Encyclopædia Iranica

AFRĀSĪĀB (PERSON)
Article by **Ehsan Yarshater**

Published: December 15, 1984
Last Updated: June 19, 2018

AFRĀSĪĀB (PERSON)

AFRĀSĪĀB (Av. Fraŋrasyan; Mid. Pers. Frāsiyāv, Frāsiyāk, Frangrāsyāk, etc.; Ṭabarī: Farāsīāt; Dīnawarī, Masʿūdī, Bīrūnī: Farāsīāb; Ṯaʿālebī, Ferdowsī: Afrāsīāb; Pazand: Frāsyāvak, Frāsyāvan), Turanian king and hero and Iran's archenemy in its legendary history. By far the most prominent of Turanian kings, Afrāsīāb is depicted in Iranian tradition as a formidable warrior and skillful general; an agent of Ahriman, he is endowed with magical powers and bent on the destruction of Iranian lands. He, Bēvarasp (Żaḥḥāk), and Alexander form a most hated trio that according to Zoroastrian writings Ahriman set against the Iranians (cf. *Zand ī Vahman Yašt* 7.32; *Mēnōg ī xrad* 8.29). He symbolizes the opposition between Iran and Turan, which constitutes the main theme of the Iranian national saga and fills more than half of Ferdowsī's *Šāh-nāma*.

In Middle Persian and Islamic sources his descent is traced to Tūr (or Tūč, Tūǰ, Tūž, Tūz < *Tūr-č), a son of Ferēdūn; in the Avesta he is called *Tūriya*– "Turian, Turanian." There are discrepancies in the number of his ancestors and their names, which are often corrupted in the extant manuscripts. His genealogy as given in the *Bundahišn* (tr., 35.17) makes him the seventh generation from Ferēdūn: Frāsiyāb, son of Pašang (Fašanǰ in Arabic texts), son of Zaēšm (Zādšam in the *Šāh-nāma*), son of Tūra(g), son of Spaēnyasp, son of Dūrōšab (or Dūrōšasp), son of Tūj, son of Frēdōn (cf. Ṭabarī, I, p. 434; Bīrūnī, *Āṯār al-bāqīa*, 104; Masʿūdī, *Morūǰ* II, p. 117, ed. Pellat, par. 540; *Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, I[2], p. 51). All sources agree on the name of his father, Pašang.

In the Avesta, where his common epithet is *mairya*– "deceitful, villainous"

(*AirWb*., s.v., col. 1151[1]; but cf. H. S. Nyberg, *Die Religionen*, p. 257, who takes it in the sense of "man, [evil] man"), he is depicted as a chief enemy of the Iranian race. He lives in a subterranean fortress made of metal (*Y*. 11.7; *Yt*. 5.41-43) and called Hankana ("pit, tunnel", Pers. Hang, from *kan-*, to dig). Elsewhere (*Aogemadaēčā*, 60-61, and *Bundahišn* 32.6, 13) he is said to have enjoyed the best of lives in an underground, iron-walled palace one thousand times the height of a man, and supported by one hundred columns; it was lit by stars, a sun, and a moon, all fashioned through magic by Afrāsīāb himself. Four rivers ran in it, of water, wine, milk, and beaten sour milk (*māst ī zata*).

The Avesta emphasizes Afrāsīāb's repeated but largely unsuccessful attempts to capture the *xᵛarnah-* (Pers. *farr(ah)*, divine fortune or glory). According to *Yašt* 5.41-43, he sacrificed one hundred horses, one thousand cattle, and ten thousand sheep in Hankana to the goddess Ardvī Sūrā Anāhitā, the *yazad* or genius of waters, in an unsuccessful bid to attain the *farr*, which was afloat in the Vourukaša sea; in contrast the same *yazad* granted the wish of Kavi Haosravah (Pers. Kay Ḵosrow) to slay Afrāsīāb (*Yt*. 9.21-23, 19.77). According to *Yašt* 19.56-64, Afrāsīāb plunged three times into the Vourukaša sea to seize the royal *farr* of the Iranian race, but to no avail. Then, according to *Dēnkard* VII, 2.68-69, he began to wander in the seven climes searching for the *farr*, only once did he succeed briefly in holding it, when he killed the wicked Zainigav (Mid. Pers. *Zēngyāv*), a follower of the Lie (*Yt*. 19.93). The *Bundahišn* (33.9) explains that Zainigav had taken the Iranian throne and the Iranians sought help from Afrāsīāb against him. The incident is referred to briefly also in the *Šāh-nāma* (Moscow, II[2], p. 147), where it is said that the Turanians overcame invaders from the "Arabian desert" during the absence of Kāvūs in Hāmāvarān. According to the *Bundahišn* (35.18) and Bīrūnī (*Āṯār al-bāqīa*, p. 103) Dahāk (Żaḥḥāk) was a grandson of Zainigav.

In the Avesta the *yazad* involved in the destruction of Afrāsīāb is Haoma, who offers sacrifices to the *yazad* Drvāspā, protector goddess of cattle and horses. She grants him the boon of being able to fetter the villainous Afrāsīāb and drag him in chains to Kavi Haosravah, who slays him at the shore of lake Čaēčasta to avenge the blood of his father Syāvaršan (Pers. Sīāvaḵš, Sīāvoš) and Aγraēraθa (Pers. Agrēraṯ; *Yt*. 9.18-19; cf. *Y*. 11.7). In the *Šāh-nāma* Haoma is transformed into the holy man Hōm, who helps capture Afrāsīāb near lake Čēčast in Azarbaijan, identified with lake Urmia in later literature (see *Nozhat al-qolūb*, p. 241; tr. p. 233).

The Pahlavi books offer valuable information for a reconstruction of some of

the lost myths. According to *Mēnōg ī xrad* 8.29-30, Ahriman created Dahāk, Afrāsīāb, and Alexander immortal, but Ahura Mazdā altered their status, just as Ahriman changed Jamšēd, Ferēdūn, and Kay Kāvūs into mortals. This is confirmed by another passage (27.34) which says that the advantage accruing from the creation of Bēvarasp and Afrāsīāb was that if kingship had not fallen to them it would have fallen to Xešm, the demon of wrath, and it would not have been possible to reclaim it until the resurrection. Yet Afrāsīāb appears to have become almost timeless; though he was conceived as a contemporary of the Pishdadian Manōčehr, he attempts to capture the *xᵛarnah* of Zoroaster (*Yt*. 19.82). Traces of his extraordinary longevity are seen in some of the sources; Masʿūdī (*Morūǰ*, par. 540) says he lived 400 years, and Naršaḵī (p. 23) 2,000 years.

According to *Dēnkard* III.110 (tr. J. de Menasce, Paris, 1973, p. 113), Afrāsīāb was a demon (*dēv*) incapable of changing his nature and therefore unable to reach salvation. His most characteristic destructive activity is the suppression of waters, draining of rivers, and causing of drought, famine, and desolation, a fact that is evident from the accounts of his rule (*Bundahišn* 33.5; Ṭabarī, I, pp. 529ff.; Ḥamza, p. 34; Ṯaʿālebī, p. 124; *Šāh-nāma* III, p. 197; *Moǰmal*, p. 43; cf. Baḷʿamī, *Tārīḵ*, p. 521); his defeat and the subsequent domination of Iranian kings such as Zav and Kay Ḵosrow caused the rivers to flow and the land to prosper. In the *Bundahišn* (33.6) it is clearly stated that Afrāsīāb withheld rain from Iran until Zav restored the situation and brought the “New rain.” According to the *Dēnkard* (III.93) Afrāsīāb caused ruinous earthquakes by imprisoning the wind in the earth. It appears that either he was originally an adverse deity who like the Indian Vrtra withheld rain and personified the natural phenomenon of drought, or else he absorbed the features of such a deity. In one respect his struggles against the Iranians resemble the celestial battles depicted in the Avesta between Tištriya, the rain-causing *yazad*, and Apaoša, the demon of drought; thus his destruction is connected with both Haoma, the genius of the plant *haoma*, and Drvāspā, a goddess closely linked to Gəuš Urvan, the genius of cattle. Furthermore Ṭabarī (I, p. 531) preserves a tradition according to which the Festival of Waters, namely the day Ābān of the month Ābān, the third most important Zoroastrian festival (after Nowrūz and Mehragān), commemorated the victory of Zav over Afrāsīāb. Afrāsīāb’s destruction of plant life is reflected also in a pivotal episode of his legends, his slaying of Sīāvoš, who exhibits many features of a vegetation deity (see E. Yarshater, “Taʿzieh and Pre-Islamic Mourning Rites in Iran,” in P. Chelkowski, ed., *Taʿzieh: Ritual Drama in Islam*, New York, 1979, pp. 88ff.).

Afrāsīāb's devastation of the land was also expressed through a myth telling of his marriage with the goddess of earth, Spandārmat (*Šahrastānīhā ī Ērān*, par. 35). The myth has left a trace in Bīrūnī's account (*Āṯār*, p. 220) of the arrow shot to determine the boundary of Iran and Turan: An angel, Esfandārmaḏ (the genius of the earth), orders the bow and the arrow to be brought and summons the bowman Areš to shoot the arrow. The legend seems to symbolize the earth's efforts to rid herself of the tyrant. The myth finds a rather unexpected confirmation in Theodor Bar Kōnay when he mentions among Zoroastrian beliefs that "the earth was a young virgin betrothed to Parisag" (see E. Benveniste, "Le témoignage de Théodore bar Kōnay sur le Zoroastrisme," *MO* 26-27, 1932-33, pp. 192ff.). Parisag (*prysg*, misread in Syriac for **prsyg* *Prasiag), as Benveniste was first to recognize, is none other than Afrāsīāb. This myth, which goes back to remote antiquity and seems to have viewed drought as the result of the rape of the earth by a powerful demon, obviously could not have been sanctioned by the Zoroastrian priesthood; the Avesta ignores it.

This mythical picture of Afrāsīāb as one who holds back rain lends support to the derivation of *Fraŋrasyan* proposed by Benveniste (ibid., p. 196): < **fra-hrasya-* "to make disappear, to fell, to destroy" (causative of a root related to Skt. *srṃs-* "to fall," *sras-* "to fall, disappear"). It would also explain the derivation of the Persian form of the name that ends with the element *āb*, Mid. Pers. *āp* "water:" thus **Fraŋrasyāka–* > **Frārasyāk* > Mid. Pers. *Frāsiyāk*, but **Frahrasyāpa–* > **Frārasyāp* > *Frāsīāb* (Frangrāsyāb in the *Dēnkard* is a pseudo-scholarly rendering of the Avestan form).

As Afrāsīāb was made into a king playing a part in the national history, his myths were combined with a number of legends reflecting the recurrent attacks on Iranian settlements by the nomads of the Central Asian steppes and the consequent desolation and ruin of Iranian lands. Many of these legends appear to represent the Parthian struggles against invaders from the east and northeast in which several kings, notably Ardavān II, lost their lives (see E. Yarshater, *Camb. Hist. Iran* III, pp. liiiff.). Nöldeke drew attention to the fact that a number of the Iranian warriors who distinguished themselves in the wars against the Turanians, such as Gōdarz, Gēv, Bēžan, Mīlād (< Mehrdād), and Farhād, bear the names of Parthian kings whose legends were incorporated into the national saga (*Iranisches Nationalepos*, Berlin and Leipzig, 1920, par. 8). The continuation of invasions from the east in Sasanian times served only to strengthen and lend poignancy to the memories of the

Central Asian onslaughts. Thus the legends of Afrāsīāb reflect not only episodes from the invasions of various Saka tribes, the Yüeh-chih, the Chinese (see W. Watson in *Camb. Hist. Iran* III, pp. 54ff.), and the Kushans, but also of the Huns, the Hephthalites, the Kidarites, and the Turks, even though it would not be easy to pinpoint any such events with clarity or certainty (cf. Nöldeke, *Nationalepos*, par. 9).

In the following review of the Afrāsīāb legends, the sequence of events is that in the *Šāh-nāma* (Moscow ed.), the most ample account in sources from the Islamic period (see also Ṭabarī, I, pp. 434-36, 529-33, 598-617; Ṯaʿālebī, *Ḡorar*, pp. 107ff.; Masʿūdī, *Morūǰ* II, pp. 117-18, 131, 213, ed. Pellat, pars. 540, 555, 633).

1. The first attack of Afrāsīāb against Iran takes place under Manōčehr's son and successor Nōḏar, who proves an inept and wayward king. When Pašang, the Turanian monarch, senses the weakness in Iran, he appoints his ambitious and vengeful son, Afrāsīāb, to head a mighty army, which invades Iran at Dahestān and Āmol (*Šāh-nāma* II[2], pp. 5ff.). Nōḏar is defeated, seized, and finally put to death, and 1,200 Iranian veterans are made captive; they are saved from execution only by the ardent intercession of Afrāsīāb's goodhearted and righteous brother Aḡrēraṯ, who pleads for them to be imprisoned in a cave under his custody (II[2] , p. 29). Afrāsīāb assumes the kingship of Iran and rules over it for twelve years. However, according to the more genuine Iranian tradition preserved in Pahlavi books and Islamic histories (e.g., *Bundahišn* 33.5-6; *Šahrastānīhā ī Ērān*, par. 35; *Zand ī Vahman Yašt* 5.7; *Mēnōg ī xrad* 27.44; Ṭabarī, I, pp. 434-36; Bīrūnī, *Āṯār*, p. 220; Ṯaʿālebī, *Ḡorar*, p. 107; Ebn Meskawayh, *Taǰāreb*, facsimile ed., I, Leiden and London, 1909, pp. 18, 19) Afrāsīāb's attacks took place towards the end of Manōčehr's reign; Manōčehr was besieged and detained in the Padašxwār mountains in Ṭabarestān and, according to the *Bundahišn*, ibid., his two sons, Fryā and Nōḏar, were killed. The genuineness of this tradition is shown not only by its prevalence in the sources, but also by the fact that Nōḏar's name does not appear among the kings in the Pahlavi books, nor do his sons Tūs and Gostahm attain kingship. The tradition followed by Ferdowsī and also by Ṯaʿālebī (who is aware of the variance between the two accounts, *Ḡorar*, p. 107) has obviously been fashioned and recorded in the sources to remove the odium of defeat from the otherwise illustrious Manōčehr. According to most accounts, after Afrāsīāb's victory over Manōčehr, an agreement is finally reached between the two for demarcating the boundary between Iran and Turan by having an Iranian archer shoot an arrow from Padašxwār mountain

and accepting where it hits the ground as common frontier. The archer Areš (Av. Ǝraxša-, *Yt*. 8.6, 37) shoots the arrow and it hits the ground at Balḵ near the Oxus river (Ṭabarī, I, p. 436; Ṭaʿālebī, *Ḡorar*, pp. 133-34; Ebn Meskawayh, I, p. 19). According to an account by Bīrūnī (ibid.), it hits the trunk of a huge nut-tree, at the farthest reaches of Khorasan, between Farḡāna and Ṭabarestān, a thousand farsakhs from where it had been shot.

2. The armies sent by Afrāsīāb to Fārs and Sīstān are defeated respectively by Qāran and Dastān. The Iranian prisoners captured earlier become apprehensive at Afrāsīāb's rage and frustration, and they appeal to Aḡrēraṯ for their lives; he works out a strategy by which they are set free and Kašvād, the Iranian general, takes them from Sārī to Zābol. Upon learning of this, Afrāsīāb flies into a rage and cuts his brother in half with his sword (II[2], p. 35). Thereupon Dastān moves his army against Afrāsīāb to avenge the blood of Aḡrēraṯ. He realizes however that the country needs a king in order for Afrāsīāb to be defeated. A just and capable king is found in Zav (also Zāb and Zāḡ, etc.; see Ṭabarī, I, p. 530; Ebn Meskawayh, I, p. 28), a grandson of Manōčehr. Although his war with Afrāsīāb remains inconclusive, exhausting both armies, he manages to force a retreat on the enemy and to return prosperity and abundance to Iran.

3. The Turanians take heart at Zav's death, and Pašang urges Afrāsīāb to renew his attack on Iran (II[2], p. 42). The Iranians appeal to their foremost warrior, Dastān; now an old man, he turns over the leadership of the fight against Afrāsīāb to his young but formidable son, Rostam. Once more, however, it is realized that the country needs a king, and Rostam is entrusted with the task of locating Kay Qobād, a prince of royal blood, in the Alborz mountains and of offering him the kingship. No sooner has he received the crown than he prepares to face Afrāsīāb (II[2], p. 57). In the ensuing battle Rostam seeks out Afrāsīāb, whom his father has described to him (II[2], p. 58). Rostam attacks Afrāsīāb ferociously and succeeds in prying him off his saddle; Afrāsīāb barely manages to escape and the defeated Turanian army retreats. Urged by Afrāsīāb, who finds himself no match for Rostam, Pašang sues for peace. The Oxus is again designated as the frontier.

4. In the episode of Rostam's son, Sohrāb, Afrāsīāb seeks to take advantage of the young hero's ambitions in order to defeat Kay Qobād's successor, Kay Kāvūs (II[2], p. 195ff.), but in the course of a tragic combat Sohrāb is killed at the hands of his unsuspecting father, and Afrāsīāb's designs are aborted.

5. Kay Kāvūs becomes suspicious of his heir apparent, the young prince Sīāvoš, who has spurned the amorous advances of his stepmother Sūdāba and is accused by her of having sought her embrace. Although Sīāvoš's innocence is proved by an ordeal of fire, he volunteers to head an expedition against Afrāsīāb, who has again crossed the border. Ṭabarī (I, pp. 598f.) mentions a tradition according to which Sūdāba was a daughter of Afrāsīāb and the expedition against him was instigated by his failure to deliver the gifts which had been part of the marriage agreement. This is a late invention to account for Sūdāba's wickedness and to justify the expedition; otherwise no trace of Sūdāba's relation to Afrāsīāb is found in the legends. Afrāsīāb, warned by the forebodings of a dream, seeks peace, agreeing to all the conditions set by Sīāvoš and Rostam. But the bellicose Kay Kāvūs is outraged by the news and urges Sīāvoš to press on with war. Finding it dishonorable to break his agreement and distasteful to return to court without complying with his father's absurd wishes, Sīāvoš gives way to the persuasive urgings of Pīrān, Afrāsīāb's wise and humane uncle and respected general, and takes refuge with Afrāsīāb, who receives him with great honor and gives him his daughter Farangīs in marriage (Ṭabarī, I, p. 600, has "Vasfāfarīd;" Ṯaʿālebī, p. 205, "Kasīfarī;" for other forms see Justi, *Namenbuch*, p. 371, under Wīspān-friyā, and Christensen, *Les Kayanides*, p. 84, n. 4). Sīāvoš's accomplishments and position excite the jealously of certain Turanian princes, in particular Afrāsīāb's brother Garsēvaz, who maneuvers to poison Afrāsīāb's mind against Sīāvoš and finally secures his consent to destroy him (III, p. 152). Afrāsīāb, apprehensive of the future and mindful of the predictions of astrologers, wants also to destroy the child that Farangīs is bearing, but following the entreaties of some Turanian princes and Pīrān's intercession she is entrusted to the latter until the child, who is supposed to be killed on birth, is born.

6. The news of Sīāvoš's murder shakes the Iranian court; Rostam, who had raised the prince as a youth, slays Sūdāba in revenge (but cf. Maqdesī, III, p. 149) and invades Turan at the head of a large army. Afrāsīāb's son Sorḵa (Sohra in Ṭabarī, I, p. 602) is captured and slain in the way Sīāvoš was killed, and Afrāsīāb is defeated and retreats towards the Chinese border. Rostam takes Afrāsīāb's treasures, pillages the country, and rules Turan for six years, after which he returns to Iran (III, p. 196). Learning of Rostam's departure, Afrāsīāb returns to his devastated land, gathers his army and attacks Iran in retaliation, causing great damage. A severe drought follows (III, p. 197).

7. Rescued from Turan by Gōdarz's distinguished son, Gēv (Bayy in Ṭabarī, I, p. 601; for other forms see Christensen, *Les Kayanides*, pp. 59, 112, n. 1), Kay Ḵosrow, now a young and matchless worrier possessing the divine *farr*, occupies the Persian throne and makes a solemn vow to avenge his father's blood (III, pp. 14-16). A long series of wars and bloody battles between the Iranian and Turanian armies follows (IV, pp. 17ff.). After severe initial reverses under Tūs's leadership, in which many Iranian stalwarts lose their lives, Rostam is dispatched to aid the Iranian army besieged in the Hamāvan mountains (IV, p. 154). Afrāsīāb seeks help from the Ḵāqān of China, but the Ḵāqān is captured by Rostam and the Turanian army suffers ignominious defeat (IV, pp. 198ff.). The assistance Afrāsīāb is given by others is also fruitless, and he and Pīrān flee into Chinese territory.

8. A son of Gēv, Bēžan, whom Manēža, a daughter of Afrāsīāb, has married against the wishes of her father, is captured by Turanian troops and imprisoned in a pit by Afrāsīāb (V, pp. 15ff.). Rostam enters Turan incognito in search of Bēžan, rescues him and Manēža, and makes a surprise night attack on Afrāsīāb's palace. The Iranian army scores another resounding victory over the pursuing Turanian army (V, pp. 75ff.).

9. Afrāsīāb, stung and humiliated, gathers a large army to attack Iran. Kay Ḵosrow sends four armies into four different directions to ensure victory (V, pp. 92ff.). The fourth and chief army headed by Gōdarz, sets out to face the main Turanian force. The battle of Twelve Faces (*davāzdah roḵ*) follows; twelve top warriors from each army are pitted against each other, with Pīrān facing Gōdarz (V, p. 188). Iran achieves complete victory. Gorōy, the murderer of Sīāvoš (according to Ṯaʿālebī, p. 211, Garsēvaz is the actual murderer of Sīāvoš), is captured, other great Turanian warriors are slain by their counterparts, Pīrān is killed by Gōdarz (V, pp. 202ff.), and Garsēvaz is captured alive. The Turanian army asks for quarter.

10. Kay Ḵosrow now decides to wage a final war on Afrāsīāb, who gathers a mighty army and makes a solemn vow not to rest until he has avenged the blood of the fallen Turanian heroes (V, pp. 237ff.). In a series of battles, Afrāsīāb suffers several routs and eventually takes refuge in his fortified city of Gang Dež. Pursuing him tenaciously, Kay Ḵosrow triumphantly enters Gang Dež and takes possession of Afrāsīāb's treasures and household (V, pp. 316ff.). Afrāsīāb, now a fugitive, takes shelter in Hang (V, pp. 365ff.), a mountain cave (a late version of Afrāsīāb's subterranean fortress), where he is detected and overwhelmed by the hermit Hōm (a late version of the *yazad*, Haoma, see

above). He manages to escape and take refuge in nearby lake Čēčast (in Ṭabarī, I, p. 616, corrupted into Ḵāsef) in Azarbaijan. Hōm then helps Gōdarz and Gēv find and fetter him. He is brought before Kay Ḵosrow, who fulfills his vow by cutting his head off with his sword (V, p. 375) and orders the executioner to slay Garsēvaz. According to Ṭabarī (I, p. 617) Kay Ḵosrow orders Gēv to slay Afrāsīāb; then he dips his hand into the Turanian's blood saying, "This is blood vengeance for Sīāvaḵš."

In the *Šāh-nāma*, Afrāsīāb is portrayed as a tenacious, shrewd, and resourceful king of great valor who commands the loyalty of his warriors and presents the Iranians with a redoubtable and worthy enemy. The title that *Moǰmal* (p. 417) mentions for him in the list of kings' titles, *ǰahāngīr-e vadkerd*, "wicked world-conqueror," succinctly sums up his portrayal. The author of *Moǰmal* adds (p. 44) that Afrāsīāb had fought more than one thousand and one hundred battles, in all of which he was victorious. Although depicted essentially as a villain, he is not without saving graces. He can be wise, as when he urges his father to sue for peace, or kind, as when he receives Sīāvoš; but he is also impetuous, suspicious, and cruel. The contrast between him and Kay Ḵosrow lies mainly in the latter's piety, justice, and humanity (see e.g. V, pp. 317ff., 376ff.).

Nöldeke has drawn attention (*Nationalepos*, par. 3) to the basic similarity between the legends of Cyrus and Kay Ḵosrow, in both of which a suspicious king (Afrāsīāb—Astiages) is bent on destroying his grandson (Kay Ḵosrow—Cyrus), but the child is saved by the intervention of a trusted adviser (Pīrān—Harpagus). Such a universal type of story may indeed have influenced the shaping of the Kay Ḵosrow section of Afrāsīāb's legends, but this has little bearing on their main thrust.

In the Iranian tradition Afrāsīāb's mythical aspects are eliminated or reduced, but Pahlavi books, and occasionally also Perso-Arab sources, retain scattered references to his demonic and magical powers. Theodor Bar Kōnay refers to Afrāsīāb's having turned into a dove, an ant, and an old dog (Benveniste, "Le témoignage," p. 192); as Benveniste points out, most probably this has to do with the ruses employed by Afrāsīāb in trying to escape Hōm's chase. Masʿūdī (*Morūǰ*, par. 633) refers to Afrāsīāb's treasure, and in the *Zand ī Vahman Yašt* 4.56-58 and the *Žamāsp-nāmag*, par. 83, we find references to a treasure of jewels and metals which Spandārmat, the earth, reveals during the calamities that befall her during an alien domination. One may speculate that after his marriage with the earth Afrāsīāb took possession of her mineral content, which formed the basis of his fabulous treasure (cf. Benveniste, "Le

témoignage," p. 198). The reference in the *Bundahišn* 9.23 (cf. *Dēnkard* VII 1.39) to the site of Afrāsīāb Hang, namely Bakēr mountain, which Christensen reads as Baγγēr "the mountain of gods" (*Les Kayanides*, p. 88), appears to conceal some lost facet of Afrāsīāb's myth.

A somewhat contradictory aspect of Afrāsīāb's function is seen in random references to his beneficial deeds. A passage in the *Šahrastānīhā ī Ērān* (par. 35) states that the capital of Zarang was first built by the Turanian Frāsiyāb, who placed there the wondrous Karkōg fire. The *Dādastān ī Dēnīg* (52.3) refers to his excellent ability in constructing channels. The *Bundahišn* (11.A.32) tells of a thousand springs, a golden spring called the river Hēlmand, the source of the river Vataēnī, and six navigable waters that Afrāsīāb diverted to the sea of Kyānsah in Sīstān, where he brought people to settle. In Islamic sources a number of settlements and townships in Iran have been attributed to Afrāsīāb or his descendants or relatives. Rāmītan, the old Bokhara, for instance, is said to have been built by Afrāsīāb, as a defensive fortress against Kay Ḵosrow (Naršaḵī, p. 23). The *Tārīḵ-e Qom* attributes the building of Harāsakān to Afrāsīāb (p. 77), the village of Saǰǰārān to Sayā(r)ān b. Sohra b. Afrāsīāb or Pīrān (p. 62), the village of Anār to Sayārān (p. 59), and Ḵafrīda to Ḵafarhaḏ, Sohra's sister (p. 74). *Moǰmal* talks of his great monuments in Turkestan (p. 44).

The explanation for these apparently out of character activities is not too difficult to find. In the original legend, the reign of Manōčehr must have been followed by the domination of the tyrant Zainigav. When Afrāsīāb overwhelmed Zainigav, he came briefly into the possession of the Iranian royal *farr*; the good deeds attributed to him must belong to this period. When the *farr* departed from him he became an agent of ruin. In fact the passage quoted from the *Šahrastānīhā* ends with the following sentence, "He ruined the city [of Zarang] and extinguished the [Karkōg] fire." Historically the legend may reflect the domination of an initially beneficent alien ruler in Sīstān regions. Like his Iranian counterparts, Afrāsīāb is surrounded by a number of noble warriors, mostly of his own clan. Pīrān, his uncle and chief general and adviser, cuts the figure of a wise, noble, and valiant warrior. Of his many brothers the saintly Aḡrēraṯ loses his life because of his pro-Iranian sympathies, and Garsēvaz is notorious for plotting Sīāvoš's death. All his sons and brothers are killed in the course of the protracted wars with Iran, but largely during the Battle of Twelve Faces (see above).

See the table (Table 15) for the members of his clan.

The identification of the Turanians, a rival Iranian tribe, with the Turks, and Afrāsīāb with their king, is a late development, possibly made in the early 7th century, the Turks having first come into contact with the Iranians only in the 6th century. Masʿūdī (*Morūǰ*, par. 540) shows awareness of the error of this identification, in contrast to Ferdowsī, who maintains it and wrote under the impact of Turkic invasions of Transoxiana in Islamic times and the prevailing negative sentiments among Persian nationalists toward the Turks. But the Turks themselves cultivated the legends of Afrāsīāb as a Turkish hero after they had come into contact with the Iranians. Maḥmūd Kāšḡarī quotes in his *Dīwān loḡāt al-Tork* (5th/11th cent.) a number of elegiac verses lamenting the death of Är Alp Toŋa, a Turkish hero identified with Afrāsīāb (C. Brockelmann, "Altturkestanische Volkpoesie I," *Asia Major, Hirth Anniversary Volume*, 1932, pp. 1ff.; and *İA* IV, p. 192, s.v. Efrāsiyāb). Fragments of an Oḡuz epic that depicts the son of Afrāsīāb, Alp Ariz, as a giant for whom "ninety fur-cloaks of skin could not cover the legs" attest to the popularity of a cycle of Afrāsīāb stories among the Central Asian Turks (see A. Z. Validi, *BSOS* 6, 1932, pp. 852ff.). Attribution of wise words and precepts to Afrāsīāb by the Turks can be gathered from a passage in the *Tārīḵ-e Mobārakšāh-e Ḡōrī* (Validi, ibid., pp. 854ff.). Validi suggests that Rāmītan mentioned by Naršaḵī was a center of Buddhism and associated with Eastern peoples and Afrāsīāb, whereas later, with the coming of the Sasanians, the citadel of Bokhara became a center of Sīāvoš's cult (see Naršaḵī, pp. 32-33). The high status of Afrāsīāb among the Turks is reflected in the fact that some Turkic dynasties such as the Qarakhanids (sometimes called Āl-e Afrāsīāb) and the Saljuqs claimed descent from him (see Jovaynī, *Jahāngošā* I, p. 40; Neẓām-al-molk, *Sīar al-molūk*, ed. H. Darke, Tehran, 1347 Š./1968, p. 13). Considering some Turkish names used in the *Šāh-nāma* for the Turanian warriors such as Damōr (apparently Turkic Demur, Timur) and Qarāḵān (a son of Afrāsīāb), it seems that the legends of Afrāsīāb among the Turks had some influence on Ferdowsī's version of the national saga (cf. Validi, op. cit.).

A Persian poem of 89 poorly written couplets in the same *hazaǰ* meter as Neẓāmī's *Ḵosrow o Šīrīn* (published among the *Revāyāt*s of Dārāb Hormazdyār, vol. II, Bombay, 1922, pp. 210-13) concerns Afrāsīāb's meeting with Satan and receiving from him a magical belt, but it is unrelated to his known legends, and must be a late invention.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

See also F. Spiegel, *Erânische Altertumkunde*, Leipzig, 1887, I, pp. 646ff., 575ff., 653ff.

J. Darmesteter, *Le Zend-Avesta*, index, s.v. Fraṅhrasyan; particularly I, p. 111, n. 19; II, p. 377, n. 53, and pp. 401-02, 636, on Hang-e Afrāsīāb.

Idem, *Études Iraniennes*, Paris, 1883, II, pp. 225-27.

A. Christensen, *Les Kayanides*, pp. 61-69, 109-17.

F. Justi, *Namenbuch*, p. 394, provides a genealogical table of the Turanian royal house including names other than those occurring in the *Šāh-nāma*. Pūr-e Dāvūd, *Yašthā* I, Bombay, 1928, pp. 207-14.

H. S. Nyberg, *Die Religionen des alten Iran*, tr. H. H. Schaeder, Osnabrück, 1938, pp. 257ff.

Boyce, *Zoroastrianism* I, pp. 106-07, 283.

Table 15. The Genealogy of Afrāsīāb and his Clan according to the *Šāh-nāma*