Ὁμόγλωττοι παρὰ μικρόν?

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Abstract: This article analyses the historical and linguistic implications that emerge from a very famous passage preserved by Strabo (XV, 2, 8 [C 724]), but probably belonging to Eratosthenes' *Geographika*, which states that Persians, Medes, Bactrians and Sogdians would "speak approximately the same language, with but slight variations" (εἰσὶ γάρ πως καὶ ὁμόγλωττοι παρὰ μικρόν). This assumption is untenable, because even before Eratosthenes' time the Iranian languages were well distinguished. The suggested *homoglossia* should be explained in political terms, as the result of a practical diffusion of a variety of Old Persian in the army and in the satrapal administration. In the framework of a socio-linguistic and ethno-linguistic analysis of the historical situation attested in the Persian Empire, this study also tackles the problem of the meaning to be attributed to the word *arya-* in a linguistic context, as that of § 70 of Bisutun inscription. This terminology is discussed not only in connection with the one attested in the recently discovered Rabatak Inscription, but also with the documentation preserved in the Khotanese *Book of Zambasta* 23, 4–5, and – outside of the strictly Iranian milieu – in the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka* III, 2, 5.

With regard to the frequently claimed *homoglossia*, this study concludes that any description of the linguistic semi-unity of the Iranian *ethne*, or only of the North-Eastern Iranian ones, is a dream, and, as far as we know about the linguistic history of these peoples, not only a conclusion insufficiently grounded, but a highly improbable linguistic mirage. A "permafrosted" Irano-Aryan still spoken by all the Iranians as a sort of "Esperanto" *ante litteram* has no historical basis, nor does the idea that *arya-* was the name of a still preserved "common language," if this expression should be interpreted as a surviving unifying archaic jargon of all the Iranians (and not a practical Western Iranian *koiné*, imposed by the Old Persian authorities as a comfortable medium). The "Aryan" linguistic identity thus assumed other, fully historical, implications, although it was based on a tradition, partly original and derived by an ancestral cultural heritage, partly invented, especially in its socio-linguistic and sociopolitical implications, as normally happens when power and its legitimacy are strongly involved.

Key words: Multilingualism and communication, Iranian languages, Achaemenian Empire, Sogdian and Bactrian, "Aryan" languages, glottonyms.

In this contribution[1] I would like to challenge the real contents of a very well-known quotation[2] preserved by Strabo (XV, 2, 8 [C 724]), but certainly derived by Eratosthenes;[3] there we find, in the framework of a geographic description of the "Ariana," a remarkable statement concerning the mutual linguistic comprehension apparently shared by some Iranian *ethne*, a subject that deserves to be properly discussed and understood. The passage is as follows:

> [...] ἐπεκτείνεται δὲ τοὔνομα τῆς Ἀριανῆς μέχρι μέρους τινὸς καὶ Περσῶν καὶ Μήδων καὶ ἔτι τῶν πρὸς ἄρκτον Βακτρίων καὶ Σογδιανῶν· εἰσὶ γάρ πως καὶ ὁμόγλωττοι παρὰ μικρόν.[4]

> [...] and the name of Ariana (Ἀριανή) is further extended to a part of Persia and Media, as also to the Bactrians and Sogdians on the north; for these speak approximately the same language, with but slight variations.[5]

In the past, these lines have been mostly studied and commented upon for their patent importance with regard to the territory of the Ἀριανή, and consequently related closely to the problem of the ancestral "Aryan" identity of the various *ethne* belonging to the earliest Iranian stock. In particular, this document has also been considered as testimony to the Eastern origin of the Western Iranian *ethne*.[6] In the present study, I would like to focus on the fact that, contrary to any expectation, this particular passage has never been properly discussed in a more "historicised" way, with a crude evaluation of the strictly linguistic and dialectological implications involved by the statements apparently deducible from (the interpretation of) its contents. We can, in fact, explain the sentence in question in at least two ways:

1) as a reference to a state of "restricted" *homoglossia* referring only to the last two mentioned *ethne*, i.e. the Bactrians and the Sogdians, so excluding Persians and Medians.

2) as a generic (and then inclusive) reference to all the four *ethne* previously quoted (all of them in genitive). In this second case, we will have to do with a short linguistic statement covering the whole *airiiō.šaiiana-* – "the Aryan space" (*Yt.* 10, 13) of the *Avesta*, as Gnoli supposed.[7]

Unfortunately, as previously noted before, in spite of the necessary prudence, the amphibolic implications of such an extraordinary *notitia* have not been clarified. Tradition-

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[2]   See apud Strabo, XV, 2, 8, ed. Jones 1930, 140, 141; Radt 2005, 236; Biffi 2005, *ad locum*.

[3]   See in particular Berger 1880, 238–239 (Fragm. III B, 20). Bernhardy (1822, 97–98), who considered just the quoted passage as not belonging to Eratosthenes. Roller (2010, 84–85) also does not include it in his translation, but without giving any explanation for that choice. Contrariwise, the quotation is inserted in the *Eratosthenica* by Aujac 2001, 192. Cf. also Marcotte 2005, 149–155, in particular note 9; see also Geus 2007, 111–122. Specifically consulted on the opportunity to consider this passage as part of the original material belonging to Eratosthenes or not, Prof. Serena Bianchetti expressed her positive opinion, confirming the assumption already proposed by Berger.

[4]   See Strabo, XV, 2, 8, ed. Jones 1930, 142.

[5]   Translation according to Jones 1930, 142. German translation by Radt 2005, 237.

[6]   See in particular Gnoli 1966b; 1967, 85; 1980, 140–142.

[7]   See Gnoli 1966a; 1966b; 1983, 20, 68; 1987, 519; 1989, 77–78.

ally, the ambiguous meaning of the alleged *homoglossia* has been regarded with a strong enthusiasm, but without particular caution in terms of whether the mutual intelligibility of the Eastern Iranian languages (or, alternatively, of all the early Iranian languages) could still be uncritically considered as very high around the beginning of the Vulgar era. We connect this datum with the age of the final report given by Strabo, and certainly before it, as an external witness of a substantial conservatism preserved by all the Old Iranian dialects around the period of the fall of the Achaemenid Empire, if – as we should – we prudently antedate the origin of such a σφραγίς to the times of Eratosthenes and, probably, of his earlier informants.[8]

It is for this reason that I would like to insist that a serious evaluation of this passage from the historical and linguistic points of view can and must be attempted only after the determination of a relative chronology of the textual material embedded by Strabo's tradition. Actually, the contents of this particular section have already been attributed by Berger[9] to a lost geographical work of Eratosthenes (born in the mid-280s BC/died around the end of the third century or, more probably, the beginning of the second [probably 194 BC] at the age of 82 years),[10] who, in his turn, should have taken and/or re-worked part of his Iranian ethno-cultural material from the reports of some historians of Alexander.[11]

We may then suppose that the description of the linguistic proximity between the Sogdian and the Bactrian languages or, alternatively, among all the languages of the four mentioned Iranian *ethne* (Persians, Medes, Bactrians and Sogdians), could theoretically be connected with a *direct* observation (if correct or not, or in what sense, is another matter we will try to discover) made around the end of the fourth century BC, and later acquired (orally or through a written intermediation) by Eratosthenes, when the multi-ethnic and multilingual complexity of the Persian Empire had directly appeared in its whole intriguing complexity also to Western observers.

After this basic appraisal of the chronological implications of Strabo's final statement, we can try to discuss its two possible interpretations, starting from the one supposing a strong state of *homoglossia* only between Sogdian and Bactrian. As previously remarked, the textual stratification compels us to refuse any simplistic judgment about the Eastern Iranian linguistic situation for the period of Strabo himself. This external caveat is confirmed by the observation that it appears highly improbable, if not impossible, that the Bactrians and Sogdians might really still have been *homoglottoi* in the period between the first century BC and first century AD, in spite of the slight dialectological variations (παρὰ μικρόν) prudently admitted in the Greek source itself. So, although Bailey[12] assumed that Strabo himself, writing two centuries later (his *Geography* was probably finished in the earliest years of the first c. AD) than Eratosthenes, and one century after the Tocharian invasion of Bactria, might have more or less consciously again

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[8] In his *Geographika*, Eratosthenes divided the world into portions, named σφραγίδες "gem or seal stones;" "Ariana" was described in the third book, second "seal-stone." See Briant 1996, 197 and note 7; Geus 2002, 276–277; Roller 2010, 25–27, 84–87.

[9] Berger 1880, 239.

[10] See Geus 2002, 7–15; cf. Roller 2010, 7–15.

[11] See Auberger 2001. Cf. Berger 1880; Eggermont 1975; Radt 2002; Roller 2010, 17–20, *passim*.

[12] Bailey 1937, 893; cf. Tarn 1938, 288, note 1.

adopted this statement, but as a fitting reference to the Kushan and Tocharian presence in Eastern Iran, such a conclusion seems to be very speculative and highly hazardous. Its implausibility is due to the evidence that Strabo had no direct knowledge of or any fitting competence on the Kushan dialects and, again, no direct access to them, so it appears simply groundless to make any *deliberate* adaptation of an older statement concerning two earlier Iranian *ethne* like the Bactrians and the Sogdians to the new historical situation occurring in Iran (if this was really what Bailey presumed). In other terms, it is much more prudent to consider this statement as simply referring to the period described by Alexander's historians rather than to that of Strabo's contemporaries.

However, if we admit – as seems reasonable – that Eratosthenes took this piece of news by an earlier Greek (written or oral) source obtained on the basis of a direct or indirect witness (although in any case deduced by means of a certain practical, empirical experience), what did it properly mean in ethno-linguistic terms? In other words, if a Greek officer or traveller in the footsteps of Alexander's army had the opportunity to hear Sogdians and Bactrians talking together, was he actually technically in the position to discriminate between the mutual comprehensibility of their two different languages? How might he be so conversant in Iranian dialectology to discriminate between the current everyday use of Bactrian and Sogdian to properly understand that two Iranians were not speaking, for instance, in (Old) Persian (perhaps with a peculiar or local accent) – as nowadays (educated) German and French tourists might easily speak together in English – if they had the chance to meet at the bazaar of Samarkand? This does not imply that Europeans are ὁμόγλωττοι παρὰ μικρόν, or that all the peoples of the former Soviet Union shared such a quality, when most of them were certainly able to speak each other in Russian, but not necessarily thanks to the common ancestral origin of their own different languages; in fact, this would have been true only for Slavonic peoples, but not for all the other ones.

A real state of *homoglossia*, like the one presumed by Eratosthenes and/or his earlier original informant(s), would probably confirm the existence of a widespread imperial tradition, in which Achaemenian officers and functionaries were (or should have been) able to communicate among themselves with a reasonable freedom! This result could be obtained, for instance, by means of the Persian language (or a certain variety of it), and it is reasonable to imagine that a few of these individuals were trained, at least in the scribal frameworks, in order to currently write and read Aramaic documents, which might probably also be offered to a public audience (or the local satrapal authorities) accordingly in Persian or in any other relevant (local) language of the kingdom, including Sogdian and Bactrian. In this sense, we must presume that at least some Sogdians and Bactrians had the appropriate education and training to read and speak Old Persian, but also to read aloud Aramaic basic texts which in an oral performance transformed their contents in Sogdian or in Bactrian as well. If not only and strictly *homoglottoi*, some of them surely could be also *homographoi*, and, by means of (written) Aramaic and (spoken) Old Persian, these people were able in practical terms to communicate in a more or less direct way in spite of their own different ethno-linguistic origins.

On the other hand, we must seriously doubt that even in the fifth century BC Sogdian and Bactrian languages were still so close to their archetypal model, i.e. to a northeastern form of Proto-Iranian, that in an oral practical performance two native speakers,

one Bactrian and the other Sogdian, still might easily feel themselves practically *homo-glottoi*. It seems to me very difficult to believe in an uncritical way that a scenario like this could be real, because more or less in the same period Iranian priests speaking Later Avestan were probably no more able to properly understand all the nuances of the whole Old Avestan liturgies, and in fact some of their adaptations show that the linguistic mate-rial belonging to the most archaic, but probably also dialectologically different, Avestan tradition[13] produced improper reinterpretations of the original composition.

Furthermore, we must insist on the striking evidence – which has never been done be-fore – contained in some Babylonian inscriptions of Darius I and Xerxes, which counter any conclusion based on a simplistic evaluation of the data preserved by Strabo: in fact, an important sequence of the Achaemenian standard titles was translated (although with minimal varieties) in Akkadian as follows:

šar mātāte ša naphar li-ša-na-a-ta *gabbi*[14]
the king of the countries of all languages
O.P. *xšayaθiya dahyūnām vispazanānām*
the king of the countries of all the (kinds of) peoples.

See also DPg[15] 1, 7; 2, 16, where we find the following statement:

Parsu Madaja u mātāte šanītima li-ša-nu šanitu[16]
Persia, Media, and other lands (with) other languages [...][17]

So, while the Elamite version just introduced a loanword for O.P., *vispazana-* "of all the peoples," i.e. *viššatanaš*, the Akkadian one had *lišanu* or *lišanu gabbi*, where the reference was to "all (*gabbi*) the languages (*lišanu*)." The same phenomenon also occurs with O.P. *paruzana-* – "of many (kinds of) peoples/men," which was system-atically translated in Akkadian as *lišanu* or *lišanu gabbi* (and minor variants), while Elamite still has a loanword (pár-ru-za-na-na-um, etc.).[18] There is no reason (as on the contrary we read in the *CAD*, *sub voce*)[19] to hide this difference by translating "of all the nationalities." In fact, *lišanu* strictly concerns languages,[20] and in particular *foreign lan-guages* as a sign of distinction; it is therefore clear that the Babylonian scribes adopted this mark, as Dr Basello has also independently assumed,[21] in order to distinguish the different *ethne*.[22] I would like to argue that the variant attested in the Akkadian scribal tradition might reflect not exactly O.P. *vispazana-* or *paruzana-* (or again "Echt-Per-

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[13] On the Avestan dialectology see Panaino 2007.

[14] Weissbach 1911, 103, § 2: 12; 87, § 2: 5; 119, § 2: 12.

[15] Lecoq 1997, 229–230. Cf. Schmitt 2009, 13, with additional bibliography.

[16] Weissbach 1911, 85, § 1: 7; § 2: 16.

[17] Lecoq 1997, 229–230.

[18] In this case, however, there is a number of variants and sometimes few Elamite genuine forms.

[19] CAD 9, 1973, 209–215; see in particular the entry 4c, at p. 214.

[20] See Zadok 1981, 665; 2003.

[21] I must again thank Gian Pietro Basello for his kind generosity in placing at my disposal his notes on the pertinent (parallel) passages in Old Persian, Akkadian and Elamite.

[22] Briant (1996, 193) translates the passage of DPg "[...] la Perse, la Médie et les autres pays aux autres langues," insisting that Persia and Media are more strictly linked for ethno-cultural reasons, which is correct, but does not support the idea that all the other countries had mutually understandable languages, as we could deduce from Strabo/Eratosthenes.

sisch" stems as *visadana-*/*parudana-* or hybrids like **vispa-dana-*),[23] but unattested compounds like **vispahizan(a)-* "of all the (different) languages" or **paruhizan(a)-* "of many (different) languages," with O.P. *hizan-* "tongue"[24] as the second element. In the genitive plural, two forms like *vispazanānām*/*paruzanānām* might easily cover **vispahizanānām*/**paruhizanānam*. In any case, the Akkadian tradition confirms that the idea of a linguistic multiplicity was current, and that the *homoglossia* was never existent a priori. In addition, we must postulate the existence of an Old Persian correspondent form from which it should have been possible to literally translate an Akkadian sentence referring to "people of other languages," and contrariwise.

If we now again examine our main problem, we must consider that Eratosthenes' statement gives us only few actually usable pieces of information; the Sogdians and Bactrians were certainly in a position to communicate among themselves with a certain efficacy, but we have no statement about the fact that this happened, when they promiscuously used their own native languages just with slight variations (παρὰ μικρόν) and without proper training. In addition, the Greek text does not clarify at which level this mutual understanding was possible, so it has been presumed that the Greek passage just meant that Sogdian and Bactrian were substantially similar, an assumption that must be considered false. We know that certain dialectological features of Bactrian were also shared by some varieties of Sogdian,[25] or that in "word-formation and syntax Bactrian shows some particular affinities to Sogdian,"[26] but we cannot forget, as already remarked by Henning,[27] that Bactrian "occupies an intermediary position between Pashto and Yidgha-Munji on the one hand, Sogdian, Choresmian, and Parthian on the other: it is thus in its natural and rightful place in Bactria." This simple description of the facts supports the prudent working hypothesis that around the epoch of the fall of the Achaemenian Empire Bactrians and Sogdians already spoke two well-differentiated languages, in which, in spite of its Eastern position, Bactrian shared some isoglosses with more Western languages, although its dialectological proximity with Sogdian was higher. But "higher" does not signify "complete," as if the two languages were just two minor branches of a common linguistic "Sogdico-Bactrian league."

Thus, a different approach to the whole passage is necessary. In fact, if we consider the *homoglossia* as referring to all the peoples of the "Ariana"[28] – so including Persians and Medes as well – the same statement could be no more compellingly interpreted as referring to the mutual intelligibility of all these languages among the various speakers and indifferently from their own native tongues. Rather, it would be interpreted as the description of a factual and pragmatic possibility to speak, at least in certain occasions

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[23] See Schmitt 2014, 229, 280.

[24] Schmitt 2014, 194.

[25] Sims-Williams 1981, 353.

[26] Sims-Williams 1996a; 1996b, 649.

[27] Henning 1960, 47.

[28] On the fact that "Ariana" was not a "general term to designate the whole of Iran from east to west," see Gnoli 1980, 140–141, with an important discussion of Strabo's passage. See also Gnoli's critical discussion of some political interpretations concerning this area, which should be considered, in the light of Schmitt (1964, 66–67, note 4, 76–80), "a purely geographical conception to Eratosthenes" (Gnoli 1980, 142). Cf. also Geus 2002, 277, note 84. Also very important are two recent articles by Bianchetti (2010 and 2012), both concerning Eratosthenes' chronology and the description of the "Ariana."

and at certain socio-linguistic levels, approximately by means of a "common" language[29] used as a *medium*. Presumably, such a *medium* should have been a variety of Old Persian as a sort of *lingua franca* of the Empire, in particular for the Irano-Aryans who had been "unified" under the Achaemenian power.

If the reference to *ariya-* has to be connected (in which way is a problem that should be further discussed here) with (the name of ?) the language by which, according to § 70 of the Bisutun inscription (*θāti Dārayava.uš xšāyaθiya vašnā A.uramazdāha ima dipiciçam, taya adam akunavam patišam ariyā* [...]),[30] King Darius denominated the Persian *dipiciçam* ("form of writing/version of the inscription"),[31] the adoption of this "ethnolinguistic" denomination could perhaps imply that from the point of view of the Persian administration a specific variety of Old Persian was marked as the "official language" of all the Aryans and of the Aryan lands. Through that standard *medium* (also in its graphic manifestation),[32] it would follow that the imperial officers were expected to be able to communicate among themselves, because that was the very language (and script) of the king. This statement does not suggest that such an Iranian variety (*ariyā* [instr. sg. of the adjective ²*ariya-*], Elamite *har-ri-ia-ma*), was a language spoken on an everyday basis by all of the Aryans or commonly understood everywhere by all of them. On the other hand, we cannot exclude that such a denomination seems to satisfy a political[33] and ritual need more than a simply informative notion. For this reason, *ariya-* could be taken as a technical reference to a "formal" linguistic dimension with pretences, in an official

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[29] This expression was already suggested by Lecoq (1974a, 62), but with other arguments and implications; cf. also Diakonoff (1970, 122, 65), and for earlier suggestions Junge (1944, 63). In my view, by means of the designation *ariyā* the text was presented as if it was expressed in a superior form, which should have been heard and appreciated by all the Aryans of the Empire, but also respected and recognised as fully authoritative by the other peoples, in particular by their local leaders. This pretension presupposes ideological aims to play a certain role in the transmission of the orders, and necessarily a compelling action in the determination of some linguistic media. See Kellens 2005 about *arya-*.

[30] Schmitt 2009, 87; 1991, 73 (DB IV, lines 4–5); 1990, 58–60. See now Schmitt 2014, 136–137. Cf. Hinz 1936; 1942; 1952; Lecoq 1974a, 62; 1974b, 77–84; Lazard 1976; Gnoli 1989, 13–14; Rossi 1981, 186–187, note 209; 1984, 62; 1985, 203; 1985, 204–208; Harmatta 1966; Herrenschmidt 1989; Huyse 1999; Bahari 2001; Tuplin 2005, 224. For the Elamite version see in particular Rossi 1985, 55–56, *passim*; Grillot-Susini/Herrenschmidt/Malbran-Labat 1993, 38, 58–59; Vallat 2011, 264–268, 280–281, who assumes that the royal action was a translation of the text in "Aryan." We must also recall that Rossi (2000, 2090–2010) has tried to explain O.P. *ariyā* and El. *hariyama* as meaning "on the rock" ("sulla roccia"). In a forthcoming article, the same scholar has revised his own view on the subject. In any case, for the complexity of the semantic field covered by El. *tuppi* "document, message," but also "inscription," see again Rossi 1985, 206–208; 2000, 2097–2098.

[31] Schmitt 2014, 169–170. Cf. Lecoq 1997, 212–213; Bahari 2001; Chul-Hyun 2003.

[32] For the inevitable implications connected with the assumption that *ariyā* might also refer to the introduction of a new Old Persian script, see Gershevitch 1979, 143, note 1; 1982, 103–107; cf. Rossi 1984, 58–62, and in particular notes 44 and 45. In my view, this interpretation is not exclusive, in the sense that the use of the term "Aryan" maintained an ideological and religious value, which was larger and, then, also inclusive of the glottonymical and graphemic levels evoked by the language and form of the inscription.

[33] My adoption of the term "political" does not counters Gnoli's considerations (1989) of the fact that *ariya-* did not play a main "political" force in the taxonomy of the Achaemenid Empire, but that it maintained a substantial religious role, in particular with contrastive reference to what happened in Sasanian times. I simply observe that the invocation of a "religious" concept in an official document as Bisutun, which, in itself, had an extraordinary political dimension, necessarily implies, willy-nilly, "political" involvements for the semantics of this stem.

(i.e. politically symbolic and liturgical) framework, to be the only one, strictly connected with an inner tradition, fitting to record all the events performed by the Irano-Aryans under the "divinely chosen" leadership of the Persian Emperor.

More precisely, I suspect that *ariya-*, in spite of a very simple and traditional inference, was not *sic et simpliciter* the standard name of the Old Persian language, because we can suppose that Persians and Medes, as well as the other Iranian peoples, knew very well that they were speaking different languages (although cognates) belonging to different Iranian *ethne*, and that more easily each one of these distinguished languages would have been designated according to the name of the corresponding *ethnos* usually speaking them.[34] Otherwise, we should be compelled to suppose that every Iranian *ethnos* presumed to speak *ariyā*, or denominated its language as "Aryan," a solution that suggest an objective state of terminological confusion (in which different people with different languages and proper ethnic denominations used the same unique term to refer to their distinct languages!), which then at least needs to be justified.

Actually, it is important to consider the theoretical doubt that all the Iranian *ethne* used to self-denominate their own mother tongues as "Aryan," because the same phenomenon seems to happen in Bactrian (see below), while we cannot forget that another important linguistic tradition like the Avestan one did not preserve any special name for itself, so we are compelled to designate it "Avestan" after the traditional name of its written textual collection. Furthermore, in the *Aitareya* (or *Kauṣītaki*), *Āraṇyaka* III, 2, 5, *āriyā- vāk-* (in the plural: *āriyā vācaḥ*)[35] indicates a plurality of "Aryan tongues," as a reference to the speeches of the Brāhmins and probably in opposition to non-Aryan languages.[36] Although this expression reasonably covers an area where Vedic was spoken, as observed by Witzel,[37] it would be risky to conclude that such a syntagm strictly concerned a special dialect or a particular "separate" variety of Vedic, while, on the contrary, it represented a "cultural" term, fitting for what was presumed to be (by its performers, of course) a superior way of speaking.[38] In fact, in this *Āraṇyaka*, it seems to make reference to the best human oral expression, and again we have confirmation of the supposition that by means of *āriyā- vāk-* a kind of ideological supremacy was meant, based on an ethnocentric perspective. In addition, we can doubt that all the Indo-Iranian *ethne* had such a low self-consideration and self-distinction that they called any of their languages "Aryan," a possibility which seems to me very improbable,[39] if not openly countered by internal competitions such as, for instance in the Iranian context, those between Medes and Persians. On the contrary, we may assume that O.P. *ariya-* and Later Ved. *ārya-* represented a general idea of ancestral prestige, shared by many (if not all the)

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[34]   See already Lecoq 1974a, 62 on this particular problem.

[35]   See Keith 1909, 138; 255, note 3. Cf. Schmitt 2014, 137.

[36]   Cf. Keith 1909, 196, note 19.

[37]   Witzel 2001, 2.

[38]   See Kuiper 1955; 1991. Cf. Witzel 2001, 3.

[39]   Although Rossi 1985, 52–55 emphasises all the difficulties to be prudently seen in the ancient references on auto-glottonyms, their diffusion, in spite of the attested contradictions and mistakes, authorises us to deduce that, according to the ancient Greeks, Persian people spoke περσιστί "in Persian" even at the times of Herodotus. The fact that in some cases Greek authors were not able to properly distinguish between Persian and Median does not allow us to suspect that these two languages had no clear differences, nor to assume that only Persian was "Aryan" or that all the Iranians were *homoglottoi*.

Indo-Aryan and Arya-Iranian *ethne*, but taken as a unifying title, not as a mean of separation. Thus, apart from other probable ethnic self-denominations,[40] I suggest that the explicit adoption of the term *ariya-* or *ārya-* for the language itself (and, when necessary, the script) of any text involved other implications, in particular as a sort of conservative declaration of belonging to a common (and presumably higher) ethno-religious heritage. The evocation of a linguistic "Aryanity" probably gave the text (and its form) a superior authoritative force, as an archaising flavour putting it closer to a divine performance or to a superior anthropological condition. When a text was offered "in Aryan" or "Aryanly," this statement could probably mean that it was expressed not only in the main current language of that particular country, but in a superb form, which was the closest one to the mythical heritage of a whole *oikoumene*. For this reason it would be a *diminutio* to consider this definition as just a reference to the jargon of one more or less strong *ethnos*. We therefore have to postulate a deliberate archaising mark, as a re-foundation of a tradition, for ideological, contrastive reasons of prestige with respect to the others (peoples and/or languages) and for a sort of self-satisfaction. In this respect, I think that Henkelman's discussion[41] of the term "Aryan" in the framework of the Achaemenid traditions results in a very fitting way, although improvable in all its implications:

> As far as our perception goes, it would seem that 'Aryan' is very different from 'Persian.' Though it potentially describes more people, namely all the Iranian-speaking nations of the empire, it is used in a restrictive and less neutral sense – the antonym non-Aryan seems to be in the air every time 'Aryan' is used. Also, judging from Greek and other secondary sources, 'Aryan' did not become a label for Achaemenid Persians or for Iranian-speaking nations in the empire in general; it was, apparently, not a name used by Persians or Iranophones when they introduced themselves to others. […] The perception of an 'Aryan' heritage and past, provided, with its epic associations, a backbone for the imperial claim.

Although the reality should have been much more complicated, the idea of Iran[42] as well as its abstraction, i.e. that of "Aryanity," should have played a certain role in the Iranian and in the Indo-Iranian frames, as the later, truly "political" uprising of the *Ērān*-ity would confirm in Sasanian times. The problem is that we do not directly know the different layers of the Achaemenid ideology, nor those of the priestly leading centres, whose actions can be only guessed, but which remain another *incognitum*. Thus, I think that by means of *ariya-* the language (and the form) of that (Persian) inscription (or text, message, document, etc.) was attributed a sort of "universal" force, endowed with a liturgical investiture, raising it to the level of a court international language, although it was not so from an historical and linguistic point of view (which, of course, was not at all in the perspective of the royal ambiance). If this interpretation should only in part be sound, we might also presume that as the "court language" and when presented as *ariyā*, Old Persian (language and script) temporarily became something of a ritual sermon, so that *ariyā* could also indicate the solemn modality of any official expression of the king's words. With regard to this point, I have found myself to be in "resonant" agreement with

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[40]   See again Lecoq 1974a, 62.
[41]   Henkelman 2011, 12.
[42]   See again Gnoli 1989.

Rossi,[43] who has written on the subject "that OP *aryā* / AE har-ri-ya-ma indicates, if not a location, a modality ('in an *arya*- way') of the royal dedication," a solution which does not imply that the language was not meant, but that strongly emphasises the authority of the "speaker."

In the light of this ideological background, we can suppose that the Old Persian language performed the function of a prestigious *passpartout*, probably full of Median and other dialectological variants, open to loanwords, in particular from other important linguistic traditions (also non-Iranian and/or non-Indo-Europaean), and that, necessarily, it should have been known for practical reasons throughout the whole empire, in particular in the higher strata of the Irano-Aryan *ethne* and in the local administrations of the different satrapies. It should therefore come as no surprise that for any historian of Alexander (as for Eratosthenes and, later, for Strabo as well), the Persians, the Medes, the Bactrians and the Sogdians would "have spoken approximately the same language, with but slight variations." The problem, in fact, concerned who were the speakers involved and in which conditions. If they were officers and functionaries of the high administration, they were, as we noted before, certainly *homoglottoi*, and a few of them *homographoi* too!

Owing to the same tradition, some centuries later, in the Rabatak Bactrian inscription, King Kaniška declared (line 3f) that the language of the engraved text was in "Aryan" (αριαο).[44] This can be simply considered as a plain denomination of Bactrian, but was it really so? Or only so? We must not rule out the idea that by means of this special ethno-religious term the authority emitting the text was raising the status of the document, probably also including an idea of leadership over Iranian and Indo-Aryan *ethne* as well and, furthermore, deliberately distinguishing an "Aryan" meta-linguistic identity with respect to a Greek text (ιωναγγο), in which Kaniška had previously issued the same edict. It is clear that Kaniška insisted on the impact of this edict both on Indian and Iranian areas, so that the use of Bactrian αριαο inevitably possessed larger ideological implications as well. If we consider that in the Later Vedic tradition *āryā- vāk-* was already attributed to "Aryan tongues," we must suspect that Kaniška's choice to self-denominate his own language as αριαο should appear not so distinctive, and perhaps, I suppose, this was not at all his main target. The linguistic "Aryanity" involved a different perspective, not simply that of a formal categorisation of one (single and distinct) language among the others. Upon hearing (or reading) the word αριαο, a Hindu or a Buddhist educated servant of Kaniška would presumably never have restricted this determination to Bactrian, but would reasonably have appreciated the fact that the king was using a very "fair" and "high" language (or that, at least, he pretended to do this), as he too was a true "gentleman." In other terms, we must suspect that from a strictly pragmatic point of view, αριαο worked as a synonym of Skt. *samskṛta- "confectus*," which not only quali-

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[43]   Rossi, in print. In this new article, Rossi revises some of his interpretations proposed in Rossi 2000. Cf. Baghbidi 2009, 54–55, just to point out structural similarities between Dba/AE + DB/AE L and Middle Elamite dedicatory inscriptions. I thank Dr Gian Pietro Basello, who kindly reminded me of this unpublished article of Prof. Adriano Rossi, and Prof. Rossi himself for his kind support in making it fully available to me before its final publication.

[44]   Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/1996, 78; in this article Sims-Williams (p. 83) insisted on the direct comparison with Darius' Bisutun inscription. Cf. Sims-Williams 1998, 81. For a new edition of this inscription, see Sims-William 2008; in particular p. 56. I thank Prof. Sims-Williams again for his kind additional remarks on the text of the Rabatak Inscription.

fied the ethnicity of a linguistic tradition, but its "perfection." We must also remark that in line 10 of the same inscription we find another ethno-cultural reference; with regard to the god Srošard (σροβαρδο),[45] corresponding to Av. Sraoša, it is specified, by means of an short addition in smaller characters,[46] "who in Indian is called Mahāsena and is called Viśāka" [(κ)ιδι υνδοοαο μαασηνο ριζδι οδο βιζαγο ριζδι). Sims-Williams underlines that the "formation of υνδοοαο 'in (the) Indian (language)' (= Khot. *hiṃduvau*)[47] is the same as that of αριαο 'in the Aryan (language)' in line 3."[48] However, in spite of the fact that this occurrence would apparently counter my previous considerations establishing a proportion like

ιωναγγο "in the Greek (language)"
αριαο "in the Aryan (language)"
υνδοοαο "in (the) Indian (language)."

I must observe that here the main distinction concerns the Indian denomination of an Iranian divinity, Sraoša[49] (who corresponded to a divine "diad" in India), and then it was more pertinent to the religious codex than wholly and solely to the linguistic one. The reference to Mahāsena and Viśāka does not strictly answer a linguistic need (how can this god be referred to in this or that speech?), but a religious pattern (to whom would these or those divine functions correspond?). It would in fact be embarrassing to try to circumscribe the dialectological limits covered by a designation such as "Indian." Which language or languages were meant? In the two divine names mentioned, the first one, μαασηνο, can reflect both a Sanskrit as well as a Middle Indian spelling, while βιζαγο seems to present two intervocalic sonorisations (ζ e γ) of Middle Indian derivation. "Indian" could therefore be taken as a generic "nickname" for religious names of Hindu origin, certainly being Mahāsena and Viśāka,[50] well attested Hindu divinities known both in Sanskrit literature and in languages spoken in the areas where the political influence of the Kušānas was relevant,[51] while, consequently, "Aryan" would mean "Bactrian." The witness of the Khotanese tradition seems to confirm that "Indian" probably became a sort of technical reference to "Sanskrit."[52] However, reversing the frame, we can assume that by means of this wide geographic determination the Bactrian text actually emphasised a socio-religious dimension, not simply linguistic evidence! Also in this case, therefore, the apparently simple "glottonymic" terminology contains some ambiguities, in which different levels are present and mutually play a number of subtle interferences.

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[45]   Sims-William 2008, 56.
[46]   See Sims-Williams 2008, 64.
[47]   For the Khotanese suffix, see Degener 1989, 172–173.
[48]   *Ibidem*.
[49]   We must remind that Sraoša, as the divinity of the 17th day of the month, was identified with Guha (Son of Śiva) and Baga (a different aspect of Śiva) in the calendrical lists of the Maga Brāhmaṇas, see Panaino 1996.
[50]   Samad 2010, 35, 94, 98, *passim*.
[51]   See Mann 2011.
[52]   "Indian" is probably another reference to "Sanskrit" also in an Arabic alchemical text attributed to Ostanes and reasonably belonging to the Hermetic tradition; see Berthelot 1893, 13–17 (French translation), 116–123 (in particular p. 121); (Arabic Text) 79–88; van Bladel 2009, 54.

To add to the evidence a different situation with very pertinent results for our discussion, I would like to enter a very famous passage contained in the *Book of Zambasta* 23, 4–5:[53]

> Z 23.4 *tterä hāḍe karma ne ysvā're hvatana kari hvatanau dātu*
> Z 23.4 *hiṃduvau dīru buvāre hvatanau ni dātä nä saittä*
> Z 23.5 *ciṅgānu ciṅgau dātä kaspärau tterä khaṣṣa-phaṣṣä*
> Z 23.5 *kaspärai hāḍe tta sājīndi kvī rru arthu buvāre*

23.4 "But such are their deeds: the Khotanese do not value the Law at all in Khotanese. They understand it badly in Indian. In Khotanese it does not seem to them to be the Law."

23.5 "For the Chinese the Law is in Chinese. In Kashmirian it is very agreeable, but they so learn it in Kashmirian that they also understand the meaning of it."

Here, we actually find in order:

hvatanau "in Khotanese,"[54]
hiṃduvau "in Indian,"[55]
ciṅgānu "in Chinese,"[56]
kaspärau "in Kashmirian."[57]

It is evident that the context concerns a more complex and sophisticated dimension,[58] in which the choice of the language to be adopted for learning the "Law," as well as that of its translations, is fundamental. In other terms, the main matters are authority and comprehension with respect to a revealed *Vorlage*. But also in this case, we must observe that two (from our modern point of view) Indian languages are mentioned; one is called "Kashmirian" (in Skt. *Kaśmīrās* or *Kaśmīra* is the name of the corresponding land), which today denominates a speech belonging to the Dardic group, but we cannot presume the pertinence of its present meaning in this Khotanese framework. The latter should surely be Sanskrit, as the formal and highest written expression of the Buddhist Law, the main language from which Khotanese translators usually prepared their editions. Although a full discussion of the glottonymical distinctions attested in this passage has not been properly developed (with the exception of a long discussion offered by Konow; see below), I can note that Emmerick,[59] later followed by Nattier,[60] was inclined to think that by *hiṃduvau* it was in fact "Sanskrit" that was meant. On the other hand,

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[53]   See Emmerick 1968, 342–343. Cf. Leumann 1933/1936, 290–291. In the discussion of the Khotanese linguistic material I have benefited enormously from the competence of Prof. M. Maggi, whom I would again like to thank.

[54]   See Bailey 1967, 431–432 (with many pertinent examples of contexts in which the language and the scripture are mentioned).

[55]   See Bailey 1967, 414.

[56]   See Bailey 1967.

[57]   See Bailey 1967, 44–45.

[58]   It is useful to recall that Leumann (1933/1936, 290, 291) interpreted *kha ṣṣa Phaṣṣä*, albeit with a question mark, "wie auch in Persisch." Cf. Konow 1939, 29. This interpretation has been already ruled out by Bailey; it has been quoted here only in order to give a complete information about the history of the interpretations of this passage, but it has no more relevance for the present discussion.

[59]   Emmerick 1983, 964.

[60]   Nattier 1990, 173 and note 66.

we cannot be sure that the Khotanese author did not make reference to other similar linguistic varieties and scripts, so that the same language could be referred to by means of different names according to the different writing and scribal traditions. The prudent caveat advanced by Degener, who simply preferred to speak of scripts "in der indischen Originalsprache" (i.e. *hiṃduvau*), and then also evoked a limited "Kenntnis des Sanskrit oder anderer indischer Sprachen," shows the complexity of the subject, which, for instance, has not been endorsed at all by Scherrer-Schaub.[61] This scholar, in fact, did not try to explain *kaspärau*, and simply maintained a generic reference to "Indian." Only Nattier,[62] and more largely Konow,[63] have tried to offer a more profound treatment of the whole problem, and both have concluded that *hiṃduvau* and *kaspärau* should be interpreted as both referring to "Sanskrit." Konow,[64] in particular, has supported his conclusions by means of a very accurate argument in which he pointed out all the complex and fitting cultural relations occurring between Gilgit (Kashmir) and Khotan, with particular regard for the pertinent fact that a number of Sanskrit texts from Gilgit are also attested in Khotanese translations. Furthermore, Konow stressed the remarkable importance that the Kashmirian area played in the earlier introduction of Buddhism to Khotan, so that (Sanskrit) texts from there would have been reasonably considered as particularly sacred. In turn, Nattier[65] has also adduced a very technical reason focusing on the evidence that the adoption of these two different ways of referring to "Sanskrit" would possibly answer a poetic reason; in fact, not only did the chosen differentiation between "Indian" and "Kashmirian" offer a synonymous alternative, but the introduction of *kaspärau* would also have produced a fitting alliteration with *khaṣṣa-phaṣṣä*, which occurs in the same stanza. Although we cannot exclude the possibility that *kaspärau* might refer to Gāndhārī, the local Prakrit, at the moment this solution does not seem to be sufficiently supported to reverse the one advanced by Konow.

I am not in a position to judge aesthetic criteria in Khotanese, but the choice remains to me worthy of attention, and I would like to note that a rhetoric solution also needs a cultural background in which it could immediately be understood by the audience. Furthermore, I would insist on the fact that Konow[66] himself did not completely rule out the possibility that "Kashmirian" could refer to an old North Western Prakrit. For these reasons, the relations between the two terms must be further investigated; in fact, also in the case that both terms were equally addressed to Sanskrit, the different denomination might involve a further distinction, perhaps connected with the style, shape, orthography and script of these texts.

Coming back to the inscriptional context, it is not by chance that in Bisutun and in Rabatak, the "Aryan" character was introduced to mark a distinction with the different ones of other ethno-linguistic traditions; in Bisutun with respect to the previously engraved Elamite and Babylonian versions, and in Rabatak to the Greek edict. Again, we have foreign languages previously adopted by royal authorities, which are now re-emit-

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[61] Scherrer-Schaub 2009, 160.
[62] Nattier 1990, 210–211.
[63] Konow 1939, 28–31.
[64] *Ibidem*, 30–31.
[65] Nattier 1990, 219, note 41.
[66] Konow 1939, 30.

ted in the very language of the king, through a *medium* whose "Aryanity" is underlined. The choice of this term does not answer just the need of a profane technical designation, but enters and emphasises the innermost essence of this speech, its obvious pretension to obtain a superior status. Furthermore, if the reconstruction *dipi[ciçam]* is the correct one for Bisutun § 70, we cannot avoid observing that *ciça-*, although in a different context, occurs again with *ariya-*. In spite of the fact that we can postulate two distinguished stems, a ¹*ciça-* and a ²*ciça-*, a solution in which I do not believe,[67] the use of *ariyā* is in any case ideological, and not just technical or even formal. When the king declared (DNa 13–15; DSe 12–14; Dse 12–14; XPh 12–13) to be "Aryan, of Aryan stock, Persian and Achaemenid" (*Haxāmanišiya pārsa pārsahyā puça ariya ariya ciça*), his reference to an *ariyā* document (emitted by himself) would necessarily imply[68] that the main (i.e. "his own") language of his edicts was doubtless also "Achaemenid, Persian, (performed by an authority) of Persian stock, Aryan and of Aryan stock." Furthermore, I cannot avoid another observation: in the Elamite text of DB IV, chapters 62 and 63,[69] Aʰuramazdā is presented as "the God of the Aryans." This suggests that from the external, i.e. Elamite, point of view the highest god of the Persians was an "Aryan" divinity, one for all the peoples belonging to the same stock, and not that specifically of only one *ethnos*, the Persian one!

The formal similarity between Darius' and Kaniška's inscriptions also concerns other aspects,[70] such as the insistence on the fact that all the events narrated in the texts were realised in the space of a single year. This evidence can support the theory, advanced by Skjærvø[71] and Huyse,[72] that we have to do with the enduring presence of an ancestral oral tradition. Therefore, in the adoption of these ethnic terms (O.P. *ariya-*, Bact. αριαο) in a linguistic framework, I prefer to see a ritual/ceremonial "qualification" (of course, "politically" determined)[73] of the text and of its language transcending our strictly linguistic considerations. In fact, this denomination tried to further promote a certain textual written document on a higher sort of liturgical, performative and authoritative dimension. It is also to be considered that these expressions are used (in Iran) for texts *specifically* composed in order to be written, and not for documents composed orally (but later committed to writing or suitable to be preserved by means of written recordings), as whether the modality required an additional qualification, probably because this was an innovation with respect to a basically quasi-exclusively oral tradition.

I would again insist that an "Aryan" text was therefore not just a profane document in Old Persian or in Bactrian, but represented a consecrated (written) edict, a higher speech, a legal and official word, in spite of the fact that it was transmitted in an uncommon way,

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[67] See Panaino 2009.

[68] Cf. Baghbidi 2009.

[69] Weissbach 1911, 65–66; Lecoq 1997, 210.

[70] See again Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/1996, 83.

[71] Skjærvø 1985.

[72] Huyse 1990, 183, note 31.

[73] It is difficult to establish whether the O.P. inscription of Bisutun played an indirect influence on the Bactrian one by means of the intermediation of an Aramaic version or of oral echoes. See Sims-Williams/Cribb 1995/96, 83 with bibliography. But if the prestige of the O.P. tradition was still so strong, we should consider the possibility that the adoption of the same terminology had an ideological meaning, and not simply a neutral description of the name of the language.

valid for the whole ethno-religious and ethno-linguistic community of the Aryans, which every leading *ethnos* aimed to represent at the highest level. For this reason, it is fitting to consider again that the Indian-speakers (i.e. Sanskrit-praying, but probably every day speaking other Prakrit- and Middle-Indian languages) were "Aryan" too, and that they probably could still use *āryā-* in order to qualify their own *vāk-* together with "Indian."

In conclusion, coming back to the small notice preserved by Strabo, it remains a very useful witness of a very intricate situation, which cannot be uncritically analysed just as the negation of the linguistic richness of Ancient Iranian *ethne* in the last years of the Achaemenian Empire. Strabo's ultimate statement probably refers to various forms of *homoglossia* and *homographia* adopted among the various communicative strategies of the Persian Empire and that enabled a number of higher officers belonging to a few of different Aryan *ethne* to be sufficiently conversant with an Aryan *koiné*, based on the court language in Old Persian (plus Median elements and other socio-linguistic varieties). For this reason, serious consideration is due to the possibility that the alleged *homoglossia* was adopted to describe the actual possibility of intercommunicating with a sort of *lingua franca*, favoured also by the authority of the "Aryan" self-promoting (and partly re-invented) tradition, adopted in order to write the royal text of the Bisutun inscription, in the light of the fact that mutual understanding could be obtained only by means of a basic instruction and a reasonable training (at least derived by practice and not necessarily by school). A new Empire needed a linguistic solidarity, although in conditions of multilingualism and multi-ethnicity, a situation confirmed, as previously noted, by the Akkadian Achaemenid inscriptions. The king did not insist on the "Persian" statute of his documents, but seems to declare that his script and language were in conformity with the Aryan (alleged) prestige, in a sort of performative *superbia* that had to implicitly promote (Old) Persian in the name of all the Iranian submitted *ethne* and without offending their traditions. It is not by chance that in the same chapter of Bisutun Darius also declared that after the sealed and authorised transcription of his edict, the document was placed on clay tablets and parchment and then was sent everywhere into the various countries. The active role of the *kāra-*, which in fact *hamātaxšatā*, i.e. "strove"[74] to follow the edict and its contents, also means that linguistic cooperation was expected.

This evidence, perhaps, can open a new path for further investigations. In fact, we must consider that in the case of Bisutun § 70, it has been normally assumed[75] that *arya-* should be strictly explained in the ethno-cultural borders of the Old Persian text, and that the Elamite version was just a translation. This is an evident solution, probably obvious enough to result in misleading, if uncritically considered as the unique key of interpretation. On the contrary, if we assume that with the term *arya-* a multilingual chancellery wished, on the one hand, to promote the ideological tradition of the Aryan heritage, but also, on the other hand, to produce a different synthesis, in which this kind of "Aryanity" was thought in order to fit in both versions, we could find a different scenario: thus, *arya-* did not simply represent a restricted reference to the mother tongue of the Achaemenians – a minimalist and minimising solution – but the superb perfection of the royal

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[74]   See Rossi 2003, 346–349; Rossi in print; Schmitt 2014, 253–254.
[75]   With few exceptions, see Rossi 2000.

message, indifferently from the adopted language. In this sense, the word of the king, in Old Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian and Aramaic as well, could become, according to need, "Aryan," because the asseveration's power went by the king himself and its legitimacy. Thus, the reference to the "Aryan" dimension would have been transformed into a pervasive ideological message, connected with the prestige of the leading authority, and not simply and intrinsically with the linguistic *medium*. In other terms, the Elamite text could also have deserved to be defined as an "Aryan" edict, because what had now assumed an essential importance was the meaning, its authority and compelling force.[76] This is just a working hypothesis concerning a potential consequence of the political impact produced by the para- and meta-linguistic use of *ariya-*, but I hope that it could stimulate positive reactions.

With regard to the supposed *homoglossia*, we must conclude that the image of linguistic semi-unity of the Iranian *ethne*, or only of the North-Eastern Iranian ones, seems to be just a dream, and, as far as we know of the linguistic history of these peoples, not only a conclusion insufficiently grounded, but a highly improbable linguistic mirage. A "permafrosted" Irano-Aryan still spoken by all the Iranians as a sort of "Esperanto" *ante litteram* has no historical basis, as the idea that *arya-* was the name of a still preserved "common language," if this expression should be interpreted as a surviving unifying archaic jargon of all the Iranians (and not a practical Western Iranian *koiné*, imposed by the Old Persian authorities as a comfortable *medium*). Therefore, the "Aryan" linguistic identity assumed other, fully historical, implications, although it was based on a tradition, partly original and derived by an ancestral cultural heritage, partly invented, especially in its socio-linguistic and socio-political implications, as normally happens when the power and its legitimacy are strongly involved.

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[76] This interpretation presupposes a strong impulse towards a universalistic political and religious vision, which we can postulate during the Achaemenid period. The fact that in the Sasanian Empire a titulature in which *ērān* and *anērān* were not only mentioned, but, probably, also opposed each other, seems to counter what has been stated here, in particular if we consider that a certain continuity should be postulated in the use of formulary expressions of ancestral origin. This difficulty can be bypassed considering that the term *ērān* had stronger confessional (and not simply "religious") implications in Sasanian Persia than *ariya-* in the Achaemenid period, in which the Mazdaean identity of the king was not so strongly emphasised in close relation with his "Aryan" status. We do not know of religious persecutions in the earlier periods, but just of political actions of punishment; the same "Daiva-inscription" reflects a political repression of (still) unclear cults and traditions, but we have no arguments to suggest that other religions were persecuted under the Achaemenids just because other non-Aryan peoples were not following a Mazdaean tradition. The status of the Persepolis tablets, on the contrary, shows a situation of religious tolerance, respect and cooperation, which would have been impossible in the Sasanian era. This compels us to suspect that the actions against the daiva-worshipers were perhaps directed against a tradition closer (but different) with respect to that of the royal power. Then, the Sasanian scenario was completely different, so that in this period we cannot postulate the same force for the meaning of the words *ērān* and *anērān*, although a certain heritage exerted an inevitable influence.

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