from the other branches of the collateral tradition as well as the rich sources written in one of the Middle Iranian languages. For the time being, only individual studies exist dealing with Aeschylus (Schmitt, 1978b), Herodotus (Schmitt, 1967; Schmitt, 1979a), Thucydides (Schmitt, 1983), Ctesias (Schmitt, 1979b), Xenophon (Schmitt, 2002), Plato (Schmitt, 1996), or the historians reporting on Alexander's campaigns (see Werba).

So far as they were known at that time, the whole of the personal names attested for the Achaemenid period were included in Justi, *Namenbuch* (cf. also the index in Schmitt, 2000, pp. 115–34). Justi also presented various relevant genealogical family trees, not only of the Achaemenid dynasty itself (pp. 398 f.), but also of other families and houses of that period, which show that his



Namenbuch is a by-product originating in materials compiled for a history of Iran. In consequence of the many new discoveries made all through the 20th century, however, Justi's book is long since outdated. At least for the anthroponyms of the Old Persian inscriptions themselves Mayrhofer (1979) has replaced it (see above). But a full collection of all the names attested in all of the many branches of the collateral tradition is not yet at hand; and the only work attempting such a collection (Hinz, 1975) should be used with caution, since it is not always a reliable guide in linguistic matters.

Typology of Achaemenid names. It is not possible to list here in full all the names attested for the Achaemenid period in those voluminous and varied sources. The following selection is chosen from Old Persian itself and the various branches of its collateral tradition; it comprises all the analyzable names occurring in the Old Persian royal inscriptions (with the relevant number in Mayrhofer, *Iranisches Personennamenbuch* indicated) and, instances chosen according to two criteria: On the one hand only personal names with a convincing etymological interpretation are quoted, and on the other, a balanced consideration of all the different branches of the tradition is intended, strictly limited to Achaemenid times. Altogether the formation of the anthroponyms used during this period closely agrees with the facts seen in earliest Vedic times. The various types are those inherited from the common Indo-European and Indo-Iranian anthroponymical system (cf. section ii., above):

A.i. (single-stem full names): OPers. *Dādṛṣi-* (no. 24) "The brave one" (cf. Ved. *dā'dhṛṣi-*); *Kuru-* (no. 39) "Humiliating (the enemy in verbal contest)"; *uxra-* (no. 48) = Med. **Suxra-* "Mr. Red" (= OInd. *Śukra-*);

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

A.ii.1 (possessive compounds): OPers. *Ariya-ṛšan-* (no. 6) "With Aryan heroes"; *Ṛšāma-* (no. 7; from *šršan-* + *ama-*) "Possessing the strength of heroes"; *Ṛtaxšaça-* (no. 11) "Whose rule is through the Truth"; *Aspa-canah-* (no. 15) "Getting pleasure from horses"; *Taxma-spāda-* (no. 47; Median name) "Possessing a brave army"; *Vahyaz-dāta-* (no. 56) "The one with the better law(s)"; *Vištāspa-* (no. 59) "Possessing horses untied (for racing)"; OIr. **Ātrfarnah-* (reflected in El. *Ha-tur-par-na*, Aram. *ʾtrprn*, Gk. *Ata[r]/At [r]a-phérnēs* and corresponding to Av. *Ātərə-xvarənah-*) "Possessing the splendor of the fire (or: Fire-god)"; OIr. **Paru-šiyāti-* (attested in El. *Ba(r)-ru-ši-ya-ti-iš*, Bab. *Pu-ru-šá-ti-iš*, Gk. *Parysatis*) "Giving much enjoyment";



A.ii.2 (determinative compounds): OIr. **Ṛta-pāta-* (reflected in El. *Ir-da-ba-(ud-)da*, Bab. *Ar-ta-pa-ti*, etc., Gk. *Artapátēs/-bátās*, etc.) “Protected by Truth”; OIr. **Baga-pāta-* (as required by El. *Ba-ka-ba-(ad/ud-)da*, Bab. *Ba-ga-pa-a-ta*, etc., Aram. *bgpt*, Gk. *Bagapátēs*, *Megabátēs*, etc.) “Protected by the gods”; OIr. **Miθra-dāta-* (attested in Gk. *Mithradátēs*, etc., Bab. *Mit-/Mi-it-ra-da-a-tú/ti*, Aram. *mtrdt*, etc.) “Given by *Mithra* (as genius of the 16th day)”;

A.ii.3 (governing compounds): OPers. *Ṛta-vardiya-* (no. 10) = Med. **Ṛta-varziya-* “Acting by Truth”; *Baga-buxša-* (no. 19) “Pleasing/serving the gods”; *Dāraya-vauš* (no. 26) “Holding firm (or: retaining) the good”; *Vinda-farnah-* (no. 57) “Being blessed with splendor” (like Av. *Vīdaṭ.xvarənah-*); *Vaum-isa-* (no. 63) “Longing for the good (or: the good one)”; *Xšaya-ṛšan-* (no. 66) “He who rules over heroes”; OIr. **Mazdā-yazna-* (reflected in El. *Mas-/Maš-da-ya-aš-na*, etc., Bab. *Ma-az-da-is/z-na*, Aram. *mzdyzn*) “Worshipping (*Ahura*) *Mazdā*”;

A.ii.4 (inverted forms): OIr. **Dāta-miθra-* (attested in El. *Da-ad-da-mi-ut-ra*, Aram. *dtmtr*, etc.) formed by inversion of OIr. **Miθra-dāta-* “Given by *Mithra* (as genius of the 16th day)”;

A.ii.5 (special cases with an exceptional nominative or accusative form of the first element, which is explained best by assuming a phrase having been joined together): OPers. *Ciṣan-taxma-* (no. 22; actually a hybrid form) = Med. **Čiθran-taxma-* hypostasized from a phrase **čiθram* (acc.) *taxma-* “excellent regarding the descent”; *Haxā-maniš-* (no. 36) hypostasized from **haxā* (nom.) *maniš* (acc.) “follower as to his mind”;

B.i.1 (single-stem short names): OPers. *Frāda-* (no. 30) shortened from some such compound name as **Frāda-farnah-* = YAv. *Frādaṭ.xvarənah-* “Furthering the splendor”; *Fravartī-* (no. 31) based on some such compound name as OIr. **Fravartī-pāta-* (attested in Aram. *prwrtpt*) “Protected by the *Fravašis*”; OIr. **Dāta-* (attested in El. *Da-ad/ud-da*) shortened from some compound with **dāta-* as its first or second element; OIr. **Miθra-* (attested in El. *Mi-ut-ra*), which must be shortened from one of the numerous theophoric names containing the theonym *Miθra-* (see below);

B.i.2 (two-stem short names): OIr. **Dāta-m-a-* (attested in El. *Da-(ad/ud-)da-ma*, Aram. *dtm*, Gk. *Datámās*) based on names like OIr. **Dāta-miθra-* (see A.ii.4);

B.ii.1 (single-stem hypocoristics): OPers. *Āḫ-ina-* (no. 1) = Med. **Āθr-ina-* from



some compound with *āç-* < Ir. **āθr-* “fire”; *Ṛša-ka-* (no. 9) based on OIr. **ṛšan-* “male, man, hero”; *Bṛd-īya-* (no. 20) = Med. **Bṛz-īya-* based on **bṛdi-/*bṛzi-* “high, grand” and suffixed by *-īya-*; *Mart-īya-* (no. 41) based on OIr. **marta-* = Ved. *márta-* “mortal, man” and suffixed by *-īya-*; *Xšaθr-ita-* (no. 65) based on some compound with Med. **xšaθra-* “kingship, kingdom” and; suffixed by *-ita-*; OIr. **Arba-ka-* (reflected in El. *Har-ba-ka*, Bab. *Ar-ba-ak-ka*, Gk. *Arbákēs*) based on **arba-* = Ved. *árba-* “little, young”; OPers. **çut-iça-* (attested in El. *Šu-(ut-)te-iz-za*) seemingly based on **çutāyau-da-* (from **çuta-* < OIr. **sruta-* plus **Hyau-da-*; attested in El. *Šu-(ud-)da-ya-u-da*) “Possessing famous warriors,” particularly since both the full name and the hypocoristic with some probability are used for one and the same person;

B.ii.2 (two-stem hypocoristics): OIr. **Ṛta-x-aya-* (attested in El. *Ir-da-ka-ya*, Aram. *ṛthy*, Gk. *Artachaiēs*) shortened from some compound name like OIr. **Ṛta-xratu-* or OPers. *Ṛta-xšaça* (see A.ii.1) with initial *x-* of the second element being preserved; OIr. **Ṛta-xš-ara-* (reflected in El. *Ir-da-ak-šá-ra*, Bab. *Ar-taḥ-šá-ri*, Gk. *Artoxárēs*) shortened from OPers. *Ṛta-xšaça-*; OIr. **Baga-p-aya-* (in Gk. *Bagapaîos*, Aram. *bgpy*) based on some compound name like OIr. **Baga-pāta-*, **Baga-pāna-*, or similar.

Among the very first anthroponomastic type (A.i.), i.e. the single-stem full names, those personal names which originate from ethnic names form a special group. In the collateral tradition from the Achaemenid period there are attested, e.g., OIr. **Daha-* (reflected in El. *Da-ha*) “The Daha” (cf. YAv. *Dānha-*); **Haraiva-* (attested in El. *Ha-ri-ma*) “The Areian”; **Saka-* (in El. *Šá-ak-ka*, Gk. *Sákās*) “The Scythian”; **Sugda-* (in El. *Šu-ug-da*) “The Sogdian”; more remarkable is in a sense the actual use of **Pārsa-* “The Persian,” too, as it is found in El. *Ba-ir-iš-šá*.

Use of the names. Because things are more or less as in Avestan, here a few remarks may suffice. The oft-recurring form *Haxā-manišiya* “Achaemenid” commonly added to the names of the Achaemenid kings is indisputably a deonomastic formation. In its function, however, it is not a ‘propatronymic,’ but a singularizing form to the plural family name *Haxāmanišiyā* “the Achaemenids”; with the meaning “one of the Achaemenids,” it does not belong to the onomastic parts of the self-predication of the kings (see Schmitt, 1987).

It is notable that among the theophoric anthroponyms of the Achaemenid period those containing the element OIr. **Miθra-* are very common, even long before this theonym appears in the royal inscriptions. Already in the list



compiled by Schmitt (“Die theophoren Eigennamen,” 1978), to which several additions are necessary, more than eighty prosopographically distinct bearers of such *Miθra*-phoric names are enumerated (pp. 418–29, nos. 1–85).

For the onomastic analysis of such theophoric names, the discovery of parallel formations with various theonyms has proved to be particularly useful, i.e., series of both compound names and those formed by suffixal derivation. The series, e.g., of OIr. **Miθra-dāta-*, **Mi θra-farnah-*, **Miθra-čiθra-*, **Miθra-ka-*, and **Miθr-aya-* is fully parallel to that of **Mazdā-dāta-*, **Mazdā-farnah-*, **Mazdā-čiθra-*, **Mazdā/ā-ka-*, **Mazd-aya-* and even to that of **Baga-dāta-*, **Baga-farnah-*, **Baga-čiθra-*, **Baga-ka-*, **Bag-aya-* based on the generic term for the gods. Because it is quite popular to draw conclusions regarding the religious conditions of a people or a period from theophoric names, the warning must be repeated here that such a conclusion is justified only where the name in question is used for the first time (Schmitt, 1991, pp. 121 ff.). Each person later reusing an already existing theophoric name may be induced to do so by some tradition, so that secondary use of the name for a quite different reason cannot be excluded. Consequently it is only the first creator of an anthroponym with religious content for whom religious motives were indubitably decisive in giving such a name. It may be otherwise in the case of names that are formally identical with an appellative of the normal language and in this respect are descriptive: e.g., OIr. **Mazdā-yazna-* “Worshipping (Ahura) Mazdā” (see A.ii.3).

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