



PERSONAL NAMES, IRANIAN VI. ARMENIAN NAMES OF IRANIAN ORIGIN

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For many centuries Armenian life and culture has been influenced in a distinctive manner by Iran because of Armenia's great political dependence on Iran's powerful rulers. This influence was most intensive under the auspicious conditions of the Parthian period, when the Arsacids ruled Armenia directly and with the support of the Parthian nobility, and it also penetrated the Armenian language to a considerable extent.

Linguistic research has documented that the majority of Iranian lexical and other borrowings in Armenian originated in the Parthian language (Meillet; Bolognesi). The borrowings include even common words of the basic vocabulary and everyday language, whereas the Middle Persian linguistic influence under the Sasanians is confined to particular titles and technical terms that were only superficially integrated within the Armenian language (see [ARMENIA AND IRAN iv](#), no. 1). The onomasticon, and especially the personal names attested in Armenian sources, are a case similar to that of the common vocabulary, in that these also show a great number of foreign



elements. If we leave aside people of foreign stock appearing in the Bible, the ancient historiographers, and the authors other writings of Old Armenian literature and confine ourselves to the names of Armenians by birth, we may summarize by saying that noblemen and noblewomen bore Iranian and mostly Parthian names, whereas clergymen had biblical and early Christian names that stayed close to their Greek and sometimes Syriac models in form. Ordinary people who were, to historians, not worth mentioning may often have maintained their genuine Armenian names (Hübschmann, 1893, pp. 99-100).

Thus many Iranian anthroponyms, some of which are still in use, are found in the Armenian written tradition from its beginnings in the fifth century CE. Roughly one quarter of all the Armenian personal names are of Iranian linguistic origin (according to Nalbandyan, 1971, p. 4). These are taken into account by Justi (1895), as regards prosopography, and by Hübschmann (1897, pp. 17-91), whose Armenian grammar marks the beginning of linguistic onomastic research in this field. Regrettably there is no systematic and comprehensive treatment of the Iranian personal names attested in Old Armenian sources; the lexicon of H. Ačaryan (1876-1953) lists them but does not differentiate between the various layers and groups of the anthroponymic material. From Hübschmann on, moreover, most scholars have not distinguished between the names used only by Iranians (e.g., members of the Arsacid or Sasanian dynasties, their generals, dignitaries, and officials) and those used by native Armenians who followed the fashion of the Parthian nobility. A special group is comprised of Iranian names that entered the Armenian language via Greek, for example during the Achaemenid period; Arm. *Kiwros* “Cyrus,” for example, does not reflect OPers. *Kuruš*, but evidently Gk. *Kûros*, in contrast to *Dareh* “Darius” (Schmitt, 2002, pp. 134 ff.).

The date of the borrowing of the Iranian names often can be established quite exactly from their Armenian forms, which normally remained in use without any change in appearance once taken over. For example, an Arm. *r* (e.g., *Bagarat* from Iran. **Baga-dāta-* “given by the gods”) is a characteristic substitution for a Parth. *δ*, which in turn is derived from Iran. **d*; it therefore gives a decisive indication of a Parthian date. Clear evidence is also provided by cases in which the same name was repeatedly borrowed at different times and/or places. Examples are the doublet *Spandarāt* (from Parth. **Spandaδāt*) and *Spandiat* (from MPers. *Spandyāt*), both of which are ultimately derived from Iran. **Spanta-dāta-* “given by Spəntā [*Ārmaiti*, the genius of the 5th day]”



and the quartet of *Vahagn* (from Parth. *Varhragn*), *Vahan* (cf. Parth., MPers. *Varhrān*), *Vahram* (from MPers. *Vahrām*, with secondary *-m*), and *Vram* (a shortened variant).

Altogether, Irano-Armenian personal names are essentially a collateral tradition of Parthian anthroponymy; and therefore they are discussed in the Parthian section (see above, iv). From the Parthian survey one can see that all the various types of Western Middle Iranian names are attested in Armenian, too, as has been demonstrated by Schmitt, 1984; examples are given there for the manifold categories and subcategories of compound and shortened names, hypocoristics, etc. Also covered are new formations developed only in Parthian and Middle Persian: juxtapositions like *Atrormizd* (cfr. MPers. *Ādur-Ohrmazd*), which are described as “theophoric dummy dvandvas”; forms that have changed from patronymics (or from ‘propatronymics’) into idionyms; and the like.

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