



GŌDARZ

GŌDARZ, name of various Iranian historical figures; an Iranian epic hero in wars against the “Turanians” in northeastern Iran; and the scion of a clan of paladins in Iranian traditional history.

i. *Historical figures.*

ii. *The epic hero.*

iii. *The Godarzian.*

I. HISTORICAL FIGURES

The name Gōdarz (Gk. Gotarzes) was borne by two Arsacid kings, by Parthian princes and nobles, and occasionally by Sasanian dignitaries (Justi, *Namenbuch*, pp. 118-19).

THE ARSACID KINGS

Gōdarz I (r. 91-80[?] B.C.E). The Nisa ostrakon no. 2638 (1760) is held to record the date of his accession according to the Arsacid era (Diakonoff and Livshits, 1960, p. 113; idem, 1976, p. 2, Group XIX). It bears the words: “Year 157. Aršak, king, grandson of Friapātak, son of the nephew of Aršak” (*ŠNT I CXXXXX*)



1111111 'ršk MLK' [BRY Z]Y [pry]ptk BRY 'HYBR[Y ZY] 'ršk; Lukonin, p. 687, giving readings revised by the original editors). Gōdarz thus stood in the same relationship to Priyapatius (Frīapātak) as did Mithradates II, who reigned from about 124-87 B.C.E, and it may well be that he was that king's younger brother. The overlap in their reigns, with no indication of civil strife, suggests that the old king appointed Gōdarz his co-regent during his own last years, and he appears to have given him wide authority. A Babylonian astronomical text of 90 B.C.E. is dated to the reign of "Arsaces the king who is called Gotarzes" (McEwan, pp. 91-94), and presumably therefore Gōdarz is the "Arsaces" who struck four issues of tetradrachms in Seleucia in the years 91-88 (Sellwood, type 31.1-4). These show him wearing the high tiara adopted by Mithradates, and bear the legend: "Of the Great King Arsaces, general (*autokrator*-), loving his father (*philopator*-), (god) manifest, friend to Greeks." Of these epithets, the relatively humble *autokrator* had not been used since the time of Arsaces I (Abgarians and Sellwood, p. 113) and may have been chosen by Gōdarz to indicate subordination to his brother, the king of kings, while *philopator* would have stressed that his own claim to rule was through their father, Artabanus II (ca. 128-24 B.C.E). Related drachms and bronzes were struck at mints across the Iranian plateau (Sellwood, type 31.5-20).

Upon Mithradates' presumed death in 87 B.C.E, Gōdarz was probably able to continue alone on the throne. This cannot, however, be proved, for the Babylonian dating formulas then revert to the standard "Arsaces, king." Tetradrachms struck in 86 and 86/ 85 B.C.E. show that this Arsaces kept the title of "great king" but changed his titulary to that used latterly by Mithradates: "beneficent, (god) manifest, friend to Greeks" (Sellwood, type 32.1). If these coins indeed belong to Gōdarz, he probably reigned for another seven years, during which time Tigranes the Great of Armenia took from Parthia some of her outlying possessions in the west, and even led a campaign into Media (see Chaumont, p. 420). The Parthian king was forced to make terms, recognizing his conquests and his assumption of the title "king of kings"; and possibly it was resentment of this among the Parthian nobles which led to the succession being disputed after Gōdarz' death (?) in 80 B.C.E. This is indicated by a Babylonian text of that year with a new dating formula: "Arsaces who is called Orodes" (McEwan, p. 93).

A sculpture at Bisotun, badly damaged in the 18th century, shows five figures identified by Greek superscriptions as (it seems) Mithradates II and four dignitaries (Herzfeld, 1920, pp. 35-40 with tables 21-22; further comments by



Colledge, p. 90; von Gall, p. 13). The first dignitary is identified as “Gotarzes satrap of satraps,” a uniquely recorded title which might have been conferred on Gōdarz I before he became king.

Gōdarz II (ca. 38-51 C.E.). Events after the death in about 38 C.E. of Artabanus III are not wholly clear, because the two chief authorities, Tacitus (*Annals* 11.8 ff.) and Josephus (*Antiquities* 20.69 ff.) sometimes conflict. Most probably Artabanus was succeeded by his son Vardanes I, but another son, Gōdarz, a half-brother, made a bid for the throne. Seleucia was then in rebellion, but Vardanes’ attempt to take it by siege was thwarted by Gōdarz. Soon afterwards the city yielded to Vardanes, but in 42 tetradrachms were minted there, in different months, for both brothers, each as “king of kings.” Vardanes’ coins bear in their fixed order what were by then the established epithets of a Parthian king: “beneficent, just, (god) manifest, friend to Greeks;” but on one small issue of Gōdarz *philhellenos* is set first, and his own name replaces “Arsaces” (Sellwood, type 66.1, 2). Further, on some rare drachms of his (Sellwood, type 66.3) there is a unique legend in bad Greek: BASLIEUS BASLIEON (sic) ARSAKOU OUS KEKALOUMENOS ARTABANOU GOTERZES “King of kings, [coin] of Arsaces called Gotarzes, (son) of Artabanus.” The brothers’ conflict was temporarily settled by Gōdarz being given suzerainty, still as “king of kings,” over “Hyrcania,” that is, the Parthian realms east of the Caspian Gates (q.v.); but before long he took up arms again. Vardanes defeated him in a battle at the boundary of their kingdoms (Tacitus, *Annals* 11.10; Kiessling, cols. 506-07), forcing him to flee to the Dahae on the steppes; but in perhaps 47 C.E. Vardanes was murdered while hunting, and Gōdarz gained the Parthian throne (Debevoise, p. 169). Before long, however, a group of Parthian nobles led by the head of the house of Kārin brought from Rome to challenge him Meherdates, a young grandson of Phraates IV. Gōdarz, having prayed before battle at “Mount Sanbulos” (identified by scholars with Bisotun or Karafto, see for recent bibliography and discussion von Gall, p. 12 with nn. 8-10), was victorious (Tacitus, *Annals* 13.13-14). He died in 51, and as far as is known was succeeded peacefully by Vonones II, presumed to be his son.

THE ROCK CARVINGS

“*King Gōdarz*” at *Sar-e Pol-e Dohāb*. A rough little sculpture of the late Parthian period, in shallow relief and much weathered, was carved high up in a cliff-face of the Alvand gorge, near Sar-e Pol-e Dohāb. It shows two figures in Parthian dress. One, mounted, wears a diadem, his face being turned towards the spectator. Before him stands a man represented fully frontally, who



stretches out his hand to receive some object from him. The theme is evidently the established one of a ruler bestowing an honor on a dignitary. Both figures were identified by some lines in Parthian script, but those by the standing man are no longer legible, while by the rider all that can be certainly made out is: “This (is) the own image of Gōdarz, king” (*ptkr ZNH NPSH gwtrz MLK*’; see Trümpelmann, Taf. 10, with pp. 14-16, for an excellent photograph, description of the carving and site, and bibliography; see also von Gall, pp. 12-13 and Boyce and Grenet, *Zoroastrianism* IV, index, s.v. Sarpol-e Zohāb). The name *gwtrz* was first read by Gerd Gropp (pp. 316-18). The title “king” was widely accorded to Arsacid princes as provincial governors, one of whom is presumably represented here. On stylistic grounds the sculpture cannot be dated to earlier than the second century C.E., and probably belongs to the late Parthian period (Herzfeld, 1920, p. 53; von Gall, pp. 12-13).

“*Gotarzes Geopothros*” at Bisotun. Beside the Bisotun carving attributed to Mithradates II, and within the same carefully prepared frame (which apparently predated both, von Gall, p. 13) is a smaller Parthian relief (Herzfeld, 1920, pp. 35-40). This shows a cavalier charging with a lowered lance, a Nike hovering above him. Before him his foeman’s horse stumbles, bringing his rider down. Behind the victor the head and arm of another lance-wielder appear, behind the vanquished a riderless horse gallops away (von Gall, p. 11). Above the carving an irregularly chiselled Greek inscription identifies the main figure as GOTARSES GEOPOTHROS “Gōdarz, son of Gēv” (so already Rawlinson, p. 14, who equated *Geopothros* with an Iranian **Gīvputr*; Marquart, p. 642, followed by Herzfeld, 1931, pp. 58-59, and still by von Gall, p. 12, suggested that the **Geopothroi* were “the clan of Gēv,” and that this was the Parthian equivalent of an old **Vaivazana*- > *Bēžan*, the *Šāh-nāma* name of Gēv’s son; but this assumed that initial *v* became *g* or *b* in Parthian as in Mid. Pers., which is now known not to have been the case. Mid. Pers. *Wēžan*, beside *Bēžan*, is a pseudo-historical back-formation). The monument is too badly weathered, and there is too little other Parthian sculpture on the Iranian plateau, for it to be securely dated; but the use still of Greek suggests a date not later than early in the reign of Vologeses I (51-79 C.E.).

IN THE ŠĀH-NĀMA

Gōdarz, son of Kašvād. This Gōdarz is the greatest of the Parthian warriors tales of whose deeds, blended with those of Avestan heroes, provide much of the material for the main Kayanian cycle of the Iranian “national” epic as presented in Ferdowsi’s *Šāh-nāma*. This cycle appears to have acquired its



essential form in Arsacid times (Yarshater, pp. 389-91, 396, 436, 458-59, 470), with Gōdarz a central figure. His father Kašvād (Ṭabari I, pp. 608, 617, Jašvād, hence probably rather Gašvād; see Justi, *Namenbuch*, p. 118; Nöldeke, 1920, p. 10, n. 1) appears, with Kārin, at the beginning of Iran's wars with "Turān," answering Ferēdōn's summons to aid Manučehr in avenging the murder of Iraj. He serves under the succeeding kings, but from the beginning of Kay Kāvus' reign yields place to Gōdarz, who first appears then, with his own son Gēv (q.v.) and with Ṭōs, the Avestan hero Tusa (ed. Khaleghi, II, p. 5, tr., II, p. 33).

Gōdarz is a redoubtable fighter, renowned among friends and foes; victor of many single combats, but also a wise commander, who faithfully serves Kāvus and Kay Kōsrow during their wars to avenge the murder of Siāvoš. His device is a lion holding sword and mace (ed. Khaleghi, III, p. 20, tr., III, p. 33), and seventy-eight sons and grandsons follow him to war (ed. Khaleghi, III, p. 11, tr., III, p. 24). He grieves bitterly when seventy of them are killed in the battles of Lādan (Lāvan) and Pašan, won by the Turanians (Wolff, *Glossar*, s.vv.; tr., IX, s.vv.), and thereafter has a personal blood-debt to claim. This he finally exacts by killing the illustrious Turanian general, Pirān, son of Vēsa, in a hand-to-hand fight (ed. Khaleghi, IV, pp. 128-31, tr., IV, pp. 107-9). This deed is his particular link with Ṭōs, his most constant associate apart from his own kinsmen, for in *Yašt* 5.53-55 Tusa is permitted by Arēdvi to slay his Tuirya foes, the "valiant sons of Vaēsaka."

Through his association with Ṭōs and his especial links with Kay Kōsrow (Av. Haosravah), Gōdarz is a key figure in the interweaving of Parthian and Avestan traditions. It is he whom Sorōš tells in a dream that Gēv must seek the young Kōsrow, and he leads the party which sets Kōsrow on the throne (ed. Khaleghi, II, pp. 413, 456 ff., tr., II, pp. 363-64, 399 ff.). He shares in Kay Kōsrow's connection with Ādur Gušnasp (q.v.), being with him when he builds that sacred fire's temple (ed. Khaleghi, II, p. 467; tr., II, p. 409); and later, when Kay Kōsrow is praying before the fire, Gōdarz brings him there the news that Afrāsiāb (q.v.) is hiding in lake Čēčast (q.v.) nearby (ed. Khaleghi, IV, pp. 316-18, tr., IV, pp. 363-64). He was thus given a place, with Kay Kōsrow, in what appears to be Ādur Gušnasp's shrine legend, based on *Yašt* 19.77, *Yt.* 9.18-19 (Boyce and Grenet, *Zoroastrianism* III, pp. 76, 80 n. 65). When Kay Kōsrow prepares to leave this world, he appoints Gōdarz to oversee the kingdom (ed. Khaleghi, IV, pp. 351-52, tr., IV, pp. 294-95). Gōdarz is among those who set out with him on his last journey, but, ever obedient to his king's commands, he



turns back, whereas Gēv goes on to vanish, with Tōs and Gēv's son Bēžan and two others. This appears to be because Gēv could be regarded as one of Iran's immortals, like Tōs, since he came to be identified with Av. Gaēvani (Darmesteter, II, p. 638 n. 125; Marquart, p. 642; Christensen, p. 59), another link being thus created between a Gōdarziān and an Avestan figure. Gōdarz is the first, after Zāl, to acknowledge Lohrāsp as king (ed. Khaleghi, IV, pp. 372-73, tr., IV, p. 312), and this is his final act in the epic, by which he is used to help link the main to the later part of the Kayanian cycle.

The Bisotun sculpture establishes the historicity of a Parthian noble of unusual eminence called Gōdarz son of Gēv; and it seems reasonable to suppose that the presence of Gōdarziān in the Kayanian cycle was the work of his family's minstrels (*gōsāns*), who wove together, with the help of the family's priests, legends about its distant progenitor, Gōdarz son of Kašvād, with those of even remoter Avestan figures, and amplified both with more recent family tales, also cast in epic mould, of glory and defeat in frontier wars. (Thus it may be that the huge losses of the Gōdarziān at Lādan and Pašan reflect ones actually suffered by the family, perhaps during the Saka wars in which two Arsacid kings perished.) The minstrels would thus have satisfied at once their patrons' pride of lineage and Zoroastrian piety, and have awoken in them a special interest in their lays. There was very possibly a real connection, moreover, of the family as wealthy patrons with Ādur Gušnasp, which persuaded the highly influential priests of that shrine to honor Gōdarz son of Kašvād; and perhaps this, and the stirring quality of the minstrels' tales, combined to make him a hero celebrated throughout Iran.

When subsequently Rostam with his family was brought into the Kayanian cycle (on the primacy of the Gōdarziān see Christensen, pp. 138-40), he was given links with Gōdarz, plainly to aid his acceptance. The two are presented as proven and trusted comrades-in-arms, generous in their admiration of each other; and moving verses describe their meeting after many of the Gōdarziān had fallen (ed. Khaleghi, III, pp. 173-74, tr., III, p. 171). Gōdarz repeatedly praises Rostam's greater strength, wisdom, and influence (e.g., ed. Khaleghi, III, pp. 259-60, 284, tr., III, pp. 248, 268). He and Gēv regularly go to meet Rostam when he comes to court; and when Kay Kōsrow behaves strangely, Gōdarz sends Gēv to fetch him (ed. Khaleghi, IV, pp. 332-33, tr., IV, p. 278). But in spite of the hugely successful promotion of Rostam, the Parthian hero is not wholly overshadowed by him, for there are essential episodes in the cycle in which Rostam has no part.



Probably the fact that some of the attenuated Parthian king lists of Islamic times (Spiegel, III, p. 194; Justi, *Namenbuch*, p. 413) give one or two rulers called Gōdarz owes something to the fame of the epic hero, since neither of the historic Arsacids of that name had a long or particularly distinguished reign. This supposition finds support from the fact that a Bēžan (not an Arsacid name) also appears there. Nöldeke's supposition (1892, p. 31; idem, 1920, pp. 7-9, para. 8) that the Parthians in the epic, whom he was the first to identify as such, were Arsacid kings and princes brought into the "national tradition" in Sasanian times has been made unsustainable by advances in knowledge (on this see further Boyce and Grenet, *Zoroastrianism* IV, in preparation, chap. 7).

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(Mary Boyce)

II. THE EPIC HERO

According to the *Šāh-nāma*, Gōdarz was the son of Kašvād and the father of Gēv (q.v.). These events are, in the *Šāh-nāma* tradition, projected into the remote, and largely legendary, epoch of the Kayanids, in particular of Kay Ḳosrow, who may partly represent epic memories of the Median king Cyaxares (q.v.). At the same time, Ferdowsi mentions a certain Gōdarz, presumably the same, in his discussion of the Arsacids (Aškāniān). Thus Jahangir C. Coyajee was no doubt right in recognizing these episodes as reflecting oral traditions of the Parthians, in particular of course of the



historical Parthian commanders and kings named Gotarzes/Gōdarz (q.v.). Coyajee, however, knew only one ruler of this name (r. 40-51 C.E.), in the light of whose period he interpreted the *Šāh-nāma* episodes.

Subsequent research confirms the existence of an earlier Gotarzes (r. ca. 90-80 B.C.E.), named in cuneiform tablets (Epping and Strassmaier, pp. 217-44; Debevoise, p. 48). An earlier stage of his career is indicated, as Ernst Herzfeld saw (1935, p. 55), by the rock sculptures at Bisotun, showing the Parthian king Mithradates II (ca. 123-88 B.C.E.) receiving his courtiers. They are named in the Greek inscription Gotarzes satrap of satraps, Mithrates the counselor, and Kophasates (Kōhzād). Adjoining this sculpture on the right is another depicting equestrian combat, above which is inscribed the name Gotarses Geopothros (i.e., Gōdarz son of Gēv). Herzfeld attributed this to the second Gōdarz, possibly thus the grandson of the first, since in the epic tradition Gēv was also the son of a Gōdarz. The situation of this sculpture, however, beside the first, does not suggest it is later. Both probably belong to the same period, and could equally depict Gōdarz I, who may historically have been the son of Gēv (not Kašvād). According to Ṭabari's version (I, pp. 709, 710; cf. Ṭa'ālebi, *Gorar*, pp. 462-65), however, deriving from sources parallel to those of the *Šāh-nāma*, Gōdarz the Elder (Juḍarz al-Akbar), son of Sābur b. Aškān, reigned shortly after the time of Christ and was succeeded by Bižan/Bēžan and Juḍarz the younger, son of Bižan. Thus the oral traditions of Gōdarz may have combined memories of both Gotarzes I and II, mingled of course with other epic themes, of which the intervention in these campaigns of Rostam, the celebrated hero of Sistān, is one of the most prominent.

Some numismatists believe coin issues called by William Woodthorpe Tarn the "Campaign Coins," bearing in Greek, exceptionally, the mint-names Katastrateia (expeditionary mint), *en Ragais* (at Ray), Nisaea (Nesā), Margiana (Marv), Traxiana, and Areia (Herāt), are issues of Gōdarz I, perhaps finally as joint-king with Mithradates II. These indicate major military operations against the Scythian Sacaraucae, and possibly also the Tochari, in northeast Iran. Such campaigns would parallel the struggles associated with Gōdarz in the epic tradition. This represents Gōdarz as a senior commander in the army under Ṭōs, son of Nōḍar (neither yet attested historically), sent by Kay Ḳosrow to punish the Turanian ruler Afrāsiāb (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, IV, pp. 115-207). The Iranians suffer successive defeats, and Ṭōs is reinforced by Fariborz. However, they are again defeated. At the crisis of the battle Fariborz retreats, leaving Gōdarz, with his seventy-eight sons, his relatives, and his retainers (the



Gōdarziān) to stem unaided the “Turanian” attack. Despite valiant resistance, they are decimated and dispersed at the battle of Lādan/Lāvan, near a locality called Pašan. Davoud Monchi-Zadeh (p. 197, map) proposes a detailed interpretation of this topography, identifying Lāvan (as the modern name of a river, the Lā'in), together with Kalāt (-e Nāderi), Čaram, and Geru, all toponyms extant today north-west of Kalāt-e Nāderi in Khorasan. Pašan, however, he took for a variant spelling of the name of the hero Bēžan (cf. Arabic Bizan), distinguished in this battle (below). Since these sites lie only about 80 km north of the city of Ṭus, the residence of Ferdowsi, local detail may, of course, have come from the poet rather than his ancient sources.

All the survivors of the Iranian force take refuge in the nearby mountain stronghold of Hamāvan, placed by Monchi-Zadeh in the nearby Kuh-e Hazār Masjed. Here they are eventually rescued by a new Iranian army led by Rostam from Sistān. Bižan, traditionally celebrated for his romance with Manēža/Maniža, daughter of Afrāsiāb, is represented as the son of Gēv and grandson of Gōdarz.

In a subsequent campaign, Gōdarz commands a new Iranian army opposing the Turanian invaders. He marches from Reybad to *Gonābad*. Monchi-Zadeh (pp. 208-14, with map on last) less conclusively identifies the first location with Rēvand, site of the fire-temple Adur Borzēn Mehr, and the second with a village north-east of Nišāpur (rather than the well-known town near Birjand known today as *Gonābād*). When the armies meet, their leaders agree to decide the issue by the single combats of six pairs of heroes (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, V, pp 85-234; see [DAVĀZDAH ROḶ](#)). In every contest, the Iranian hero slays his man. Gōdarz finally meets the Turanian general Pirān, and with an arrow fells his adversary's horse, which, falling, disables the rider's right hand. The Turanian, now defenseless and on foot, retreats to the mountain, but is eventually pursued and slain. This event leads to the capture and execution of Afrāsiāb. Gōdarz was rewarded for his services by Kay Ḷosrow with the governorship of Isfahan and Gorgān, and the post of grand vizier (Christensen, p. 115). Christensen notes that his death is not reported in the *Šāh-nāma*. At the same time, he is represented as a commander, but never as a king. From both these indications one might infer that its epic sources date from the peak of the military career of Gōdarz (historically Gotarzes I), but before his elevation to the throne, and that they were not afterwards reworked.

These episodes no doubt reflect, in extensively embroidered form, epic



memories of the historical struggles of the Arsacids against Central Asian invaders. Their main inspiration must be the Parthian wars against Sacarauca and Tocharian invaders in the early first century B.C.E. Yet since the personality of Kāmōs appearing in the narrative is sometimes identified with the first Kushan emperor Kujula Kadphises (ca. C.E. 9-50), they probably incorporate also certain events of the 1st century C.E.

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III. THE GŌDARZIĀN

The Gōdarziān (Gōdarzis, House of Gōdarz) were a leading clan of paladins in Iranian traditional history. It has been rightly emphasized that "next to the house of Rustam, the house of Gōdarz is the most prominent among the warrior nobles of the national epic" (Yarshater, p. 457). Ferdowsi describes them as "all valiant men with swords and golden boots" (*Šāh-nāma*, ed. Khaleghi, III, p. 20 v. 296; all references to *Šāh-nāma* are to Khaleghi's edition unless otherwise indicated).

The ancestry of the Gōdarzis is given by Ṭabari (I, pp. 617-18; in an interpolated verse in the *Šāh-nāma* [ed. Macan, IV, p. 2134, v. 24], their lineage is traced back to a Qāren son of Kāva). Taking account of manuscript variants and the analogous genealogy of the Kayanids in Ṭabari (I, p. 533, with Christensen, p. 107), the lineage of the Gōdarzis may be given as follows: Gōdarz son of Gašwād (not Jawdarz b. Jašwādagān; the text has a redundant *ebn*), son of Soḵra (text: Soḥra), son of □ (8 forefathers), son of Zāg [alias Zāb/Ozav], son of Nōdar, son of Manuš, son of Nōdar, son of Manučehr. The last five ancestors are common to both the Kayanids and the Gōdarzis. Of these forefathers, Gašwād "giver of fine orations" (cf. Justi, *Namenbuch*, p. 114,



s.v. Gešwād) is the first paladin in the legendary history of Iran. He served as a general of Nōdar when Afrāsiāb (q.v.) invaded Iran (*Šāh-nāma* I, p. 305 v. 304; the reference to him as a commander of Ferēdun in the *Šāh-nāma*, ed. Vullers, I, p. 96, is an interpolation). Following Nōdar's downfall, Gašwād helped Zāl to regain Iran from Afrāsiāb and eventually crown Kay Qobād, served with Rostam, and was rewarded by Kay Qobād. He bore the by-name Zarrin-kolāh "Golden-hat wearing" and possessed a palace in Estakr (*Šāh-nāma* I, pp. 318, 320, 345, 351, 352 v. 99, 355-56, II, p. 456 v. 505).

Gašwād's son, Gōdarz, is portrayed as the true leader of the armies of Kay Kāvus and Kay Kōsrow. He is said to have had seventy-eight sons and grandsons (*Šāh-nāma* II, p. 458 v. 537, III, pp. 11 v. 145, 20 v. 295, but "seventy" in II, p. 166 v. 598 and "eighty" in *Moktāri*, p. 47). Gōdarz, known also for his wise counsel (*Šāh-nāma* III, p. 11 v. 144), became the grand vizier (*bozorg farmadār*; see [FRAMADĀR](#)) of Kay Kōsrow (*Ṭabari*, I, p. 613, tr. IV, pp. 14-15) and was acknowledged by *Kvāja Nezām-al-Molk* (p. 233) as one of the great viziers of all times. Of his sons, the celebrated ones were: 1) *Gēv* (q.v.); 2) *Rahām* (also *Rahhām* for meter's sake in the *Šāh-nāma*, but not *Rohhām*; see *Markwart, Provincial Capitals*, p. 17); 3) *Bahrām* (q.v.); 4) *Šēduš* (*Šāh-nāma* IV, p. 109 v. 1715, cf. III, pp. 20, 35, 158; *Ṭabari*, I, p. 604: *Šāduš*); 5) *Hojēr* (*Šāh-nāma* IV, p. 96); 6) *Farhād* (*Irānšāh*, pp. 151, 152; *Justi, Namenbuch*, p. 101, no. 3) Lord of *Abaršahr* (*Šāh-nāma* III, pp. 12, 21, 35; IV, p. 96) and father of *Mehrān* (*Irānšāh*, pp. 145, 151, 152) and *Šērzād* (*Irānšāh*, pp. 353-55); 7) *Valāš* and 8) *Varāza/Gorāza* (see below). As the commander-in-chief of Iranian forces, Gōdarz was entrusted with the Banner of *Kāva* (see [DERAFŠ-E KAVĪĀN](#)) and received many boons, including lordship over *Isfahan* (see below). His son *Bahrām* is called the *hamšēra* (foster-brother) of *Siāvoš* (*Šāh-nāma* III, p. 38, vv. 173-75), which indicates that in one tradition it was Gōdarz, and not Rostam, who acted as the foster-father of *Siāvoš*. In the great battles of *Pašan* and *Lāvan* [rather than *Lādan*; see *Markwart, Provincial Capitals*, pp. 40-41], Gōdarz lost sixty-nine of his sons (seventy in *Šāh-nāma* III, p. 88 v. 1011, is just a round number, see below), and then also *Bahrām* (*ibid.*, 95-96), so that, at the end of Kay Kōsrow's reign, he could boast that seventy of his sons had been sacrificed in defense of Iran and "now eight remain" (*Šāh-nāma* IV, p. 356). *Ḥasan b. Moḥammad Qomi* mentions among Gōdarz' children a daughter named *Nāhid* and several sons: *Bib* (i.e., *Gēv*), *Rahām*, *Bahrām*, *Valis* (*Valāš*), and *Varāza* (*Varāz b. Bib*; *Qomi*, pp. 66, 69-70, 78-80, 84-85). The usually well-informed *Mojmal al-tawārikò* (p. 91) counts the notables of Kay Kōsrow's court and adds: "they included sons of Gōdarz who administered royal affairs: *Gēv* was



chamberlain (*hājeb*), *Bēžan* [chief] royal guard (*jāndār*), *Ḳosrow* stable master, *Bahrām* master of ceremonies, *Zarēr* chief envoy, *Hojēr* chief of boon companions, and *Nōzād* royal trustee (*amin*).” By all accounts *Gēv* was “the greatest and best” of *Gōdarz*’ sons (*Šāh-nāma* II, p. 161 vv. 543 f.). Since *Gēv* had only one son of his own, *Bēžan* (*Šāh-nāma* III, pp. 338 v. 447, 341 v. 497), his brother *Gorāza* was regarded as the “Elder of the house of *Gēv*” (*sar-e tokma-ye Gēvagān* ; *Šāh-nāma* II, p. 162 v. 555, III, p. 22 v. 229 f., 126 v. 340). Of the *Gēvagān* family, one hundred and five knights were registered in *Kay Ḳosrow*’s army roster (*Šāh-nāma* III, p. 12 v. 155).

According to one tradition, *Gēv* was married to Rostam’s eldest daughter *Bānu Gošasp* (q.v.; an interpolated verse in the *Šāh-nāma* II, p. 437 n. 9., l. 25, names *Šahr-bānu Eram* as a sister of *Gēv* and a wife of Rostam). *Gēv*’s son, *Bēžan*, was a paladin of exceptional prowess, who added to his heroic deeds a romantic adventure, namely his love for and marrying of *Manēža*, a daughter of *Afrāsiāb*. Their son *Ardašēr*, a hero in the *Bahman-nāma*, was the chief hero (*jahān pahlavān*) of Bahman, and was instrumental in the downfall of Rostam’s son *Farāmarz* (*Iranšāh*, pp. 103 v. 1498, 213, 225; cf. *Šāh-nāma* V, p. 480 v. 96, where *Yāz-Ardašēr* should be changed to *yal Ardašēr*). He was later killed when Bahman tried to storm *Sistān*’s capital (*Irānšāh*, p. 235). A good deal of information on *Rahām* is contained in the *Bahman-nāma* (pp. 213, 225, 249, 358, 360, 587) and the *Mojmal al-tawāriq* (pp. 50, 438), citing *Ḥamza Eṣfahāni* from the latter’s lost book on *Isfahan*). He served Bahman for forty years, and took part in the war against *Farāmarz* “despite being related [to him] by blood” (*Irānšāh*, pp. 224-25). In a legend that shows mixing of stories and traditions, he is said to have been the Lord of Jerusalem and to have always troubled the Jews; he also bore the by-name *Boḳt-Naṣar/Naṣr* (i.e., the biblical *Nebuchadnezzar*; *Irānšāh*, pp., 213, 225, 587; *Mojmal al-tawāriq*, pp. 50, 436-38; see below). Bahman bestowed on him Palestine and *Qarawān* as well (*Irānšāh*, p. 587).

Another epic composition that has preserved the memory of the *Gōdarzis* is *Moḳtāri Ġaznavi*’s *Šahriār-nāma*, which narrates the adventures of *Šahriār* son of *Borzu*, son of *Sohrāb*, son of Rostam (*Šafā*, pp. 311-13; see [BORZŪ-NĀMA](#)). It describes how *Arjāsp* (q.v.) attacked Iran, defeated *Lohrāsp*, devastated *Balk*, and besieged *Sistān*, capturing *Rahām* and *Ardašēr*. It also states that *Gōdarz* attacked *Arjāsp* but was captured and then executed. *Zāl*, however, managed to rescue his corpse and give it a splendid burial (*Moḳtāri Ġaznavi*, pp. 141-59, 175-78, 181-82).



The memory of the Gōdarzis was attached to various localities. Gōdarz is said to have been the feudal lord of Qom and Isfahan (*Šāh-nāma* IV, p. 356, cf., II, pp. 450-51; “the fief-holder of Isfahan and Jorjān and their highlands” Ṭabari, I, p. 613, tr. IV, pp. 14-15). He is also said to have had a palace in Eṣṭaḳr of Fārs (*Šāh-nāma* II, p. 456 v. 505), and the Fortress of Gōdarz (Qal‘a Jawḡdarz) in Kām-Firuz, Fārs, was well-known for its strength (Eṣṭaḳri, p. 118; Ebn Ḥawqal, p. 273, tr. Kramers and Wiet, p. 269). The “Hole of Bēžan” (*Vijan-čāhn*) is said to exist in both Māzandarān’s Omidvārah Mountain (Ebn Esfandiār, p. 87) and in Šābor near Darband in the Caucasus (Zakariya Qazvini, tr., II, p. 458). According to Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfi (*Nozhat al-qolub*, p. 91, tr. Le Strange, p. 92), one of the three towns of the Muḡān plain on the Caspian Sea was Hamšahra, which was the seat (*nešast*) of “Farhād, son of Gōdarz, whom they identify with Nebuchednezzar.” This seems to have arisen from the identification of Abaršahr (i.e., region of Nišāpur) with Hamšahra. The *Provincial Capitals* credits “Rahām ī Gōdarziān” with the building of Rokḡaj, the capital of Arachosia (Markwart, p. 17). Qomi has surprisingly detailed information on the building activity of the Gōdarzis in the area of Qom: Gēv (Bib) founded the villages of Maḡta‘a (Pers. Ābjōya; *Tāriḡ-e Qom*, p. 66, citing Ebn Moḡaffa‘), Vēr, Jehrōd (*Gēv-rōd?), and Afšidjerd, (*Tāriḡ-e Qom*, p. 69). He also built Āba in the Sāva area and two manor houses there, as well as three subterranean canals (*kāriz*) called Varāzjerd, Verōjerd, and Esfandaq (*Tāriḡ-e Qom*, pp. 78, 79, 80-81). Bahrām, son of Gōdarz, built a fire temple in Andas and founded the village of Fistin (*Tāriḡ-e Qom*, pp. 82-84). Valis (i.e., Valāš), son of Gōdarz, founded Valisjerd; his nephew Varāz Varāzjerd, and Nāhid, daughter of Gōdarz, founded Ṭariz-e Nāhid (*Tāriḡ-e Qom*, pp. 76, 84, 85). The establishment of the Feast of Tirgān is also connected with the Gōdarziān. Bēžan was credited with having drained a swampy lake between Qom and Sāva by digging an outlet which canalized the water to adjacent fields. Kay Ḳosrow rewarded Bēžan with wonderful presents and “conferred on him certain parts of Khorasan and Jorjān in fief” (*Tāriḡ-e Qom*, pp. 79-80). Qomi also relates that Kay Ḳosrow prayed to God to bless the spring near Sāva and increase its water, “and that occurred on the day of Tir of the month Tir; and since then it has become a tradition and custom to bathe in that and other springs” (*Tāriḡ-e Qom*, p. 82; Biruni, *Āṭār al-bāqia*, p. 221). According to a legend mentioned by Abu Rayḡān Biruni (*Āṭār al-bāqia*, p. 221) and repeated by Qomi (p. 82), Kay Ḳosrow had the vision of an angel (*malak*); Qomi: *jenn*; “genie”) there and fell unconscious, but Bēžan, son of Gōdarz, sprinkled water on him and restored him; Qomi adds that Bahrām built a fire temple there (*Tāriḡ-e Qom*, pp. 80-82). Gardizi (ed. Ḥabibi, p. 243) has a similar



story: on his return from the war with Afrāsiāb, Kay ̤osrow slept alone by a spring and Bēžan, son of Gēv, sprinkled water on him and awakened him; the bathing during the Tirgān Festival is a tradition preserved among Iranians from that day.

The memory of the Gōdarzis was fondly preserved among Iranians of all periods. From the 5th century onward we meet with names such as Gōdarz, Rahām, Valāš, Zarēr, and ̤osrow, and that is the time when Iranian national history began to be gathered (Shahbazi, 1990, pp. 214 f.). Later on we see traces of the house of Gōdarz in the story of Vis and Rāmin (Minorsky, pp. 180-88). In the middle of the 10th century, Abu Maṣūr Moḥammad b. ‘Abd-al-Razzāq (q.v.), who ordered the compilation of a prose *Šāh-nāma*, claimed that his forefathers had been military chiefs under Sasanian kings and descendants of “Borzēn son of Bēžan son of Gēv son of Gōdarz” (Moḥammad Qazvini, ed., pp. 52-56). The lavish praises which he bestows on Gašwād and Gōdarz testify that he took his claim seriously. Later in the state of the Shabankarids, a Kurdish dynasty of eastern Fārs, a certain Gōdarz asserted that he was “of the family of Gašvādagān,” while another commander, Jānōy, counted Bēžan and Gēv as his forebears (Šāḥeb, p. 112).

So prominent a family as the Gōdarzis could not have been purely fictitious (on the oral transmission of sagas and the formation of legends about historical events and figures see Boyce, 1954, 1955, 1957). Indeed, there are reasons to believe that their legends were “included in the national saga earlier than those of the Sistanian heroes” (Yarshater, p. 459, citing Christensen, 1931, pp. 139 ff.). The historical origins and heroic development of this house have been explained by Alfred von Gutschmid (pp. 43-45, 95-124), Theodor Nöldeke (pp. 7-9), Josef Markwart (1895, pp. 634-45; idem, 1931, pp. 85-98), Jahangir Cawarji Coyajee, Dabiḥ-Allāh Šafā (pp. 575-81), Ehsan Yarshater (pp. 457-60), and others (see also Shahbazi, 1990, pp. 156 f.). They have shown that the heroic sagas of the Kayanids and historic events and personalities of the Parthian period “mingled in the narration of the east-Iranian bards and minstrels and eventually became part of the national history” (Yarshater, p. 459). The memory of the Arsacid kings was preserved through king lists and oral transmission of their heroized history, which were retold by minstrels as the deeds of the Gōdarzis and other great houses of the national epic. Thus, Gēv, Gōdarz, Bēžan, Farhād, Nerseh, and Valāš of the Arsacid king lists in the *Šāh-nāma* (ed. Moscow, VII, p. 116) and other sources (see [ARSACID CHRONOLOGY IN TRADITIONAL HISTORY](#)) represent the vague



reminiscence of Arsacid kings (Gōtarzes II, son of Gēv; Phraetes; and Vologeses), as well as the Parthian prince Bēžan and Parthian princess Manēža (on these last two see Markwart, 1896, pp. 67-68). It is interesting to note that in the story of Vis and Rāmin, which has a Parthian origin, Rahām and Bahrām appear among the supporters of Rāmin (Minorsky, pp. 165, 178 ff.). The predominance of Gōdarz and Gēv in the national tradition is explained, as Gutschmid demonstrated (pp. 44-45, 95-96, 115-24), by the fact that Gōtarzes, son of Gēv, was the only Arsacid king about whom ample information was available. Unlike other Parthian kings, he placed his personal name on coins, he left a record-relief in Bisotun (q.v.), and his history is given in such detail by Josephus and Tacitus as to prove that he presented a perfect candidate for heroization (on Gōtarzes II see Karras-Klapproth, pp. 60-64). In due course he became the kernel of legends that also involved the Parthian houses of Mehrān, Kāren, and Varāz (all mentioned in Šāpur I's trilingual inscriptions on the Ka'ba-ye Zardošt in Fārs) and Vēžn (on this see Henning, p. 50), who appear as his sons and relatives.

It has been shown that the final redactors of the traditional history availed themselves of the “Ctesian method” of anachronistically projecting back into remote history events and personages of more recent times (Shahbazi, 1990, pp. 210-13). A case of the “Ctesian method” resulted in the attribution of an episode of Sasanian history to Gašwād in the following way. During the 5th century, the Hephthalites (Hayāṭela) repeatedly ravaged east Iranian provinces and eventually defeated and killed King Pērōz (see [FIRUZ](#)). Suḵrā, a noble from the great house of Kāren, took an army to the northeast and compelled the Hephthalites to release Iranian prisoners and, returning triumphantly, crowned Kavād king of Persia (see Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser*, pp. 117 ff.; Christensen, *Iran Sass.*, pp. 294 ff.). As Nöldeke noted (1920, p. 9), this is almost exactly what a certain Qāren and Gašvād (the sons of Suḵrā) do in the epic (see above). And it does not come as a surprise when we see that both Gašvād and the Karenid Suḵrā traced their descent to Nōḍarān son of Manuš son of Nōḍar son of Manučehr (Ṭabari, I, pp. 533, 617-18), which proves that the house of Kāren claimed lineage from the house of Gōdarz. This is also borne out by the assertion of Abu Maṣūr Moḥammad b. ‘Abd-al-Razzāq that his ancestors were the Karenids and descendants of Manučehr (see above).

Two post-Sasanian developments of the Gōdarziān legends may also be noted. The Arsacid king list in Islamic sources includes a “Nersi son of Bēžan” (e.g.,



Mas'udi, *Tanbih*, p. 96). When Hebrew-Iranian synchronism became prevalent (see Horovitz; Christensen, 1931, pp. 71, 93, 106, 145; Yarshater, pp. 471 f.), this Nersi was rendered as Boḵt-Nersi and identified with Boḵt-Našar (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar of the Bible), whom Islamic chronicles had discovered in Syriac and Jewish sources as the nemesis of the Jews. Thus, Bēžan son of Gēv came to be known as Boḵt-Nersi, a general of Kay Lohrāsp and destroyer of Jerusalem (Ḥamza, p. 36; cf. Maqdesi, *Bad'* III, p. 149, where Lohrāsp himself is credited with the destruction of Jerusalem). Variant traditions identified Nebuchadnezzar with Rahām son of Gōdarz (Irānšāh, pp. 213, 225) or with his brother Farhād (see above). The second development occurred because of the identification of one of the Zoroastrian immortals who are supposed to appear with the Sōšyānt with Vēv = Gēv son of Gōdarz (Christensen, 1931, pp. 57, 59, 153-55). According to the *Šāh-nāma* (IV, pp. 365-66) Gēv, Bēžan, Fariborz, Tōs, and Gostahm (qq.v.) followed Kay Ḳosrow on his journey into eternity, and lost their lives in a great snow storm. This is probably the origin of the incorporation of Gēv into the select group of heroes who will appear with the Sōšyānt.

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