

The Origin of Social Classes, Profession and Colour in the Indo-European Societies and Ancient Persia

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Abstract

The ancient Persian society was traditionally divided into three or four different classes. Experts believe that this shared legacy went back to the Indo-European periods with its foot print, in turn, traceable in the Indo-European societies' belief system. The important question, however, is whether these classifications were the results of such religious beliefs and their gods, or attributable to some other social factors. What role did the *colours* play in this classification? The Sasanian period constitutes the cardinal source of our information. We are, however, trying to find out:

- ✚ The origins of this classification,
 - ✚ The nature of influence, and the role that, the element of *colour* played in this classification,
 - ✚ Whether such classification was identical and uniform amongst all ancient Persian dynasties.
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Introduction

Some scholars study an individual's social standings both vertically and horizontally. Vertically speaking, a person is positioned within the family, clan or tribal unit.

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An individual can also be studied from a horizontal point of view which is the person's work, profession and production. *This* was known as **Pishtra** in the Old Persian texts (Frye, 1377). **Avesta** --the oldest ancient Persian information source and the gatekeeper of the Indo-European and Aryan ancient beliefs-- speaks of four distinct Pishtra:

- ✓ The **Clergy** - *āthravan*,
- ✓ The **Warrior** - *rathaeshtār*
- ✓ The **Husbandman** (Peasant) - *vāstrya fshuyant*, and
- ✓ The **Artisan** - *hūiti*

Which directly correlate to the four classes in **Vedic** (Geldner, 1896 & Skjaervo, 2007).

In the **Long Avesta's** *Yasna* 19 --**Zand**(*Commentary on the Ahunwar*)-- line 16, we read:

“And this saying, uttered by Mazda, has three stages, or measures, and belongs to four classes, and to five chiefs, and it has a conclusion ending with a gift. How are its measures? The good thought, the good word, and the good deed.....” (Muller, 1887)

Line 17 of the same *Yasna* continues:

“Which (are) the occupations? The Priest, the Warrior, the Husbandman, the Artisan, which are daily (tasks? To be) pursued by the Orderly Man, thinking straight thoughts, speaking straight words, performing straight actions, remembered according to the models...” (Skjaervo, 2006)

It must be noted that the four-Pishtra classification has been done in *Yasna* 19 only, and the other parts of Avesta --placing the husbandmen and artisans in the same class-- refer to just three classes (Skjaervo, 2007 & Bartholomae, 1904)

According to the Persian mythological narratives, the classification of the society into priests, warriors, husbandmen, and artisan dates back to the golden era of **Yima**(*Jamshid Shah*). Zarathustra does not, however, recognize this four-Pishtra division of the society in **Gathas** (Dhalla, 1938), and instead refers to them as:

- ✓ Airyamanor Haxemanfor the Clergy,
- ✓ XvaētavandNarfor the Warrior, and
- ✓ Vāstrya or Vāstrya-fšuyantorVərəzəyaorVərəzənya for the Husbandman (Bartholomae, 1904)

Without even mentioning the Artisan (Muller, 1887)

The **Rigveda** society in India echoes the same exact Old Avesta classification (RV10.90):

“12. The Brahman (clergy)was his mouth, of both his arms was the Rajanya (warrior)made. His thighs became the Vaisya(peasant,) from his feet the Sudra (artisan)was produced.”

However, unlike in India where these classes became rigid castes, in Persia the clergy class developed into a separate caste by itself and the other three remained divisive in name only (Dhalla, 1922).

It is possible that the formation of the four-Pishtra social structure was influenced and metamorphosed by the Mesopotamian culture (Frye, 1377). Some other Indo-European scholars believe that this classification symbolizes mythical point of view of the four principle geographical directions.

N. J. Allen and E. Lyle, however, have two other theories. The first finds the likelihood of a Fourth Function reinforced because of parallels with other societies hat project a segmentary "ideology", but finds support as well in terms of the plausibility of a "closing" function, one standing for what is alien, threatening, ambiguous, "beyond' or "outside" the nominative Indo-European tripartite system. The second theory uses mythic sources often mined for their reflected of Indo-European structures to posit that a complete Indo-European system would have three "male" oriented functions and an overarching or a---inclusive "femLe" .Lyle adduces calendrical or seasonal and other diagrammatic cyclical-circular plans such as four directions, seasons, elements, of even the four humors controlling the human body(Mallory & Adams 2006: 119,431).

N. J. Allen believes that the fourth Pishtra's (Artisan) mission is unlike the other three's and this notion does correspond to the mythical notion of the past. According to E. Lyle, the first three Pishtras share the same masculine functional property, while the fourth (the Artisan) is of feminine nature.

We can see this structure in other societies with a little difference. According to Gelb, society in the Ancient Near East was divided into three different classes: the upper, the semi-free serf, and the slaves (Gail, 2007:2). The people of ancient Egypt belonged to three main social classes, often referred to as upper, middle, and lower classes. Social class was inherited but not necessarily fixed permanently. Through marriage or hard work, a person could rise to a higher social class. The tiny upper class included members of the royal family, army officers, doctors, wealthy landowners, and high-ranking government officials and priests. The somewhat larger middle class included merchants, skilled craftspeople, and manufacture. The largest class, the lower class, consisted of unskilled workers; most of them farm laborers (Wallenfels, 2000:270). All were commoners before the throne, except those in whose veins flowed some trace of the royal blood (Frankfort 1978:53). The code of Hammurabi recognized three social classes: *awilum* (landowner), *mushkenum* (landless free citizen), and *wardum* (slave) (Wallenfels, 2000:354). Soviet researchers continuing in the path of Marx, including Jacobson, Diakonoff and Dandamaev divided the Neo-Assyrian society into three main classes, upper, middle, and lower, according to two principal criteria owner and workers (Gail, 2007:2 & Morris 2009:37). Also, we are able to find out such a similar social structure in the ancient Near East.

The Etymology of *Pishtra* and its Association with Colour

Before searching of the classes in the Indo-European society, it is necessary to etymologize these words so as to know the association of *pīstra* with the profession and colour. In Avesta, the sacred book of the Zoroastrians, *pīstra* is a neuter noun to mean "profession, caste, class". *Pīstra* compose of the root of *paēs*, and it has evolved into *pīsa* in the New Persian (Bartholomae, 1904:908 & Kellens 1974: 316). This is derived from the Indo-European root of *peik'* to mean "array, dye" (*peik'-tr/lo* > *pīstra* > *pīsa*) (Lubotsky 2007:2290 & Rix 2001:465). The equivalent of *pīstra* is *vārna* to mean "profession, caste, class" in old India. In Rigveda *vārna* originates in *var* to signify "cover" (Buck 1949:1051 & Mayrhofer 1996:518 & Mayrhofer 1996:154). According to Monier-Williams *vārna* derive from the root of *vri* which signifies "form, colour, clothes and coloured cloth thrown over an elephant".

But the word *vārna* is more properly applicable to the four principal classes described in *Manu's* cod, viz. *Brāhman*, *Kṣatriya*, *Vaiśya* *Sudras*, and not to the numerous mixed castes of later time: the more modern for caste is *Jāti* (Monier-william1872:890). Caste is an unhappy translation of *varna*, as *varna* the ancient ideal social system of Vedic religion whereas "caste" refers to actual *jāti* (birth) system of today (Williams 2003:97). Also, *pīstra*, literally, convey the association of "profession" with "colour" better than *varna*.

Colours and their Symbols

Colour symbolism is one of the most universal of all type of symbolism, and has consciously been used in the liturgy, heraldry, alchemy, art and literature. To begin with, there is the superficial classification suggested by optics and experimental psychology. The first group embraces warm 'advancing' colours, corresponding to processes of assimilation, activity and intensity (red, orange, yellow and, by extension, white), and the second covers cold, 'retreating' colours, corresponding to processes of dissimilation, passivity and debilitation (blue, indigo, violet and, by extension, black), green being an intermediate, transitional colour spanning the two groups. Colour symbolism usually derives from one of the following sources: (1) the inherent characteristic of each colour, perceived intuitively as objective fact (2) the relationship between a colour and planetary symbol traditionally linked with it (3) the relation which elementary, primitive logic perceives (Cirlot2001:54).

The first characteristic of the colour symbolism is its totality and universality source which consists of both the geographical criteria, and the cosmological, psychological and the mythological patterns. Their explanations, too, can be different with each other in cultures (chaviellir1990:294-5). Thus, Jolan de Jacobi, in her study says "the correspondence of the colours to the respective functions varies with different cultures and groups and even among individuals, for example; blue, the colour of the rarefied atmosphere; yellow, te colour of the farseeing sun; red, the colour of the pulsing blood and of fire; green, the colour of earthly, tangible growing things" (Cirlot2001:54). According to the Athenian architect, Philon, "the four colour are the cosmos symbols: white= earth, green=water, violet=air, red=fire"(chaviellir 1999:294-5).

Ely Star maintains that the seven colours are severally analogous to the seven faculties of the soul, to the seven virtues (from a positive point of view), to the seven vices (from a negative view of point), to the geometric forms, the days of week and the seven planets (Cirlot2001:54). Deioces, the Median king, built the great and mighty circles of the seven walls which are now called Agbatana. The first circle is white; the second, black; the third, purple; the fourth, blue; the fifth, orange and the last two circles are coated with silver and gold colours (Herodotus1922. 1.98-99). Colours were referred to the planets: green, the attribute of Jupiter and nature; yellow, attribute of Apollo, the sun god; red, attribute of Mars (Cirlot2001:54). In the Islamic traditions, colours have the magic symbol; for example, the black animals are dire, a black dog is led to die in the family, and the black birds use to sorcery, on the contrary, the white colour is the symbol of light and luminance (chaviellir 1999:294-5).

Colours have referred to the duties of the three social classes: white stands for the priests, red stands for the warriors, and blue and black stand for the herdsmen which changed into the green in Iran(Anthony 2007:92). Indeed, one of the most evident symbols of the societies of the Indo-European tripartition is colour, and its association with the first two classes is clear: Indo-Iranians, Hittites, Celts and Latins applied the white colour for the priests and the red one for the warriors (Mallory1997:151). The Magi who formed one of the six tribes of Medes wore the white robe and covered the head with woolen tiara with long flaps on each side to cover the mouth (Strabo VII, 15, 3). The ancient Romans used white stones to mark fortunate days and that when the Romans celebrated a triumph the victor rode in a chariot drawn by white horses. To these examples we may add plot's claim that in picturing the gods white is most appropriate colour, and that Roman "candidates" for office wore white- as a sign, presumably, of "candor" or "sincerity" (Latin *candidus* meant "bright white", in contrast to *albus*, "pale white"; it also meant "sincere" (Ferber1999:233). the white colour, It is said is the symbolic of the Mazda-worshipping religion(Dhalla1938:233). From early times white has been regarded as symbolic of purity. *Chisti*, the genius of wisdom, put on a white dress. According to the later Persian writers, *Zarathustra* himself wore a white robe. Prince *Siyavarshan* donned white garments when he submitted to the fire ordeal to vindicate his character. Royal garments and military costumes were exchanged for white raiment by kings and warriors, when they offered prayers to *Ahura Mazda*, whether in the fire-temple, or upon the battlefield. The *Shahnameh* represents the early Iranians as using garments of black and blue colour for morning.

Tishtrya, the rain star, assumes the form of a white horse, when he encounters *Apaosha*, the demon of drought, who appears as a black horse. White horses draw the chariot of *Sraosha*. On the death of a person, his corpse was washed and array in white garments. The corpse bearers, likewise, were clad entirely in white (Dhalla1922:176).

Red in the literature is the colour of fire, gold and roses; it is the colour of faces when they show embarrassment, anger, or the flush of health or passion. It stands for the god of bloody war (Ferber1999:169). Red is associated with blood, wounds, death-throes and sublimation (Cirlot2001:54). Since, It was the colour of war and blood, it is possible to think that became the clothes of warriors.

Blue is the colour of the rarefied atmosphere, of the clear sky. One of the specific symbols of World egg is dome, symbolizing also the vault of heaven, which is why domes in ancient Persia were always painted blue or black. The blue colour attributes of Jupiter and Juno as god and goddess of heaven(Ibid :31).

The green colour is the symbol of plants. Sacrificing a green thing, specially in the morning, accompanies with fortunate. Throwing a plant on the new moon leads to a bounteous month. Verdancy empowers the water, and influences on the dead soul (chaviellir:294-5). The primary association of the green colour, of course, is the herbage and foliage of nature, specially in spring and summer(Ferber1999:88).

The Social Classes in the Indo-European Societies

We can realize the common legacy of the Indo-European traditions with surveying of the comparative words and the Indo-European myths such as Indo-Iranian, Greece, Italia who had the social structure based on tripartite classes (priest, warrior, and herdman)(Benveniste1966:280). George Dumézil (1898-1986) is among the few historians of religion whose theories have found a wider audience outside the discipline, and even outside the academy. For half a century- from 1930 up until his death- Dumézil was one of the foremost humanists in France. The scholarly work that had led Dumézil to this position was based on a wide-ranging hypothesis that all people who spoke Indo-European, or, as they were sometimes called even as late as the 1960s, "Aryan" languages had also inherited a common ideology.

In the course of his historical and philological research, Dumézil had found traces of this ideology in Roman texts, Greek myths, Indian hymns, and Old Norse saga literature. The ideology characterized by a special three-part structure that organized distinct cultural fields. At the highest level in this "Indo-European" tripartite structure was the "function" of the sovereign holders of power—the priests, lawmakers, and kings; below it, that of the warriors; and the bottom, the function of the people or producers (Arvidsson2006:4). This tripartite structure is considered as a base for the ideological system of the Indo-European societies; because, myths are the reflex of beliefs. As a result, this structure applies for presenting of the root and culture of the Indo-European societies (Mallory&Adams2004:117). scholars could also find out the nature of the tripartite societies of the priests, the warriors and the herdsmen, and we can assume that each of these classes has had a specific colour, totem and animal (Mallory1997:161). The first function is concerned with acts of sovereignty, and with sacred and legal matters. Its Indo-European god were Mitra and Varuna. Mitra personifies the concept of the contract and governs the legal aspects of authority. Varuna's domain is magic and religion.

The second function has to do with the use of physical force and acts of war. The Indo-European god of this function is Indra, the god of the physical force. The third function has to do with fertility, sustenance, wealth and health. The Indo-European gods are the *asvin*. They were twins. Twinhood was a symbol of fertility and abundance. They were known as *dive Napata*, which means the son of Dyaus or Zeus (Bedolla2002:10&West2007:4). This structure could be revealed in the Mitanni treaty lists the Indo-Aryan gods Mitra and Varuna (often joined together in the Rigveda and associated with the priests), Indra (the war god), and the Nasatya (twins associated with the lower orders). In Greek tradition we find three deities, each associated with a different divine sphere, offering bribes to Paris: Hera offered military victory, and Aphrodite promised the love of the most beautiful woman, arguably a reference to fertility. As Dumézil argued, the Roman equivalents were reinterpreted as history rather than mythology. This is reflected in Livy's account of the first Roman kings where Romulus and Numa appear to fill the function of priests, Tullus Hostilius excelled as a warrior, and Ancus Martius undertook the type of public works projects that might be assigned to the third function (Mallory&Adams2006:431). G. Fussman has discovered in north Pakistan very archaic religious beliefs and rites reflecting the common-Indo-Iranian notions which were alien to the creators of the Vedas.

Here exists an ancestor cult and the common Indo-Iranian and Indo-European tripartite social structure, as well as, cults of the most ancient common Indo-Iranian gods: Yama-Yami (Hama-Yamir), Indra, Gavesha, the protector of cattle, Dhiṣana, the goddess of milk and fertility (Kuzmina2007:321).

each role might have been assigned a specific type of ritual/legal death: strangulation for the priest, cutting/stabbing for the warrior, and drawing for the herder/cultivator. Probably they were something much less defined, like three age grades through which all males were expected to pass- perhaps herders (young), warriors (older), and lineage elders/ritual leaders, as among the Massai in east Africa (Anthony 2007:92). Thematic instances of tripartition, too, can be included the three "crimes" of the king (connected to the theme of king or sovereign necessarily operating in all three functions) and the calamities that proceed from these delicts; the three sins of the warrior, the theme of a type of death as fitted to each function, again usually referent to the figure of the sovereign and how he, engrossing all functions himself, may have to die a "threefold death"; the three major categories of diseases or ailments and three types of remedies that might be applied. Tripartition has also been located in images of division or the parts of the human body (head=the first function, mid-body= the second function, lower body and legs=the third function), in such symbolic usages as functionally ordered colours (generally, white and gold= the first function, red=the second function, green/blue=the third function), and even in spatial or geographical divisions.

The best known spatial reference would identify the sky as the first function, the earth as the second function, and subterranean zone as the third function (Mallory & Adams2004:118). Besides all of the creation or evolution, there were stories about four castes-*brāhmins*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and *śūdras*. When human origin was traced to the dismemberment of the cosmic man (*purusha*), the castes were described as originating from different parts of his body. The Rigveda described the origin of the four castes from parts of the cosmic person, *Virat Purusha*. The *manu-smṛiti* (the law code of Manu) said that the four castes were born from different parts of the body of the body of Brahmā. *Brāhmanas* were born from the face, *kṣatriyas* from the arms, *vaiśyas* from the Thighs, and *śūdras* from the feet of Brahmā (Williams2003:25,91,96).

In the *Shikand I Gumānik Vichār* (16, 1), has come: likewise, the work manifested by him in the world-which is man- is in the likeness of these four classes of the world. As unto the head is priesthood, unto the hand is warriorship, unto the belly is husbandry, and unto the foot is artisanship (Muller1885:119).

These cases show the Indo-European interesting in the “twin or trinity” which are fundamental to the proto-Indo-European system of religious beliefs. Twin shows the magic power (Twin-Mani, Varuns-Mitra, Odin-Thur), and trinity shows the division of the society and cosmos based on the three roles or duties (priest, warrior, Herdman) (Anthony2007:135).As a result, Dumézil’s theories have won supporters. Among those supports were not only experts on Indo-European religion, but also historians of religions (such as Mircea Eliade and Jan de Vries), historians (such as George Duby and Jacques LeGoff), anthropologist (such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Marshall Sahlins) (Arvidsson 2006:4). Benveniste helped ground Dumézil’s theories in the ancient and important Iranian area. While Wikander investigated Indic epic and other Iranian possibilities as well (Mallory&Adams2004:119).

Of course, in a few critical articles from the early 1980s, the two highly regarded historians Arnaldo Momigliano and Carlo Ginzburg claimed that Dumézil himself belonged to the group that opposed the “Judeo-Christian” society, and his theories do with the fascists and Nazis (Arvidsson 2006:4). Malandra believes that although it is true that a tripartite structure can be demonstrated conclusively for Celts, Iranian, and Indo-Aryan societies for historical periods, it is not at all certain that a primitive tripartition can be safely reconstructed for Indo-European or even Indo-Iranian society, mainly because there is no consistent terminology in the various languages for the supposed classes. In Avestan a word for ‘priest’, *āθravan*, became the generalized term for any priest, although in western Iran there was what Herodotus calls a tribe of Median priest, the Magi (Opers magu). In India *brāhmana* ‘brahmin’ (sacred power older term, *brahmán*, one who has to do with barman, again a once specific term generalized to include the entire class of specialists in the sacred. Members of the warrior class in Iran were called *rathaēshtā* ‘who stands in the chariot, while in India they are *rājanya* ‘kingly, noble, or *kṣātrya*, one who exercises rulership; noble man. The third estate is designed as *vāstryō.fšuyant*, husbandman, farmer, in Avestan. In Indic the term is *vaiśya*, commoner,. But there is no reason to assume that each function was the sole domain of three discrete hereditary social classes. The pater familias, for example, could easily have exercised all three functions (Malandra1983:8).

Although his tripartite view of IE ideology may not hold the key to IE mythology, Dumezil's work is worth reading as an enthralling adventure of mind, and his work reveals much about the early culture of IE societies (Clackson 2007:212).

Dumezil's work, anyway, has been enormously influential. Some researchers continue to operate within the framework of his tripartite ideology, and to refer to the First, Second, or Third Function as if they had the same truth-status as the first, second, or third declension in Latin. Others have been strongly critical. As the system is essentially a theoretical taxonomy, it is hardly capable of proof or disproof (West 2007:4). In the following, we observe the tripartite classes of the Indo-European societies.

				India
Indic classes	Mahābhārata	RV	Mitanni deities	
Manu Brahmin- swears by truth	Yudhishtira Pāndu	Mitra Varuna	Mi-itira Aru-na	Sovereign
Ksatrya- swears by chariot and weapons	Arjuna	Indra	In-da-ra	Warfare
Vaisya	Nakula	Nāsatya	Na-sa-at-tiya	Fertility

				Iran
Prayer to Ahura Mazdāh to ward off	Sacred fires initiated by early Iranian kings	Iranian Social Classes	Avesta	
Demonic evil and heresy	Atur Franbag 'priests'	Āthravan 'fire priest'	Aša Vahišta Vahu Manu	Sovereign
Military conquest	Atur Gushnasp 'warriors'	Rathaēštar 'chariot warrior	Xšaθra vairya	Warfare
Bad year for harvest	Atur Bazzen Mihr	Vastryō fšuyant 'herdsmen	Amr̥tāt Haurvatāt	Fertility

			Greece
Lycurgus's reforms	Athenian social groups	Judgment of Paris	
Established senate	Ἱεροποιοί 'priests'	Herā promises kingship	Sovereign
Established military messes	Φύλακες 'guards'	Athēnē promises military victory	Warfare
Redistributed land	Γεωργοί 'farmers'	Aphroditē promises love of most beautiful woman	Fertility

			Rome
History	Major Roman priests	Deities	
Rōmulus Numa	Flāmen Dialis	Jupitr Dius Fidius	Sovereign
Tullius Hostilius	Flāmen Martiālis (Mars)	Mars	Warfare
Ancus Martius	Flāmen Quirinālis (Quirinus)	Quirinus	Fertility

		Scandinavia
Heimskringla	Dieties	
On winter's day a blood sacrifice for a good year	Oðinn Tyr	Sovereign
On a summer's day, a sacrifice 'for victory in battle'	Thor	Warfare
On the middle of winter, a sacrifice 'for a good crop'	Njorðr Freyr Freyja	Fertility

The Social Classes in the Ancient Iran

There are a little and different data as for the social classes in the ancient Iran, and even our data in the Achaemenid period are much less than that of sasanian period. We only know of the existing of the seven aristocrat families who placed in the top of the nobles, and according to Herodotus "they possessed the specific privilege". The magi, a Median tribe engaged in the religious affairs, but there is no information about the other classes (Pirniya 1999,2, 1432&Diakonov1991,111). There are no evidences that indicate to the social classes in the Parthian period as well (Pirniya 1999,3, 2345). We know the Parthian aristocrats have the high and inheritable ranking, and could depose the king, and were more independent than the Achaemenian and sasanian ones (Rawlinson1903:414). Of course, In the heartland of the Parthian empire there lived, aside from the aristocracy and the Husbandman (and aertisan) population of different origins and status, a 'middle class' consisting of people whose special knowledge, skills and services could not easily be dispensed with in the royal residences and aristocratic households. These were artists, craftsmen, traders, physicians, eunuchs and other ,personnel, as well as ,minstrels, (*gōsān*) (Wiesehofer1996: 156).

In the Sasanian period there were another division with more important social structure which originated in the Parthian period.

In the *kārnāmag i ardashir i Babakān*, an unsacred book, indicates a hierarchy as follow" *spāhbedān* (the head of warrior), *wuzurgān* (the great), *āzātān* (the nobles), *vāspubragān* (princes) were astonished when saw in such manner. *Movbedān movbed* (the head of priests), *ērān spāhbed* (the head of iran warriors), *pōshtibān sālār* (the head of patrons), *dabērān meh* (the head of scribes) and *andarzbed* (the head of consultants) and *vāspubragān* went near *ardashir* and did homage(Nyberg 2003: 60). In the *ayādigār zarērān* has separately been indicated to these officilas(navvabi,1374: 52). In the bilingual inscription of Shāūpur I at Hāji Ābād in the province of Fārs, these are listed as the princes of the Empire, or *shabrdārān*; the high-ranking elite or *vāspubrān*; the grandees, or *wuzurgān*, and finally the freemen or *āzādihān*. Divine Glory or *farr* was a quality possessed by the King of Kings.

But the King of Kings was not the only dignitary in possession of *farr*. The *Shabrdārān* of the realm could also boast the attribute of Divine Glory. The highest members of *vāspubrān* came from the seven great feudal families of the realm. In fact, the Sasanians were themselves only the first of these. As Christensen observes, " the members of these seven great families had the right to carry a crown, being in their origin the equals of the kings of Iran. Only the size of their crown was smaller than that of the Sasanian king". The *Shabrdārān* were subordinate the King of Kings, *Shāhanshāh*. The seven great feudal families of the Sasanian period traced their descent to the Parthians. In fact only three, Christensen argues, seem to have held the same elevated position in the Arsacid feudal structure inherited by the Sasanians. These were the families the *Karins*, the *Surēns*, and the *Ispābbudhān*. These all carried the title of Pahlav, or Parthian. The three other families were Spaniyadhs (or Isfandiyar), the Mihran, and possibly the Ziks (Poursharati2008;48). Of course, the latter has come in the Greek writings(Nafisi 1384: 34). In official inscriptions the Sasanian kings called themselves, Mazda- worshipping majesty, of the race the gods'. According to Ammianus Marcellinus (XXIII, 6.5), the Sasanian king considered himself 'brother of the sun and moon' (Chegini1996:3).

As it was pointed out, there is no mention in sources of the Achaemenid and Parthian periods of the ancient division of society into estates of which we learn from the Avesta, and there is no evidence that such a division existed in the first half of the Sasanian period. That such a division existed in the subsequent period (from the 5th century on) we know from Pahlavi sources, from the works of Byzantine writers and Arab writers, and from the Persian tradition(Yarshater 1983, 3(2) 32).

Of course, the Pahlavi sources continue to show the same Avestan tradition because there is no mention to the secretaries (*Dipiran*), and here we refer to them to be clarified: in the *Mēnōg I kbrad* in the question 31; The Sage asked the Spirit of Wisdom thus: what is severally the business of the *Āsrūs* (priest), and the *Artishtārs* (warrior), and the *vāstryōshes* (agriculturists)? The Spirit of Wisdom answered thus: the business *Āsrūs* is to keep the religion perfect, and to perform the worship and invocation of God well and with attention; and to keep true the decrees, and judgments, and customs, as declared from the pure, good religion of the *MazdaYasnaians*, and to inform men of good works and sin, and to show the way to heaven, and the avoidance of fear from hell. And the business of the *Artishtārs* is to beat the enemy and to keep their own city and frontier unalarmed and tranquil. And the business of the *vāstryōshes* is to perform tillage and cultivation and according their ability, to nourish the earth and keep it cultivated, (32) The Sage asked the Spirit of Wisdom thus: what is severally the business of the *Hū-tukhshes*, the artizans? The Spirit of Wisdom answered thus: the business of the artizans is this, that work which they understand not, they bring not a hand to it; and that which they understand, they do well (west1979; 161&Tafazzoli1364:49).

In the *Shikand I Gumanik Vichar* has been indicated to the four duties: So, also, of the four capabilities (*hunarān*) that are in man-which are temper, ability, wisdom, and diligence- unto temper (*khim*) is priesthood, as the greatest duty of priests is the temper that they do not commit sin on account of shame and fear; unto ability (*hunar*) is warriorship, that is, the most prized adornment of warriors is the ability which is expended, the manliness which is owing to self-possession (*khvadih*); unto husbandmen is the wisdom (*khirad*) which is strenuous performance of the tillage of the world, and continuance unto the renovation of the universe; and unto artisan is the diligence (*tukhshākih*) which is the greatest advancement of their class (Demenasce1945: 26&Muller1885:116). In the *Denkerd* (9, 48, 21) has indicated to four classes" about the girding on this saying of the religion of *Auharmazd* by the three degrees (*padmān*), which are good thoughts, good words, and good deeds; by the four classes, which are priesthood, warriorship, husbandry, and artisanship. In the *Denkerd* (7, 47, 20) describes of the four classes (Muller1885:308), and in the passage remained of the Pahlavi Yasnaa (19,46) as well (Ibid:504).

Anyway, the *Bundahishn* tell us about three classes and their association with the three fire-temples " and in the beginning of the creation the whole earth was delivered over into the guardianship of the sublime Frōbak fire, the mighty Gūsnasp fire, and the beneficial Būrzin-Mitrō fire, which are like priest, warrior, and husbandman (Muller1885:186). The fifth chapter of *Zend-Āgāsib* or the great *Bundahishn* denotes the three classes of priest, warrior, and husbandman(Anklesaria1956:56). But, In the *Shayist u nashayist* (8, 8) tell us of four classes: the three repetition of *Ye-sevisto*, and the holding up of the holy-water (zōhr) at these repetitions, are for the four classes. Muller says " there were originally only three, the priest, warrior, and husbandman; but at a later date the artisan was added(Muller1885:260,358& West1880,284).

Each of these classes had a specific hierarchy. The priesta (*āsrōnān*) composed a class which was further divided into rank and function: the chiefpriests (*mowbedān*), priestattending the fires (*hērbēdān*), expert theologians (*dastūrān*), judges (*dādwarān*), and learned priests (*radān*) were chosen from the ranks of the religious body. The Judges were the ones who had knowledge about those religious matters which regulates of the laws and norms of the empire. They acted as councilors (*andarzbed*) and, based on the epigraphic remains, we know of councilor-priests (*mowān andarzbed*) who were also important functionaries. Other important priestly offices included the priest of Ohrmazd (*ohrmazd movbed*). We must remind ourselves that these titles were not all created at one time or the beginning of the Sasaanian dynasty, but rather there was a proliferation of ranks and titles as the administrative and religious apparantus of the state grew.

By the fifth century CE each class of priests had their own chief and we have evidence for two of them, the chief of the movbeds known as mowbedān mowbed, and for the teacher-priests attending the fires the hērbēdān herbed(Daryae2009:43). The warriors (*artēštārān*) composed the second state of the society and their function was to protect the empire and its subjects, the armies were initially headed by an Iran-spahbed "General of the the Empire". Later during the time of Kavad and his son, Khusro I, this office was abolished and four spahbed "generals" were assigned the four quarters (*kusts*) of the empire. There were divisins within the military including the cavalry (*asmāra*), and the foot soldiers (*Pāygan*). The function of the warriors who were in effect the largest part the nobility was to protect the empire, and to deal with people with gentility and keep their oath.

The third state consisted of the husbandmen (*wāstaryōšān*), and farmers (*dabigān*), whose function was to till the land and keep the empire prosperous, and were represented by a chief of husbandmen (*wāstaryōšān sālār*). The fourth estate was much more numerous than the other three and treated somewhat separately by Zoroastrian law. They were the artisan (*butuxšān*) (Ibid 45-47). These officials were transferred from father into son, but there were exceptions according to traditions, and if somebody showed his capability, he could go the higher rank such as secretaries and warriors after confirming of the king and the chief of priests (Burgan2010:88& Houvar, 1363, 144). The *Letter of Tansar* describes "The founder of the Sasanian dynasty proclaimed, "it should maintain everything except the classes, and he came into existence ranks and the general and exterior differences among the people (Yarshater 1983, 3, 2, 44). On this reason, some scholars take into the consideration the ancient social structure severely. Of course, this has been exaggerative because these scholars have tried to describe the ideal ways of the social structure based on the religious literature existed. This was led to be represented the incorrect picture of the Iranian potential structure. Of course, we can imagine that the priest, warrior, and husbandman classes were separated of each other in some cases. We see the name of Gaumat is always coming with his title, and in certain references it is specified only with his title. Namely, he had not the right to corrupt his position, just like that the warriors could not possess the priestly officials (Dyakonov 1380: 111).

The sasanian, however, with the establishment of Iranshahr transposed Avestan norms and also its class structure onto the society in the Iranian plateau. The existing society was not the same society of antiquity and had its own characteristics which had developed in the Achaemenid and Parthian period (Daryae2009:39). This division had came into being in terms of the new circumstances; among other thing the existence of the new class of the governmental staffs who were appeared in the 5th and 6th century C.E, and the castes took a new shape, so that the third class changed into the secretaries and the fourth into the *wāstaryōšān* and *butuxšān* (Dyakonov 1380: 325). The social structure, of course, was based on the four class in the time of Sasanian. Its difference the fact that the third class became secretaries, and arranged the husbandmen and artisans in the fourth class as follow: the priests or *āsravan*; the warriors or *arteštārān*, the secretaries or *dibērān*, and finally the people who were included the husbandmen and artisans. According to Darmesteter it is possible to be enumerated the secretaries as the third class might have resulted in the mistake of the Iranian-Arab translators.

But it is incorrect because the *dibērān* class has been confirmed in the *Letter of Tansar* (Poursharati 2008:47 & Christansen 1944:98 & Christansen 1907:128). In *Pahlavi* the word for "scribe" is *deibir* (New Persian: *dabir*), derived from old Persian *dipira* which in turn was a borrowing from the Elamite of *tup-pi-ra/tipira*. Vallat remarks about it "as if Darius had wished to make use of a class of scribes belonging to an already existing administration (Tafazzoli 1385:37 & Soudavar 2003:119). It is possible that the three traditional classes along with growing the economic, the specializing of officilas, and developing of the bureaucracy system could not response to the existing circumstances in the sasanian period; as a result the secretaries who was being selected between the priests and nobles, changed to a social class (Yarshater 1983, 3, 2, 44). Masudi in *Tanbihatolashraf* of the Islamic references says "the Iranian have officials which were the five officials as follow: the priest, the great commander, the warrior, secretary and artisan (Masudi 1365:97).

During the fifth century C.E, the reform also established four main estates or *pēšag*. First, as before, came the priests with which the judges were also associated. In the second place the ancient warriors or *artēštārān* were changed to the new nobles or *āzātān*. The third place was assigned to a new estate known as scribes or *dipīrān*. The cultivators or *wāstaryōšān* along with the craftsmen or *butuxšān* formed the forth estate (Yarshater 1983, 3, 2, 45).

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