



DAMĀVAND II. IN IRANIAN MYTHOLOGY

ii. In Iranian Mythology

Damāvand is the scene of a number of Iranian mythological and legendary events. Gayōmard (NPers. Gayūmart, Kayūmart), the Zoroastrian prototype of human beings and the first king in the *Šāh-nāma*, was said to have resided in Damāvand (Ṭabarī, I, pp. 147, 171; Bīrūnī, *Ātār*, p. 24; Ebn al-Balkī, p. 26). The foundation of the city of Damāvand was also attributed to him (Mostawfī, p. 76). Jamšēd was said to have traveled in the air from Damāvand to Bābel (Babylonia), riding in a majestic chariot made and driven by demons (Ṭabarī, I, p. 180; Ṭaʿālebī, *Gorar*, pp. 13-14; Bīrūnī, *Ātār*, p. 216). According to a tradition preserved by Baḷʿamī (ed. Bahār, p. 132), Jamšēd was attacked by Žaḥḥāk (q.v.) in Damāvand. This region also played an important role in the legends of Žaḥḥāk and Ferēdūn. Armāyel and Garmāyel (see [armāʿil](#)), the two cooks of Bēvar-asb (Žaḥḥāk), were ordered by him to kill each day two young men in order to feed the two serpents growing from his shoulders. They evaded their duty, however, by killing only one and sending the other to Damāvand, thus saving a group of people, who resided there and constituted the ancestors of the Kurds (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, I, pp. 52-53; Ṭaʿālebī, *Gorar*, pp. 24-26; Bīrūnī, *Ātār*, p. 227; idem, 1954, p. 263; *Mojmal*, ed. Bahār, pp. 40-41, 462; Gardīzī, ed. Ḥabībī, p. 246; Ebn al-Nadīm, ed. Tajaddod, p. 15; Markwart, *Provincial Capitals*, pp. 15, 68 nos. 28-30). According to a tradition preserved by Ebn Esfandiār (pp. 57-58) and repeated by Maḥʿašī (p. cv), Ferēdūn was born in



the village Var (or Varak) in the Lārījān area of Damāvand after his mother had sought refuge on Mount Damāvand. Finally Ferēdūn defeated Žaḥḥāk and sent him to Damāvand, where he was kept in chains at the bottom of a well (*Bundahišn*, TD₂, pp. 80.6-7, 198.6-7; *Ayādgar ī jāmaspīg*, 4.28, pp. 42-43; Mas'ūdī, *Morūj*, ed. Pellat, I, pars. 206, 537-38, II, par. 1115; *Mojmal*, ed. Bahār, pp. 41, 462; Mostawfī, p. 83); Ferēdūn appointed guards (*dahāgān negāhbed* “guardians of Dahāg,” corrupted as *nekāhīd*; *Gardizī*, ed. Ḥabībī, p. 5), who constantly beat on anvils with their heavy hammers in order to frighten the prisoner (*Ebn al-Faqīh*, p. 275; *Yāqūt*, *Boldān II*, p. 545; *Qazvīnī*, I, p. 159). Ferēdūn's portrait (*Pahl. dēsag*, Ar. *šūrat*, *temtāl*) was displayed on the rock face of the mountain in Žaḥḥāk's view so that he dared not escape (*Zand ī wahman yašt*, 9.13-16, ed. B. T. Anklesaria, Bombay, 1957, pp. 78-79; *Ebn al-Faqīh*, p. 257; *Qazvīnī*, I, p. 157; *Moses of Khorene*, tr. Thomson, p. 126). The famous *Ṭāqdīs* throne of *Kosrow II Parvēz* (591-628 c.e.) is said to have been made originally by the ruler of Damāvand for Ferēdūn after he captured Žaḥḥāk (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, IX, p. 220). The tyrant was to remain imprisoned in Mount Damāvand until the end of the world, when he would release himself but would finally be killed by the Iranian hero *Garšāsp* (Av. *Kərəsāspa*; *Bundahišn*, TD₂, p. 198.8-9; *Zand ī wahman yašt*, 9.20-21, ed. Anklesaria, pp. 80-81; *Pahlavi Rivāyat*, chap. 18, no. 25, p. 71; *Dēnkard*, ed. Madan, p. 803.3-7). *Garšāsp* was said to be lying asleep in the plain *Pēšānsē* in *Kābolestān* (*Bundahišn*, TD₂, p. 197.14ff., 198.11; see *Monchi-Zadeh*, p. 108; *Gnoli*, p. 38), but, according to another tradition, which reflects a general tendency of the Zoroastrian divines of the Sasanian period to transpose eastern Iranian localities to the west, *Pēšānsē* was located in the vicinity of Mount Damāvand (*Mēnōg ī xrad*, 62.20, ed. Anklesaria, p. 164; cf. the *Pazand* version, in which the location is given as *pušt ī Guštāspān* [in *Nišāpūr*], rather than *Pēšānsē*). In local popular belief the volcanic vapor that rises from the mountain is the breath of Žaḥḥāk, the flames his eyes, the dull sounds his groans, and the yellowish water flowing in the streams at the foot of the mountain his urine (*Abū Dolaf*, p. 22 par. 51; *Yāqūt*, *Boldān II*, pp. 545, 607, 609; *Qazvīnī*, p. 158; *Bīrūnī*, 1355/1936, pp. 103-04). A popular feast is reported to have been held in the city of Damāvand on 7 Šawwāl 1230/31 August 1815, during which the people celebrated the anniversary of Žaḥḥāk's death (*Massé*, *Croyances I*, pp. 163-64).

According to one tradition (*Baḷ'amī*, ed. Bahār, p. 344), the legendary king *Manūčehr* was born in Damāvand, and, according to another (*Baḷ'amī*, ed. Bahār, p. 348; *Šāhmardān*, p. 343), *Āraš* shot his arrow from Mount Damāvand. The mountain was also the scene of an episode in the story of *Rostam* and



Esfandiār, preserved in one of the epistles of the Armenian Grigor Magistros: Esfandiār tried to roll the mountain down on Rostam while he was sleeping, but Rostam woke up and kicked Esfandiār out by the tip of his boot (von Stackelberg, p. 105); in a similar version in the *Šāh-nāma* (Moscow, VI, p. 237) it was Bahman, the son of Esfandiār, who tried to kill Rostam by rolling a rock down a mountain in Sīstān. According to popular belief the White Demon (*Dīve sapīd*), who was killed by Rostam, resided in Damāvand, and his daughter still lives there on an inaccessible rock, working with a spindle (Massé, *Croyances* II, p. 414).

Mount Damāvand was believed by some Muslim authors to be the scene of the events in certain Semitic stories. Thus it was related that the demon Ṣaḡr was imprisoned there by Solomon (Abū Dolaf, p. 22 par. 51; Yāqūt, *Boldān* II, p. 607; Ebn al-Faḡīh, p. 279; Qazvīnī, p. 158; Ebn Esfandiār, p. 83). Hārūt and Mārūt were said to have been chained in this mountain (*Nozhat al-qolūb*, ed. Le Strange, p. 37). Damāvand has also often been referred to in Persian poetry. In this century [Moḥammad-Taḡī Malek-al-Šo‘ara’ Bahār](#) made Damāvand the subject of one of his best-known *qaṣīdas*.

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