



KARSĪVAZ

KARSĪVAZ (Garsivaz), Av. Kərəsauuazdah; Pahl. Karsēwazd, in the old Iranian epic tradition the brother of Av. Fraŋrasiian, Pahl. Frāsiyāb (Frāsyāw, [Afrāsiyāb](#)). The Avestan name meant “having meager (*kərāsa-*) fattiness (*vazdah-*)” (cf. Kərəsāspa “having meager horses,” see [KARSĀSP](#)). This entry will be divided into the following sections:

i. *In the Avesta and the Pahlavi books.*

ii. *In the Šāh-nāma.*

i. In the Avesta and the Pahlavi Books

Kərəsauuazdah is mentioned once in the *Avesta* (*Yašt* 19.77, with acc. Kərəsauuazdām instead of the expected *Kərəsauuazdahəm) together with Fraŋrasiian in the context of Kauui Haosrauuh’s (Kay Husrōy). Although the text is not altogether clear, it appears that Kauui Haosrauuh, after overcoming Fraŋrasiian, binds Kərəsauuazdah as revenge for the treacherous slaying (*zūrō.jata-*) of Siiāuaršan (Siyāwāš; cf. Hintze, 1994, pp. 329, 336; cf. Mayrhofer, I/69). In *Yasna* 11.7 and *Yašt* 9.18, however, it is Haoma who binds Fraŋrasiian and leads him to Kauui Haosrauuh, who slays him, but we are probably dealing with two variant expressions of the same epic narrative.

Karsivaz is listed in the *Pahlavi Rivāyat* (46.21, spelled Karsēwast), among other early epic characters (after Frāsiyāb) with the epithet *purrr-* “full of,” as



pur-guftār “full of talk” (ed. Williams, I, pp. 170-71, II, pp. 77, 220; cf. *por-ferib* “full of deceit” in the *Šāh-nāma*, see below). In the *Dēnkard* (7.1.39, spelled Kereswazd = Kersīwazd), it is told that, when Ohrmazd’s word came to Kay Husrōy, he used it to overcome several world-destroyers, among them Kersīwazd, Frangrasyā’s “sibling brat (*ham-wišūdag*)” (ed. Dresden, p. [475]; ed. Molé, pp. 10-11). In the *Bundahišn* (35.17, spelled variously Karsēwaz and for *klsywyc>?), he is said to be called Kēdān and is listed together with Agrērad as Frāsyāw’s brother (ed. Pākzād, p. 395).

See also KAYANIAN.

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ii. In The *Šāh-nāma*

In the *Šāh-nāma*, Karsivaz is the brother of the Turanian king, [Afrāsiāb](#), and the man most responsible for the murder of the Iranian prince Siāvaš (q.v.).



The name is usually pronounced Garsivaz in New Persian, but the Avestan and Middle Persian forms of the name, as well as the fact that it is recorded in Arabic with initial *kāf* rather than *jim* (e.g., Tālebi, pp. 194, 207-11), indicate that its correct pronunciation must be Karsivaz (Nöldeke, tr., p. 17; cf. Justi, *Namenbuch*, p. 162). At least two manuscripts (the Vatican and the 2nd Leningrad codices) of the *Šāh-nāma* consistently render the name as Karšivaz.

Karsivaz is first mentioned in the *Šāh-nāma* in the story of Nōdar, where he is listed with other Turanian warriors who are sent against Iran after the death of Manučeher (ed. Khaleghi, I, p. 290, l. 68). In this story, as also in a later episode, he is given the epithet *piltan* “huge” (I, p. 298, l. 196; IV, p. 191, l. 329). Although he was a great warrior who is described in the *Šāh-nāma* as warlike (*jangjuy*, *jangsāz*), swordsman (*tiğzan*), vindictive (*kinajuy*, *kinak^vāh*), revengeful (*kinadār*, *kinasāz*), glorious (*nāmdār*), lionheart (*širmard*), and ambitious (*nāmjuybadgomān*), wicked (*badnehān*, *badnešān*), evil-doer (*badkoneš*), desceitful (*dāmsāz*), and fraudulent (*porferib*, *feribanda*). The single instance of the use of the epithet *badnežād* “of lowly lineage” (*Šāh-nāma*, ed. Khaleghi, II, p. 340, l. 2054) for him seems to be a textual corruption. More likely and plausible is the reading of the second Cairo manuscript, *badnehād* (of evil character). This reading also agrees with Karsivaz’s evil ways, which leads the wise Turanian warlord Pirān to accuse him of lack of wisdom (ed. Khaleghi, III, p. 213, l. 1775). Being the brother and confidant of Afrāsiāb, Karsivaz is also described as prominent (*arjomand*), renowned (*niknām*), benevolent (*nikk^vāh*), leader (*rahnomāy*), and wise (*pišbin*).

Karsivaz was quite close to his royal brother. The siblings’ intimacy is movingly described early in the story of Siāvaš, where he holds his brother Afrāsiāb, who has just woken up with a cry of terror, and asks him what is wrong. Whimpering in his brother’s arms like a child, the king responds, “Don’t ask, nor speak to me now. Just hold me tight for a while until I regain my wits” (*Šāh-nāma*, ed. Khaleghi, II, pp. 248-49, ll. 701-10). The brothers’ love for one another is depicted once again at the end of their lives, where Afrāsiāb, who is hiding from his enemies in a lake, comes out only after Karsivaz is tortured on the shore. Having heard his brother’s cries of agony, Afrāsiāb cannot remain indifferent, even in order to save his own life, and comes out ready to face his death (IV, pp 319-20, ll. 2316-39).

The Iranians consider Karsivaz the chief architect of Siāvaš’s murder. However, this ghastly deed is attributed to Afrāsiāb’s other brother, who is

called Brskān by Bal'ami (ed. Rowšan, I, p. 435; cf. Ṭabari, I, p. 600; ed. Bahār, p. 598). Be that as it may, like Afrāsiāb, whose daughter is married to Siāvaš, Karsivaz is also related to the prince. According to the *Šāh-nāma*, Siāvaš's mother was either Karsivaz's granddaughter or closely related to him by blood (ed. Khaleghi, II, pp. 204-05, ll. 33-56). Iranian folk tradition describes Siāvaš's mother as Karsivaz's own daughter, which would make him the slain prince's grandfather (Enjavi, III, pp. 103, 116, 120). The *Šāh-nāma* implies that Karsivaz disliked Siāvaš because the prince defeated him in the battle of Balk (ed. Khaleghi, II, pp. 244-45, ll. 634-50). It is also possible that he grew angry with Siāvaš because the young hero overcame two of Karsivaz's men in a friendly duel (II, pp. 325-26, ll. 1810-32). Whatever the reason, Karsivaz spares no effort to turn Afrāsiāb against Siāvaš and to bring about the innocent prince's eventual downfall. Aside from causing Siāvaš's death, Karsivaz is also responsible for the capture and imprisonment of Bižan, an Iranian hero (*Šāh-nāma*, ed. Khaleghi, III, pp. 321-24).

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