



GÖBADŠĀH

GÖBADŠĀH, the name of a mythical ruler first appearing in medieval Zoroastrianism. In Pahlavi his name is variously spelled *gwpt-*, *gwkpt-*, *gwpyt-* + *-šh*, *-MLKA*. According to the *Bundahišn* (29.5 ff.), “the son of Agrērah [Av. *ayraēraθa*] i Pašangān, whom they call Gōbadšāh,” is the spiritual master (*rad*) of a land, evidently neighboring Ērān-wēz (q.v.), the name of which is badly corrupted in all manuscripts. It is later (*Bundahišn* 29.13) said to be “on the road from Turkestan to Činestān.” The most likely reconstruction of the original name seems to be *Suydestān, but bewildered copyists may have changed this to approximate to a spelling *Gōbadestān. The river Dāitī, “full of noxious creatures [*xrafstar*],” is said (*Bundahišn* 11A.7) to flow from Ērān-wēz into a *Gōdestān or *Gōbestān. In the *Dādestān ī dēnīg* (89.18) it is called Gōbad bum “land of Gōbad.” In the *Mēnōg ī xrad* (44.35) Gōbadšāh is called *rad* of the people of Ērān-wēz itself. There too (62.31 ff.) he is described as “ox from foot to waist and man from the waist up.” He sits constantly on the shore of a lake, worshipping the gods and pouring libations (*zōhr*) into the lake, so killing innumerable *xrafstars*. He is one of the seven immortal rulers who will bring about the Restoration (*frašagird*; *Zātspram* 35.4; *Pahlavi Rivayat Dādestān ī dēnīg* 54). To this end he also keeps the ox Hadayānš, whose tallow is needed for the final *yasna*-ceremony and the elixir of immortality, in a fortress of metal (*Zātspram* 35.15).

The name has been explained as deriving from an Iranian **gau-pati-*, reflecting Sanskrit *gōpati* “lord of cattle,” or from **gawa-pati-* “lord of Gawa.” A land of Gawa is known from the Avesta as *suydō.šayana-* “home of Sogdians”



and, failing any marked connection between Gōdbadšāh and cattle in general, and given the apparent traditional placing of his home, the latter explanation seems likelier. The representation of him as half ox, possibly depicted (though never named) on several Sasanian seals, could then have arisen through popular etymology.

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