



The Evolution of the Farr Myth in the Ancient Literature and Religious Writings of Ancient Iran and its Reflection in Symbols and Insignia of Reliefs of Sassanid Emperors in Taq-e Bostan

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ABSTRACT

One of the important characteristics of Iran at the beginning of the Sassanid dynasty was the alliance between religion and the state to maintain the unity of Iran. Consolidating power bases by religion and developing religion with the help of political and military forces were the pillars of Sasanian founders' thinking. Inspired by the knowledge of Zoroastrian priests and the Avesta book, Sasanian artists mixed mythological symbols with historical images in the design and engraving of Sasanian inscriptions and reliefs. They took the utmost care to ensure that the combination of religion and myth was manifested in the form of symbols and emblems in the reliefs. This close relationship has a lot to do with ancient Iranian myths, both from the artistic and physical point of view and from the cultural and spiritual point of view. The question raised in this research is how the gods of Mithra, Vayu, and Bahram were embodied in the symbols and emblems of Taq-e Bostan in the donation of Farr to the Sassanid emperor? How are symbols such as the crescent moon, two angels, wavy ribbons, patterns and symbols on the emperor's clothes, and two plants carved at the foot of the large Taq of Taq-e Bostan, related to Mithra, Mithraism, and the donation of Farr? In this research, based on the analytical and descriptive approach, the carved Sasanian symbols and emblems of Taq-e Bostan are studied in the form of Mithraism and the myth of the donation of Farr. The result shows that the Sasanian art in Taq-e Bostan and the relief of Ardashir II Sasanian are all rooted in the belief in Mithraism and the Farr was donated by Mithra to the Sassanid emperor.

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Introduction

Deyhim or Farr was a circular ribbon that was presented to the Sassanid emperor by a spiritual and religious authority. This string or strip was placed on the head and covered with a royal crown. Deyhim was a symbol of the fusion of religion and kingship. Ardashir Papakan always said that the kingdom and religion are two brothers, that the stability of each will not be possible except with the help of the other (Maskouyeh Razi, 1990: 116/1). Deyhim came to Greece during the Achaemenid period and it was mentioned by the name of Diadema (Rajabi, 2004: 5/468). At the beginning of the Sasanian dynasty, Ardashir Papakan takes this ring from Ahura Mazda in his reliefs to legitimize his empire (Niebuhr, 1975: 131-132). Ardashir Papakan always said that I have organized the affairs of the religion and the country, which are like two twin brothers (Thaalabi, 1989: 304). In response to Ardavan V who said, "Who gave you the throne and the Farr?", he said, "The throne was given to me by God" (Ibn Athir, 1991: 444/1). In various reliefs of the Achaemenid and Sassanid kings, especially in the scenes related to the coronation ceremony, the kings always received the ring of power or royal Deyhim from the Zoroastrian priest or the manifestation of Ahura-Mazda. In some examples, they receive Deyhim from Zoroastrian holy gods such as Anahita and Mithra. According to the Gathas, Song 31, Farr is the thought of God that Ahura-Mazda thought of at the beginning of creation and on the first day to enlighten this world (Pourdavood, 2005: 149).

In Pahlavi texts, the word "Farr" is written as Khwara, in Middle Persian Farrah, and in Dari Farsi as "Farr". This word is often used to mean happiness, glory, shine, and justice. In the Avesta, where the ancient Aryan religion is combined with ancient myths, there is talk of three Farris: (1) Zoroastrian Farr, (2) Iranian Farr, (3) Royal Farr (Kiani). The presence of this sacred circle will bring blessings and wealth to the herd and the flock, wisdom, and the government (Bondaheshn, 2011: 109). Farr has an unbreakable relationship with Mithra, whose most important characteristic in the myths and religion of the ancient Iranian people was to take care of the agreements made, judge and guard the land of Iran (Razi, 2002: 148-149; Pourdavood, 2005: 169). It is the covenant of Ahura-Mazda with the first

man. Therefore, Ahura-Mazda said to those two first humans, Mashi and Mashianeh, at the beginning of creation: "You are the father and mother of the world; I created you with the best thought (intellect and wisdom). Do the flow of work with wisdom; Have good thoughts, words, and actions, and do not praise demons!" This was God's first covenant with man (Pourdavood, 1998: 1/105, 2/79). Mithra oversees the first man's covenant with Ahura-Mazda. The Sassanid kings, who consider their roots and origins to be from the ancients (Daryaei, 2005: 73), were obliged to crystallize that holy spirit in their existence and adhere to that first covenant to re-establish the Aryan and ideal Iranshahr. In this article, an attempt is made to investigate the carved motifs and symbols in Taq-e Bostan (Fig. 1) by applying the historical and mythological research method which is based on data description and analysis. In addition, the application of these motifs in the expression of the myth of the donation of Farr to the Sassanid emperors, which is reflected in the religious narratives of ancient Iran and depicted in their reliefs, should be analyzed and deciphered.



Figure 1: The large Taq of Taq-e Bostan (photo by the author).

Methodology

In this research, based on the analytical and descriptive approach, the carved Sasanian symbols and emblems of Taq-e Bostan are studied in the form of Mithraism and the myth of the donation of Farr.

Discussion

Investigating Avestan and Mithraic creation in the myth of the donation of Farr

In the Avesta creation myth, the sacred cow called Thor lived next to Kiyomarth. Ahriman killed Kiyomarth and the first cow. The two Amshaspands, the holy angels of the Zoroastrian religion, took the seed of Kiyomarth and the first cow from their bodies. They were taken to the moon and purified from pollution in the light of that holy place. As soon as Ahriman left the earth, that seed was protected in the bright light of the moon (Bondaheshn, 2001: 70). When the filth of the devil was removed from the earth, those two holy angels kept that seed in the heart of the earth for forty years. After forty years, 15 leaves of Ribas (sacred plant) grew from that seed. The entry of Ahura's Farr and wisdom into the plant creates a wise man (Bondaheshn, 2001: 81; Zādspram, 1987: 16; Shahrestani, 1982: 1/396; Shortheim, 2008: 85) (Fig. 2).

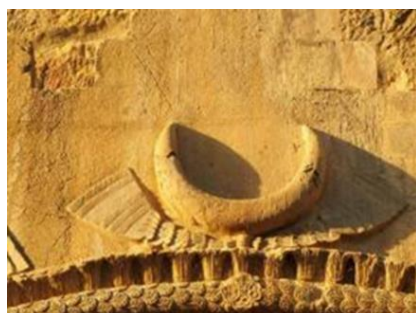


Figure 2: The crescent moon motif with a ribbon above the opening of the large Taq of Taq-e Bostan (photo by the author).

The two holy angels above the mouth of the large arch have Greek style and art, but in this Greek image, the myth of Iranian creation is hidden. When Ahriman left the earth, the seeds were brought to the earth by two Amshaspands of the moon whose image is carved on the top of Taq-e Bostan. Ameratat and Haorvatat (the two angels of Taq-e Bostan) planted the seed of Kiyomarth and the first cow on the earth, and from their growth a pair of male and female creatures appeared in the form of a plant (Bondaheshn, 2001: 81). The two plants carved at the bottom of Taq-e Bostan represent the initial creation of Ahura. Two male and female creatures named "Mashi" and "Mashianeh" were born from the evolution of this plant under the protection of the moon (Bondaheshn, 2001: 70; Pourdavood, 1998: 1.105; Isfahani, 1967: 1.62; Boyce, 1996: 194; Zener, 1996: 446).

Investigating the concepts of the myth of the donation of Deyhim to the Sassanid emperors in the large Taq

These arches and paintings were built during the reign of Khosrow Parviz (AD 590-628). The wall in front of the large Taq is horizontally divided into two parts and two hunting scenes are carved on the side walls. The upper scene on the opposite wall shows the assembly of donating the Deyhim to the king. In this relief, Khosrow is standing in the middle, and in his hand is the king's crown with a wavy ribbon, which is given to him by the Zoroastrian priest or the manifestation of Ahura-Mazda who is standing on the right side. On the other side of Khosrow Parviz, there is the goddess Anahita, who presents a similar ring to the king with one hand, and on the other hand, she holds a bucket that pours water on the emperor's feet. In the lower part of this scene, Khosrow Parviz is sitting on his big horse Shabdiz and a halo of light is shining around his head. While he is wearing a full battle dress, he is holding a long spear. This relief is four meters high. The king wears a crown in this relief. A relatively large orb can be seen on top of the crown. Below this orb is a wavy ribbon that has been blown by the wind. The wind is a representation of the existence of God Vayu, which includes the sacred Farr next to the emperor (Fig. 3).

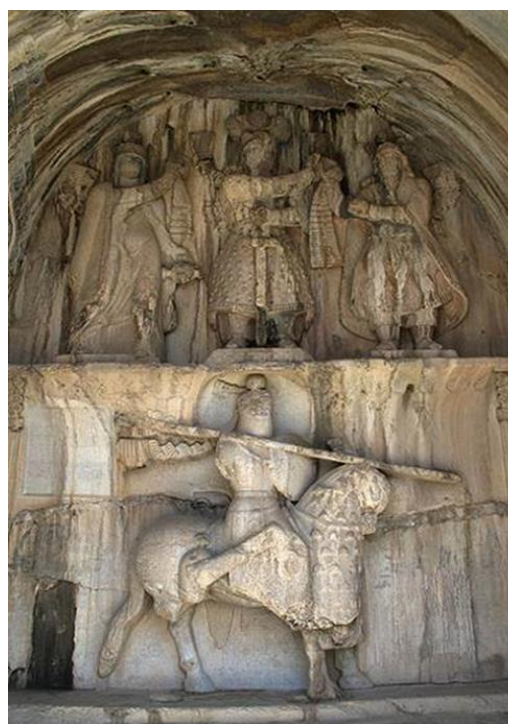


Figure 3: Khosrow Parviz riding on Shabdiz with the holy Farr halo around his head (photo by the author).

The king's clothes can be seen in the lower part that is visible from under the armor, which has a magnificent Simorgh pattern. In the Avesta, this creature is called Sane Mergu, and in the Shahnameh, it is mentioned as the king of birds and the breeder of Zal in Mount Alborz. A Simorgh with a dog's head and a peacock's tail is carved in the relief of Taq-e Bostan and is depicted in the king's dress (Prada, 2012: 262). The dress on which Simorgh is decorated is only for the emperor. Therefore, the motif of Simorgh has an inseparable relationship with sacred Farr thought (Fig. 4).

The Sassanid emperors considered themselves sacred as gods and heavenly beings. Khosrow Parviz shows himself in the upper part of the large Taq next to the celestial beings on the top of the Taq, which is an allegory of the sky. The cave symbolizes the dome of the sky and the world of creation. Mithra started creation in a cave with a cow sacrifice (Bondaheshn, 2001: 66; Komen, 2004: 138).



Figure 4: The motif of Simorgh in the costume of the emperor Khosrow Parviz in Taq-e Bostan (photo by the author).

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The Iranian emperor, who is the receiver of the fur, must maintain its three characteristics:

- 1-Defeat the harmful demon with the truth.
- 2- Defeat anger.

3-Crush greed (Pourdavood, 1998: 2/204; Pourdavood, 1998: 1/425; Pourdavood, 2005: 169; Balami, 1974: 1/353).

Farr can never appear in the existence of a non-Iranian person, just like the criminal Afrasiab Turani went to the wide sea of Crete to kidnap Farr; He rushed after Farr, and Farr got away from him (Doustkhah, 2006: 1/495). In the war between Zahhak and Azar to obtain the sacred Farr, Zahhak could not grab Farr because of the fear of Azar, which is a symbol of the sanctity of the Aryan people (Doustkhah, 2006: 1/493; Pourdavood, 1998: 2/340).

Conclusion

In the Sassanid Empire, the Deyhim, which was tied around the crown, indicated the emperor's religious adherence to religious beliefs. Donating the royal Farr and the Deyhim by a cleric or one of the Zoroastrian deities to the king tells the dependence on religion and politics in the Sassanid era. In most Sasanian sculptures, especially in Taq-e Bostan, there are always two wavy bands behind the kings and gods, which directly relate to the god Vayu (wind). God Bahram is the bearer of the holy Farr, the guardian of Iran, and the imperial glory in the form of the falcon and the wind. Therefore, the light of Mithra is seen around the head of the Sassanid emperor and the face of the king shines like the sun. The Taqs of Taq-e Bostan are a manifestation of Mithra's shrines. The Sassanian symbols carved in Taq-e Bostan evoke the myth of creation and the creation of the first sacred Farr, which is embodied in Mashi and Mashianeh in the allegory of two plants at the foot of the large Taq. Above the entrance of the Taq, the image of the moon is carved. The moon was the place and holder of the initial seed of creation. Two Amshaspands (Ameratat and Haorvatat) take Farr from the moon in Taq-e Bostan and spread it on the plant that was the beginning of creation carved at the bottom of the Taq. In Pishdadi kings, Farr appears in the form of justice, law, and truth. The Sassanid kings were obliged to receive Farr from Mithra and be the guardian of Iran like Mithra.

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