The Etymology of Arabic xarāj, Revisited
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Now, the plural of Man. MPers. hrg is attested as h:rg(n) [i.e. with two dots over h, indicating an abbreviation for ḫ somewhere in the rest of the word, and partially preserved n] = *hrg’n /hargān/ [Durkin-Meisterernst, op. cit. p. 183, following Werner Sundermann [Texte kirchengeschichtlichen Inhalts = Berliner Turfantexte 11, 1981], p. 93; I thank Dr. Christiane Reck for her sending me annotated references to these works]. The latter reading refutes the putative series MPers. */harāg/ < OPers. *harāka- < Aram. *hlākā in effect posited by W. B. Henning (“Arabisch harāg,” Orientalia 4, 1935, 291–3) on the basis of his reading Man. MPers. h:rg [for h:rg(n)], the Masoretic pointing of the Aram., [which must now be corrected to *halkā, cf. Akkad. ilku] and the Arabic vocalism xarāj.

Since MPers. only had harg and xarg (and not also *harāg and *xarāg), whence Arab. xarj, the Arabic vocalism of xarāj must be an inner-Arabic development from xarj; the fact that xarj was associated with the Arabic root x-r-j ‘to go out’ quite probably had some role in the creation of the very viable byform xarāj alongside xarj.

[TYPESETTER: SUBHEAD LEVEL 1.]

Addendum
A. Tafazzoli, BAI 4 (1990), p. 303, in questioning whether Gr. arkapatēs, Inscriptional Parth. hrkpty (or *rkpty) = Inscriptional Pahl. hlgwpt/hrgwpt, refers to a [chief] tax-collector, noted that the interpretations supporting this view are “solely based on the assumption [by Henning] that its first element is identifiable with Man. MPers. harāg.” He further speculated that Skjærvø’s noncommittal definition of the inscriptive title as ‘Hargbed, an official’ was due to dissatisfaction with the earlier etymology. Tafazzoli went on to
express preference that the word in question be equated with Arab. ‘rajbed = MPers. */argbed/ ‘citadel-commander’.

Since (1) the title in question is fully compatible with the Middle Persian harg ~ {xarg} and early Parthian hark as the term for a tax, as against the once widely accepted MPers. *hərāg, which I hope to have shown is a ghost-word, and since (2) the Inscr. Pahl. title in question is spelled with h- as against the ‘- expected for the [unattested] word for ‘citadel-commander’; with putative MPers. *arg- [cf. Arab. arj]- < *ark < Latin arx, acc. arcem; and since (3) the Inscr. Pahl. spelling hlg- (or hrg-) in the title corresponds precisely to the Book Pahl. spelling for the tax term. hlg [with noteworthy g]; and since (4) the Inscr. Pahl. spelling hlgwpt/hrgwpt likely represents /hargf/ or /xargf/ [with –ft < *-pt], which again differs from */argbed/; and, finally, since (5) in the Greek loan contract of 121 C.E. Phraates, the arkapēs, was in the entourage of Manesos, who was [in addition to loftier positions] a tax-collector, the Greek Inscr. Pahl. and Parthian title at issue gains new, stronger evidence for its being interpreted as referring to an official connected with taxation. This would accordingly expand our dossier of the tax term itself.

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