The Meaning and Etymology of *ārya*

Giacomo Benedetti
Università degli Studi di Firenze, Italia

Abstract The present paper considers the issue of the Sanskrit term *ārya*, starting from the use of *ārya* and *arya* as 'freeman' and 'owner' in opposition to *dāsa* 'servant' (or *śūdra*), from the Vedas to the *Arthaśāstra* and Pāli texts (in the form *ayya*). The original meaning is here interpreted as based on social classes rather than ethnic differences, although foreign populations could be considered as belonging to the *dāsa* or *śūdra* class. This social meaning can be found also in the Irish cognate *aire* 'freeman, noble', and in Iranic cognates like Middle Persian *ērīh* 'nobility'. Derived terms from *arya/ārya* often have an honorific use, and from the social meaning, also a moral and spiritual meaning could be developed, which is more easily explained from the concept of 'noble' and 'freeman' than from that of an ethnic identity or kinship. If the original meaning of Indo-European **aryos* was 'freeman, noble', it can be compared with the Afro-Asiatic root **ħar-* '(vb.) to be superior, to be higher in status or rank, to be above or over; (n.) nobleman, master, chief, superior; (adj.) free-born, noble'. We can have thus to do with concepts of nobility and freedom developed in the common cultural frame of a society where slavery and social stratification were evolving.

Keywords Sanskrit Lexicology. Vedas. Buddhist Studies. Jainism. Indo-European Historical Linguistics. Afro-asiatic Linguistics.

The Sanskrit term *ārya* is one of the most important in the history of Indo-European studies. Anquetil-Duperron in 1771 published a translation of the Avesta and used the term *arien* for the Avestan ethnic name *airya*. The same term and the Sanskrit *ārya* were then rendered in German with *Arier*, which Friedrich Schlegel in 1819 applied to define the original people from where not only Indians and Iranians, but also Germans descended, as he allegedly proved by the German word *Ehre* 'honour' and ancient Germanic names with *Ari-* or *Ario-* (Schlegel 1819, 458-62). In 1830, Lassen proposed to use the term *Arier*, being a real self-definition and not an artificial label, for the Indo-Europeans in general.[1] Eugène Burnouf, in his *Commentaire sur le Yaçna*,[2] accepted Lassen's proposal through the French form *arien*, which was used also by Adolphe Pictet in this sense.[3] Max Müller promoted the same use of the term in the English form *Aryan* from the first volume of his *Lectures on the Science of Language* (1861).[4] The linguistic concept was naturally connected with the idea of an original people of speakers of the Aryan language, called *Aryas* by Pictet and 'ancestors of the Aryan race' by Max Müller, and placed, following the Avesta, in Bactria or more vaguely on the highlands of Central Asia. The idea of a special Aryan race whose self-definition meant 'honourable' (Gobineau 1853-55, 2: 309) fascinated the theorist of racism Arthur de Gobineau, who in his *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races* promoted the idea of a superior white and blonde race of conquerors, called *Arians*, which in Europe was most purely represented by the Germanic race. Müller later criticised the racial notion of Aryan:

> I have declared again and again that if I say Aryas, I mean neither blood nor bones, nor hair nor skull; I mean simply those who speak an Aryan language. [...] To me an ethnologist who speaks of Aryan race, Aryan blood, Aryan eyes and hair, is as great a sinner as a linguist who speaks of a dolichocephalic dictionary or a brachycephalic grammar. (Müller 1888, 120)[5]

---

1 Lassen 1930, 70-1 fn.*. He wrongly connected with the same name the Germanic tribe of the *Arii* (a more correct variant is *Harii*) mentioned by Tacitus.

2 See Burnouf (1833, LIV, 460-2 fn. 525), where he proposes that *arya* was an adjective meaning *excellent*, *supérieur* (as the Indian lexicographers say), and that it was used as a title by the Aryan peoples (*peuples ariens*) to distinguish themselves from their neighbours as 'the best ones' (*les meilleurs*) or 'the brave ones' (*les braves*).

3 Pictet 1837, 170-5; 1857, 60; 1859, 3-6, 27-34. In the last work he also uses the term *Arya* itself to indicate the proto-Indo-Europeans, and he justifies this use with Irish terms that in his opinion were related to *arya*.

4 Cf. Müller 1866, 266-80.

5 Müller (1888, 90) explains his use of these terms: "if we speak of Aryan race at all, we should know that it means no more than *x*+Aryan speech".

In spite of Max Müller, this sin apparently became more and more popular at that time: in 1899, the French anthropologist Vacher de Lapouge titled a work *L'Aryen*, identifying the Aryan man with a racial type (blonde and dolichocephalic) called *Homo europaeus*, not because he was convinced about this use of the term, but because it was so popular at his time (Vacher de Lapouge 1899, 1-5, 22-3). Then, it became part of a political agenda through Nazism and Fascism in the following century, so that in the West the concept of Aryan is still naturally associated with those ideologies, while in the scientific field it has survived mainly in the notion of Indo-Aryan languages.

About the etymology of the term, many hypotheses have been made,[6] the most detailed being that of Paul Thieme, who derived the term from *arí* interpreted as 'stranger', being the source of *aryá* 'related to strangers, hospitable master of the household', which finally gives *ārya* as a self-definition of a civilised people that is kind with guests. I find this interpretation too speculative and artificial, starting from the translation of *arí* as 'stranger, foreigner' (*Fremder, Fremdling*), that is imposed on the Rigvedic passages, but it is not supported by the Indian tradition. The meaning of this term has been very much debated, and according to the interpretations of several scholars,[7] it has sometimes a positive and sometimes a negative meaning: only this

---

6 Cf. KEWA 1: 49, 52, 79, where Mayrhofer follows Thieme and, about *aríḥ*, Specht, who derived it from **al-i-* (lat. *alius*). However, the term corresponding to lat. *alius* 'other' in Sanskrit is *anya*, in Avestan *aniia*, in Old Persian *aniya*. In EWA 1: 111-12, 174-5, he still accepts the connection of *arí*, *áryá/aryá* and *ā́rya*, but he also cites Brereton's interpretation of *aryá* as 'one who shares in the Vedic culture', therefore he compares it with Hittite *ara* 'belonging to one's own social group' and mentions also Szemerényi and his derivation of these terms from Ugaritic *ảry* 'relative, family member, companion'. The idea that Aryans could take this Ugaritic loanword and bring it to India is quite impossible to accept, and of course goes against the existence of an Indo-European root **aryo-*. According to Ward (1961, 32), Ugaritic *ảry* (parallel to 'son' or 'brother') has no Semitic etymology and can be borrowed from Egyptian *ỉry* 'companion'.

For another etymology of *arí*, *aryá* and *ā́rya*, see also Pooth (2015, 106-10), who criticises Thieme and sees as primary meaning of *arí* "Vortrefflicher; Edelmann" ('excellent; noble'), from a nominal stem **h1ari-* "trefflich; etw./j. treffend" ('excellent, meeting sth./sb.'). So, *ā́rya* would have the meaning "die Wahrhaft-Vortrefflichen, (gemäß Ritus) Vortrefflichen" ('the really excellent ones, (according to rite) excellent ones').

7 Cf. MW, 87, where the first meaning of *arí* is "attached to, faithful; a faithful or devoted or pious man", the second one 'not liberal, envious, hostile; an enemy'. Grassmann (1955, 105; italics added) based his interpretation on the meaning: "regsam, strebsam" ('active, industrious') from the root *ar*, especially in the sense "sich erregen, sich regen" ('to get excited, to move'). From this common concept he proposed an evolution towards three different meanings: "*den Göttern zustrebend, fromm*" ('striving towards the gods, pious'), "*den Schätzen zustrebend, habsüchtig, geizig*" ('striving towards treasures, greedy, avaricious') and "*widerstrebend, feindlich*" ('striving against, hostile'), from the meaning of *ar* "gegen jemand *andringen*, ihn *treffen, verletzen, verwunden*" ('to rush against someone, meeting, hurting, injuring him'). BR, 101 also distinguished two meanings, but the first one, from the root *ar*, is not especially positive: "(*aufstrebend*) *verlangend, begierig, anhänglich*" ('(aspiring) demanding, eager, attached'), and the second one is derived from *a-rā* 'not giving', giving the sense "*knickerig, karg, miss-*

one has been preserved in Classical Sanskrit, where *ari* means 'enemy' (not 'stranger') and is used in numerous compounds.

Yāska in Nir 5.7 says: *arir* **amitra**[8] *ṛcchater* **īśvaras** *apy arir etasmād eva* (*ari* is an enemy, from the root of *ṛcchati* ('to go against, attack, hurt'); a master (or lord) is also *ari*, from the same root (in the sense 'to reach, obtain'?).[9]

Geldner (Pischel, Geldner 1901, 72-97) accepted this explanation and proposed as first meaning "'*reich' und 'der Reich, Mächtiger, der vornehme Herr, Patron, Gebieter*'" ('rich; the rich, mighty, the distinguished lord, patron, master'). He also remarked an opposition of *arí* and *víśva* 'all', interpreted as an opposition between the rich and the mass of the poor people.[10] Then, he distinguished a special use of this meaning for the *maghávan*, the patron or lord of the sacrifice (*Opferherr*), in some cases as an epithet of the god Indra. The negative meaning, in his interpretation, developed from a negative view of the rich as greedy and miser, and from the rivalry between rich *yajamāna*s, that brought to the meaning of 'patron of the opposite party' and 'rival', finally 'enemy' (*Feind*).[11] In his translation of the Ṛgveda (Geldner 1951), he generally used for the negative sense *Nebenbuhler* ('rival'), and *der hohe Herr* ('the high lord') for the first sense, thus stressing the social rank rather than economic wealth. Bloomfield (1925, 160-8) criticised Geldner's proposal of semantic evolution towards the negative meaning, asking why terms with a similar meaning of 'lord, patron of sacrifices' like *sūrí* and *maghávan* have not followed the same evolution. In his view, the word *arí* started with the meaning of 'noble' or 'gentleman', and it was used for the patron (*yajamāna*), but also for the 'noble priest', 'high or supervising priest' (Purohita or Brahmán) and arrived to mean 'rival' in the rivalry of priests at the sacrifice.

---

günstig; (gegen die Götter) *unfromm*" ('niggardly, stingy, jealous; (against the gods) impious') and "*feindselig*, subst. *Feind*" ('hostile, enemy').

8   For the correspondence of *ari* and *amitra* cf. RV 7.60.11 (*manyúm… aryáḥ*), 6.25.2 and 10.125.3 (*amítrasya… manyúm*), where *manyú* can be translated 'fury, wrath' of the enemy.

9   Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the Author.

10   Cf. RV 6.45.33; 8.94.3, where we find the phrase *víśve aryá ā́*, translated by Geldner (1951, 2: 142, 420) "*alle, auch die hohen Herren*"; 8.1.22, where we find *viśvágūrto ariṣṭutáḥ*, translated by Geldner (280) as "*der von aller Welt Gelobte, von dem hohen Herrn Gepriesene*", with the note "*dem Opferherrn*" ('by the lord of the sacrifice').

11   A similar view is that of Palihawadana (2018, 33): "if the word carries the meanings 'foe' and 'lord', the latter could well have been the original sense. If the chief (lord) turns out to be hostile for some reason or other, then in the very position of chief he may become the object of one's displeasure and opposition. The one sense ('lord') would be the word's denotation, while the other ('foe') would be one of its significant connotations". Palihawadana, however, justifies the negative view of the *arí* because he belonged to a social and ideological category of Aryan chiefs opposed to that of the *sūrí*, the patron of the Ṛgvedic poets, but if the negative meaning of *arí* does not derive from the meaning 'lord', and simply indicates any enemy or rival as in later Sanskrit, this interpretation is not justified.

Now, instead of imposing a dubious semantic evolution, I am inclined to consider the possibility of two different senses from two different roots[12] of this short term: on one hand, 'enemy, hostile', that can be connected with *ṛti* 'assault, attack', *ā́rti* 'painful occurrence, pain, injury, mischief', *ā́rta* 'pained, injured', *sam-ará* 'hostile encounter, conflict, struggle, war, battle', and is present also in Old Persian *arika* 'treacherous, evil, hostile', and probably in Greek ἔρις 'strife, quarrel, contention';[13] on the other hand, a sense connected with a social status of master or lord,[14] possibly connected, as Geldner (Pischel, Geldner 1901, 94) proposed, with the same root of *āritá* ('praised') and *ā́ryanti* ('they praise', in RV 8.16.6; 10.48.3), which Sāyaṇa glosses *īśvaram kurvanti* ('they render lord'). We can suppose that originally there were two words with two different initial laryngeals, and, when the laryngeals were lost and the meaning 'enemy' became more frequent, in order to avoid ambiguity, for the second sense *arí* was replaced by the derived or parallel term (with *-ya* instead of *-i* suffix) *arya*. In fact, the meaning *īśvara* 'master, lord' is given also to *arya* by Yāska in Nir 5.9 and 13.4. This meaning is confirmed also by Pāṇini, who identifies *arya* with *svāmin* 'master, owner, lord' and with *vaiśya*,[15]

---

12   Bailey (1959, 85, 92-3, 106-7) sees *arí* as 'owner' from a root *ar-* 'to get; possess, own', that is however hypothetical for Indo-Iranian, and *arí* (Atharvavedic *ári*) as 'foe' from a root *ar-* 'to attack', connected with *ṛti* 'attack'. Pooth (2015, 94, 108-9) sees a single root *h1er-/*h1ar-* "[an x] *geraten*, [zu, in x] *gelangen*" ('to come across/by x; to reach, to get x') giving the nominal stem *$h_1$ari-* "*trefflich; etw./j. treffend; der/das getroffen wird*" ('excellent, meeting sth./sb.; who/that is met', from which both *arí* 'nobleman' and *arí* 'guest; enemy' are derived. However, it seems very unlikely that the same root could give these two different meanings.

13   The terms *ṛti*, *ārti*, *sam-ara* and ἔρις were referred by Pokorny (1959, 326-30) to the same root 3.*er-/or-/r-* 'to start moving, excite (also mentally, annoy, irritate); to raise (elevation, to grow tall)'. He also derived from that root Old Church Slavonic *ratь* 'conflict' (329). EWA 1, 196 connects ἔρις with *irin* 'powerful, violent' and *irya* 'active, powerful'. Both terms were derived by Pokorny (1959, 327) from the same root. Pooth (2015, 99) sees ἔρις as derived from *h1eri-*, a *nomen actionis* with the meaning "*Treffen, Aufeinandertreffen, Aneinandergeraten, Zusammenstoßen, Zusammenkommen*" ('meeting, clash, coming to blows, colliding, coming together').

14   As remarked by Palihawadana (1970, 2): "The one thing that is quite certain about the word *ari* in the RV is that it consistently refers to a rich and powerful person, a chief of one sort or another. In this capacity, the '*ari*' appears in many hymns as a devout and generous employer or benefactor of Vedic priest-magicians, the *ṛṣi-s*". Cf. Aguilar i Matas (1991, 25-6) and Pooth (2015, 107-8), the latter considers the meaning 'nobleman' much better than 'stranger' for some passages of the Ṛgveda.

15   Pāṇ 3.1.103: *aryaḥ svāmi-vaiśyayoḥ* (the word *arya* is irregularly formed when meaning 'lord' and a 'Vaiśya'). According to the commentary (Vasu 1894, 387), the irregularity is in the use of *arya* instead of *ārya* from the root *ṛ*. Moreover, the *udātta* accent falls on the last syllable instead of the first one. It is also said that, when we refer not to a lord or a Vaiśya (*aryaḥ svāmī* 'honoured lord', *aryo vaiśyaḥ* 'honoured Vaiśya'), we use *ārya*, like *āryo brāhmaṇaḥ* 'the respectable Brahmin'. The epithet *ārya* was so typically applied to Brahmins that in MBh 3.186.33 we read that at the end of this degenerate age Śūdras will say *bho* (like Brahmins) while Brahmins will say *ārya* (to the other castes): *yugānte samanuprāpte... bhovādinas tathā śūdrā brāhmaṇāś cāryavādinaḥ.*

and it is admitted also by Thieme for the late Vedic form *árya*, which is also found in opposition with *śūdrá* in VS 20.17 and 23.30-1.[16] An analogous opposition is found in the Atharvaveda (possibly with *ārya*,[17] see AV 4.20.4; 4.20.8; 19.62.1). According to Thieme (1938, 90-5), this opposition is between 'master' (*Herr*) and 'servant, slave' (*Magd/Knecht*) and not between Aryan (*Arier*) and member of the *śūdra* caste. However, *śūdra* is a technical term for the members of a social class distinct from the Āryas, and if we interpret *ārya* like Debrunner (1939b, 147) as indicating the race of the master[18] (*árya*), there is not a neat distinction between *arya* and *ārya*. Yāska in Nir 6.26 defined *ārya* as *īśvara-putraḥ* 'son of a lord': *ārya* can be both an adjective that means 'belonging to a master or freeman' and a noun that means 'son of a master', and not of a slave, therefore the member of the class of freemen and owners. In JB 2.405 we have: *āryaṃ ca varṇam śaudraṃ ca*. Thus, the opposition is between the two adjectives *ārya* and *śaudra*, which can imply that the opposed nouns are *arya* and *śūdra*.

In other passages of the Atharvaveda and in the Ṛgveda, instead, the opposition is between *árya* and *dāsá*, that, in Classical Sanskrit and in Prakrit languages, but already in the Ṛgveda,[19] means 'slave, servant'. In RV 2.12.4 (= AV 20.34.4) we also find a *dásaṃ várṇam*, which makes stronger the correspondence with the later *śūdra*.[20] The

---

16   VS 20.17: *yác chūdré yád árye yád énaś cakṛmá vayáṃ… tásyāvayájanam asi* (Each sin that we have done to a servant or freeman [...] of that [sin] you are the expiation). The corresponding formula in TS 1.8.3.1 has *aryà*: *yác chūdré yád aryà énaś cakṛmá vayám*. In VS 23.30-1 we find the feminine *śūdrá* as *áryajārā* 'female lover of a lord', and the masculine *śūdró* as *áryāyai jāró* 'male lover of a lady'.

17   Thieme (1938, 90) remarks that in AV the *sandhi* does not allow to determine the quantity of the first vowel (*arya* or *ārya*), and actually all the passages where there is opposition with *śūdra* are in *sandhi*. AV 4.20.4cd: *táyāháṃ sárvaṃ paśyāmi yáś ca śūdrá utáryaḥ* (Through this (magical plant) I see everyone, servant or freeman.) AV 4.20.8cd: *ténāháṃ sárvaṃ paśyāmy utá śūdrám utáryam*. AV 19.62.1: *priyáṃ mā kṛṇu devéṣu priyáṃ rájasu mā kṛṇu / priyáṃ sárvasya páśyata utá śūdrá utárye* (Make me dear among the gods, dear among the kings, make me dear to everyone who sees, to the servant as well as to the freeman).

18   "*die Rasse des Hausherrn*". Cf. Debrunner 1939a, 73-4, where he interprets *aryá* as 'noble' (*edel*), *árya* as 'the noble, Aryan' (*der Edle, Arier*), *ārya* as an adjective 'belonging to the nobles, the Aryans; aryan' (*zu den Edlen, Ariern gehörig; arisch*) and then as a noun 'Aryan' (*Arier*).

19   See RV 1.92.8 (*dāsá-pravarga* '(wealth) provided with a multitude of servants'), 7.86.7, 8.56.3, 10.62.10. We can also remark that cognates with this meaning are found in Iranic languages: Persian *dāh* 'servant'; Buddhist Sogdian *δ'yh*, Christian Sogdian *δ'y* 'slave woman'; Turfan Parthian *dāhīft* 'slavery' (Vogelsang 1993; Bailey 1987; Bailey 1959, 108, 111).

20   RV 2.12.4c: *yó dásaṃ várṇam ádharaṃ gúhákaḥ* ((Indra) made the class of Dāsas low and concealed). The term *varṇa* should refer to other humans rather than demons, that is, low-class people or barbarians, unless we admit that *varṇa* could be used also for a wide category of various beings including demons. In JB 2.196 we find *śūdrāya dāsāya* apparently as synonyms. Cf. also MBh 12.60.27cd: *prajāpatir hi varṇānāṃ dāsaṃ śūdram akalpayat* (Prajāpati established the Śūdra as servant of the (other) classes); Mn 8.410-18, where the function of the Śūdra is *dāsya* 'servitude' of the other castes.

opposition is especially with the adjectives *árya* and *dā́sa* applied to *vṛtra* 'obstacle, enemy', but it is also found between the corresponding nouns, showing that those terms, like *arya* and *śūdra*, include the whole humanity (or even all beings) in two different categories. Also Indra, as the divine archetype of the Ārya warrior and leader, can be styled as *ārya*, and his enemies as *dāsa*, as in RV 5.34.6cd:

> *índro víśvasya damitā́ vibhī́ṣaṇo yathāvaśáṃ nayati dā́sam ā́ryaḥ*

> Indra is the dominator of all, spreading fear; the Ārya leads the Dāsa as he wishes.

In this image, there is the clear idea that the *dāsa* is a slave of the *ārya*.

We know that *dāsa* often refers to demons, like the serpent Vṛtra (see RV 1.32.11, 2.11.2, 4.18.9). So, if *ārya* and *dāsa* describe two universal categories of beings, they cannot primarily refer to ethnicities but to specific positions in the universal order: that of the civilised lords, following the noble customs, who can be gods and humans, and that of the slaves, villains, barbarians, who can also be demons. Since non-Aryan strangers do not belong to the class of the civilised lords, they can be styled *dāsa* as in later language foreign peoples were considered *śūdra* or *vṛṣala*.[21]

The opposition of *ārya/arya* and *dāsa* continued also in post-Vedic times, for instance according to Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* 3.13.4, there is no condition of *dāsa* (slave) for an Ārya (*na tv evāryasya dāsabhāvaḥ*).

In the *Assalāyana Sutta* of the Buddhist Pāli Canon, we read that among Yonas (Greeks) and Kambojas and in other peripheral regions there are only two classes, masters or freemen (*ayya*) and slaves (*dāsa*), and that a freeman can become slave and a slave freeman.[22] Another variant of this term in Pāli is *ayira*, also indicating a master in opposition to *dāsa* 'slave' in *Jātaka*s.[23]

---

21 MBh 13.33.19-20: *śakā yavanakāmbojās tās tāḥ kṣatriyajātayaḥ / vṛṣalatvaṃ parigatā brāhmaṇānām adarśanāt // dramiḷāś ca kaliṅgāś ca pulindāś cāpy uśīnarāḥ / kaulāḥ sarpā māhiṣakās tās tāḥ kṣatriyajātayaḥ // vṛṣalatvaṃ parigatā brāhmaṇānām adarśanāt* (Śakas, Yavanas, Kambojas, various Kṣatriya tribes, have reached the status of Śūdra because of the absence of Brahmins. Dramiḷas, Kaliṅgas, Pulindas and Uśīnaras, Kolisarpas, Māhiṣakas, various Kṣatriya tribes, have reached the status of Śūdra because of the absence of Brahmins). Cf. Mn. 10.43-4.

22 MN II 149,8-10: *yona-kambojesu aññesu ca paccantimesu janapadesu dveva vaṇṇā, ayyo c' eva dāso ca; ayyo hutvā dāso hoti, dāso hutvā ayyo hotīti* (Among Greeks and Kamboja and in other peripheral countries there are two classes, freeman and slave: having been freeman one becomes slave, having been slave one becomes freeman.)

23 See Ja V 257,18: *dāso ayirassa santike ti* ([like] a slave in the presence of [his] master); Ja VI 300,2: *ayiro hi dāsassa* [...] *issaro* (a master indeed is the lord of a slave). In the following commentaries, *ayira* is glossed with *sāmika* or *sāmi* 'owner, master' (Skt. *svāmin*). In Ja V 138,19-20, *ayire* (referred as a respectful title to ascetics) is glossed with *ayye*, evidently more common out of the *Jātaka*s.

The term *ayya* is considered an evolution of Vedic *arya* and is translated 'a worthy or venerable person, lord, master' (CPD, 412). This would be in harmony with the opposition between *arya* and *śūdra* that we have found in the Yajurveda. We can also cite the fact that in the Ṛgveda we find the two parallel compounds *aryá-patnī* and *dāsá-patnī*, which can be interpreted as Bahuvrīhi compounds meaning 'having a lord as husband' and 'having a slave as husband'. There is nothing ethnic here, since the *arya*s can belong also to foreign populations like Greeks and Kambojas, classified as *śūdra* by Brahmins. So, if *arya* > *ayya* was a social category, we can hypothesise that this was the primary meaning from which the other derived, but do we have in the Indo-European domain other cognates to support this hypothesis?

It is interesting that in Old Irish we have a term *aire* that has been derived from *aryo-[24] and has the following meaning according to the Royal Irish Academy's *Dictionary*:

> In Laws used to describe every freeman, 'commoner' as well as noble, who possesses an independent legal status… Occasionally, however, *aire* is used in the more restricted sense of 'noble' (as oppd. to 'commoner'), which is its usual meaning in the literature. (See Szemerényi 1977, 12)

It is possible that the same term is found in Gaulish names like *Ario-manus*, *Ario-vistus*, *Ario*, *Ariios* (Billy 1993, 14-15; cf. Holder 1896). According to Matasović (2009, 43) in his etymological dictionary of Proto-Celtic, *aryo- meant 'free man' and "the word was originally a yo-stem.[25] […] The old comparison with Skt. *aryá*- […] still offers the most plausible etymology". If this is the case, we would have at the opposite ends of the Indo-European world the survivals of a concept of freeman or noble based on a root **(H)ar*- with a **yo/ya* suffix (possibly derived from *-i* in Indo-Aryan). Also in the Iranic domain, where the Young Avestan[26] *airiia* and the Old Persian *ariya* typically have an ethnic meaning (which nonetheless does not exclude the meaning 'noble'), in Pahlavi the derived term *ēr* means 'noble, hero', *ērīh* is 'nobility, good conduct' and *anērīh* 'evil conduct'.[27]

---

[24]   Another etymology is from *prh₃- 'first', but according to Matasović (2009, 43; italics added), "this is less convincing because there are no traces of the laryngeal in the purported Celtic reflexes (*prh₃yo- would have probably given PCelt. *frayo-)". Moreover, semantically 'lord, master' corresponds better than 'first' to the meaning of the Celtic word, that concerns a vast category of freemen.

[25]   In fact, *aire*, gen. *airech*, comes from a secondary k-stem, according to Shaffner (2021, 387) from PCelt. *arịākw- < **h₂arịo-h₃okw-/h₃k*w- 'having a noble appearance'.

[26]   The term *airiia* is not found in the *Gāthā*s, but it appears in the *Yaṣt*s.

[27]   See MacKenzie 1971, 30; Bailey 1959, 96; Bailey 1987, who also observes how in the *Dēnkard ērīh ut dahyupatīh* 'nobility and lordship' are contrasted with *arg ut bār*

In Anatolian languages we can compare Hittite *arawa-* 'free (from)'; *arawan(n)i-* 'free man (not slave)'; Lycian *arawa-* 'free (from taxes), freedman'; *arus-* 'citizens' (see Puhvel 1984, 119-21). Here the main concept is the condition of freedom, which can involve also that of citizenship that is comparable with the concept of **arya* in the Indo-Iranian world as that of a freeman who belongs to the ethnic community. However, these terms lack the concept of superiority, and according to Kloekhorst (2008, 198), they are connected with *āra* 'right, properly', and *arā* 'friend', from Proto-Anatolian **ʔor-* and PIE **h2or-o-*, from the root ** h2er-* 'to join together'. According to Puhvel (1984, 121) *arawa* has a suffix **-wo* and a meaning 'free' < 'properly belonging'.

The concept of superiority is instead central in comparable terms in ancient Greek: ἀρείων "*better, stouter, braver*, in *Hom.* of all advantages of body, birth, and fortune", ἄριστος "*best* in birth and rank, *noblest*: hence, like ἀριστεύς, *a chief; best* in any way, *bravest*", ἀρετή "*goodness, excellence,* of any kind" (Liddell, Scott 1940, s.v.). We can also add the prefix ἀρι–, an amplifier meaning 'very, most' (e.g. ἀρι–δείκετος 'most famous', ἀρί–δηλος 'clear, distinct', ἀρι–πρεπής 'very distinguished').[28] All these terms convey an idea of excellence or superiority that conforms to the Indo-Aryan semantic domain of *arya/ārya*. According to Schaffner (2021, 390-1),[29] the origin of ἄριστος is **h2ár-isto- "der erste (dem Range nach), der beste"* ('the first (by rank), the best') from a root **h2ar- "der Reihenfolge und dem Rang nach) der erste sein"* ('to be the first (in order and in rank)'), which gives also ἄρχω 'to begin, to rule' < **h2r̥-sḱé/ó-* and Armenian *arkcay* 'king' < **h2ar-s-kah2-ti- "der zum Vorrang, zur Herrschaft Gehörige"* ('the one belonging to pre-eminence, to lordship').

The connotation of superiority is clear also in Pāli, where *ariya* (= Skt. *ārya*) is someone 'of noble birth (and education), high-caste, eminent; noble, sublime' (CPD I, 425), *ayya* 'a worthy or venerable person, lord, master, often used in vocative' (CPD I, 412), *ayyaka* (= Skt. *āryaka*) '(an honourable man) a grandfather; a master', *ayyakā* 'a grandmother' (CPD I, 412), *ayya-putta* (= *ārya-putra*) 'a young master; a husband; a venerable person; a prince', *ayira* 'a noble man, sir; master (opp. *dāsa*)' (CPD I, 409), in Ardhamāgadhī we have *āriya* 'sinless, holy, pure; born in an Ārya country, high in civilisation' (IAMD II, 82), *ajja* 'pure, civilised, noble, refined, cultured; maternal grandfather, paternal grandfather' (IAMD I, 104) and *ajjaga, ajjaya* 'paternal grandfather' (IAMD I, 105-6). The use of terms derived from *arya* also for grandparents confirms that it is an honorific title that

hač škōhišn 'labor and burdens from poverty'.

28 Liddell, Scott 1940, s.v.; Beekes 2010, 130.

29 Following Klingenschmitt 1974, 274 fn. 1.

conveys the idea of superiority,[30] like the Greek terms. Also the use in the Buddhist, Jaina and Brahmanical domains of the adjective or noun *ārya* is often not ethnic but indicates a moral or spiritual superiority, as in the Buddhist concept of *ārya-pudgala/ariya-puggala* 'noble person' (who understands the four *āryasatyāni/ariyasaccāni* 'sublime truths/truths of the Noble ones')[31] in opposition to *pṛthagjana/puthujjana* 'ordinary person'. Or in compounds like *ārya-mārga/ariya-magga* 'path of the noble ones; noble path'; *ariya-citta* 'holy-minded'; *ariya-paññā* 'the insight of the noble ones'; *ariya-vihāra* 'the behaviour of the noble ones'; *ariya-vohāra* 'noble or proper mode of speech'; *ariyācāra* 'noble conduct', *ācāraariya* 'noble in conduct'.[32]

In the Jaina *Paṇṇavaṇāsutta* we find numerous kinds of *āriya*, including *kammāriya* 'noble for work'; *sippāriya* 'noble for art'; *ṇāṇāriya* 'noble for knowledge'; *daṃsaṇāriya* 'noble for realisation'; *carittāriya* 'noble for conduct' (Deshpande 1993, 9-13).

In Ardhamāgadhī we also have *ajja-diṭṭhi* 'pure-sighted, noble-sighted'; *ajja-paṇṇa* 'endowed with great wisdom'; *ajja-maṇa* 'pure-minded, noble-minded'; *ajja-sīlāyāra* 'of noble and refined conduct' (IAMD I, 104-5).

But also several Brahmanical derived terms and compounds have an ethical rather than ethnic connotation: *āryatā*, *āryatva* 'honourable character or behaviour'; *ārya-bhāva* 'honourable character or behaviour'; *ārya-cetas* 'noble-minded'; *ārya-miśra* 'distinguished, respectable; an honourable person, a gentleman'; *ārya-śīla* 'having an honest character' (MW, s.v.).

Basham (1979, 5), following the Western concept of Aryan, has written that:

---

30   Cf. also the use in Dravidian languages, like Tamil "*ayyaṉ*, *aiyaṉ* father, sage, priest, teacher, brahman, superior person, master, king; *ayyā* father, respectable man; *aiyar* men worthy of respect, sages, brahmans, title of smārta brahmans, etc".; Kannada "*ayya*, *aya* father, grandfather, master, lord, teacher" (Burrow, Emeneau 1984, 19). Turner (1962-66, 61) gives these terms in connection with Sanskrit *āryaka*: Bengali *āji* 'grandmother'; Oriya *ajā* 'mother's father'; Hindi *ājā*, *ajā* m., *ajī*, *ajī* f.; Gujarati *ājo* m. 'mother's father'. In relation to *ārya*, we find Sindhi *ājo* 'free' (unless it is derived from Persian *āzād*), Sinhalese *aya* 'person' and *ari-* 'excellent' (in compounds).

31   According to the Buddhist tradition, there are eight *ariya-puggala* or *ārya-pudgala*, from the one realising the path of 'Stream-winning' through the penetration of the four 'noble' truths (about suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path leading to deliverance) to the *arhat*, who has reached the spiritual deliverance in this life. Of course, also a perfect *buddha* or a *pratyekabuddha/paccekabuddha* ('awakened by himself or for himself alone') is an *ariya/ārya*, as we read e.g. in Ja II 281,11-12: *ariyā vuccanti buddhā ca paccekabuddhā ca sāvakā cā ti* ('Noble ones' are called the Buddhas, the solitary Buddhas and the Disciples.)

32   See CPD I, 426-30; CPD II, 35. I have in some cases changed 'Aryan' used by CPD with 'noble', in order to avoid ambiguity with an ethnic meaning that is clearly absent.

by the time of the Pāli canon the term *ārya* had, in common speech, come to mean something sharing the characteristics of a number of English words such as 'good', 'moral', 'gentlemanly', and 'well-bred', and seems to have lost nearly all the sense of race which went with it in the time of the *Ṛgveda*.

However, if we admit, instead, that the sense of race is secondary and that of socially and morally superior is primary, the perspective would be inverted. The ethnic sense of *ārya* was present in Sanskrit (as well as in Pāli and Ardhamāgadhī), also in a linguistic sense, but it retained an ambiguity that reveals the original social connotation. Also the *Manusmṛti*, which describes the confines of Āryāvarta, considers *dasyu*, that is, non-Ārya, all those who are out of the four Varṇas, even if they speak the language of the Āryas:

> Mn 10.45: *mukha-bāhūru-paj-jānāṃ yā loke jātayo bahiḥ / **mleccha-vācaś cārya**-vācaḥ sarve te **dasyavaḥ** smṛtāḥ //*

> All those castes in this world, which are excluded from (the community of) those born from the mouth, the arms, the thighs, and the feet (of Brahmā), are considered *dasyu*s, whether they speak the language of the barbarians or that of the Āryas.[33]

So, we can suppose that the idea of an *ārya* people with a special language developed in opposition to people who did not belong to the community of those who used the term *arya* to indicate themselves as masters, nobles or freemen opposed to slaves. This evolution apparently happened only in the Indo-Iranian domain, and it was stronger on the Iranic side, which developed a special sense of national identity through terms related to **arya*, which was known also by the Greeks in the geographical concept of Ἀριανή[34] and survives until

---

[33] Cf. Pāli *ariyaka* 'of Aryan race; Aryan language' (CPD I, 426); *ariyavohāra* 'Aryan language' (CPD I, 429). *Pārājikakaṇḍa-aṭṭhakathā* 54 (ChS): *Tattha ariyakaṃ nāma ariya-vohāro, māgadha-bhāsā. Milakkhakaṃ nāma yo koci anariyako andha-damiḷādi* (Here, *ariyaka* is the Aryan language, the language of Magadha. *Milakkhaka* is any [language] that is non-Aryan: Andhra, Tamil, etc.); MSV I 258: *dasyu-vāc* 'language of the barbarians' opposed to *āryā vāc* 'Aryan language' (this second definition is not a compound, since *āryā* is used as a separate adjective of *vāc*); AKBh 170: *sarve devā ārya-bhāṣā-bhāṣiṇaḥ* (All gods [are] speakers of the Aryan language.)

[34] See Strab. *Geogr.* 15.2, where Ἀριανή is placed from the Indus on the east to a part of Persia and Media on the west, and included also Bactria and Sogdia on the north, because the inhabitants of these regions spoke approximately the same language (εἰσὶ γάρ πως καὶ ὁμόγλωττοι παρὰ μικρόν). It is noteworthy that India was not associated with a similar term by the Greeks; instead, India was regularly distinguished from Ἀριανή, the river Indus being the boundary between the two regions, although some Iranic provinces of Afghanistan and Baluchistan to the west of the Indus were sometimes included into India. Cf. Plin. *NH* 6.29: "The greater part of the geographers, in fact, do not

now in the name of Irān. In the Celtic domain, although there was an analogous term (**aryo-*) for freeman or noble, there was not the same evolution, but the root apparently is very ancient.

According to Mallory and Adams (1997, 213), the Indo-European root is **h4erós *h4eri̯os* 'members of one's own (ethnic) group, peer, freeman', giving also Hittite *arā-* 'member of one's own group, peer, companion, friend', of which *arāwa-* 'free from' would be a derivative.[35] The proposed verbal root is **h4er-* 'to put together' (corresponding to **h2er-* mentioned above). They add:

> Clearly supposed in the original meaning is an emphasis on in-group status as distinguished from the status of the outsider, particularly those outsiders forcibly incorporated into the group as slaves. In Anatolian the base word has come to emphasize the personal relationship between individuals while the derivatives continue the more general focus on social status, as remains the case in Old Irish. In Indo-Iranian, presumably because the unfree were typically captives taken from other (ethnic) groups, the word has taken on a more purely ethnic meaning. (213)

What I propose is rather that the division between *arya* and non-*arya* was more on a vertical level of master/slave or noble/vulgar than simply on the horizontal level of in-group and outsider, and I do not find convincing that Hittite *arā* 'peer, friend' must be connected with *arya*. Mallory and Adams in the same entry cite the comparison made by Bomhard and Kern (1994, 533-4, entry no. 387)[36] with the Afro-Asiatic root **ħar/*ħər* 'to be superior, to be higher in status or rank, to be above or over'. In a more recent volume, Bomhard (2018, 849-50, entry no. 723) adds: "**ħar-a* (n.) nobleman, master, chief, superior; (adj.) free-born, noble".

The same root was already noticed and compared with **arya* by Hermann Möller (1911, 16) in his comparative dictionary of Indo-European and Semitic, as **ar-* in Indo-European and **Ḥ-r-* in Semitic, with a reduplication **Ḥ-r-r-*. He cited Arabic *ḥarra* 'he was free; he

---

freed (a slave); (a slave) became free'; *ḥurrun* 'free, genuine, the best (of anything); f. *ḥurratun* 'free, pure, noble' (woman or she-camel); *ḥurriyatun* 'the state of freedom', coll. 'free persons, the eminent, noble persons (of a people)'; Hebrew pl. *hōrīm* 'the nobles, freeborn'; *ben-hōrīm* 'freeborn'; Syr. *hērā* 'free'; Judeo-Aramaic *hārā* 'id.'

Bomhard (2018, 849-50) instead gives: Hebrew *ḥōr* 'noble'; Arabic *ḥurr*[37] 'noble, free-born; free, independent', *ḥarra* 'to liberate, to free, to set free, to release, to emancipate', *ḥurrīya* 'freedom, liberty'; Aramaic *ḥərar* 'to be or become free'; Ugaritic *ḥrr* 'free'; Sabaean *ḥrr* 'freemen, free-born men'; Geez *ḥarāwi* 'free-born, nobleman', *ḥarāwənnā* 'freedom', *ḥarənnat* 'freedom'; Tigrinya *ḥara* 'free', *ḥarənnät* 'freedom'; Tigre *ḥara* 'free; freedom'; Amharic *hurr* 'free'; Gurage *hurru bālä* 'to become free, to set free'. We can also add from Semitic languages North-west Semitic *ḥr* 'person of note, noble', *br ḥry* 'freedman' and Amharic *arənnät* 'freedom', *ara* 'free' (Hoftijzer, Jongeling 1995, 401-2; De Blois 1985, 8-10).

Bomhard also compares, from other Afro-Asiatic languages, Egyptian *ḥry* 'chief, master, overseer, superior', *ḥr* 'on, upon, over', *ḥrw* 'upper part, top'; Coptic *hi-* (< **ḥaryaw*) 'on, in, at', *hray* [xrai] 'upper part' (cf. Černý 1976, 291-2). Bomhard (2014, 320) added North Omotic (Yemsa/Janjero) *herašo* 'chief, ruler; chieftainship, rule'.

The root of the Semitic terms is not clear, but, if they are related to the Egyptian terms, these suggest a root connected with the idea of 'being over, superior'. In Indo-European, we have in Pokorny the root 3.*er-/or-/r-* 'to start moving, excite (also mentally, annoy, irritate); to raise (elevation, to grow tall)'[38] that gives Skt. *ṛṇóti ṛṇváti* 'he rises, he moves' (Gr. ὄρνῡμι); Skt. *ṛṣvá-* 'high'; Gr. ὄρος n. 'mountain'; Lat. *orior, oriri* 'to rise, to ascend, to arise, to spring, to be born'; Hitt. *a-ra-a-i* (*arāi*) 'he rises'; Arm. *ari* 'stand up!'.[39]

In the laryngeal theory, this root is **h3er-/*h3r-*, which, according to Kloekhorst (2007, 234-5, 239-40, 253), is also the origin of Hitt. *ar-(tta)* 'to stand (by), to be stationed, to remain standing' (*<h3r-*); *arai-/ari-* 'to (a)rise, to lift; to raise'; CLuw. *ari(ya)* 'to raise' (*<*h3r-oi-/*h3r-i-*); *aru-/araṷ-* 'high' (*<*h3(o)r-u-?*).

Rix (2001, 252, 299-301) distinguishes two different roots, one *h₃er-* 'to start moving (forward)' ('*sich in (Fort-)Bewegung setzen*'), which however he connects with some verbs meaning 'to rise' ('*sich*

---

erheben'), and another root **h1rei- 'sich erheben'*, which he connects with the Hittite verbs cited above, although, as Kloekhorst (2008, 200) remarks, the participle of the verb is *arant-* instead of the expected ***arii̯ant-*. The presence of the final -*i*, as a part of the root in Rix and as a suffix in Kloekhorst is however interesting, because it is found also in Vedic *arí* and in *arya*, if we interpret the last one as derivative of *arí* itself, and in the Greek ἀρι– used in compounds. The vowel is not present in Semitic, but there is in Egyptian *ḥry* and Coptic *hray*.[40] As for the initial sound, in Semitic it is mostly a voiceless pharyngeal, a sound that has been identified with *h2* because it can cause *a*-colouring in Semitic languages.[41] Of course, because of the vocalism, Greek ἀρι– has been derived from *$*h_2er$-* (Beekes 2010, 130), which is normally identified with the meaning 'to fit, to put together', the same that is given to *h4er-* by Mallory and Adams,[42] a meaning however that does not fit with that of Greek ἀρι- 'very'. Differently, *h3* is considered the *o*-colouring laryngeal, reconstructed on the basis of Lat. *orior*, Gr. ὄρνῡμι, etc. However, I think we should

---

[40] This would be one of the cases where non-Semitic Afro-Asiatic parallels of Indo-European terms are closer than Semitic possible parallels. According to Takács (1998, 159-61) these cases suggest the existence in the Near East of an ancient Afro-Asiatic branch different from Semitic, otherwise not attested but by loans in the surrounding languages such as Sumerian, Proto-North-Caucasian, Elamite, Proto-Dravidian, and Proto-Indo-European itself, that would be placed therefore in the Near East.

[41] Cf. Bomhard 2018, 67-73; Quiles 2009, 484; Byrd 2015, 12-13, 232; Kloekhorst 2018, 70. Bomhard (1998, 29) remarks: "there is no evidence from the other Nostratic languages to support positing *H_3 distinct from *H_2 in Indo-European. Note that both of these two laryngeals have the same reflex in Hittite, namely ḫ- (initially) and -ḫ(ḫ)- (medially)". Kloekhorst (2018, 71) observes that in Luwian the outcomes of **h2* and **h3* are rendered with ḫ (in cuneiform) and h (in hieroglyphic). He also reports (2018, 69-70) that there is a consensus that these graphemes represent uvular fricatives, because of the way in which Hittite and Luwian lexemes containing these sounds (especially personal names) are rendered in other languages of the Ancient Near East. His theory is that originally these sounds were uvular stops, still preserved in Lycian and Carian, and then became uvular fricatives in Hittite and Luwian, and pharyngeal fricatives in Proto-Indo-European. Klein and Joseph (2018, 2065), also reporting that Anatolian reflexes of **h2* and **h3* were uvulars, observe that uvulars more easily develop into pharyngeals, therefore they consider likely that **h2/3* were originally uvular in Proto-Indo-European. However, Afro-Asiatic or Semitic terms with initial pharyngeal ḥ- correspond to Hittite terms with initial ḫ- (e.g. Hebrew *ḥaraš* 'to plow', Hitt. *ḫārš-* 'to till (the soil)'), therefore, if the Anatolian sound was really uvular in historical times, it should be an evolution of a pharyngeal and not the other way round. Cf. Bomhard 2018, 824, 850-1.

[42] The existence of **h4* is not generally accepted: it is considered similar to **h2*, being *a*-colouring, with the peculiarity that it disappeared in Anatolian languages, while it would have survived in Albanian /h/ in initial position (Mallory, Adams 2006, 55; cf. Quiles 2009, 473; De Decker 2014, 48; Klein, Joseph 2018, 1807). According to Bomhard (1998, 29), the correspondences between Afro-Asiatic and Indo-European show that **h4* was a voiceless laryngeal fricative /h/ as originally suggested by Sapir, Sturtevant and Lehmann. Bomhard (2018, 822) derives Anatolian terms such as *arawa* 'free' from Proto-Indo-European **her-* [**har-*]/**hor-*/**hr̥-* '(vb.) to liberate, to set free; (adj.) free', corresponding to Proto-Afro-Asiatic **her-*, **hor-* 'to escape, to flee, to run away', giving e.g. Arabic *haraba* 'to flee, to escape', etc.

question the reliability of these reconstructions based on vocalism: we have seen how also in Semitic there are different vowels in different languages (*ḥōr, ḥurr, ḥara,* etc.) although they follow the same pharyngeal consonant, and Pokorny derived from the same root also Greek ἔρνος 'sprout, offshoot' and ἐρέθω 'to stir, provoke', which are not attributed to *h3er-* by Beekes only because of the vocalism itself.[43] Nonetheless, the difference in vocalism between Greek ἀρετή, ἀρείων, ἄριστος, ἀρι- on one hand and verbs like ὄρνῡμι and ἐρέθω and a noun like ἔρις (see above), on the other hand, can suggest two different Proto-Indo-European roots with different laryngeals and vocalism, one with a pharyngeal that helped to preserve the *a* vocalism (**ḥar-*) for the idea of 'superiority, excellence' (similarly to the root **h2ar-* proposed by Klingenschmitt and Schaffner),[44] and the other with a different initial laryngeal and originally no vowel (as in Skt. *r̥ṇoti*) for the upward movement and excitement (possibly **ʔr̥-*),[45] that can also be the source of Skt. *ari* 'enemy', with the sense of hostile movement and anger.

In any case, it seems possible to recognise a root **ḥar-/ḥr-*[46] to indicate a noble and free man or a master, that was shared by Semitic (or Afro-Asiatic) and Indo-European,[47] giving Indo-Iranian *arya* and Celtic **aryo-*, and the Greek noun and adjectives just cited. We can

---

43 See Beekes (2010, 463, 1107), where he proposes to derive ἐρέθω and related terms from **h1er-*, or to assume a secondary ablaut in Greek. Rix (2001, 238, fn. 1) instead, observed that some Greek forms with **er-* like ἔρνος are semantically closer to **h3er-* 'to start moving' (*sich in (Fort-)Bewegung setzen*) than to **h1er-* 'to reach' (*wohin gelangen, geraten*). Mayrhofer (EWA 1, 106) observed that it remains open whether the root of movement **er-* reconstructed by Pokorny has two different IE sources **h1er-* and **h3er-*.

44 Schaffner (2021, 397) derives also Sanskrit *aryá* from that root, refuting Thieme's theory: "Das gravierende Problem bei der Erklärung von Thieme ist, dass das Etymon von ved. *arí-* nach wie vor unklar bleibt. Auszugehen ist m.E. von einer im Sinn eines Part. Präs. Akt. verwendeten primären adjektvischen Bildung uridg. **h2ár-i̯o-* 'dem Rang nach der erste, den ersten Rang einnehmend', die im Indoiranischen – mit oppositivem Akzent substantiviert – als Appellativum iir. **ari̯á-* m. 'Herr' (> ved. *aryá-* 'Herr' [RV.+]; mit ursprünglichem Akzent des Adjektivs ved. *ár(i)ya-* 'Hausherr, Herr' [AV.+]) und als endogene Eigenbezeichnung der Indoiranier iir. **ari̯á-* m. 'Arier' (jav. *airiia-*, ap. /ariya-/) fortlebt. Mittels Vr̥ddhierung und Konstrastakzent ist von iir. **ari̯á-* m. 'Arier' abgeleitet ved. *ā́r(i)ya-* m. 'Arier, Angehöriger der drei Großkasten', Adj. 'zu den Ariern gehörig' (RV.+)".

45 Bomhard (2018, 793-6) reconstructs a Proto-Nostratic root **ʔor-* 'to move rapidly, quickly, hastily; to set in motion' and **ʔory-* 'to rise (up)', both giving Proto-Indo-European **ʔor-/*ʔr̥-* 'to move, to set in motion; to arise, to rise; to raise'.

46 A term with the root *ḥr-* can be *sūrí*, if it derives from *(H)su-ḥri-* (cf. EWA 3, 741; KEWA 3, 495), in the sense of 'good lord', like *su-devá* 'good or real god' (MW, 1225; Grassmann 1955, 1536). This compound can also be a way of avoiding the ambiguity of *arí* in Vedic.

47 The direction of borrowing is not sure, although the fact that Semitic has not the *-i* or *-yo/ya* suffix suggests that it did not receive the term from an Indo-European language. The comparison with Egyptian *ḥry* 'chief, master', instead, could suggest that an Afro-Asiatic language (present in West Asia) with a term similar to the Egyptian one was in contact with Proto-Indo-European speakers, who adopted the term (cf. above fn. 40).

have thus to do with concepts of nobility, freedom and ownership developed in the common cultural frame of a society where slavery and social stratification were evolving: this was possible especially with the Neolithic revolution, which for agriculture required hard labour and produced a surplus that allowed to maintain slaves, and that was also associated with conflicts and trade, which made possible the acquisition of slaves. The Semitic and the Indo-European cultural worlds could be parallel developments of the Neolithic of the Fertile Crescent: in this cultural tree, the Indo-Iranian branch (differently from the other Indo-Europeans) chose to name itself with the adjective or noun connected with that root. As if they did not admit that, members of their own people could be slaves (and normally slaves were foreigners), and/or because they considered their customs especially noble.

Thus, the social concept evident in the Semitic, Irish, and Indian use became ethnic, especially in Iranic speakers, while in India it could be used to distinguish speakers of Indo-Aryan languages from Dravidian, Munda and Tibeto-Burman speakers, thus becoming more linguistic than ethnic, besides the traditional association of *ārya* with the higher castes and ethical behaviour.

All this has nothing to do with the disastrous and artificial concept of a Nordic 'Aryan race' that we have mentioned at the beginning. It is time to deepen the ancient relation of the Semites or Afro-Asiatic speakers with the 'Aryans', evident in many other terms and roots:[48] the results can question some stereotypical oppositions that may still be present in our received picture of humanity and its history.

---

[48]   Cf. Möller 1911; Takács 1998; Bomhard, Kerns 1994; Bomhard 2014; 2018. Takács (1998, 141) observes: "It has long been known and accepted that certain words in the cultural terminology (such as fauna, flora, agriculture and so forth) of Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Semitic coincide due to mutual borrowing. The considerable number of borrowings between Proto-Semitic and Proto-Indo-European can be explained only if we suppose that some time, for a certain period, speakers of these two proto-languages were in areal contact, i.e. were neighbours". Citing Dolgopolsky (1987), he maintains that generally Proto-Semitic was the donor of loanwords, and that the presence of the same terms in Afro-Asiatic confirms this viewpoint.

Bibliography

Primary sources

AKBh = Pradhan, P. (1975). *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam of Vasubandhu*. Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Center.

AV = *Atharvaveda Saṃhitā*, Śaunaka recension. Ed. by J. Gippert. Frankfurt: TITUS, 2012.

JB = *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa of the Sāmaveda*. Ed. by R. Vira and L. Chandra. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986.

MBh = *Mahābhārata*. GRETIL version.

Mn = *Manusmṛti*. GRETIL version.

MSV I = Dutt, N. (1947). *Gilgit Manuscripts*, vol. III.1. Calcutta: Calcutta Oriental Press.

Nir = *Nirukta*: Sarup, L. (1967). *The Nighaṇṭu and the Nirukta*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Pāṇ = Pāṇini: Sharma, A. (1969-85). *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. Extracted from *Kāśikā, a Commentary on Pāṇini's Grammar by Vāmana and Jayāditya*. Hyderabad: Osmania University, Sanskrit Academy.

RV = *Ṛgveda Saṃhitā*. Ed. by Th. Aufrecht. Frankfurt: TITUS, 2000.

TS = *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*. Ed. by A. Weber. Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1871.

VS = *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*. Ed. by A. Weber. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1972.

Secondary sources

Aguilar i Matas, E. (1991). *Ṛgvedic Society*. Leiden: Brill.

Bailey, H.W. (1959). "Iranian *arya-* and *daha-*". *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 58(1), 71-115.

Bailey, H.W. (1987). "Arya". *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/arya-an-ethnic-epithet.

Basham, A.L. (1979). "Aryan and Non-Aryan in South Asia". Deshpande, M.M.; Hook, P.E. (eds), *Aryan and Non-Aryan in India*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1-9.

Beekes, R. (2010). *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, vol. 1. Leiden: Brill.

Billy, P.-H. (1993). *Thesaurus Linguae Gallicae*. Hildesheim: Olms-Weidmann.

Bloomfield, M. (1925). "Review of 'Zum Wörterbuch des Ṛgveda. Von Walter Neisser'". *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 45, 157-72.

Bomhard, A.R.; Kerns, J.C. (1994). *The Nostratic Macrofamily: A Study in Distant Linguistic Relationship*. Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Bomhard, A.R. (1998). "Nostratic, Eurasiatic, and Indo-European". Salmons, J.C.; Joseph, B.D. (eds), *Nostratic: Sifting the Evidence*. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 17-50.

Bomhard, A.R. (2014). *Afrasian Comparative Phonology and Vocabulary*. S.l.

Bomhard, A.R. (2018). *A Comprehensive Introduction to Nostratic Comparative Linguistics, with Special Reference to Indo-European*, vol. 1. 3rd ed. S.l.

BR = Böhtlingk, O.; Roth, R. (1855-75). *Sanskrit Wörterbuch*. St. Petersburg: Eggers.

Burnouf, É. (1833). *Commentaire sur le Yaçna*. Paris: Imprimerie royale.

Burrow, T.; Emeneau, M.B. (1984). *A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Byrd, A.M. (2015). *The Indo-European Syllable*. Leiden: Brill.

Černý, J. (1976). *Coptic Etymological Dictionary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CPD I = Trenckner, V.; Andersen, D.; Smith, H. (1924-48). *A Critical Pāli Dictionary*, vol. I. Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters.

CPD II = Trenckner, V.; Andersen, D.; Smith, H.; Geiger, W. (1960). *A Critical Pāli Dictionary*, vol. II. Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters.

De Blois, F. (1985). "'Freemen' and 'Nobles' in Iranian and Semitic Languages". *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1, 5-15.

Debrunner, A. (1939a). "Zum Ariernamen". Katre, S.M.; Gode, P.K. (eds), *A Volume of Eastern and Indian Studies: Presented to Prof. F.W. Thomas*. Bombay: Karnatak Publishing House, 72-4.

Debrunner, A. (1939b). "Besprechung von: 'Der Fremdling im Rigveda'". *Indogermanische Forschungen*, 57, 145-8.

De Decker, F. (2014). "Some Etymological and Morphological Observations on the *h_2o* Problem". *Studia Etymologica Cracoviensia*, 19, 43-57.

Deshpande, M.M. (1993). *Sanskrit & Prakrit. Sociolinguistic Issues*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Dolgopolsky, A. (1987). "The Indo-european Homeland and Lexical Contacts of Proto-Indo-European with Other Languages". *Mediterranean Language Review*, 3, 7-31.

Dumézil, G. (1941). "Le nom des 'Arya'". *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 124, 36-59.

Ensel, R. (1999). *Saints and Servants in Southern Morocco*. Leiden: Brill.

EWA = Mayrhofer, M. (1992-2001). *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter.

Fraenkel, E. (1962). *Litauisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Bd. I. Heidelberg: Carl Winter.

Geldner, K.F. (1951). *Der Rig-Veda aus dem Sanskrit ins Deutsche übersetzt und mit einem laufenden Kommentar versehen*. 3 vols. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.

Gobineau, A. de. (1853-55). *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*. Paris: Firmin Didot Frères.

Grassmann, H. (1955). *Wörterbuch zum Rig-Veda*. Wiesbaden.

Hoftijzer J.; Jongeling, K. (1995). *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions*, pt. 1. Leiden: E.J. Brill.

Holder, A. (1896). *Alt-celtischer Sprachschatz*. Erster Band A-H. Leipzig: B.G. Teubner.

IAMD I = Ratnachandraji (1923). *An Illustrated Ardha-Magadhi Dictionary*, vol. I. Ajmer: Kesarichand Bhandari.

IAMD II = Ratnachandraji (1927). *An Illustrated Ardha-Magadhi Dictionary*, vol. II. Indore: Sardarmal Bhandari.

KEWA = Mayrhofer, M. (1956-80). *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter.

Klein, J.; Joseph, B.; Fritz, M. (2018). *Handbook of Comparative and Historical Indo-European Linguistics*, vol. 3. Berlin; Boston: Walter de Gruyter.

Klingenschmitt, G. (1974). "Griechisch παρθένος". Mayrhofer, M. et al. (Hrsgg), *Antiquitates Indogermanicae. Studien zur indogermanischen Altertumskunde und zur Sprach- und Kulturgeschichte der indogermanischen Völker. Gedenkschrift für Hermann Güntert zur 55. Wiederkehr seines Todes am 23. April 1973*. Innsbruck: Institut für Sprachwissenschaft, 273-8.

Kloekhorst, A. (2007). *The Hittite Inherited Lexicon* [PhD dissertation]. Leiden: Leiden University.

Kloekhorst, A. (2008). *Etymological Dictionary of the Hittite Inherited Lexicon*. Leiden: Brill.

Kloekhorst, A. (2018). "Anatolian Evidence Suggests that the Indo-European Laryngeals *$h2$ and *$h3$ Were Uvular Stops". *Indo-European Linguistics*, 6, 69-94.

Kogan, L. (2015). *Genealogical Classification of Semitic: The Lexical Isoglosses*. Boston; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Lassen, C. (1830). "Über Herrn Professor Bopps grammatisches System der Sanskrit-Sprache". *Indische Bibliothek*, 3, 1-113.

Liddell, H.G.; Scott, R. (1940). *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. `http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/`

MacKenzie, D.N. (1971). *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*. London: Oxford University Press.

Mallory, J.P.; Adams, D.Q. (1997). *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture*. London and Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn.

Mallory, J.P.; Adams, D.Q. (2006). *The Oxford Introduction to Proto-Indo-European and the Proto-Indo-European World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Matasović, R. (2009). *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Celtic*. Leiden; Boston: Brill.

Möller, H. (1911). *Vergleichendes indogermanisch-semitisches Wörterbuch*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht.

Müller, M. (1866). *Lectures on the Science of Language delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain in April, May, June, 1861 by Max Müller.* 5th ed., revised. London: Longmans, Green and Co.

Müller, M. (1888). *Biographies of Words and the Home of the Aryas*. London: Longmans, Green and Co.

MW = Monier-Williams, M. (1899). *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary, Etymologically and Philologically Arranged with Special Reference to Cognate Indo-European Languages*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Palihawadana, M. (1970). "A New Approach to the Interpretation of Ṛgvedic *ari*". Tilakasiri, J. (ed.), *Añjali, O.H. de A. Wijesekera Felicitation Volume*. Peradeniya: Felicitation Volume Editorial Committee, 88-96.

Palihawadana, M. (2018). "The Indra Cult as Ideology. A Clue to Power Struggle in an Ancient Society (Including a Discussion of the Semantics of Ṛgvedic *Ari* and Its Socio-political Background)". Second, slightly revised Edition with Indices. *Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies*, 24(2), 19-166.

Pictet, A. (1837). *De l'affinité des langues celtiques avec le sanscrit*. Paris: Benjamin Duprat.

Pictet, A. (1857). "Inquiry into the Origin of the Name of Ireland". *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 5, 52-60.

Pictet, A. (1859). *Les origines indo-européennes ou les Aryas primitifs. Essai de paléontologie linguistique*, vol. 1 Paris: Joël Cherbuliez.

Pischel, R.; Geldner, K.F. (1901). *Vedische Studien*. Dritter Band. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Pokorny, Julius. (1959). *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. I. Bd. Bern; Münche: Francke Verlag.

Pooth, R.A. (2015). "Gr. ἔρι-, ved. ²ṛ und *arí*-, die uridg. Wurzel *h_1er- ~ *h_1ar- und uridg. *$h_1ér$- ~ *$h_1ár$-,Widder, Schafbock'". *Historische Sprachforschung*, 128, 94-122.

Puhvel, J. (1984). *Hittite Etymological Dictionary*. Vol. 1, *Words Beginning with A*. Berlin; New York; Amsterdam: Mouton Publishers.

Quiles, C. (2009). *A Grammar of Modern Indo-European*. 2nd ed. Badajoz: Academia Prisca; Indo-European Language Association.

Rix, H. (2001). *Lexicon der Indogermanischen Verben*. Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert Verlag.

Schaffner, S. (2021). "Armenisch *arkʿay* 'König', griechisch ἄρχω 'beginne, herrsche' und indoiranisch **arįá-* 'Herr; Arier'". Tarsi, M. (ed.), *Studies in General and Historical Linguistics Offered to Jón Axel Harðarson*. Innsbruck: Institut für Sprachwissenschaft, 387-402.

Schlegel, F. (1819). "Ueber den Anfang unserer Geschichte, und die letzte Revolution der Erde, als wahrscheinliche Wirkung eines Kometen. Von J.G. Rhode". *Jahrbücher der Literatur*, VIII, 413-68.

Spiegel, F. von. (1858). "Arya, airya; Aryaman, Airyamâ". *Beiträge zur vergleichenden Sprachforschung auf dem Gebiete der arischen, celtischen und slawischen Sprachen*, 1(2), 129-34.

Szemerényi, O. (1977). "Studies in the Kinship Terminology of the Indo-european Languages with Special Reference to Indian, Iranian, Greek and Latin". *Acta Iranica*, 16, 1-240.

Takács, G. (1998). "Afro-Asiatic (Semito-Hamitic) Substratum in the Proto-indo-european Cultural Lexicon?". *Lingua Posnaniensis*, XL, 141-62.

Thieme, P. (1938). *Der Fremdling im Ṛgveda. Eine Studie über die Bedeutung der Worte Ari, Arya, Aryaman und Ārya*. Leipzig: Brockhaus.

Turner, R.L. (1962-66). *A Comparative Dictionary of Indo-Aryan Languages*. London: Oxford University Press.

Vacher de Lapouge, G. (1899). *L'Aryen: son role sociale*. Paris: Albert Fontemoing.

Vasu, Ś.C. (1894). *The Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini*. Allahabad: Satyajnan Chaterji.

Vogelsang, W. (1993). "Dahae. *i.* The Name". *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/dahae.

Ward, W.A. (1961). "Comparative Studies in Egyptian and Ugaritic". *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 20(1), 31-40.