



ŠAHREWAR

ŠAHREWAR, name of one of the Amahraspandān (see [AMƏŠA SPƏNTA](#)) in Zoroastrianism. This is the Middle Persian form of the name deriving from Av. Xšaθra Vairya, meaning literally “dominion to be chosen” and more freely “choice/desirable/best dominion.”

Absent from the [Gāthās](#), Xšaθra Vairya appears in the recent strata of the Avesta as the third in the enumerations of the Aməša Spəntas. The word *xšaθra-* is used extensively by Zarathustra to express the concept of the power and dominion of Ahura Mazdā. Whether he considered *xšaθra*, like Aša or Wohu Manah, as a separate entity or just a modality of Ahura Mazdā or as some combination of both is difficult to determine owing to the multivalence of such terms. In any case, an entity called Xšaθra Vairya, however one understands it, is nowhere to be found in the Gāthās. Nevertheless, there are associations of the two words which point to the post-Gāthic emergence of Xšaθra Vairya as one of the Aməša Spəntas. The most direct association is *Y.* 51.1a: *vohū xšaθrəm wairīm bāgəm aibi.bairištəm* “Good dominion is to be chosen as the best provider of (one’s) share.” At *Y.* 43.13 the association is more remote: *təm dātā mōi ... wairyā stōiš yā θβahmī xšaθrōi wācī* “You (pl.) grant me that (desire) for the choice existence which is said to be in Thy power.” In addition to *xšaθra* and *sti*, the (priestly?) reward or stipend (*mīžda*) is “choice, desirable” (*Y.* 34.14a and *Y.* 54.1d).

In texts of the so-called Younger Avesta, and there in what seem to be uniformly recent sections, there are enumerations of the Aməša Spəntas which always follow a fixed order, namely, (Ahura Mazdā), Wohu Manah, Aša



Vahišta, Xšaθra Vairya, Spənta Ārmaiti, Haurwatāt-Aməratāt (Y. 1.2; 16.3; 57.24; 70.2; Yt. 1.25; 4.1). Beyond this fixed order the name merely occurs in litanies, where no indication is given about how Xšaθra Vairya was understood theologically. Elsewhere Xšaθra Vairya appears as the fourth day of the month (Y. 16.3; *Sīrōza* 1.4;) and as the sixth month (*Āfrīnagān* 3.9). At some point, however, Xšaθra Vairya, as we know from Pahlavi texts, came to be regarded as the patron of the creation of metals; and in this capacity *xšaθra vairya* became another word for “metal.” Thus, *Vd.* 9.10: *karšasci frakārayōiš tiyra xšaθra vairya* “Thou shouldst trace furrows with a sharp metal (stick)”; similarly *Vd.* 17.6: *xšaθrāi wairyāi pairi.karəm kārayōiš* “Thou shouldst trace a furrow around with a metal (stick); also *Vd.* 16.6: *ayanhaēnəm vā srūm vā [nitəma xšatra wairya]* “a (vessel) of iron or lead [the basest of metals].” Finally there is the difficult description of the chariot yoke at *Yt.* 10.125, where the hook (*aka*) by which the yoke strap is bound to the pole, appears to have a gloss specifying that the hook is metal (*xšaθrəm vairīm*).

According to the Pahlavi *Bundahišn*, during the creation the fourth Spirit (*mēnōg*), Šahrewar, took metal (*ayōxšust*) derived from the sky (*āsmān*) as his creation. The connection of his dominion with metal is made explicit in the *Bundahišn* (26.57-61). The explanation given there begins with an etymology of *xštlwl* /*xšaθrawar(ya)*/ as “sovereignty which is according to will,” where *kāmag* always glosses *vairya* in the Pahlavi Yasna. The text then goes on to say that because metal belongs to him, one is able to exercise autonomy (*kāmag-xwadāyih*), power, and other attributes through arms. Since Šahrewar represents legitimate rule, his demonic antagonist at the Frašegird (see [FRAŠŌ.KĒRETI](#)) is the Sāwul dēw (GrBd 34.27), who is characterized by evil rule, oppression, injustice and violence (GrBd 27.7). In regard to Šahrewar’s role during the Frašegird there is a discrepancy between the *Bundahišn* and the Pahlavi Rivāyat. According to the latter Šahrewar “will melt the metal of all the mountains in the world up to the height of (a person’s) mouth” (PRDD 48.70: *ud šahrewar ayōxšust ī hamāg kōfihā ī pad gēhān be widāzēd dahān-bālāy*), whereas the *Bundahišn* states that “Then Fire and Ērmān-yazd will cause the (molten) metal which is in the hills and mountains to flow forth and it will stay on this earth like a river” (GrBd 34.18: *pas ātaxš ud ērmān yazd ayōxšust ī andar kōfān ud garān witāzēnd ud pad ēn dām rōd humānāg estēd*). Further, the Rivāyat, says that “then Šahrewar will release the molten metal into that hole where the (Dēws) entered” (PRDD 48.86: *ud pas šahrewar pad ān sūrāg kū awēšān andar šud hēnd ayōxšust ī widāxtag abar hilēd*). The *Bundahišn*’s account omits an agent: “That –?– through which the Foul Spirit

invaded will be held by the (molten) metal” (GrBd 34.31: *ān -?- ī gannāg mēnōg padiš andar dwārist pad ayōxšust gīrīhēd*).

There are some incidental details concerning Šahrewar. His proper function is to intercede before Ohrmazd on behalf of the disenfranchised (GrBd 26.57). His flower is the royal-basil (*šāhesprahm*, GrBd XVIIA.2; see [BASIL](#)), and his sacrificial portion is the spleen (*spul*, PRDD 59.3). Also Šahrewar treats well the one who so treats metal, but torments the one who mistreats it (GrBd 26.61). In the Middle Persian calendar Šahrewar holds the same positions as in the Avestan calendar (also Parthian *šhrywr*).

[GrBd] T. D. and B. T. Anklesaria, *The Būdahishn. Being a Facsimile of the TD Manuscript No. 2 . . .*, Bombay, 1908. Tr. B. T. Anklesaria *Zand-Ākāsīh*, Bombay, 1956 (for citation purposes only).

J. Narten *Die Amāša Spəntas im Avesta*, Wiebaden, 1982.

[PRDD] A. V. Williams *The Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, Copenhagen, 1990.