



ČĚČAST

ČĚČAST (Av. *Čaēčasta-*), a mythical lake in eastern Iran, later identified in the Pahlavi and Persian sources with Lake Urmia (or Kabūdān “dark blue lake”) in Azarbaijan (*Bundahišn*, TD₂, p. 92.2, tr. Anklesaria, pp. 114-15; *Nozhat al-qolūb*, ed. Le Strange, pp. 80, 85, 241; *Tārīk-e gozīda*, ed. A.-H. Navā’ī, Tehran, 1339 Š./1960, p. 90). In the Avesta the lake has the following epithets: “deep,” “created by Mazda,” and “with wide waters” (the last epithet, Av. *uruuāpa-/uruiiāpa-*, has been variously interpreted as “having a great expanse of water”: *AirWb.*, s.v.; “with surging waters”: H. W. Bailey, “Irano-Indica [I],” *BSOAS* 12, 1948, p. 331; “with salty waters”: J. Darmesteter, *Etudes iraniennes* II, Paris, 1883, pp. 179-80, cf. Bailey, loc. cit.; and “with roaring waters”: Bailey, loc. cit., J. Kellens, *Les noms-racines de l’Avesta*, Wiesbaden, 1974, p. 373 n. 2). In the Pahlavi sources the lake is described as “having warm water” (*garm-āb*, *garmō*[g]-*āb*[ag] from unattested Av. **garəmə.āpa-*: *Bundahišn*; *Zād-spram* 3.24; and *Zand ī Wahman yašt*, ed. B. T. Anklesaria, *Zand-ī Vohūman Yasnand Two Pahlavi Fragments*, Bombay, 1957, 6.10), “free from animals, in which no animals live” (*jud-dad* from Av. **vidaiti*[ka]-: *Bundahišn*, *Zādspram*), “free from harm” (*jud-beš*, cf. Av. *vi.ṭbaēšah-*), and “saline” (*sūr*, corrupted into *zūr* in *Zādspram*; cf. *daryā-ye sūr* in *Nozhat al-qolūb*, p. 241). Čēčast was said to be four *farsak*s wide and four long (Pahlavi *Nyāyišn* 5.5, ed. M. N. Dhalla, New York, 1908, pp. 145f.), but according to *Nozhat al-qolūb* (loc. cit.), its circumference was forty-four *farsak*s. Its source was supposed to be “connected with the mythical ocean Frāxkard” (*Bundahišn*, TD₂ pp. 64.14, 92.3, tr. Anklesaria, pp. 74-75, 114-15).



In the Avestan and Pahlavi sources few legends are linked with Čěčast, Prince Haosrauuah (Kay Ƙosrow) was said to have offered a sacrifice to Arəduuī Sūrā Anāhitā beside this lake, asking as a boon that he might overcome Fraṅrasiian (Afrāsīāb). The goddess granted him his wish (*Yt.* 5.49-51). He was also said to have asked this boon from Druuāspā (*Yt.* 9.21-23). The latter episode may be the same one that was related in detail by Ferdowsī (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, V, p. 354ff.) and Ṭabarī (I, p. 616), in which Afrāsīāb, having been defeated by the Iranian army, sought refuge at Lake Čěčast (corrupted into *knjst* in *Šāh-nāma*, p. 369 v. 2263, p. 370 v. 2278, and into *kāsef* for **Jājast*, Arabicized form of Čěčast, in Ṭabarī, loc. cit.). He was finally found, captured, and brought before Kay Ƙosrow, who slew him. Kay Ƙosrow is also said to have destroyed the shrine of an idol at Lake Čěčast (*Mēnōg ī xrad*, ed. Anklesaria, 2.95, 27.61; *Dēnkard*, Madan, pp. 599.2, 818.8; *Pahlavi Rivayat*, p. 148.3) and to have established the fire temple Ādur Gušnasp on the site (*Bundahišn*, TD₂ p. 125.5f., tr. Anklesaria, pp. 160-61); this shrine may actually have been destroyed by a powerful iconoclast, possibly in the late Parthian period (See [ĀDUR GUŠNASP](#)).

During Sasanian times Čěčast enjoyed a great reputation for sanctity, particularly because Ādur Gušnasp, in that period one of the three most important fires, stood on its shore (*Bundahišn*, loc. cit.; *Zādspram* 3.24; *Zand ī Wahman yašt* 6.10); the site was called Čěst, Ar. Šīz, the site of modern Taḳt-e Solaymān. Furthermore, the homeland of Zarathustra was supposed to be located in the vicinity of Čěst (*Zādspram* 10.15).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Given in the text. See also Markwart, *Ērānšahr*, p. 108; idem, *Provincial Capitals*, pp. 108-10; A. W. V. Jackson, *Zoroaster*, New York 1919, pp. 193-205.