



HŌŠANG

HŌŠANG (Av. Haošyaṇha, Ar. Ušanj/Ušhanj), called Pēšdād (< Av. Para' dāta), an early hero-king, father of the Iranians and founder of the Pēšdādian dynasty in the Iranian traditional history. Information about him come from Avestan, Middle Persian, and Sasanian-based Arabo-Persian sources (Christensen, 1917, pp. 133-64 and passim; 1932, pp. 17, 42-43, 81; Yarshater, 1983, pp. 371, 413-15, 420-22). Previously the second part of Hōšang's name was taken as *-šyaṇh*, i.e., *ši-* "dwelling" and *-aṇh* "giving rise to," and the whole interpreted as "he who produces good dwellings" in the sense of "promoter of culture and settledness" (Justi, *Namenbuch*, p. 126; cf. Christensen, 1917, p. 140). Mayrhofer sees in *-šiih-* a variant of *čiih-* "selecting, deciding" and suggests "good (religious) choice" for **hu-šiih-* (*Iran. Personennamenbuch* I/1, p. 50). Hōšang's surname Paraḍāta (> Pēš-dād) was understood by the Sasanian scholars as "he who first set the law of sovereignty" (*Pahlavi Vendidād*, ed. Anklesaria, 20.1; tr., p. 391; similarly Ṭabari, I, pp. 154, 171; Ḥamza Ešfahāni, pp. 3, 24; Ṭa'ālebi, *Ḡorar*, p. 5; K̄vārazmi, *Mafātiḥ al-'olum*, ed. G. van Vloten, Leiden, 1895, p. 98; Biruni, *Āṭār*, pp. 220-21; Maqdisi, III, p. 139); and some still follow this interpretation. Others take it as "set at the beginning" and hence "first created/ first man" (Christensen, 1917, p. 136; Yarshater, 1983, p. 420; Mayrhofer, op. cit., p. 67). The name Paraḍāta has been compared with Paralatos, father of the Paralatae or the "Royal Scythians," who was a grandson of Targitau, the First Man in the ancient Scythian tradition (Herodotus, 4.5-7; see [IRAJ](#)). Hōšang "does not have a counterpart in Indian mythology and therefore must be regarded as an Iranian figure" (Yarshater, 1983, p. 420).



There seem to have been various Iranian traditions, each revolving around a first-man/king (Yima/Jamšēd, Gayōmard, Tahmorat), among them a widely accepted one which considered Hōšang the first king. Certainly, the lists in the older *Yašts* of the heroes/kings who sacrificed to the deities in order to receive divine support in conquering their enemies and achieving great deeds always start with Hōšang (*Ābān*: *Yt.* 5.21-33; *Goš*: *Yt.* 9.3-5; *Rām*: *Yt.* 15.7-9; *Ard*: *Yt.* 17.24-26; *Zamyād*: *Yt.* 19.24-25); and a number of later sources specify that he was the founder of Iranian sovereignty (e.g., *Čehrdādnask* apud *Dēnkard* 5.4.2; 7.1.9-18; 8.13.5-6; Ṭabari, I, p. 154; Biruni, pp. 103, 220-21). A variant, and probably older, tradition is found in the *Frawardin Yašt* (*Yt.* 13.130-32), where the list begins with Yima and ends with Kavi Hausrava (Kay Ḳosrow); then it mentions (13.137) Hōšang the valiant (*taxma-*) amongst a number of revered heroes. Here again he is remembered as victorious over demons and their followers, so there can be no doubt that he is the same as Hōšang the Pēšdād (*Avesta*, tr. Darmesteter, II, p. 551, n. 292; Mayrhofer, *Iran. Personennamenbuch* I/1, p. 50; contra Bartholomae, *AirWb.*, cols. 1738-39). The position of Hōšang as the first king is attested in some sources (Ṭabari, I, p. 154) and is implied by several indications. Firstly, although in a more widely current tradition he is the successor of Gayōmard, most authorities specify that it was Hōšang who established the institution of sovereignty (see above). In fact the surname Paraδāta (> Pēšdād), which the *Avesta* restricts to Hōšang, is subsequently applied to the first dynasty in the Iranian traditional history, namely the Pēšdādian, which comprises not only Hōšang's successors who were regarded as his descendants, but also his predecessor, Gayōmard. Secondly, the *Bundahišn* ([TD2], 14.36; tr. Anklesaria, p. 135), calls Hōšang the father of the Iranian race and the first to rule over the Seven Climes (*haft kešvar*, q.v.). Thirdly, the *Šāh-nāma*, in contradiction to its own chronology (see below) renders the idea of “from the first king” by the phrase “down from the time of Hōšang” (ed. Moscow, VI, p. 232, v. 243; VII, p. 338, v. 575; IX, p. 290, v. 571) and has Ḳosrow Parvēz call the Iranian national religion “the Creed of Hōšang” (ibid., IX, p. 207, v. 3323; similarly, Ṭa‘alebi (*Ġorar*, p. 7) reports that Ḳosrow I referred to Hōšang as “our first ancestor.”

The old *Yašts* represent Haošyaṅha paraδāta as a powerful and benevolent king. He sacrificed to the deities and with their help and by attaining *farnah* “the God-given royal fortune” (*Yt.* 19.26; see [FARR\[AH\]](#)) he combated the *daēvas*, false gods, of Mazana (much later identified with Māzandarān) and defeated their worshippers, as well as the Lie-followers and *daēva*-worshippers of Varəna (the Bunar region in northern Pakistan; Henning, 1947,



pp. 52-53). These people lived on the western and eastern borders respectively of the Aryan homeland and included large population elements of Proto-Indo-Aryan origin (Burrow, 1973, pp. 134 ff.). He also successfully fought against the *kavis* (princes and chiefs; *ibid.*, p. 132) and *karapans* (ritual priests), who contested his rule. The *locus classicus* of such sources is *Ābān Yašt* (*Yt.* 5.21-23, based on Lommel, 1927, p. 34): “To [Arədvī Surā Anāhita] brought offerings Haošyaṇa Paraḍāta at the foot of the peak of Harā [mountain], one hundred stallions, one thousand cattle, and ten thousand sheep. Then he prayed to her for this favor: ‘Upon me bestow this boon, O mightiest good (and) supreme Arədvī Surā Anāhita, that that I become the highest power over all lands, over demons and men, over the she-devils (*pairi-kās*) and the sorcerers, over the princes and priests; that I may be able to destroy two-thirds of the Mazana demons and of the Lie-followers of Varəna’. Arədvī Surā granted him the boon.”

The *Yašts* provide no genealogical details about Hōšang, and later sources are hopelessly confused on this point, considering him a brother or son of Gayōmard (Mas‘udi, *Moruj* II, p. 111) a son of Mašya and grandson of Gayōmard (*Čehrdādnask* apud *Dēnkard* 8.13.2-8) or son of Siāmak and grandson of Gayōmard (Mas‘udi, *loc. cit.*; *Šāh-nāma*, ed. Khaleghi, I, pp. 23-25; Ta‘ālebi, *Ĝorar*, p. 5), a son of Fravāk son of Siāmak son of Mašya son of Gayōmard (*Bundahišn* [TD2], 35.1; tr. Ankesaria, p. 293; Ḥamza Ešfahāni, pp. 24, 29; Biruni, *Ātār*, p. 103; Mas‘udi, *Moruj* II, p. 178; Ṭabari, I, p. 154), or even a remoter descendant of Gayōmard (for details see Christensen, 1917, pp. 143-55). Most sources give him a reign of forty years; but it is interesting to note that, with the introduction of the millenary system into the Iranian traditional history (see [HISTORIOGRAPHY](#) i.), the first five millennia were named after the legendary kings Gayō-mard, Hōšang, Jam, Bēvarasp (= Dahāg), and Frēdun, and the sixth millennium was called that of Zoroaster (Biruni, *Qānun Mas‘udi*, cited by Taqizādeh, 1937, p. 79, n. 159).

The traditional history as developed in the late Sasanian period rationalizes the story of Hōšang as follows (see *Šāh-nāma*, ed. Khalegi, I, pp. 29-31; Ta‘ālebi, *Ĝorar*, pp. 5-7; cf. Ṭabari, I, pp. 171-72): Siāmak, son of Gayōmard, was slain by demons, but his son Hōšang attained the God-given royal fortune, avenged the murder, subjugated Ahriman, and reigned for forty years. He introduced metallurgy and architecture, domesticated animals, dug canals for irrigation, and promoted cultivation. Some attributed the founding of Susa and Babylon to him (Ṭabari, I, p. 170) and credited him with establishing the festivals of



Tirgān and Kōrram-ruz (Biruni, *Ātār*, pp. 220-21). A tradition which attributes to him the founding of the Sade festival in commemoration of his accidental discovery of fire is “obviously a rather late and popular account” (Yarshater, 1983, p. 421) and occurs only in the *Šāh-nāma* in a passage that Khaleghi (2001, I, pp. 38-40) has shown to be an interpolation. Hešām Kalbi identified Hōšang as a descendant of Sām son of Noah (Ṭabari, I, pp. 154-55).

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