



KANGDEZ

KANGDEZ (Kangdež; erroneously Gangdež in several editions of the *Šāh-nāma*), lit. “Fortress of Kang,” a mythical paradise-like fortress in Iranian folklore. There are different and often contradictory descriptions of Kang, Kangdež and several similar place names in Pahlavi literature and the epics of the Islamic period (foremost, the *Šāh-nāma* of Ferdowsi; also extracts in the works of Mas‘udi, Ṭabari, Ṭa‘ālebi, Biruni, and others). The Avesta attests to a certain region named Kaṇha-: in the *Ardisur Yašt* (Yt. 5; see [ĀBĀN YAŠT](#)), the Iranian hero Tūsa asks Anāhitā to overcome Tūirīas at the “most important door” (“pass” or “castle”?) Xšaθrō.sūka (“illumination” or “benefit of the kingdom”) in the “high, pious” Kaṇha- (Yt. 5.54, g-h). The sons of Vaēsaka (of the Tūirīia nation) pray to Anāhitā to defeat Tūsa at the same “door” (Yt . 5.57, c-e). Aṇtarə.kaṇha- “inside Kaṇha” appears in the Avestan list of mountains (Yt. 19.4, f). The place-name can be probably etymologized as “cauldron” (Vedic *kaṁsá*). Kang of the later tradition is generally taken to be the name of the same place (evident through the parallels between Yt. 19 and *Bd* . IX, 3); however, the latter form is more likely to be a transcription (possibly adjusted according to certain realia of the Middle Iranian period; see below) rather than a direct continuation of Av. Kaṇha-.

The Pahlavi texts mention Kangdiz as being founded by Siyāvaxš (Pers. Siāvoš, *Šāh-nāma* : also Siyāvaxš; *Dk* . VII, 38; *Bd* . XXXII, 5; DMX XXVII, 57; ZWY VII, 19-20), which was conquered for Ērānšahr by Kay Kōsrow (*Bd* . XXXIII; DD 90 [= 89], 4). In the eschatological view, Kangdiz is said to be the abode of Pēšōtan, son of Vištasp, and Xwaršēdčīhr, son of Zarathushtra, with their righteous



army before the final battle against Ahriman and his creatures (*Bd* . XXXIII, 28; *Dk* . VII, 5, 12; ZWY, VII, 19-20; in *Dk* . IX, 15, this information is ascribed to the lost Sudgar Nask of the Sasanid Avesta). This latter use of Kangdiz (on this, see Boyce, pp. 61 ff.) was apparently left unmentioned in texts of the Islamic period, while the legend of Siāvoš and Kay Kōsrow is presented in the *Šāh-nāma* in great detail.

Siāvoš, having fled from Kay Kāvus to Afrāsiāb in Turān, is granted a pleasing piece of land, where he erects the castle Kangdež (*Šāh-nāma* , ed. Mohl, 12d 1683 ff.; in some other texts, the construction of Kangdež is attributed to Kay Kāvus, Kay Kōsrow, or Jamšid (Jamšēd); see Monchi-zadeh, pp. 238-39). The region is rich in water and game, knows neither the frost of winter nor the heat of summer, and is 30 *farsak* long and wide; within its walls, the city (called variously Kang-e Siāvoš/Siyāwaxš, Siāvošgerd/ Siyāwaxšgerd, and Kangdež) has buildings made of marble, stone, and cement as well as other materials, and meadows with flowers. The combination of urban structures and gardens within the city walls, the absence of heat and frost, as well as several (usually seven) walls or buildings made of different materials is a characteristic description of towns in Iranian lore (see Monchi-zadeh, pp. 237 ff.).

Siāvoš lives in this city before being cunningly killed by Afrāsiāb. Kay Kōsrow, the son of Siāvoš, swears revenge on Afrāsiāb, and, having ascended the throne of Irānšahr, organizes a series of expeditions against Turān. Afrāsiāb, finally defeated, escapes to Čin and from there sails to Kangdež (13g 1732 ff.). Kay Kōsrow, in his turn, organizes a naval expedition to Kangdež (13g 1947 ff.) and after a six-month-long voyage reaches it, but Afrāsiāb has already secretly escaped. Kay Kōsrow resides in Kangdež for one year and then sails back to Iran through Turānian territory. Kangdež of the later episode is identified with Yamakoṭi, the legendary easternmost town of the Indian oecumene (Monchi-zadeh, pp. 245-51; the same location of Kangdiz is found already in *Bd*. XXIX, 10).

Apart from Kangdež, the *Šāh-nāma* mentions two other mythical castles with similar names: Kang-e Dožhuxt (or Dožhuxt-Kang) and Kang-e Behešt (or Behešt-Kang), the residences of Žaḥḥāk (ed. Mohl, 5, 342; 6, 998, 1006) and Afrāsiāb (13g 915 ff.) respectively. Kang-e Dožhuxt, lit. “accursed Kang,” is a re-etymologization of (Kuuirinṭa-) Dužita-, the abode of Aži- Dahāka- in the Avesta (*Yt*. 15.19). It is associated with Jerusalem in the *Šāh-nāma* and with Babylon in the *Bundahišn* ; the latter identification is based on an incorrect



understanding of Bawri , the “beaver land” in the Avesta, as Bābul , that is, Babylon (see Monchi-zadeh, p. 238). Kang-e Behešt, lit. “paradise Kang,” is located somewhere in Turān, beyond Čāč; it was captured by Kay K̥ osrow (13g 1310) during his war against Afrāsiāb. Probably this town may be related to the existence of a nomadic kingdom centered in the central Syr Darya region from the 2nd century BCE onwards; it was known to the Chinese as Kangju (Markwart, pp. 26-27). In later times, this name was shortened to Kang, a designation of the Samarqand (Samarkand) kingdom. The Old Turkic Kängü Tarban, the name of the Otrar region, is probably also derived from Kangju (Czeglédý). Moreover, the heroes of the wars against Afrāsiāb have Parthian rather than Persian names and thus probably reflect events occurring during the Arsacid dynasty (Yarshater, p. 572). In certain texts, Kangdež acquires features of other fortresses of Iranian mythology and epics: Yima’s Vāra (Biruni, pp. 303-4 [= Ar. p. 157]; also Boyce, pp. 62-63) and the Dež-e Ruyin “Brazen fortress” of the Turānian king Arjāsp (Tafazzoli; Russell, pp. 105 ff).

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