

More on *harkÇ* and **harkapati-*

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In my *BAI* 17 contribution “The Etymology of Arab. *xarÇj* Revisited” (26-27), I discussed the history of the taxation term MPers. *harg/xarg*, in which I dismissed **harÇg/*xarÇg*

as a ghostword, and I derived Western Middle Iranian forms as well as Greek from earlier **harkÇ* + **pati-* ‘chief’, upholding interpretation as ‘chief taxation official’ as against ‘citadel commander’ or the like.

I had already checked the final proofs of my contribution when, a short time later in Vienna for the conference of the *Societas Iranologica Europaea*, Prof. Tommaso Gnoli and I, at

our hotel, found we were in agreement on, and the next day this colleague presented

me with his book just published by the Austrian Academy, in which he devotes a chapter to the

word in question (Gnoli 2007, 95-113). I immediately e-mailed my news to the editor of *BAI*,

who responded that there was just enough time for inserting a “last-hour” addendum to my

contribution, and we quickly agreed on a brief bibliographical notice of Gnoli’s book and its

importance for my subject.

Unfortunately the happy synchronicity in Vienna did not produce the intended *BAI* 17 addendum citing Tommaso Gnoli on etc., probably (I conjecture) because of the printers’ confusion by the fact that my contribution already had an addendum citing Tafazzoli on

....., in which I differed with this esteemed late scholar, who had preferred the translation

of the word as ‘citadel-commander’. When, belatedly, to my chagrin, I noted the omission of the

expected insertion from *BAI* 17, I informed the Editor (with whose fastidious devotion to articles

in her journal I have long experience), and she, surprised at the omission, invited me to write the

present expansion of the notice.

Gnoli’s chapter (“.....”) provides a valuable and meticulous critical history of scholarly treatment of the term in question, and then traces the career of a very prominent local

figure, Julius Aurelius Septimius Vorodes (Worÿ.) through a series of inscriptions in Greek and

Palmyrene Aramaic from the 260’s CE. This investigation is contextualized in a consideration

of the position of Palmyra as economic mediator between the Roman and Sasanian empires.

Gnoli concludes (110) that Worÿ., far from having a military office (as had been thought

largely
on the misinterpretation of his title), had risen to the position of virtually
administrating “the activities of the Palmyrene caravans by means of a two-way interface
between the two great preternational empires. Towards the imperial [Roman] fiscus he
was the
chief of the *portorium* in Palmyra, while as far as Sasanian Iran was concerned, he was an
argapetes, i.e. ‘Chef des Steuerwesen.’¹ ... [Worÿ.’s various offices] were all centred
around
the twofold hinging function this person had as a chief of the most important customs
station in
the whole Roman Near East at that time. Thus he was first of all *argapetes* and
procurator

¹ The German phrase goes back to Ph. Huyse, whom Gnoli (101) cites after listing other Iranists who
correctly
interpreted the term: E. Herzfeld (Gnoli: 98), W.B. Henning, O. Szemerényi, Rüdiger Schmitt, and E.
Khurshudian.

R.N. Frye is also noted as belatedly (in 1984) coming around to the correct interpretation, after having
issued the
“rash explanation” ‘commander of a fortress’ (first in the 1959 publication of the Dura Europos documents)
whereby the “incorrect etymology had a wide circulation among scholars of ancient history”, this long after the
contrary evidence of the forms MPers. *hrgwpt* and Parth. *hrkpty* came to light with the 1924 publication of
Narseh’s
Paikuli inscription, and correct interpretation by Henning and others in the next decades (Gnoli: 98 and
100).

decenarius. In this regard it is extremely significant that he should sign his [votive relief]
portrait as *argapetes* (*wrwd ’rgbt•*)”

A few remarks on the non-Iranian spellings of the term in question are in order. The
spelling *argapetis* at Palmyra in the 260 BCE inscription reflects, as to its *g*, the
contemporary

Sasanian West Middle Iranian pronunciation in which the Old Iranian voiceless stops had
become voiced, whereas *-petis* (alongside *-patis* in PDura20), reflects the earlier-
established

Parthian pronunciation, borrowed with *-petis*; cf. Arm. *hazarapet* ‘chiliarch’, etc. A lesser
degree of hybridity is shown by Palm. Aram. *’rgbt•*, as against the earlier-established
Jerus. Talm.

Aram. *’rqpt’*, Bab. Talm. Aram. *’lqpt•* and Syr. *’lqpt’*.

The *-r/l-* of the latter forms may actually come from a Parth. **ark-/*alk-*, Parthian
compound forms < **(h)arkÇ/*(h)alkÇ* < Aram. **halkÇ* (= Akk. *ilku*), reconstructed in
Schwartz

2007. The *ha-* > *a-*, apparently reflected in the Greek forms as in light of the Byzantine
orthography (see below), shows a general Parthian phonological feature, found also in the
Manichean texts; it maps as an easterly trait, e.g. with Sogdian, which indeed has S. *’rkH*
<

**arkÇ* < **harkÇ*, whereas Bact. /harg/ should now be regarded as borrowed from
Sasanian

MPers. economic terminology (cf. Schwartz 2007). The Parth. spelling *hrkpty* at Paikuli
is

clearly an orthographic conservation of the old pronunciation with **h-*. The existence of a

Parthian /l/ phoneme is shown by *wlg%oo* ‘Vologeses’.

The Byzantine Greek forms are given with the Aramaic in Telegdi (1935, p. 228, sec. 15)². The Byzantine form, attested in the Sasanian period³ has its first member altered probably due to- ‘arch-’, plus the above-discussed archaizing *-petiis*, whereas shows contemporary phonology. As for the Paikuli outcome of **harka-* + *-pati-* for

MPers. *hrgwpt* (vs. Parth. *hrkpty*), development more or less along the following lines is likely:

**harkapet* yielded, with syncope of *e*, labialization of the stem-vowel (or anaptyctic vowel)

before the labial, and voicing of *-k-* to *-g-*, the successive forms **hargopt*, **hargoft*, and finally

**harguft*; see the material and bibliography on the outcomes of **hazÇra-pati-* and

**dipŷra-pati-*

in Shayegan 2004.⁴ MPers. **hargbed* (cf., etc.) represents an alternative realization of

**harka-pati-* (cf. Shayegan, *loc. cit.*).

While the eminence of the *argapetiis* in Palmyra results from the realia of that city, one can understand how, all the more, the Sasanian **hargbed*/**harguft*, as the official administering

all the revenues from taxation of the Empire, hence in effect the supreme financial overseer, is

seen at Paikuli to have occupied a rank just below royalty.

Having earlier (Schwartz 2007) dismissed the existence of a MPers. **h/xarÇg* as antecedent of Arab. *xarÇj*, which I explained as an inner-Arabic development from *xarj* (<

MPers. *xarg*), I take this opportunity to point out the occurrence of the Arabic word as a loan (of

² I thank Prof. Éva Jeremiás for again showing her great kindness, by providing me with this tome in Vienna, having

remembered my mention of a conversation I had long ago with Telegdi, her erstwhile teacher.

³ In the writings of Petrus Patricius on the court of Narseh, probably in reference to the very same *hrgwpt/hlkpty*

named in the Paikuli inscription; see Shayegan 2004.

⁴ Shayegan: 94 (who also suggests that *hargbed* is a military position) states that “there is no evidence that Arm.

hazarpet goes back to Parthian times” since the earliest evidence is in Armenian texts of the 5th and 6th cent. CE.

This is, of course, the period of our earliest Armenian writings; that the word in these texts represents an institutional

word fixed in the Parthian period representing the old term for ‘chiliarch’ is shown by the phonology. The formal

relationship between the Armenian terms *hazarpet* and *hazaraouxt* parallels, *grosso modo*, Paikuli Parth. *hrkpty*

and MPers. *hrgwpt*.

Shayegan should also have cited Eilers 1962/3, p. 215. Contra Eilers, however, Arab. *qandalaf* ‘sacristan’ does not reflect the Iranian **-ft-* < **-pati*, but is rather from late Greek,

(the early Islamic period) into Pahlavi.⁵ The passage occurs in the *ArdÇ WŷrÇz NÇmag*

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and reports to the reason given by the divine psychopomps Sr̄y% and Ådur for one of the punishments in hell which ArdÇ WÿrÇz witnesses: Those souls must eat excrement and bear up an intolerable pile of stones on their backs, who in life “measured land falsely and deprived people of their properties and always had to pay heavy *taxes* (*hl’c = xarÇj*)”. The passage is given in Vahman 1986, p. 143 and Gignoux 1984, p. 97, who notes that the word is an Arabic loan in New Persian, for which the (older) Pahlavi would be *harg*. Ms. Giunashvili also informs me that (alongside Arm. *hark*, mentioned in Schwartz 2007), Old Georgian (in the translations of Ezra and Esdras) has *xark’-i*, which word also occurs with various suffixes. Ms. Giunashvili also refers me to the ms. *hapax xarak’-i*, which Gippert 1993, p. 53, suspected as a miswriting; the elimination of an underlying disyllabic Mir. form confirms that this OGeor. *hapax* is an error.

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- ⁵ I thank two junior colleagues, with whom I had interesting conversations in the recent Iran and Caucasus Conference in Yerevan, for this material: Ms. Helen Giunashvili (Hélène Giunachvili) for first apprising me of the attestation, and Mr. Mateusz K[]agisz, and again Ms. Giunashvili, for subsequently sending me the details.