



HANG-E AFRĀSIĀB

HANG-E AFRĀSIĀB, the name of the cave in which Afrāsiāb (q.v.), the fugitive king of Turān, spent his last days. According to the *Šāh-nāma* (all reference are to the Khaleghi edition, IV, pp. 312-23), Afrāsiāb, having been repeatedly defeated by the armies of Kay Ḳosrow in eastern Iran, wandered wretchedly and fearfully around, and eventually took refuge in a cave (*ḡār*) on a mountaintop near Bardaʿa (q.v.) in Azarbaijan. The cave “was far away from cities but near water; one calls it the Hang of Afrāsiāb.” A hermit by the name Hum, a noble descendant of Ferēdun, who lived in a nearby cave, recognized him because “his lamentations [were] uttered in Turkish.” Hum overpowered Afrāsiāb and bound and dragged him out of the hiding place. Afrāsiāb escaped, however, and hid in the water of Čēčast (q.v.; Lake Urmia), but Hum recaptured him by a ruse and delivered him to Kay Ḳosrow, who put him to death. The author of the *Mojmal al-tawāriḡ* (ed. Bahār, pp. 49-50) follows this account but locates the cave near Jis, that is, Šiz. Abu Maṣṣur Ḥosayn Ṭaʿālebi (*Ḡorar*, pp. 232-34) has the same story but omits the reference to the cave. The term *hang*, used here for a simple cavern in Azarbaijan, still survives in Lorestān and Fārs as *hong* (also *ḡong*) “a trough,” especially a mountain depression bearing carvings (e.g., Hong-e Nowruzi, Hong-e Kamālvand, Hong-e Yār-ʿAlivand, all with Elymaean rock-reliefs). The *Šāh-nāma* clearly distinguishes this last refuge of Afrāsiāb in nature and location from the city (*šārsān*) of Behešt-Kang, which he had built in Turkestan. The city was once taken by Rostam when he campaigned in Turkestan to avenge the murder of Siāvoš (*Šāh-nāma* III, p. 247; Ṭaʿālebi), but Afrāsiāb recovered it and later used it as shelter when Iranians routed him repeatedly and forced him to quit



Bukhara (*Šāh-nāma* IV, pp. 227-28). The Behešt-Kang was a fortified city eight leagues in length and four in breadth, with high walls guarded by troops equipped with catapults, ballistae and arbalests. It was surrounded by a peaceful and prosperous plain well irrigated and made into a paradise by sages brought from India and Byzantium (Rum). It was further protected by a mountain on one side and a river on another (*Šāh-nāma* IV, pp. 237-40). Kay Ḳosrow besieged it and assaulted it with Roman-engineered arbalests and catapults, which hurled pieces of wood covered in black naphthā and set ablaze. The city fell but Afrāsiāb escaped, only to be routed again (*Šāh-nāma* V, pp. 240-64, 273-78). When all was lost, he fled Turkestan and ended up in a cave (*hang*) near Barda‘a, where he was captured and slain (*Šāh-nāma* IV, pp. 312-23). Ṭabari (I, p. 616) does not mention Hum, and merely states that Afrāsiāb hid in the lake but was captured and executed by Kay Ḳosrow.

Both the Behešt-Kang and the Hang of Afrāsiāb, as well as the personality of Hum, are derived from accounts ultimately based on Avestan texts (see Darmesteter, pp. 225-30; Christensen, pp. 87-89; Skjærvø, p. 162). According to the *ĀbānYašt* (41-43), “the Turanian [evil] man Fraṅrasyan (i.e., Afrāsiāb) sacrificed . . . to her [Anāhita, see ANĀHID] in the subterranean Hankana,” and asked of her, in vain, the boon of obtaining the (divine) Fortune of the Iranian nations. From *Yasna* 11.7, we learn that the *yazata* Haoma (q.v.) “chained Fraṅgrasyan the [evil] Turanian man, who was protected in the middle [of the three] layers of earth inside the walls of iron.” The capture occurred near Lake Čaēčasta (by which probably Lake Čāč or the Aral Sea was understood, see Gershevich, pp. 55-72). The *Bunda-hišn.* (32.13; cf. 6; tr. Anklesaria, p. 271) includes among the wonderful mansions (*mānīhā*) of ancient kings that which Frāsiāw (Afrāsiāb) “built underneath the earth with sorcery.” It was as high as a thousand men of average height, and four rivers of water, wine, milk and beaten sour-milk flowed in it. It was brilliantly lit by magically fashioned stars, a sun, and a moon. The *Aogəmadaēčā* (60-61) gives a similar account and adds: “and had one hundred columns.” In due course the name Hankana (from *kan-* “to dig”) evolved into Kang (as in the name of Kang-dež). In describing the wars against Arjāsp, Ṭabari (I, p. 680 with n. g) remarks that Esfandiār (q.v.) crossed the Kāsrud and two other rivers and “entered the city of Afrāsiāb known as Wahišt-Kang” (Paradise City). Evidently the wonderful nature of Afrāsiāb’s stronghold earned it that designation, which (as Behešt-Kang) becomes its standard name in the *Šāh-nāma* and related texts. Thus, all indications point to the location of the (Behešt-)Kang of Afrāsiāb in the neighborhood of ancient Chorasmia (see also below). In the Sasanian period,



however, when many of the Avestan geographical names were transferred to Azarbaijan, the fate of Afrāsiāb was also associated with that region, and his Kang reinterpreted as a cavern near Lake Čěčast, which by then was identified with Lake Urmia. The Sasanian embellishment of the story can be readily pointed out. The details of the fortification and the means of assaulting it vividly pictures a stronghold of the Sasanian time and its siege and capture by a well-equipped army, closely paralleling Ammianus Marcellinus' eye-witness account (XVIII, 8; XIX, 1 ff.) of the siege and capture of Amida (q.v.) by Šāpur II. The employment of Indian and Roman sages and mechanics by both parties in the conflict points in the same direction. The transfer of the Kang/Hang to Azarbaijan is also in conformity with the Sasanian attitude and their well-documented veneration of the Fire Temple of Šiz near Lake Urmia. The Kang may have been an imitation of the Var of Jamšid (Christensen, p. 88), but its artificial luminaries clearly recall the astral dome of the Palace of Ƙosrow Parvēz in Ganzak in Azarbaijan, where he had "fabricated stars, the sun, and the moon" in imitation of the heaven (Nikephoros, 12; see also Christensen, *IranSass.*, pp. 467-68). Even the statement that the Kang had one hundred columns finds a parallel in the Sasanian designation of Persepolis as "Satsetun" (Shahbazi, pp. 200-201). The transformation of the *yazata* Haoma into a pious nobleman may be a rationalization by redactors of the early Islamic period (Christensen, *IranSass.*, p. 116, n. 2). As the narratives of Ʀa'ālebi and Ferdowsi agree in essentials, it may be assumed that they both used the same source, probably the *Šāh-nāma* of Abu Maṣur Moḥammad b. 'Abd-al-Razzāq (q.v.).

A surprisingly divergent, and so far unnoticed, tradition on the capture and execution of Afrāsiāb is given by Šahmardān b. Abi'l-Ƙayr (pp. 338-40). Rostam, in revenge for the murder of Siāvoš, led the Iranian armies against Turān and inflicted several defeats on Afrāsiāb while Lohrāsp took Darband and the adjacent region and Gōdarz triumphed over Pirān and slew him. Then "Rostam marched on Transoxiana and subjugated it, leaving Gostahm (q.v.) with a host in Čāč and entrusting all Transoxiana to him, and he further sent Gōdarz with a vast army against Kāšgar and Ʀarāz. He himself remained in those regions searching for Afrāsiāb, but no trace of him could be found." As he was returning to Iran, some people came to him and complained that "a few Turks have recently settled near the mountain and trouble us and steal our sheep." Rostam "marched thither and took them [i.e., the thieves] captive. Their leader was called Hum. He asked for quarter, and said: "I will lead you to Afrāsiāb, do not kill me." Rostam said: "If you do this, I will elevate you to



prominence and make you rich.” Through an interesting ruse, Hum led Rostam to Afrā-siāb’s camp. The Turanian king and his associates were captured and sent to Kay Kōsrow, who later slew Afrā-siāb at the urging of Rostam, and “they honored Hum greatly.” The origin of this version of the story, which vilifies Hum, is not easy to determine, but as Šahmardān reproduces independent, authentic accounts of other Iranian sagas, his narrative of Afrāsiāb’s fate cannot be dismissed as the rationalization of the tale in the *Šāh-nāma*.

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