



# KAYĀNIĀN II. THE KAYANIDS AS A GROUP

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## KAYĀNIĀN

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References to the *kauuis* in the Avesta are found in the *yašts* in the lists of heroes who sacrificed to various deities for certain rewards. The lists go from Haošiiarṇha, via Taxma Urupi (Tahmōraf), Yima, and Kərəsāspa, to Ɔraētaona, the later Pishdadids (see [HŌŠANG](#), [JAMŠID](#), [KARSĀSP](#), [FERĒDUN](#)), before coming to the *kauuis*, beginning with Kauuāta and ending with Vištāspa. For translations see Malandra, 1983, and Skjærvø, 2011, as well as individual text editions cited below.

In the Pahlavi texts, Gayōmard and Siyāmak are appended at the beginning of the lists, and Ērij (see [iraj](#)), Manušcihr, and Uzaw/Zaw are inserted after Ɔraētaona before the Kays (cf. *Yašt* 13.131: Uzauua son of Tūmāspa, Manuš.ciθra son of \*Airiu), and the list of Kayanids is lengthened.

In the post-Avestan traditions, the *kauuis/kays* are portrayed in four stages: 1. seven *kauuis/kays* beginning with Kauuāta/Kawād and ending with Siiāuuaršan/Siāwa(x)š; 2. Haosrauuah/Husrōy (Husraw), son of Siiāuuaršan/Siyāwaxš; 3. Vištāspa/Wištāsp and his father Luhrāsp, descendant of Kay Pasin; 4. the rulers after Wištāsp.



From the point of story line, the first two are stages in the wars against Fraŋrasiīān (Frāsiyā, Afrāsiāb, q.v.) and the Turanians (including, in the Persian epic, the activities of Rostam), while the third is centered around the arrival of Zarathustra and the war against the Xionians (*xīiaona/ xyōn*). In the Pahlavi and later traditions, this third stage also provides the link with the Achaemenids. The characters of the third stage are the only ones mentioned in the *Gāthās*, and those of the fourth stage are the rulers linking the Kayanids with the Achaemenids and their successors. A similar framework is mentioned in *Dēnkard* (3.229; tr. de Menasce, p. 242), where good rule among the descendants of Jam was in three stages: 1. those after Frēdōn, Manuščihr, and his successors; 2. the Kayanids; and 3. the Huāfrīds or “Sasanian Kayanids, called Ōj” (see below, viii).

Mythological origins. The seven *kauuis* recall the Rigvedic *saptá ṛṣis* “the seven wise poets (singers)” (*Rigveda* 4.42.8), “the seven singers (*kāru*)” (*Rigveda* 4.16.3), or “the seven wise men (*vīpra*),” who found the path (*pathiā*) of Order” (*Rigveda* 3.31.5), and who are all involved in the regeneration of the new day and the orderly cosmos.

As in the case of the Rigvedic *kavīs*, the lineages of the Iranian *kauuis/kays* are emphasized, as in chapter 25 of the *Bundahišn*: “the family (descendants) and lineage (*tōhmag ud paywand*) of the *kays*” (cf. *Dēnkard* 5.4.4-5); compare the similar note in the *Rigveda* (3.38.2): “So ask the . . . births/generations (*jānimā*) of poets. Holding (their) thought(s) (firmly), acting well, they have fashioned the sky,” where we see the *kavīs* in their ritual-poetic-cosmogonic functions. The Gathic poet, whose function is also to help Ahura Mazdā regenerate the new day and the sunlit sky, apparently expresses his wish to be in the “good lineage” (*haozqθβa*) of “(one of?) good thought, that is, presumably, one of his successful predecessors, and so be entitled to a good reward for his ritual (*Yasna* 45.9).

Another reference to the cosmogonic function of the *kays* is found in *Bundahišn* 27.18-20 [27.19-21], where the *kays* and heroes (*wīr*), each in his own age, are said to smite six of the seven “powers” (*zōr*, or “deceptions” *zūr*) that Wrath produced to destroy the creatures, but also that they themselves, because of Wrath’s evildoing, were annihilated (*wanī-būd hēnd*) for the most part (*abērtar*); note a similar passage in *Yašt* 19.95, where Wrath is said to retreat before the companions of the Saošiiant, among whom is Kay Husrōy according to the Pahlavi tradition (*Dēnkard* 3.343; tr. de Menasce, p. 317; on Wrath as the embodiment of the powers of darkness in the *Gāthās*, see



Skjærvø, 2004, pp. 272-77; on the function of the Old Indic *kaví*, see Jamison, 2007, chap. 4, with comprehensive discussion of *kaví/kauui* and references; on the various topoi in the stories about the *kays*, see Krasnowolska).

In the Avesta. The Avestan references to the Kayanids as a group are scant, while there is more about a few individual *kauuis*. The standard list contains the seven *kauuis* preceding Haosrauuah, who is singled out from his predecessors. The main text is *Yašt* 19 to the earth (most recent editions: Hintze; Humbach and Ichaporia; Pirart), but the principal *kauuis* and references to their narratives are found in several other *Yašts* as well (*Yašts* 5, 15, 9, 13, 17; see also Kellens, 1997-98, pp. 750-52; idem, 1999-2000, pp. 744-51).

In *Yašt* 19.71-72 (Pahlavi translation in *Dēnkard* 7.1.35), the six names in the list are the direct object of “the Kavian *xvarənah* (see below), which followed . . . so that they all became . . .”; they are followed by a description of the qualities they obtained from this, and then Haosrauuah is listed, followed by a lengthy description. Unfortunately, the meanings of most of the terms are uncertain at best: *auruua* (stop-gap tr. “brave,” *Dēnkard*: *arwand* = Av. *auuruuaṇt* “speedy”), *taxma* “firm, steady” (like charioteers, archers, etc.; *Dēnkard*: *tagīg*, commonly rendered as “speedy,” but contexts point to “firm” or similar), possessing *θamnah* (meaning unknown; *Dēnkard*: *pahrēzōmand* “who exercises care”) and *varəcah* (commonly thought to mean “wondrous power,” common Pahlavi translation *warzōmand*; Old Indic *vārcas* is something possessed and given by the fire and the sun; cf. Pahlavi *warzāwand*, frequent epithet of fires) and *yaoxšti* (thought to refer to skill; Pahlavi tr. forms of *wizōh*- “examine”: *Yasna* 9.8 [Aži Dahāka], *Yašt* 7.5 [the moon], *kāmagōmand*: *Videvdad* 19.30 [the *daēnā*], 20.1), *darši-kariia* “performing daring deeds (*Dēnkard*: *škeft-kerdār*), and of the lineage of *kauuis* (*kauue* < *kā`uuiia*?). Other entities possessing *θamnah*, *varəcah*, and *yaoxšti* are Tištriia (*Yašt* 8.49; see [TIŠTRYA](#)), some aspect of the *mąθra spənta* (Ahura Mazdā’s holy thought/word; *Yašt* 16.1-2), the *xvarənah* of the *kauuis* and the “unseizable(?)” (*axvarəta*) *xvarənah* (*Yašt* 19.9, 45, etc.), *Θrita*, the first healer (*Videvdad* 20.1-2, where *pahrēzōmand* is taken to refer to healing and *warzōmand* is said to be like Kāyus and *kāmagōmand* like Jamšēd). In *Yašt* 13.132, the description of the seven is missing, and Haosrauuah follows Siiāuuaršan directly (in Geldner’s edition, his description comes in str. 133, but this division is arbitrary).

The Avestan list does not, with one exception, suggest a specific relationship between the *kauuis* of the list, with the exception of the relationship between Siiāuuaršan and his son Haosrauuah, expressed in the term *puθrō.kaēna* “as



filial revenge for.” The Pahlavi list, whose order differs slightly from the Avestan one, covers three generations, four of the *kays* being brothers.

Of the two characters of the third stage, only Vištāspa is called *kauui*. His father is Auruuat-aspa (*Yašt* 5.105, Pahlavi Luhrāsp), and his daughter (not explicitly) Humāiā (later Humāy). In the Young Avesta, he is associated with the brothers Frašaoštra and Jāmāspa (*Yasna* 12.7).

The Avesta does not refer to kings per se as rulers over specific lands other than in the case of Yima, who became the first ruler in Airiiana Vaējah (see ĒRĀN -WĒ Z), the mythological homeland of the Airiias (on Vištāspa, see below). The Avestan *dañ hupaiti* is usually the last in the list of heads of social units: *nmanō-*, *vīs-*, *zañtu-*, *dañ hupaiti*, loosely: “master/lord of the house, town, tribe, land,” but contexts such as *Yašt* 10.8, where the *dañhupaitis* fight enemy armies, suggest “rulers, kings.”

The *kauuis* are also not said to have “ruled” (*xšaiia-* “have command over”); this term is reserved for the Pishdadid “kings” Haošiiāṇha, Taxma Urupī, and Yima (*Yašt* 19.26-32; similarly in *Yašt* 5.22-26, with the expression *upəməm xšaθrəm bauua-* “wield the utmost power over”). The term is elsewhere applied to gods or to control over things (see Bartholomae, *AirWb.*, cols. 551-53).

In the Pahlavi texts. According to the *Bundahišn* (26.101-2 [26.104-5]), the divine Nēryōsang (messenger of the gods) is especially connected with the *kays* and “heroes” (*yal* or *\*wīr*) and increases their family (*tōhmag*) and assists them in furthering and organizing the world; he is also said to “call the family of the *kays* from the lineage of the gods (*bayān*).” In *Dēnkard* 5.4.5-6, the *xwarrah* of the current king is said to be the same as that of the *kays*, and Nēryōsang is said to have been “made manifest in order to keep their close family relationship (*ham-nāf*), lineage, and their intrinsic *xwarrah* intact (*drust*).” In *Dēnkard* 3.282, the seed (*tōhmag*) of Kay Kawād, made by Nēryōsang, is said to go back to that of Gayōmard. The Avesta may contain an echo of this myth in *Sī-rōzag* 1.9 (= 2.9 = *Niyāyišn* 5.5-6 to the Fire), where Kauui Haosrauuh, the Kavian *x<sup>v</sup>arənah*, and Nairiō.saṇha are counted among those associated with it.

The ancestor (*niyāg*, *Dēnkard* 3.282, 7.1.33, 8.13.12; ed. Dresden, [MR76]) of the *kays* was Kay Kawād, and their “lineage and seed/family” came from him (*paywand ud tōhmag*, also in *Mēnōy xrad* 26.45). Kay Abīweh was his son, and



the next four *kays* his grandsons.

In the *Bundahišn*, their lineage is said to come from the *kayān xwarrah* (*Bundahišn* 26.4), and their family, seed (*tōhmag*) is said (by popular etymology) to be from Lake Kayānsē (Av. Kaṣaoiia; *Bundahišn* 11C.5 [11C.4]), where Zarathustra’s “seed,” gathered by Nēryōsang, was deposited by Anāhīd (*Bundahišn* 35.60 [35.61], cf. 33.38 [33.43]), where it is Zarathustra’s *xwarrah* that is deposited by Anāhīd; see [KAYĀNSĪH](#)).

Their function as supporters of the *dēn* is mentioned in the *Ayādgār ī Wuzurg-Mihr* (*Pahlavi Texts*, p. 123 [229]), where “the *kays* and heroes (*yal* and *wīr*) who laid down their lives for the Mazdayasnian *dēn* (q.v.) are invoked, and also in the introduction to the *Bundahišn* (0.3: *kayān dēn-burdārān*).

The identification of the *kays* with rulers is explicit in *Abdīh ud sahiḡth ī Sīstān* 4 (*Pahlavi Texts*, p. 101 [320]), where the author points out that “the family and lineage of the ruling *kays*” (*paywand ud tōhmag ī kayān dahībēdān*) were much harmed in Sīstān. In *Dēnkard* 5.4.4-5, the qualities of the present ruler are compared with those of the *kays*. The *kays* are not the only ones who became kings, however; their predecessors also did, and kingship is not limited to those bearing the title *kay*. In the still later Perso-Arabic tradition, even Gayōmard has become a king, the first king in history. There is thus no question of “secularization” restricted to the *kays* (cf. Dumézil, 1986, p. 176; Jamison, 2007, p. 127).

In Perso-Arabic tradition. Like the Pahlavi sources, the Perso-Arabic historians state that Kay-Qobād was the ancestor of the Kayanids (Ḥamza, p. 35, tr. p. 24: *wāled* “progenitor”; Ṭabari, I/2, p. 535; tr., III, p. 117: *men naslehe*; Bal’ami, ed. Bahār, p. 524: *hama farzandān-e Kay-Qobād budand*). K̄ārazmi says his laqab was *alawwal* “the first” (p. 100), and Mirk̄vānd has *awwali* (see I, p. 664; tr., p. 216).

According to Ṭabari, the Pishdadids and Kayanids were rulers of Babylon (Bābel) and the east (Ṭabari, I/2, pp. 529-35; tr., III, pp. 112-18), while Bal’ami (ed. Bahār, p. 519) has Manučehr already as king of ‘Ajam in the land of Bābel (cf. Dinavari, ed. Guirgass, p. 12; ed. Ṭabbā’, pp. 15-16). Biruni says the Kayanids came from Balk but became the rulers of Babylonia, where they were called Chaldean after the former rulers (tr., p. 100; chronological tables on pp. 112-13, 17). This connection of the Iranian rulers with Babylon goes back at least to Dahāg, whose castle was in Bābel (*Bundahišn* 32.4; cf. *Dēnkard*



7.4.72). Biruni, who complains that the chronology of the Kayanids is “troubled and obscured,” only registers that ̤osrow was the grandson of Qobāḍ and gives the father’s name as for .

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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See at end of KAYĀNIĀN XIV. THE KAYANIDS IN WESTERN HISTORIOGRAPHY.