



## BAHMAN (SON OF ESFANDĪĀR)

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**BAHMAN** son of ESFANDĪĀR, a Kayanian king of Iran in the national epic. This king does not appear in the Avesta but is mentioned as one of the Kayanian kings in the *Dēnkard* (ed. Sanjana, VII, p. 6.4), *Bundahišn* (36.9), and *Bahman yašt* (3.20-29). Various Pahlavi, Arabic, and Persian sources give his name in forms such as Wahman (*Bundahišn*), Bahman (*Šāh-nāma*; Mas'ūdī, *Morūj*, ed. Pellat, p. 272; Dīnavarī, pp. 28, 29), Ardašīr Bahman (*Bahman yašt*; Ṭabarī, I, p. 686; Ebn Balkī, p. 52; Ebn al-Atīr, repr., I, p. 278), Kay Ardašīr (Ḥamza, pp. 25, 37; Bīrūnī, *Āṭāral-bāqīa*, p. 105), Kay Bahman, and add the epithet “long-handed” (*al-ṭawīl al-bā'*, *derāzdast*); they thus identify him with Artaxerxes I (r. 465-25 B.C.), who was surnamed Macrocheir in Greek and Longimanus in Latin. In the accounts of historians such as Ṭabarī (I, p. 688) and Mas'ūdī (loc. cit.), his mother is said to have been from the Children of Israel and to have borne the name Astūrīā (i.e., Esther of the Old Testament). Ṭabarī (I, p. 651), Mas'ūdī (loc. cit.), and most of the other historians (e.g., Dīnavarī and Ebn al-Balkī attribute to him the overthrow of Boḡt Naṣṣar (Nebuchadnezzar) and the return of the Children of Israel to their homeland; and some, such as Mas'ūdī and Ebn al-Balkī, add that Bahman appointed Kūroš (i.e., Cyrus the Great) to perform this task. Bahman is thus identified not only with the Achaemenid Artaxerxes I but also with Cyrus. (On the intermixture of various traditions concerning Bahman, see E. Yarshater, “Were the Sassanians Heirs to the Achaemenids?” in *La Persia nel medioevo*, Rome, 1971, pp. 521f.). Although traces of the careers of Achaemenid kings can be found here and there in the



stories of Kayanian kings before Bahman, this influence only becomes fully apparent when the reigns of Bahman and his successors Dārā and Dārā b. Dārā are reached. Bahman is described in the *Bahman yašt* and the *Dēnkard* as one of the greatest Mazdayasnian kings of Iran (*Camb. Hist. Iran* III/I, pp. 470f.), but he is not one of the Kayanian kings named in the Avesta. It is therefore better to regard him as not a Kayanian king but as basically a mixture of Cyrus and Artaxerxes I.

In the *Šāh-nāma* it is stated that after the death of Bahman's father Esfandīār in combat with Rostam, Bahman invaded Sīstān with a large army, devastated that region, and slew Rostam's descendants; but since Rostam, according to the *Šāh-nāma*, had already been treacherously killed by his half-brother Šaḡād before the start of the campaign, Bahman only slew Rostam's son Farāmarz and imprisoned Rostam's father Zāl, whom he later released at the request of his own paternal uncle Pašūtan (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, VI, p. 345 vv. 36f.). The accounts of the historians differ. According to Ṭabarī (I, p. 687), Mas'ūdī, (loc. cit.), and Ebn al-Aṭīr (loc. cit.), Bahman slew Rostam, Zāl, Farāmarz, and Zavāra; according to Ebn al-Balkī, he slew Zāl and Farāmarz. The *Bundahišn* (loc. cit.) and most of the Arabic and Persian sources give the length of Bahman's reign as 112 years, but some say 120 and others 80 years (Ṭabarī, I, p. 688; *Šāh-nāma* VI, p. 343; Mas'ūdī, loc. cit.; Bīrūnī, *Āṭār al-bāqīa*, p. 105; *Mojmal*, p. 53; Ebn al-Aṭīr, loc. cit.). They all praise him as a righteous king. The importance attached to Bahman's reign in Zoroastrian literature can be seen in a passage in the *Bahman yašt* where the reigns of the kings are likened to tree branches made of seven metals. The branches, listed in order of importance and in the main also historical sequence, are the golden reign of Goštāsp, the silver reign of Bahman, the brass reign of Ardašīr Pāpakān, the bronze reign of the Arsacid Balāš, the tin reign of Bahrām Gōr, and the steel reign of Ḳosrow I Anōšīravān, together with the branch of impure iron which symbolizes the rule of the shaggy-haired demons (*dēws*) born of the seed of anger, probably referring to the rule of the Arabs.

Arabic and Persian sources (e.g., Ṭabarī, Ebn Balkī) state that Bahman had five children—two sons named Dārā and Sāsān and three daughters, one named Ḳomānī or Homāy and entitled Čehrāzād, the others named Bahmandokt and Farnak; that Bahman married his own daughter Homāy on account of her incomparable beauty; that Homāy was the mother of his son Dārā; and that on his deathbed he designated his daughter-wife Homāy, who was then pregnant by him, to be his successor. According to the *Šāh-nāma* (VI, p. 351 vv. 164f.),



Bahman's other son Sāsān, being resentful of his father's choice of Homāy to succeed him, went to Nīšāpūr, took a wife there, and had a son to whom they gave the paternal name Sāsān; this second Sāsān was the grandfather of Ardašīr Pāpakān (q.v.), the founder of the Sasanian empire. Later in the *Šāh-nāma* (VII, p. 116 vv. 69f.), another story, different from the above but consistent with the account in the *Kārnāmag*, is told in explanation of Ardašīr's ancestry: after the death of Dārā in the war with Alexander, Dārā's son, who was named Sāsān, fled to India where he took a wife, and his descendants down to the fourth generation were all named Sāsān, his great-great-grandson being the father of Ardašīr Pāpakān. Thus Ardašīr's lineage, according to the second story, went back to Bahman through Homāy, not through Bahman's son Sāsān. The accounts of Ardašīr Pāpakān's lineage in the *Bundahišn* (35.36) and in *Ṭabarī* (I, pp. 813f.) give different lists of Bahman's descendants down to Ardašīr, but concur with the first *Šāh-nāma* story in relating Ardašīr to Bahman through Sāsān, not through Homāy. In any case all these stories were obviously fabricated in the Sasanian period to provide evidence for the legitimacy of Ardašīr and his descendants.

A different account of Bahman's career has also come down. The Persian prose version of this is lost, but a versified rendering by Īrānšāh b. Abī'l-Ḳayr, with the title *Bahman-nāma*, survives in a manuscript in the British Library (Or. 2780), and a summary is included in the *Mojmal* (pp. 53-54). For further details see [bahman-nāma](#).

According to the *Bahman-nāma*, Bahman was killed by a dragon when out hunting (ms. Or. 2780, fols. 134-87). With regard to the manner of Bahman's death, it should be noted that this is the only instance of the killing of a legitimate ruler by a dragon. The episode, if not wholly fictitious, may perhaps symbolize the conquest of the Iranian crown and throne by a foreigner.

Wise sayings ascribed to Bahman are quoted in a chapter of Ebn Meskūya's (Meskawayh's) *al-Ḥekma al-ḳāleda* (ed. 'Abd-al-Raḥmān Badawī, Cairo, 1952, pp. 61f.) and in Taqī-al-Dīn Moḥammad Šūštari's *Jāvidān ḳerad* (ed. Behrūz Ṭarvatiān, Tehran, 2535 = 1355 Š./1976, pp. 111ff.). In some sources (e.g., *Ṭabarī*, I, p. 687) he is also credited with the foundation of the town Bahman-Ardašīr (q.v.).

*Search terms:*

بهمان پسر سفندیار بهمان پسر اِسفندیار



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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See also A. Christensen, *Les Kayanides*, Copenhagen, 1932, s.v. Vahman.