



ĀDUR FARNBĀG

ĀDUR FARNBĀG, an Ātaš Bahrām (see [Ātaš](#)), that is, a Zoroastrian sacred fire of the highest grade, held to be one of the three great fires of ancient Iran, existing since creation (see further under [Ādur Burzēn-Mihr](#)). The Middle Iranian name Farnbāg, presumably that of the fire's unknown but historical founder, means "Having a share (*bāg*) through Fortune." Old Persian *farnah-* is a dialect form of Avestan (*xvarənah-*, Pahlavi *xwarrah* (a "learned" word) meaning "fortune, glory," a common noun and the name also of a *yazata* (see [Farr](#)).

In the Sasanian period Ādur Farnbāg was established in Pārs, and it is probable that this is where the fire was first founded, at some unknown date (presumably in the late Achaemenid or Parthian period). A legend existed, however, to the effect that it had been brought to Pārs from Chorasmia. This legend appears to have been evolved to give the Persian fire a link with the early days of the faith, in rivalry with the Parthian Ādur Burzēn-Mihr; in fashioning it much was made of the correspondence between *farn-* and *xvarənah-* (the second element in the fire's name being ignored). So it is said in *Bd.* 18.10 that in the remotest past Jam (Yima) installed the fire on Xwarrahomand ("Fortune-possessing") Mountain; and that "when they hacked the Jam to death, Ādur Farabāg saved his *xwarrah* from the grasp of Dahāk." This is a clear allusion to *Yt.* 19.47, where, however, it is said simply that it was "the Fire of Mazdā Ahura" which sought to take possession of Yima's *xvarənah-*. Thereafter, according to the *Bundahišn*, "in the reign of Vištāsp through a revelation from the faith, they (took) it from Chorasmia, and installed it on Mt.



Rōšn in the region of K . . . , where even now it remains” (*Bd.* 18.11). The place-name beginning with “k” is differently transmitted in the various manuscript, but one reading, of the ms. TD 1, appears to the Kārnīkān, which W. B. Henning interpreted as the older form of Kārīān, the place in Fārs, where, according to the Muslim geographers, Ādur Farnbāg was installed at the time of the Arab conquest. No ruins of a fire-temple have yet been identified at this site. Mas’ūdī (*Morūj*, par. 1402) records variants of the legend of the fire’s foundation: One is that, at the urging of Zoroaster, Goštasp had search made for “the fire venerated by Jamšīd,” and, having found it in Chorasmia, brought it to Pārs. Another is that Kay Kōsrow, having entered Chorasmia on an expedition against “the Turks,” found the fire and brought it away. A third version, which attributed this action to Anōšīravān, can hardly belong to Sasanian times but must be a confused tradition of the post-conquest period.

It was probably first in the Sasanian epoch that Persian priests declared Ādur Farnbāg to be the fire of the priestly estate (see [Ādur Burzēn-Mihr](#)); and in the Pahlavi books it is regularly placed first among the three great fires. Moreover the opening lines of *Ātaš nīāyeš* 4, *Sīrōza* 9—where “Fire, son of Ahura Mazdā” is invoked with “Mazda-created Xvarənah,” the “Xvarənah of the Aryans,” and the “Kingly Xvarənah”—were interpreted as being an invocation of Ādur Farnbāg. (The identification is explicitly made in the Pahlavi translation.) The frequent identification of Ādur Farnbāg with the divine Xvarənah had far-reaching effects; and the curious incident in the *Kār-nāmag ī Ardašīr* (ed. Sanjana, 9.11), where “the victorious Ādur Farnbāg, or miraculous power” flies to Ardašīr in the shape of an eagle and dashes a cup of poison from his hand, is almost certainly a rehandling of an original version where the royal Xvarənah acted thus.

In consequence of this identification, the sacred fire itself was sometimes called simply Ādur Xwarrah (NPers. Kōrra); and this allowed a confusion to develop between it and the divine “Glory of Fire” (Av. *atarə xvarənah-*) which is the hypostasis of the power and “glory” in all fires (see *Bd.* 18.15). Thus it is said in the *revāyats* that Ādor Kōrra, “who is Ohrmazd’s own son” (Dhabhar, *Rivayats*, p. 619), that is, the spirit of Fire itself, will be present “with the other Amēšasponds” to receive the righteous soul at the Čīnvat Bridge (*ibid.*, pp. 70, 175, 177); but in *Bd.* 26.45 it is recorded that one commentator identified “Ādur Xwarrah” in this function with Ādur Farnbāg. In the preceding lines (26.44) a distinction is made between the three great fires, Farnbāg, Gušnasp, and Burzēn-Mihr, called spirits (*mēnōg*), and the “other fires which are installed in



sanctuaries.” This is all the more remarkable, since all three fires were presumably (Ādur Farnbāg certainly) burning in their actual temples when these words were written.

Apart from the name Ādur Xwarrah (later Ḳorra), the sacred fire was also known in later times as Ādur Ḳordād, corrupted into Ḳar(r)ād; and its own proper name was reduced to Farrvā (attested in a Syrian source as a man’s name, Ādurfarrvā), with the dialect variant, Kar(r)ā. In the *Šāh-nāma* version of the story of Ardašīr, the king is represented as visiting the temple of “Ādar-e Rām-Ḳarrād” in order to pray there (ed. Borūḳīm, VII, p. 1940.364). Later in the work, Yazdegerd I swears an oath by “Ḳarrād and Barzīn [i.e., Borzīn-Mehr] and the yellow sun” (VII, p. 2094.325); and Bīrūnī (*Āṭār al-bāqīa*, p. 228) records that Yazdegerd’s great-grandson, Pērōz, prayed at the shrine of “Ādarkūrā” for an end to the prolonged drought which affected Iran in his reign. In the *Ardā Vīrāz nāmāg* 1.21, a great assembly of priests gathers at the temple of “the victorious Ādur Farnbāg,” and thereafter (1.28) they summon the people to the same place to hear their decision (ed. and tr. H. Jamaspji Asa, M. Haug, E. W. West, *The Book of Arda Viraf*, Bombay and London, 1872).

According to Ebn al-Faḳīh (BGA V, p. 246.7ff.) when the Arabs conquered Iran the priests divided the “fire of Jamšīd, that is, Ādarḳorra” into two, keeping one fire at Kārīān, but carrying the other to Fasā (also in Fārs) to reduce the danger of its being extinguished. Eventually, when the *dastūr dastūrān* of the Zoroastrians withdrew with his priests to the village of Torkābād in the north of the Yazd plain, two great Ātaš Bahrāms were brought for safety to the neighboring village of Šarīfābād. One of these is known to this day to the villagers as Ādor Ḳarā, and it is presumably the fire of Kārīān of Fasā. Early in this century the cost of maintaining the two fires forced the villagers to unite them in the temple of the other Ātaš Bahrām (most probably in origin the ancient fire of Eṣṭaḳr). So the temple of Ādor Ḳarā now stands empty; but it is still deeply revered and is used for certain communal observances, while the conjoined fire in the other temple is tended with the greatest devotion.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

B. N. Dhabhar, *The Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz*, Bombay, 1932.

To the works under Ādur Burzēn-Mihr add: Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems*, pp. 1-51.

J. Harmatta in *Bulletin du Musée hongrois des beaux arts*, 1957, p. 9.

Boyce, *Stronghold*, Chap. 1.