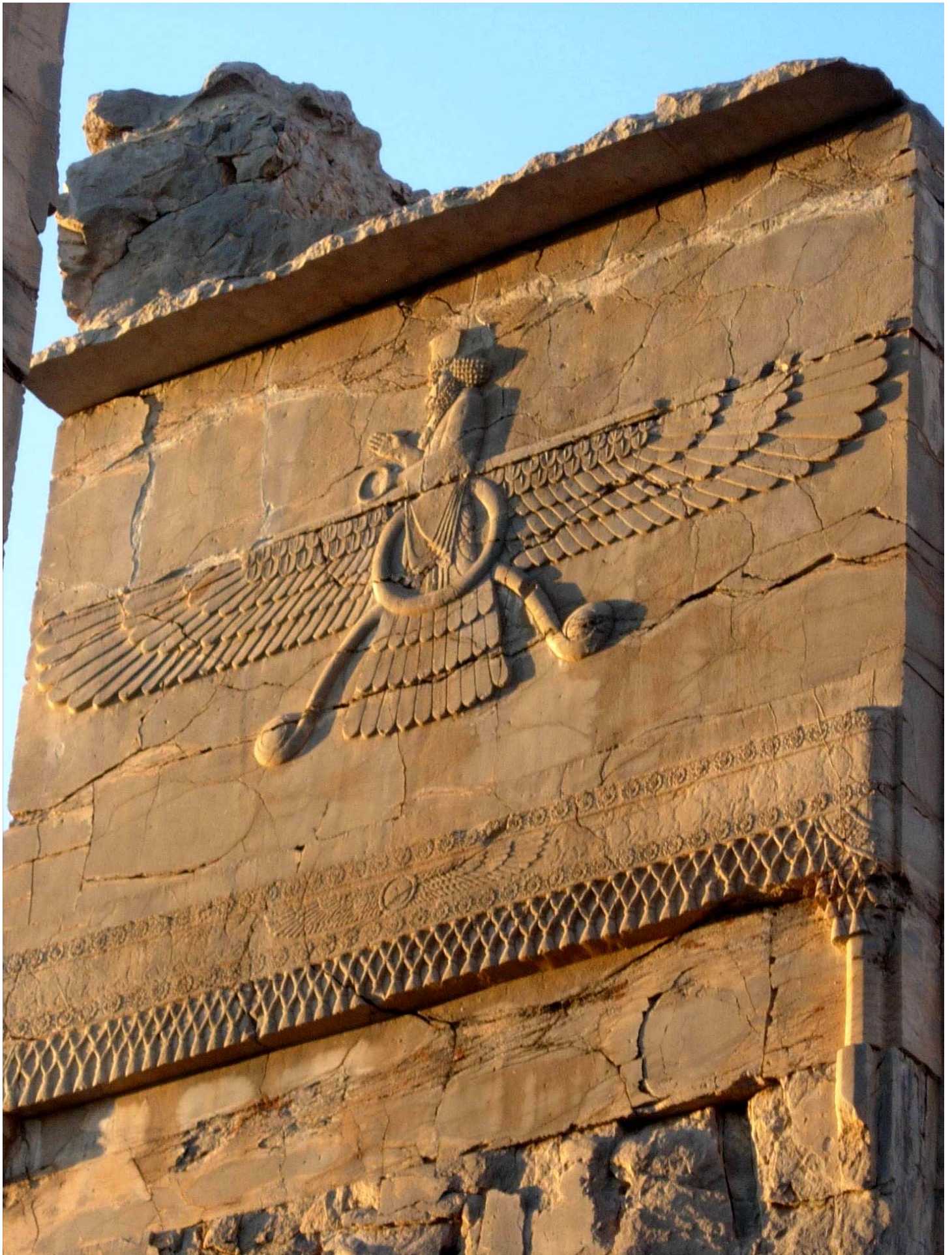


FAROHAR/FRAVAHAR MOTIF
WHAT DOES IT REPRESENT?
USE OF ICONS & SYMBOLS IN ZOROASTRIANISM

K. E. Eduljee

Zoroastrian Heritage Monographs



Farohar / Fravahar motif at Persepolis, Iran. Image: Narges Vafi.

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*Dedicated to the memory of my mother Katayun Eduljee
on whose birthday, September 29, this edition was completed.*

The monograph has been published in two versions:

- 1. Complete version with notations and source texts,*
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Zoroastrian Heritage Monographs

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GLOSSARY OF LATIN TERMS & ABBREVIATIONS

- c. - An abbreviation for circa, Latin for approximately or about.
- cf. - An abbreviation for confer and used in place of ‘compare with’.
- ibid. - Previously cited work in a footnote. To find the ibid. source, look at the reference preceding it. Ibid. is short for the Latin word ‘ibidem’ meaning ‘the same place’ and its use avoids repeating a work’s title.
- q.v. - Abbreviation for ‘quod vide’ used in our text to indicate more information is available elsewhere.

TIPS USING ADOBE READER

Using Read Mode

Task	Using the Drop Down Menu & Mouse	Using Keys (PC) Press
Start Read Mode	View > Read Mode	Ctrl and H
Change pages	Mouse over centre-bottom of screen to reveal control bar	PgDn PgUp
Change and zoom pages	Mouse over centre-bottom of screen to reveal control bar	Enlarge: Ctrl and + Shrink: Ctrl and -
Go to first page		Ctrl and Home
Go to last page		Ctrl and End
Exit Read Mode	View > Read Mode	Esc

Using Full Screen Mode

Task	Using the Drop Down Menu & Mouse	Using Keys (PC) Press
Start Full Screen Reading	View > Full Screen Mode	Ctrl and L
Next page	Left click mouse or advance scroll wheel	PgDn
Previous page	Right click mouse or retreat scroll wheel	PgUp
Enlarge page	Ctrl and advance scroll wheel	Ctrl and +
Shrink page	Ctrl and retreat scroll wheel	Ctrl and -
Exit Read Mode	View > Read Mode	Esc

PART I

WHAT DOES THE FAROHAR/FRAVAHAR MOTIF REPRESENT?



Farohar motif at Persepolis (Iran), capital of the Persian Achaemenid kings.

What does the winged motif¹ called the farohar/fravahar represent?

The answers go beyond clarifying the motif's past use to the heart of present-day Zoroastrian beliefs – they define Zoroastrianism.

We know of no direct statement that explains what the winged motif shown in the image above represents. Nevertheless, nowadays we read of three principal theories about the motif's symbolism, namely, that it represents:

1. God (often spelt as the diminutive 'god'), Ahuramazda (Ahura Mazda);
2. A monarch's farohar (also spelt or called fravahar/faravahar/fravashi), and
3. A monarch's khvarenah (also called farr).

To determine which of these three theories comes closest to what the farohar may have represented in the past – and what it could represent today – we will examine the concepts behind the theories and discuss related developments as well.

¹ Similar motifs accompany images of several Persian kings of the Achaemenid dynasty. The Achaemenids ruled Persia and Greater Aryana (also see I.5) from around the 8th or 7th century BCE to 330 BCE – say, two thousand five hundred years ago. Kings Cyrus and Darius the Great were part of the Achaemenid dynasty.

1. Background on the Use of the Farohar Motif

The farohar/fravahar motif of the type shown earlier usually accompanies the portrait of a monarch depicted on Persian Achaemenid inscriptions, tomb façades and artifacts – all being royal settings. The Achaemenid dynasty ruled from around the 8th or 7th century BCE to 330 BCE.

A similar and older motif has been found on a tomb in an area once part of Persia's sister nation, Media. When Achaemenid rule ended, so did the use of the winged motif – until, that is, about say two hundred years ago – when the farohar motif began to be adopted as a Zoroastrian symbol to symbolize the faith.



Farohar motif at the purported tomb of Cyaxares I (dated to between the late 7th to early 6th century BCE) in Qyzqapan, Iraqi Kurdistan and once a part of Media, Persia's sister kingdom. Image: Wikimedia.

We have not found any record of an intervening use of the farohar between the end of the Achaemenid era and its modern adoption as a common Zoroastrian symbol.

The use of the farohar as a symbol of Zoroastrianism is therefore relatively modern. While modern secular Iranians also use the symbol, we will restrict our discussion to the motif's use by Zoroastrians and we will begin with a review of the Zoroastrian concept of God, Ahura Mazda.



Farohar of the façade of the Yazd Atash Bahram (Fire Temple). Image: Terry Feuerborn at Flickr.

2. Zoroastrian Concept of God, Ahura Mazda, in Scripture & Texts

In addition to references throughout the Zoroastrian scriptures, the *Avesta*², including the Hormuzd Yasht (an Avestan chapter devoted to the concept of Ahura Mazda), the Zoroastrian concept of Ahura Mazda, God, is found concisely stated in the *Avesta's* Sad-o-Yak Nam-e Khoda [Hundred-and-One Names of the Lord (SK)]. We list here a few relevant attributes:

- An-aiyafah (SK 14) – Incomprehensible (understanding the true nature of Ahura Mazda, God, is beyond human comprehension). *The Dabistan*,³ 'The School', describes this concept of God by stating that except God, who can comprehend God? Entity, unity, identity are inseparable properties of this original essence.
- An-ainah (SK 26) – Without form.
- Mino-tum (SK 28) – Spirit-like (invisible). While the eye cannot behold Ahura Mazda, God, and while the mind cannot conceive God, Ahura Mazda is nearer to us than our own corporeal selves.⁴

Zoroastrian texts talk about the concept of a metaphorical pure eternal spiritual 'light' that brooks no 'darkness'⁵ and thereby casts no 'shadow'.

A. The Farohar Motif as a Winged Bird-Like Ahura Mazda

We have found no references in Zoroastrian texts that Ahura Mazda is bird-like or can be represented as part bird.

² The books of the *Avesta* comprise the Zoroastrian scriptures.

³ *Dabistan*, trans. D. Shea and A. Troyer (London, 1843), Chap. 1, p.6. The *Dabistan* (School) is a 17th century work in Persian credited to a Mohsen Fani. His early 'protector' was a Mobed Hushiar.

⁴ cf. *Pursishniha* in possession of Ervad Tahmuras Dinshaw Anklesaria, 1842-1903 CE (also called *Tahmuras Fragments*) 58, 59.

⁵ Denkart, ed. Madon (Dk. M.) 347.6-7. The *Denkart* (also spelt Dinkard or Denkart) consists of nine Middle Persian (Pahlavi) Zoroastrian books written by the Hudinan Peshobay – Zoroastrian priestly leaders – of whom Ardurfarnbag, son of Farrokhzadan, wrote the first three. Adurbad, son of Emedan edited Ardurfarnbag's books and added a further six books. The completion of Adurbad's expanded edition is dated to 1020 CE. Today, there are two principal renditions of the Denkart. Dastur Peshotan Bahramji Sanjana and his son Darab prepared the first of these renditions or modern editions, commonly known as the Sanjana edition (Dk. S.). Their rendition consisted of nineteen volumes of which the father published the first eight during his lifetime, i.e. between 1869 and 1897. The son published the remaining volumes in 1928. D. M. Madan undertook the preparation of a second rendition (Dk. M.), which he published in 1911 as a two volume set.

3. Fravashi/Farohar

The Avestan word ‘fravashi’ has evolved to the modern farvard, faravahar/fravahar and farohar. The *Avesta* and Zoroastrian texts speak about the fravashi in two ways.

The first is as a spiritual component of all creation including human beings where it is a companion of the soul. The second is as a spiritual entity that survives the passing of a righteous person to the after-life. Here, it has the ability to become a beneficent spirit – a guardian angel if you will. Both instances are explained in the Farvardin Yasht (hereafter Yt. 13).

In the first instance, the soul is a personal spiritual component while the fravashi is a universal component. The soul becomes good or bad depending on the choices made by its corporeal owner. The fravashi, however, carries *asha*, the laws of God, and is incorruptible. The soul can seek the assistance of the fravashi (perhaps through introspection).

While goodness is innate within us, associating with it is a matter of free will – of choice. Wisdom is the soul’s path to uniting with the fravashi and it is in an *ashavan*, a righteous person, where the two are in harmony. Such an individual is divinely blest.⁶

With this endowed faculty embedded within us, we do not need to seek divine assistance from without – we need to look deep within. Grace is theirs who choose the right path.

In the second instance, Yasht 13 (reiterated in the *Greater Bundahishn*⁷ at 3.18) extols and memorializes the farohars/fravashis of the righteous, the *ashavan*, who have passed away. In this aspect, the fravashi and soul are seldom mentioned as separate entities. In Yasna (Y.) 23.4 we have “*havahe uruno fravashi*” which can be read as “my own soul’s fravashi”.

It appears that once united with the personal soul, the universal fravashi becomes personal.

A. The Farohar Motif as a Winged Bird-Like External Fravashi

The united soul-fravashis of the departed can function as beneficent helpers i.e. as guardian angels. In Yt. 13.70 we have “*Tao he jasaonti avanghe*

⁶ cf. Yasna Y. 27.13, the Ahuna Vairyo, and Yt. 13 and 19.

⁷ The *Bundahishn* is a Middle Persian (Pahlavi) Zoroastrian text based on older works that discusses creation, geography, history, astrology and mythology. The surviving *Bundahishn* editions are frequently referred as the *Greater Bundahishn* (GB) (based on the older 16th century compilation) and the shorter *Lesser Bundahishn* (LB) (based on a later 18th century compilation).

yezi-she bavainti anazaretao khshnutao ainitao atbishtao ughrao ashaunam fravashayo, tao dim ava nifravayente manayen ahe yatha na meregho hupareno.” The free rendering reads, “They, the asha-abiding fravashis, come to assist those who are beneficent and not hurtful or offensive. To them, the fravashis will assuredly come flying like birds well-winged (meregh hu-parena i.e. Huparena Murgh).”

Thinking of the fravashi as winged like a bird, allows the fravashi to be represented as an external winged entity, thereby making the farohar motif a strong candidate for representing the winged fravashi.

What may work against this conclusion is that in Yt. 13.70, the external fravashi as a “well-winged bird”, i.e. angel-like, may not refer to the internal fravashi of a living person but rather that of someone who has died and passed on to the spiritual realm. However, the Achaemenid reliefs show the person in the external farohar closely resembling the (living) king beneath.

One can postulate that this is a farohar of an ancestor. Alternatively, the image could seek to convey that the king being righteous, his soul and fravashi have reached, or will reach, this status upon passing away. In other words, the fravashi portrayed externally could represent that the king rules in accordance with the fravashi and therefore the king is an ashavan living and ruling in accordance with the laws and will of God, Ahura Mazda.

4. Khvarenah/Farr

There is yet another spiritual component that resides within us – the khvarenah (Avestan) or farr (New Persian). It is difficult to find one English word that encapsulates the vast concept of the khvarenah. At one level, the khvarenah is the archetype of the person one can grow to become if allowed to grow to the limit of her or his capacity in grace, that is, in keeping with the fravashi and thereby in keeping with one’s higher calling.⁸

As with the fravashi, the khvarenah is also a companion of the soul.⁹ In the righteous – the ashavan – all three work in concert as they did with Zarathushtra.¹⁰

In addition, if through choice and free will, a person utilizes her or his talents fully, that person can grow to her or his greatest potential. Since the khvarenah is Mazda-datem, God-given, when a person works in concert with

⁸ cf. R. C. Zaehner, *The Dawn & Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (New York, 1961), pp. 151-3, 268.

⁹ q.v. Yt. 13.40, 41; Dk. S. 3.367.

¹⁰ q.v. Mary Boyce quoting the *Bundahishn* 3.23-24 in her article *Fravaši* at Encyclopaedia Iranica.

her or his higher calling, the closest English equivalent is to say that person is living in grace.

A. The Farohar Motif as a Winged Bird-Like External Khvarenah

In addition to the internal khvarenah possessed by all, there is an external khvarenah, which comes to a person who is most deserving of that special (for the lack of better words) aura or charisma.

The external khvarenah is more in keeping with the notion of the farr in Daqiqi and Ferdowsi's *Shahnamehs*.¹¹ The royal Kava Khvarenah is one such unique external khvarenah with bird-like mobility while a person is still alive.

The Zamyad Yasht has an enigmatic passage at Yt. 19.26 that can be read to mean the Kava Khvarenah either settled for the first time over righteous King Hushang or that it formed a strong attachment to him. However, when a monarch uses his or her talents to achieve base ambitions rather than his or her higher calling, the Kava Khvarenah can fly away like a bird. The Zamyad Yasht at Yt. 19.34-35 tells us, "When he (King Jamsheed) began to find delight in words of falsehood and untruth, the (Kava) khvarenah was seen to flee away from him in the shape of a Vareghna bird (identification not known)" to Mithra, guardian of the sun. In doing so, the (Kava) khvarenah became the Akhvareta Khvarenah – a non-personal khvarenah.

The Yasht strongly implies that kingship and the mantle of leadership of the Aryan people must be deserved. It stays over a monarch provided he or she rules in grace, but flies away when a monarch violates a covenant embedded in Aryan history to rule as an ashavan. This is the exclusive heritage of the Aryan people¹² from the time when kingship was first conferred on Hushang (or on his grandfather Gayomard/Kaiumars according to Ferdowsi).

The Zamyad Yasht further states that someone cannot forcibly seize the Kava Khvarenah. This may be a contributing reason why Achaemenid King Darius I (who gained power by deposing someone he claimed had usurped the throne) faced rebellions from other Aryan nations who may have initially rejected Darius' right to be their overlord.

We see that the *Avesta* figuratively describes both the external fravashi and the khvarenah as birds. Of the two, the exclusive bird-like external royal

¹¹ While 'shahnameh' means 'chronicle of kings' in Persian, it has been the traditional chronicle of Iranian-Aryan history. The most well-known shahnameh is the 10th-11th century CE Persian poet Ferdowsi's work in verse. The poet Daqiqi's *Shahnameh* is one of many that preceded Ferdowsi's work.

¹² q.v. Yt. 19.57-64.

I.3-4. Farohar/Fravahar Motif – What Does it Represent?

khvarenah has mobility while the person it patronizes is still alive. Its presence indicates a monarch is ruling in grace. This feature makes it particularly suited to be represented as the motif we now call the farohar. If this reasoning holds, the external royal khvarenah of Zoroastrian-Aryan monarchs could have been represented by what we call the farohar motif – the earlier surviving example of its purported use being that by the Zoroastrian Medes, Persia's sister nation (see III.2.C).

There are two principal types of winged motifs depicted on Achaemenid structures, one with a person within a central disk and another without a person.



Personal or attached farohar. A bas relief at Persepolis. Note the unusual position of the person placed above the impersonal farohar with a vacant circle. Usually, the figure of the person rises from within the circle. This motif also has an unusual combination of stylized 'feet' emerging from the waist of the person and wavy-pronged 'feet' emerging from the circle.



Impersonal or unattached farohar depicted on glazed tile work from Palace of Darius I, the Great (r. 522-486 BCE), at Susa, now at the Iranian National Museum, Tehran.

For our purposes, we call the former a personal farohar and the latter an impersonal farohar. The first could be the attached Kava Khvarenah and the other the unattached Akhvareta Khvarenah.

We suspect that different Zoroastrian-Aryan regimes would have had their own graphic representation of the khvarenah/farr. A ram or stag with bird wings is a Sassanian-era possibility (see Appendices V.2.E and V.5.D.). Popular artists' impressions of Zarathushtra have him portrayed with his khvarenah/farr as a halo – as the radiance of the sun (khvar/khor) emanating from his head (likely influenced by the Sassanian rock carving shown at III.1.B).

B. Birds in Zoroastrianism

As we have noted, the *Avesta* compares the fravashi to a Huparena (well-winged) bird and the Kava Khvarenah to the Vareghna bird.

In addition, we find that in the *Bundahishn*, the largest of all birds is called the three-toed Sen-murgh or Saena-bird.¹³ The Sen-murgh likely evolved into the Simorgh so central to Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*.

The *Shahnameh* also mentions a farr-e Homai and a heavenly Homai (bird) that spreads its wings casting a shadow (over a king) (see V.2.C.).



The head of a bird commonly said to be the Homa/Homai bird. Rock sculpture at Persepolis.
Image: youngrobv at Flickr.



Artist's impression of a Simorgh in the Walter's manuscript of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*.

We do not know if these birds were modelled after existing birds when the texts were written and if the birds still exist or have become extinct.

¹³ q.v. *Greater Bundahishn*, tr. B. T. Anklesaria, 13.10, 17.11 & 17A.1 (see Appendix V.B.1) & Yt. 12.17 & 14.41.

I.3-4. Farohar/Fravahar Motif – What Does it Represent?

What is of interest to this discussion is that some depictions of the bird-like farohar motif show it with three-toed feet. The Saena bird – the largest of all birds in Zoroastrian texts – is also stated to have three toes. However, three-toed flying birds are relatively rare.

This author notes that nowadays, one of the heaviest creatures that can fly is the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*). A variety of the bird is native to Greater Aryana (see below).

The species is endangered and its numbers are diminishing rapidly (a popular and controversial sport amongst the wealthy Arabs in the Gulf States is to hunt Bustards using Falcons). The male Bustard is typically a metre tall (three feet) with an average wingspan just under three metres (about eight feet). The Bustard has long feet that at times project beyond its body in flight – and it has three toes.



Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*)

5. Greater Aryana

This author has proposed use of the name ‘Greater Aryana’ to mean greater ancient Iran or Iran-shahr. Greater Aryana includes the sixteen nations listed in the *Avesta’s* Vendidad (1.1-19) plus lands added after the Avestan canon was closed. In our estimation, Greater Aryana stretched from the Tigris and Cappadocia in the west to Kashgaria and the Indus River in the east; from the Caspian and Aral seas in the north to the Persian Gulf and the Makran coast in the south. cf. Extent of Greater Aryana at page 104 of *The Immortal Cypress – Companion* by K. E. Eduljee (www.immortalcypress.com).



PART II FAROHAR/FRAVAHAR MOTIF – USE OF ICONS IN WORSHIP

1. Name of the Religion

‘Zoroastrian’ & ‘Zoroastrianism’ are modern English words. They are not found in ancient texts. If so, by what name was the religion known previously?

Internal name: The *Avesta* calls the religion ‘Mazdayasna’ and ‘Mazdayasna Zarathushtrish’. Some modern writers use the word ‘Mazdean’.

External name: Classical European writers called Zoroastrianism the religion of the Magi, ‘Magiæ’ or ‘Magian’ if you will. To this day Arabs call Zoroastrians ‘Majus’ (i.e. Magian). Islamic writers called Zoroastrian lands ‘Mughistan’ (from ‘Mugh / Magha’).

In *Alcibiades I*, Greek philosopher, Plato cites the Magism of Zoroaster (Zarathushtra). Plato’s disciple, Hermodorus, said Zoroaster was the first Magian i.e. founder of the Magi’s doctrine (cf. *Agathias’ Histories*).

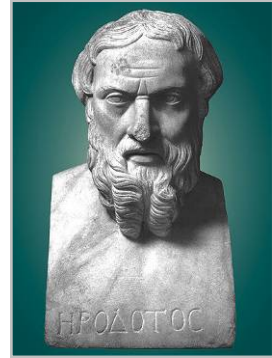
Herodotus and Strabo knew of only one Persian religion. Albert de Jong in *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature* states, “There is no trace of a plurality among the Iranians. On the contrary, in the (Greek and Latin) Classical texts, only one religion is recognized: the religion of the Persians. This religion is often connected with the name Zoroaster, who enjoyed a wide reputation in the ancient world as the founder of the order of the magi, and by extension as the founder of the wisdom and religion of the Persians.”

2. Ancient Historians on Achaemenid Era Zoroastrian Worship Practice

Since surviving records of ancient Persian belief systems are found in the works of Classical Greek and Latin authors, their records can help us determine what the farohar motif could have represented during Achaemenid times. The earliest extant work is that of Greek author Herodotus (c. 485-420 BCE) who lived during Achaemenid times.

A. No Temples or Images of Deities – Persians Consider Image Use a Folly

Herodotus: “They (the Achaemenid era Persians) have **no images of the gods, no temples** and no altars – **and consider their use a sign of folly**. This comes, I think, from their not believing the gods (sic) to have the same nature with men, as the Greeks imagine. Their wont, however, is to ascend the summits of the loftiest mountains, and there to making offerings to Zeus (Mary Boyce: “Ahuramazda’s name was regularly ‘translated’ as Zeus by Greeks”), which is the name they give to the whole circuit of the firmament. They likewise offer to the sun and moon, to the earth, to fire, to water, and to the winds. These are the only deities (sic) **whose worship has come down to them from ancient times.**”¹⁴ Further, during offerings, a magus “chants a hymn, which they say recounts the origin of the cosmos.”



Herodotus



Strabo

The farohar motif was in use during Herodotus’ time. If it had represented God, Herodotus would have been constrained to make the statement “they have no images of the gods....”

First century CE Greek writer Strabo,¹⁵ confirms that “the **Persians do not erect statues or altars**, but ‘offer sacrifice’ (i.e. worship) on a high place. **They regard the heavens as Zeus (Ahura Mazda)** and also worship (revere or extol) Helius (Greek god of the sun), whom they call Mithras... and fire and earth and winds and water.”

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215 CE), a Greek Christian theologian and Church Father, wrote in *Exhortation to the Heathen*, that the magi, “(Dino tells us,) worship beneath the open sky, regarding fire and water as the only images of the gods (sic).”¹⁶ Dino is likely Greek historian and chronicler, Dinon (c. 360-340 BCE), a contemporary of Alexander and the author of a lost *Persica*.

B. Heavens: Ahura Mazda’s Cloak

What Classical writers saw through their anthropomorphic (human-like) polytheistic frame of reference is that Achaemenid era Persians viewed the

¹⁴ Herodotus, *Histories*, 1.131.

¹⁵ Strabo, *Geography*, 15.3.13.

¹⁶ Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Heathen* (chapter 5 – The Opinions of the Philosophers Respecting God), translated by William Wilson in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2 (New York, 1885).

entire cosmos i.e. the heavens as a way to illustrate Ahura Mazda's nature. Perhaps we can allude to the heavens as the cloak of Ahura Mazda who is nevertheless unseen and spirit-like.

3. Unseen & Seen Deities. Aniconic & Iconic Worship

A. Chatterji: Asuras & Devas

In his *The Hymns of Atharvan Zarathushtra*,¹⁷ Jatindra Mohan Chatterji, a scholar of Vedic and Avestan texts, finds that the schism between the Iranian and Indian branches of the Aryan family took place over their theological systems.

"The difference," he states, "seems to have started over the use of icons in worship. ...Deva came to mean a visible God (God represented by an idol) and Asura, an invisible (formless) God. Some people preferred the use of an icon – they were the Deva-Yasna. Others interdicted [prohibited] its use – [they were] known as Ahura-tkesa in the beginning and Mazda-yasna later on." "...the Deva-Asura war [was] a clash between the ideals of iconic and aniconic worship."¹⁸ "There can be no compromise between iconism and aniconism."¹⁹

4. An Austere Worship Practice

A. The Austere Worship Practice of Ancient Zoroastrians

Reading the oldest records, we see that the Achaemenid Zoroastrians were remarkably austere in their use of religious contrivances – so austere that they didn't even have temples.

All the rock engravings on the tombs depict the monarchs worshipping before the fire with the moon or sun in the sky – that is, in the open air with the earth as their temple and the heavens as its roof.

About 450 years after Herodotus



Plinths for possible outdoor worship at Pasargadae, Pars, Iran - capital of Cyrus the Great. The far plinth could have supported the fire stand and the king or others could have stood on the other.

¹⁷ J. M. Chatterji, *The Hymns of Atharvan Zarathushtra*, published by the Parsi Zoroastrian Association of Calcutta, 1967.

¹⁸ *ibid.* p. xx.

¹⁹ *ibid.* p. xxvi.

II.1-4. Farohar/Fravahar Motif – Use of Icons in Zoroastrian Worship

made his observation that the Persians had no temples but worshipped in the open, Strabo noted that the magi of Cappadocia (now in Turkey) had “...Pyraetheia (fire-houses), noteworthy enclosures; and in the midst of these there is a fire holder on which there is a large quantity of ashes where the magi keep the fire ever burning. And there, entering daily, they make incantations for about an hour, holding before the fire their bundles of rods (barsom) and wearing round their heads high turbans of felt, which reach down over their cheeks far enough to cover their lips.”²⁰

Thus, we read that the magi had fire-houses (Persian atash-gah) in order to maintain an ever-burning fire in their role as keepers of the ever-burning flame (fire-keepers, athravans) and for their worship rituals. There is no indication that the community at that time joined the magi in rituals at the fire-houses (atash-gahs) i.e. the atash-gahs were not public temples. It appears the community continued to worship in the open.

Nevertheless, atash-gahs eventually became larger fire temples where people could congregate within and not have to brave the elements or climb a hill (institutionalized exercise).



Sassanian chahar-taqi at Niasar near Kashan, Esfahan (Isfahan).

The earliest surviving atash-gahs are from the Parthian and Sassanian eras (from c. 250 BCE to c. 650 CE). They are austere hillside structures called chahar-taqi(s) meaning four directions.

No symbols adorn the temples. The only object in the temples would have been a fire holder or urn.

²⁰ Strabo, *Geography*, 15.3.15.

5. Pure Worship Practice

A. Ammianus Marcellinus: the Purest Worship of Divine Beings

Fourth century CE, Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus adds²¹,



Plato

“Plato, that most learned deliverer of wise opinions, teaches us that the Magian (religion) is (known) by a mystic name Machagistian,* that is to say, the purest worship of divine beings; of which knowledge in olden times the Bactrian Zoroaster derived much from the secret rites of the Chaldaeans.”

[*Note: Machagistian could be a corruption of Mazistha (greatest) or Mazdayasni. If a corruption of Mazdayasni, then this is one of the few Western references to this name.]

Jatindra Mohan Chatterjee, author of *The Hymns of Atharvan Zarathushtra*, also uses the term “pure religion” when referring to the religion of Zarathushtra.²²

B. Pak-e Yazdan

In his *Shahnameh*, Ferdowsi states “*Mapandar*²³ *ka atash parastaan boodand. Parastandey Pak Yazdan boodand*” which this author translates as, “Do not think that they were fire-worshippers. They were worshippers of a pure Divinity (Pak-e Yazdan)”. The Middle Persian text, the *Shayest Na-Shayest*, also states, “Of a pure law (dad) are we of the good religion.”²⁴



Ferdowsi

C. Pak-e Mazdayasna

The simplicity of ancient Zoroastrian worship practice, a profound philosophy, and the lack of religious contrivances or images could have been why Plato saw Zoroastrianism/Magism as, “The purest worship of divine beings” – a concept we might wish to reaffirm today – the pak (pure) yasna (worship) of Mazda (God).



²¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum gestarum libri*, 23.6.31-32. See Appendix V.B.

²² J. M. Chatterji, *The Hymns of Atharvan Zarathushtra*, p. xxiii.

²³ Poetic license for ‘napandar’ (‘deem not’ or ‘do not think’).

²⁴ *Shayest Na-Shayest*, 6.7.

PART III USE OF SYMBOLS IN ZOROASTRIANISM

1. Historical Use of Identifiers and Symbols

While several items can identify the wearer or carrier as a Zoroastrian, we have no record of Zoroastrians traditionally using a symbol as a personal adornment. Perhaps as indicated by Herodotus, ancient Zoroastrians shunned religious images and symbols. If correct, then the use of a symbol as a personal and structural adornment in Zoroastrianism is a modern development.

A. Fire & the Stepped Fire Stand

Historically, the only object Zoroastrians used during worship has been fire (or a light source).

It is the stepped top and base fire stand or holder* that provides a lasting testimony to the depth (in time) and breath (across Aryana) of Zoroastrianism's practice. [*We hesitate to call the fire stand an 'altar' since an 'altar' of the Classical Greek variety likely meant something quite different for Herodotus who stated the Persians did not use altars. (See V.6.F.)]

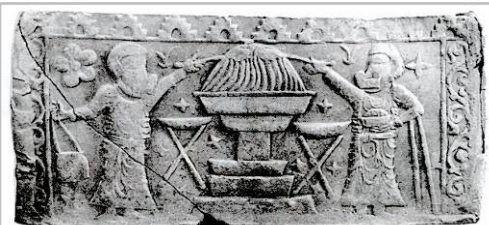


Parthian-Sassanian era stepped fire stand found at Kuh-e Khajeh near Zabol in Sistan.

Fire burning in a stepped fire-stand has been a consistent Zoroastrian 'symbol' for about a thousand years – from Median-Achaemenid royal carvings to the coins of Sassanian era Zoroastrian sovereigns; from Anatolia (Central Turkey today) in the west, to Kyrgyzstan in the east and Sistan in the south.



Coin of Sassanian King Shapur II ? (304-379 CE). While the Achaemenid style of the stepped fire stand persisted for nearly a thousand years, the winged motif called the 'farohar' ceased to be used as a Persian-Zoroastrian symbol after the end of the Achaemenid era.



Stepped fire stand on an ossuary discovered at Navaket (present day Krasnaya Rechka) in Kyrgyzstan. Note the shape of the flame and compare with the flame portrayed on Xerxes' tomb at III.2.C. Also note the tassels on the waist cords (kushti?) shown in detail in the image to the left and the padam over the priests' mouths.

III.1. Farohar/Fravahar Motif – Use of Symbols in Zoroastrianism



Stepped fire stand on a ceramic ossuary dated to the 7th-8th century CE found in the Samarkand-Sugd region of Central Asia. Note the priests wearing the padam over their mouths so as not to defile the fire. Also, note the design at the very top of the ossuary – the apparent sun within a crescent moon (cf. sun in Median motif at III.2.B). The arches over the fire and the priests could depict a worship area similar to a chahar-taqi atash-gah / fire-house or temple.

Many of the fire stands and artifacts displayed on these pages have come to light in relatively modern times. We can only imagine what remains hidden and grieve for those objects that may never be found.

The consistency with which the stepped fire stand has been depicted across Aryana over a period of at least a thousand years is closely followed by depictions of the barsom.

B. Barsom

The barsom (the bundle of sticks used in haoma/hom preparation during the Yasna ceremony) indentified the person carrying the barsom bundle as a Magian-Zoroastrian.

The barsom has been depicted in rock carvings and artifacts from Anatolia (Central Turkey today) to Central Asia.



Investiture of Sassanian King Ardashir II (r. 379-383 CE). Rock relief at Taq-e Bostan, Kermanshah, Iran. The figure in the centre is commonly identified as Ardashir II. Identification of the other two figures has spawned an industry and we will not contribute to the speculation. The image of the left figure including his clothing has become a model for Zarathushtra's modern portraits. Our interest is in the barsom bundle held by this individual and the sun-shine (khur-sheed)-like farr emanating from his head. Base image: Alieh Saadatpour at Flickr.



A gold sheet with an engraved image of a man carrying a barsom (perhaps a magus). Part of the Oxus Treasures now located at the Victoria & Albert, as also the British Museums, England. Image: Wikipedia.



Rock carving housed at the Museum for Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara. Note the cloak. For this author, this style of clothing identifies a possible magus here depicted carrying a barsom bundle and what may be a haoma cup.

The magi are at times depicted carrying weapons. Several inner sanctums of fires temples also have old style weapons. While not warriors, Zoroastrian priests appear to have been prepared to defend themselves and the temples.

C. Sudreh and Kusti

The sudreh and kusti – the white vest and waist cord – if worn externally can identify the wearer as a Zoroastrian. While they carry symbolic meaning, the sudreh and kusti are not iconic symbols.

D. Identifiers & ‘Symbols’ – Zoroastrianism in Aryana

This writer proposes that images – identifiers or ‘symbols’ if you will – of the stepped fire stand, the sun or moon depicted overhead in a worship scene, the barsom, and the clothing of the magi all come together as corroborating evidence of Zoroastrianism’s practice within Greater Aryana. New discoveries will continually redefine the extent of widespread Zoroastrian practice and even that of Greater Aryana. The east and north of Greater Aryana are still relatively unexplored.

2. Development of the Farohar Motif

A. Hittite Motif

The Hittites were the people who ruled Hatti, a central Anatolian (Turkey today) kingdom, from c. 1900 to c. 700 BCE.

Together with their southern neighbours, the Mitanni, the Hittites acknowledged Aryan (Indo-Iranian) deities such as Mitra, Varuna, Indra and used names with Aryan roots. The Hittites formed the earliest known Anatolian civilization and employed an advanced system of government based on a legal doctrine.

The land of the Hittites was called Katpatuka (Cappadocia) during Persian Achaemenian times (c. 675 to 330 BCE). Strabo in the first century CE noted that the magi of Cappadocia “...have Pyraetheia (fire-houses), noteworthy enclosures...” the first record of Zoroastrian fire temples. The Hittite lands of Hatti



Hittite farohar-like bas-reliefs.

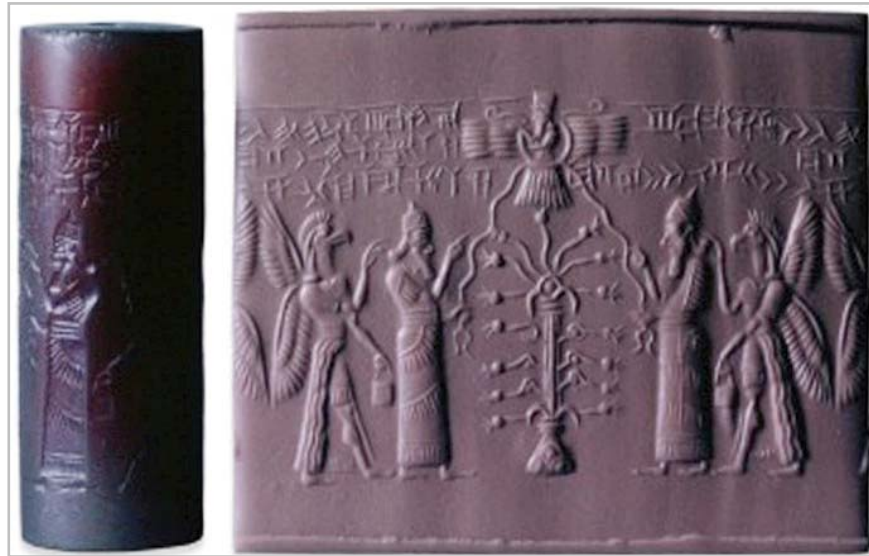


c. 750 BCE bas-relief found at Sakça-Gözü/Coba Höyük, S. Turkey. Compare with Darius hunting seal at p. 27.

could have formed the western extent of Ranghaya, the sixteenth and last Aryan land in the Vendidad – the last land mentioned before the Avestan canon was closed.

If Hatti was indeed a part of Greater Aryana, the Hittites may have employed one of the earliest known/surviving farohar-like motifs in Greater Aryana – or for that matter in the region. These motifs accompany royalty in much the same way as in Achaemenid bas-reliefs. The Hittite farohar-like motifs are primarily of the impersonal/unattached (see III.2.F) variety.

B. Symbols Similar to the Farohar Used by Other Cultures



Neo-Assyrian carnelian cylinder seal and impression 9th cent. BCE. Image: Br. Museum.

Much has been made of farohar-like motifs used by other neighbouring ancient cultures such as the Assyrians, Sumerians and Egyptians (all to the west of ancient Aryana). While the symbols have similar features and while the artisans who developed them may have borrowed design features from one another (or could have done so by royal command), the concepts they represented may have been entirely different. In the absence of any corroborating information on their representing similar concepts, a further discussion is only speculative and conjectural.

The cylinder seal shown here was found in Sherif Khan (Tarbisu), northern Iraq. The inscription reads “Seal of Mushezib-Ninurta, governor... son of Samanuha-shar-ilani.” In 883 BCE, Samanuha-shar-ilani was a ruler of Shadikanni (Arban in eastern Syria) as an Assyrian vassal. On their web-page, the British Museum claims without substantiation that the farohar-like figure is one of the Assyrian gods.

While there is a close similarity between the image above and some Achaemenid farohar designs, it is pointless to speculate on who borrowed what from whom since our present information is based on surviving artifacts made on materials that can last (such as clay or stone – commonly used Assyrian substrates). We do not know if ancient Aryan artifacts on perishable materials such as parchment have been destroyed for all time. The Assyrians had close contact with the Aryans and at one time ruled over Aryan lands. Assyria might have been the home of the legendary Dahak/Zahhak and the *Avesta* (Yt. 19. 46-50) states he sought in vain to claim the khvarenah.

C. Median Motif

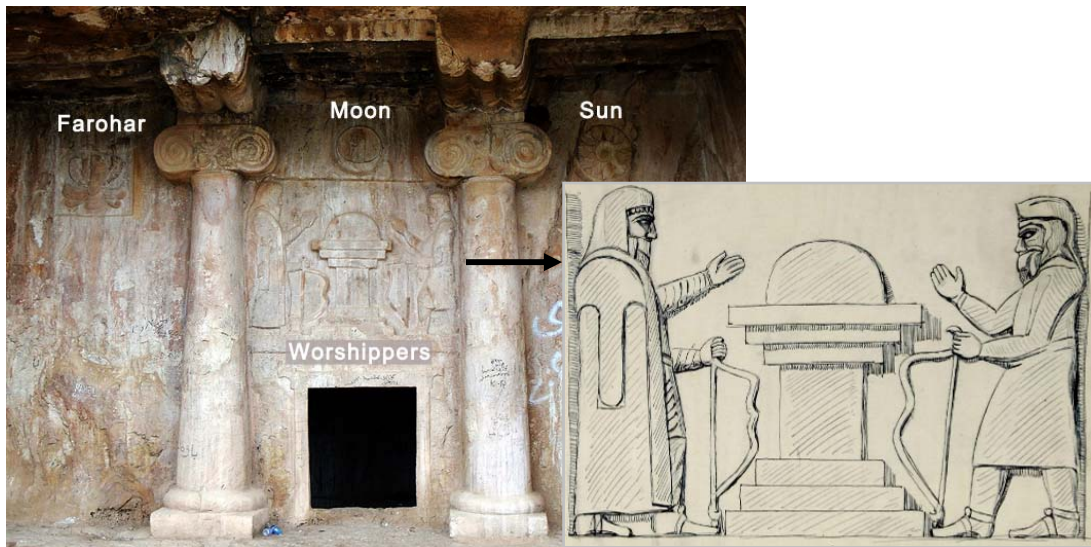
A farohar-like motif has been found on a tomb presently in Iraqi Kurdistan – an area that once came under the jurisdiction of Media, Persia’s sister nation that lay to its north. The tomb, which was carved into a high rock face, is dated to between the late seventh to early sixth century BCE. It could have been a model for the later Achaemenid tombs at Naqsh-e Rostam in Pars, Iran dated to fifth century BCE.

The tomb is located at Qyzqapan (also Qizqapan/Kizkapan) about 50 km northwest of Sulaymanieh near the village of Zarzi and is about a thousand kilometres northwest of Naqsh-e Rostam.

The principle rock carving above the entrance to the inner tomb is that of two individuals praying before the very familiar stepped (top and bottom) Zoroastrian fire stand. The individual on the left is dressed as a magus. Igor Diakonov in *The Cambridge History of*



Recessed antechamber/façade of Qyzqapan tomb Sulaymaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan. Image top at Wikimedia taken on Mar 21 2001 by Ara Qadir. Image bottom taken on June 29 2008 by Trudy Tunistra.



Left. Qyzqapan tomb antechamber. Base image: Farouq Kirkuki (taken February 2013). Right. 1905 drawing of worshippers above the entrance to the inner tomb by Ernst Herzfeld (1879-1948). The figure to the left is dressed as a magus. Image: Smithsonian.

III.2. Farohar/Fravahar Motif – Use of Symbols in Zoroastrianism

*Iran*²⁵ suggests that the tomb was that of Median King Cyaxares I.

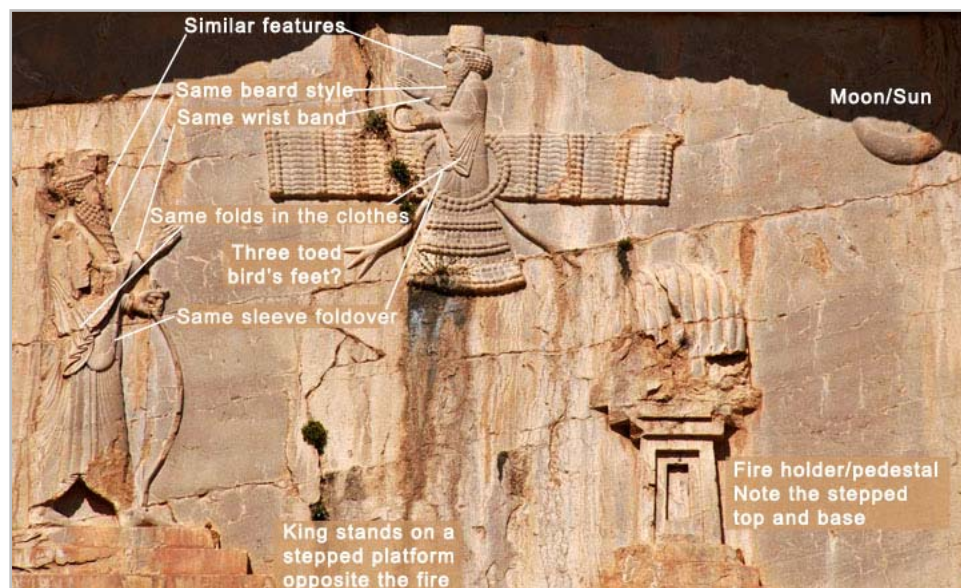
A small farohar motif is seen not directly beside one of these figures but on the other side of the left column.

If this farohar were a representation of God, Ahura Mazda, it has been assigned to a rather small and inconspicuous location compared to the two individuals before the fire.



Farohar motif at the purported tomb of Cyaxares I in Qyzqapan. Note the double winged design of the motif.
Image: Wikimedia.

D. The Achaemenid Motif – a Closer Examination



Rock carving above the tomb of Achaemenid Persian King Xerxes I (486-466 BCE) (?) at Naqsh-e Rostam, Pars, Iran. Does this image depict Xerxes worshipping (note piety) outdoors before the fire in grace (i.e. in keeping with his khvarenah/fravashi), or is he worshipping the “winged god” Ahuramazda “hovering” above him?

E. Piety of the Persian Achaemenid Kings

By all accounts, most Achaemenid kings were pious. Xenophon informs us about the piety of King Cyrus while several Classical writers inform us about the public display of orthodox piety by Xerxes (accompanied by the

²⁵ Igor Diakonov, *The Cambridge History of Iran: The Mede and Achaemenian Periods*, ed. Ilya Gershevitch (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 138-9.

head magus Ostanes) and other Achaemenid kings. Several kings (as Xerxes in the image above) are shown worshipping before the sacred fire.

F. Unattached or Impersonal Farohar Motif

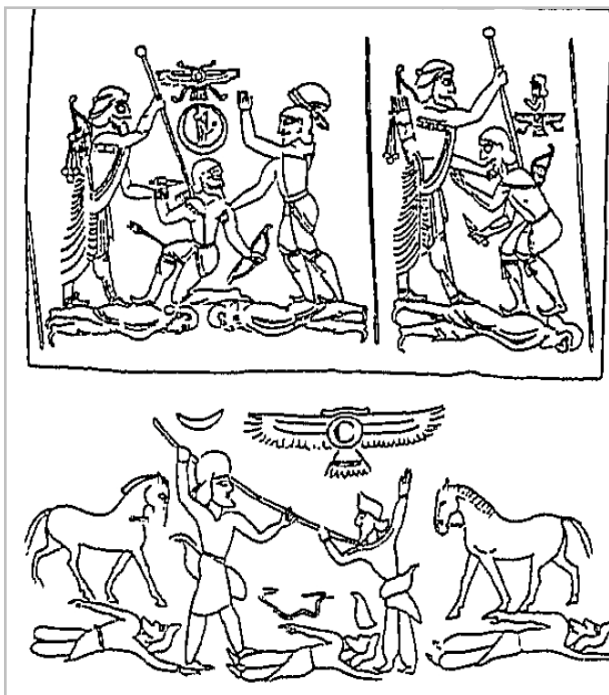


Unattached or impersonal farohar depicted on glazed tile work from Palace of Darius I, the Great (r. 522-486 BCE), at Susa, now at the Iranian National Museum, Tehran.

We often find an unattached or impersonal (without a person) farohar motif depicted near an attached or personal (with a person within) farohar motif. The attached or personal farohar motif can be thought of as consisting of two graphic elements: the first, an unattached farohar motif, and the second, the torso of a person, say a king (at times portrayed close by).

The unattached farohar motif resembles the lower part of a bird (wings, tail and feet – often stylized) joined to a circle. We find a circle where we would otherwise find a bird's body and head. In an attached/personal farohar motif, a person's torso emerges from the circle.

While the circle of the unattached farohar motif has variously been described as a sun, soul or ring of royalty, it could represent the unattached khvarenah – a khvarenah that has the mobility of a bird. The unattached khvarenah is in turn associated with Mithra and through Mithra, the sun, khvar.



6th-5th century BCE seals. Top: Seal from Oxus Treasures. Note unattached (with person/king within a circle/sun/moon beneath) & attached farohars. Bottom: Seal of Arsama satrap of Egypt. Image: *Achaemenid History X* (Leiden, 1996), p.228, by Pierre Briant.

3. Sassanian Era Motifs

In 330 BCE, the rule of the Persian Achaemenid dynasty ended with the defeat of Darius III by Alexander of Macedonia.

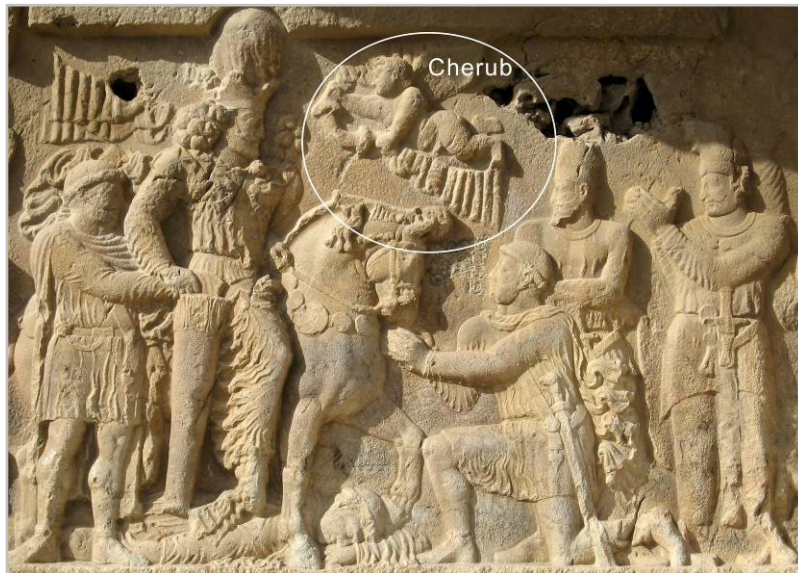
Following Alexander's death in 323 BCE, his generals divided the rule of the conquered lands between them and a general Seleucus and his heirs – the Seleucid dynasty – came to govern the Aryan lands. From around 246 BCE, the Parthians (allied with the Bactrians and other Aryan nations) began to liberate Aryana from Seleucid



Angel possibly carrying a royal ring/band. Sassanian era rock carving at Taq-e Bostan. Image: Adam Jones at Flickr.

domination. The Parthian Arsacids became the king-of-kings of liberated Aryan lands and ruled until around 224 CE – when Arsacid King Ardaban (Artabanus) IV or V was deposed by the Sassanian Ardashir-e Papakan. The Sassanians ruled Aryana – now called Iran-shahr – until their overthrow by the Arabs around 649 CE.

Macedonian domination brought with it Greek influence and the use of



Roman Emperor Valerian surrendering to Sassanian King Shapur I (241-272 CE). Rock relief at Tang-e Chogan, near Bishapur. The cherub holding a royal vestment towards Shapur's head may have served a similar purpose to the depiction of the Achaemenid farohar motif.

Greek religious iconography. The Greeks worshipped anthropomorphic gods who were portrayed as super-humans. If the Median and Achaemenids royals had been influenced by their neighbours to the west in the use of iconography, the Sassanians increased the use of quasi-religious iconography considerably.

Most observers tend to equate Persian royal customs with Zoroastrianism as practiced by the priesthood and the people. There is, however, a significant gulf between what royal Sassanian iconography can represent and what the religious texts from that era state. Further, none of the extremely austere Parthian and Sassanian era *chahar-taqi atash-gahs* (fire temples) show any signs of religious icon or symbol use. There is no record of the Parthians and Sassanian dynasties using the farohar motif. However, the concept of the royal *khvarenah/farr* was still current in Middle Persian literature and it plays a significant role in the story claiming the *farr* came to Sassanian Ardashir-e Papakan just before he acquired the Iranian throne.

4. Developments leading to the Farohar's Modern Use

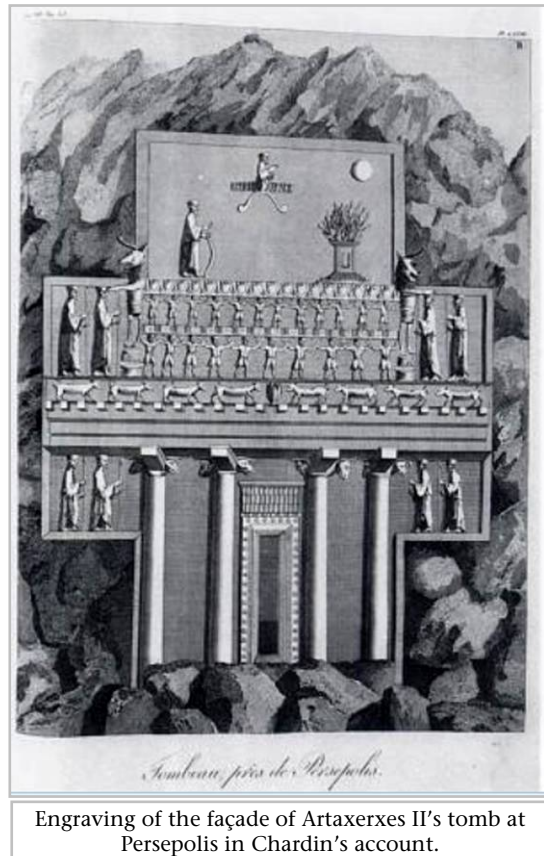
A. Rediscovery of the Farohar Motif

Over the past five hundred years, Western travellers to Iran (then known as Persia) brought the farohar motif to the world's attention and promptly speculated on what it symbolized.

The earliest of the travellers' descriptions of the farohar image that is available to this author is that of Jean Chardin (1643–1713).

Chardin does, however, note that travellers before him had written descriptions about the farohar and had speculated about its symbolism.

Chardin was a French jeweller turned explorer who adopted British nationality to become Sir John Chardin. He visited Persepolis in 1667, 1673, and 1674 and is one of the first authors to call the site 'Persepolis' in his writings.



Engraving of the façade of Artaxerxes II's tomb at Persepolis in Chardin's account.

On his third visit, Chardin invited artist Andre Daulier-Deslandes – who had previously published a panoramic drawing of the site – to accompany him.

Chardin states his conviction that Persepolis was a grand temple and not a palace. He goes on to say (our translation), “The ancients (Persians) had not developed idols, because they had no other God (sic) than the sun which presented itself daily to their eyes. They therefore had no need to make representations. Moreover, according to the testimony of the elders, their temples had no roof cover because such a covering would shut out the sun which they adored.”²⁶

Regarding the farohar motif, Chardin had been contemplating its meaning ever since his first visit to the site. Earlier travellers had “taken this to be a figure of a serpent (the bird legs of the motif?) and they said that these ancient ignicoles [fire-adorers] worshiped fire, the sun and the serpent.” He dismissed the notion of serpents saying, “This error comes from the eyes rather than the mind.”

Lamenting that he had very little information about the site, he nevertheless reflected on the possibility that the farohar motif represented a spiritual concept, perhaps representing the soul making an eternal circle. In the absence of direct information, we find his musings remarkable.

At the least, he did not rush to judgment that the farohar motif represented a deity. He knew (perhaps via the writings of Herodotus, Strabo and other Greek/Latin writers) that the ancient Persians did not employ idols or graven images.

Chardin criticized the inaccurate observations and speculations engaged in by travellers who had preceded him.²⁷

Modern writers who are wedded to the concept that the farohar represents a god (a form of idol worship according to Chardin), dismiss Chardin’s observations. For instance, Ronald W. Ferrier notes, “Chardin had great difficulty in understanding the winged representation of Ahuramazda. He was no less surprised at the sight of the altar and the disc of the sun on the tomb (façades)....”²⁸

²⁶ *Voyages de Mr. Le Chevalier Chardin, En Perse, Et Autres Lieux De L'Orient* (Amsterdam, 1711), Volume 9 pp. 75-76. See Appendix V.3.D.

²⁷ *ibid.* p. 84.

²⁸ *A Journey to Persia: Jean Chardin's Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Empire* (London, 1996), p. 159.

B: Sacy: Motif Represents Farohar (Fravashi)

In the records this author possesses, the next (chronologically speaking) Western scrutiny of the farohar motif is that by A. I. Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838). His treatise on the subject is seminal.²⁹ He appears to be the first person to associate the motif with the concept of the farohar (which he spells as férouher),³⁰ basing his conclusions on the beliefs of the Zoroastrian Parsees as recorded by A. H. Anquetil du Perron (1731-1805). Perron had collected information directly from the Zoroastrians of Surat, India.



A. I. Silvestre de Sacy
Image: Wikipedia

Sacy notes that William Francklin (1763-1839, an orientalist employed by the British East India Company) believed the motif “was an emblem of the ancient religion of the Persians.” We see here the beginnings of the idea that the ‘farohar’ motif was a Zoroastrian symbol.

At the end of his treatise, Sacy notes, “in several passages from the books of the Parsees, the farohars are called female beings,” a contradiction to the maleness of many motifs. He tries to overcome this contradiction by stating that some ‘farohar’ motifs had female characteristics.

Sacy goes on to say that he “suspects that this (Parsi gender assignment to the farohar) is a more modern idea.” We too must wonder if gender assignments to otherwise gender-neutral Iranian language nouns are a contrivance influenced perhaps by contact with other language speakers or perhaps through the bias of translators and now, philologists.

In any event, a discussion on the farohar’s gender is moot. A personal farohar that unites with a person’s soul becomes a part of that person’s being, be that person male or female.

C. Rhode, Layard & Rawlinson: Motif Represents Ahura Mazda

According to A. S. Shahbazi,³¹ (also see III.4.I), the first person to assert that the winged motif represented God, Ahura Mazda, was J. G. Rhode (1762-1827). Rhode rejected the notion that the motif could represent an internal fravashi following a person around externally. He figured it was

²⁹ q.v. A. I. Silvestre de Sacy, *Mémoires sur diverses antiquités de la Perse: et sur les médailles des rois de la dynastie des Sassanides* (Paris, 1793), pp. 266-70. See Appendix V.3.E.

³⁰ *ibid.* p. 268.

³¹ q.v. A. S. Shahbazi, *An Achaemenid Symbol (Part) I, A Farewell to Fravahr and Ahuramazda*, at *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran – Neue Folge*, Vol. 7 (Berlin, 1974), p.138.

III.3-5. Farohar/Fravahar Motif – Use of Symbols in Zoroastrianism

either an Izad (angel) or an Amesha Spenta (archangel). Then after stating the ring held in the motif figure's hand was the sun, Rhode concluded that the figure in the motif must be Ahura Mazda, since only Ahura Mazda could hold such a divine object.³²

Rhode's argument is indicative of many highly opinionated, contrived and speculative arguments that would follow.

In 1850, Austen Henry Layard (1817-94), through conjecture also determined that the motif represented Ahura Mazda. He stated his conclusion as a fact and not as a hypothesis.³³ Layard went on to propound that a similar motif found on Assyrian artifacts also represented the Assyrian supreme deity and that the Persians had borrowed this notion from the Assyrians.



Agate seal and clay impression of 'Darius Great King' in a hunting scene. The seal – said to have been found in a tomb at Thebes near Memphis, Egypt. Egypt was a part of the Persian Empire & Memphis was a seat of the Persian administration. The man in the farohar image bears a likeness to the king. The US Embassy's web-page promoting the Cyrus Cylinder's 2013 US tour featured this seal with a caption "winged god Ahuramazda hovering above".

Image: British Museum.

While he did not know which Assyrian god was being represented, Layard nevertheless speculated that it was the god Baal.

Shahbazi laments that Layard's "interpretation based on an unsupported surmise hardly deserved to win the unwanted enthusiastic adherence of so

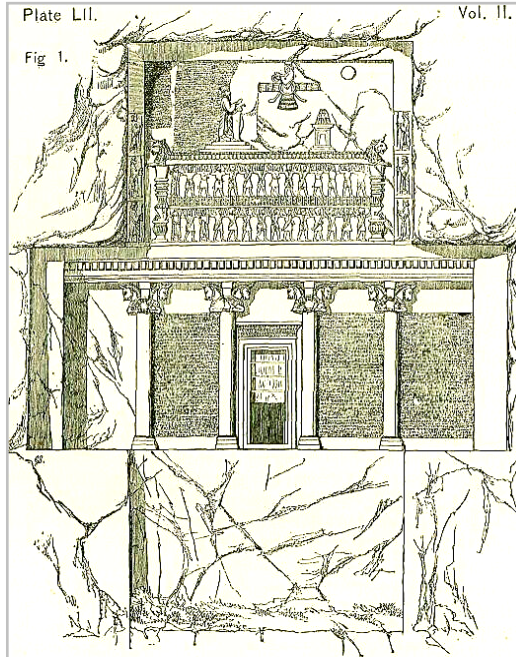
³² q.v. *Die heilige sage und das gesammte religionssystem der alten Baktrer, Meder und Perser*, &c. (Frankfurt, 1820), p. 486.

³³ q.v. *Nineveh and its Monuments II* (London, 1850), pp. 440 and 449.

many scholars for so long a time.”³⁴

In his *Seven Great Monarchies*,³⁵ George Rawlinson (1812-1902) – professor of Ancient History at Oxford University and Sir H. Rawlinson’s brother – provides a sketch of a farohar motif on the façade of Darius the Great’s tomb at Naqsh-e Rostam (about 7 km north of Persepolis). He describes the relief as being “a very curious sculptured representation of the monarch worshipping Ormazd (Ahura Mazda).”

The statures of Layard and Rawlinson as exceptional explorers, linguists and orientalists may have convinced many to adopt their interpretation that the farohar motif represented Ormazd (Ahura Mazda).



Drawing of tomb façade of Darius I, the Great, at Naqsh-e Rostam in Rawlinson’s *The Seven Great Monarchies*, Vol. II, plate 52.

D. Tribute to the Intrepid Explorer-Orientalists

While this author regrets Layard and Rawlinson’s equation of the farohar motif with Ormazd (Ahura Mazda, God) and the subsequent debate that consumes us today, this author nevertheless has the greatest regard for the sheer dedication of Layard, Rawlinson, Chardin, and others like them. Their travels in those uncertain times would have been at great risk to themselves. They were scholars in the true sense of the word for they diligently studied everything available to them. They did not obfuscate their writings with diacritical marks.

A few scholars like Perron and Mary Boyce have gone a step further. They have made every attempt to solicit the views of practicing orthodox Zoroastrians and thereby make their works relevant to the practitioners of a living faith. The legacy these intrepid orientalists have left behind is a testimony that their work was not just for wages – it was a mission.

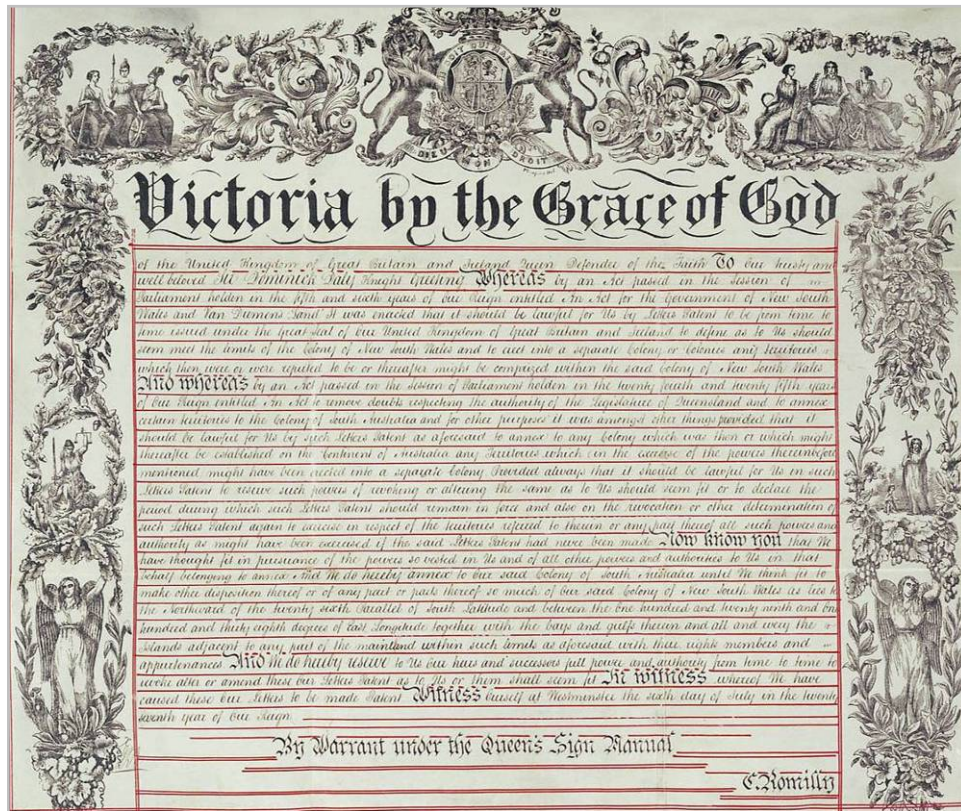
Daresay we that they had realized their khvarenah.

³⁴ A. S. Shahbazi, *An Achaemenid Symbol (Part) I*, p.139 (see above).

³⁵ George Rawlinson, *The Seven Great Monarchies* (London, 1876), Vol. II p. 406.

E. Equating the Farohar Motif with Ahura Mazda

Since there is nothing on any farohar motif to state that it represents Ahura Mazda, the apparent reason why Rhode, Layard, Rawlinson and others made and continue to make this assertion, seems to be that royal Achaemenid inscriptions depicting the motif have the king extolling Ahura Mazda and stating he is king by the grace of Ahura Mazda. If we were to use that criterion, we can describe Queen Victoria's letters patent shown here by saying, "Letters Patent issued by Queen Victoria showing her god Britannia sitting around with other goddesses."



Letters Patent issued by Queen Victoria showing her god Britannia sitting around with other goddesses.

A few Parthian and Sassanian monarchs (or nobility) may have used iconography to represent divinity, but exceptions do not make the rule and in any event, royalty do not formulate theology.

Any aberrant use by a monarch is limited to that monarch and dies with that monarch. The theology contained in the *Avesta* lives.

F. James Moulton: Motif Represents the Fravashi

In her article *Fravashi* at Encyclopaedia Iranica, Boyce notes that author J. H. Moulton³⁶ (1863-1917) “rejecting the then prevailing Western interpretation of the Achaemenid winged symbol as that of Ahura Mazda, identified it as the king's fravashi, and it is still generally regarded as a fravashi symbol by Zoroastrians.”

G. Unvala: Motif Represents the Fravashi

In 1925 and again in 1930, J. M. Unvala, a Parsi scholar, wrote articles identifying the motif as a representation of the fravashi of the king or king's ancestor.³⁷

H. Taraporewala: Motif Represents the Khvarenah

Dr. Irach J. S. Taraporewala appears to have been the first person to identify the motif as a representation of the king's khvarenah or farr (in 1928).³⁸

In the Foreword his book, *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra*, Dr. Taraporewala adds (our words in square brackets []), “...I have always felt that these [Western] renderings have somehow lacked the inspiration that should form their main characteristic. One main reason for this want is that the translators, profound scholars and excellent philologists though they are, possess nevertheless, the double bias of being Europeans and [our words: members of another faith]. Consciously or sub-consciously, they cannot help feeling that any message given so long [ago] and in a far-off Asiatic land, must necessarily be on a lower plane than that of their own faith and their own ideals. They really wonder how such high moral teachings could have been given at that remote period. In short, they look upon Zarathushtra as a great personage who lived in a primitive age, and they have the ineradicable conviction that though sublime enough for his age, the message of the prophet of Iran is, as a matter of course, not to be compared at all with [their religions' founders].”³⁹

While being profoundly grateful for all the good work done by others for their research into the Zoroastrian faith and its heritage, Zoroastrians must now take the lead and define their faith for themselves.

³⁶ J. H. Moulton, *Early Zoroastrianism* (London, 1913) at p. 260.

³⁷ J. M. Unvala, *The Winged Disk and the Winged-Human Figure on Ancient Persian Monuments*, Modi Memorial Volume (Bombay, 1930), pp. 488-513, especially p. 493.

³⁸ *Journal of the Cama Oriental Institute II* (1928), 16 n. 1, 25 n. 21.

³⁹ As reprinted in Dr. Irach J. S. Taraporewala, *The Religion of Zarathushtra*. (Bombay, 1951/1979) p. 82.

I. Shahbazi: Farohar Represents the Farnah (Khvarenah)



A. S. Shahbazi
Image: Wikipedia

In 1974 and 1980, A. Shapour Shahbazi (1942-2006) wrote two articles for the journal *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*. In the first article, *An Achaemenid Symbol (Part) I, A Farewell to Fravahr and Ahuramazda*,⁴⁰ Shahbazi noted why he felt the farohar motif could not represent either the farohar/fravahar or Ahura Mazda. In his second article, *An Achaemenid Symbol (Part) II, Farnah (God Given) Fortune Symbolised*,⁴¹ Shahbazi fills the void with his dissertation on why the motif represented the khvarenah/farr which he calls ‘farnah’ by its Median-Achaemenid era (Old Persian) manifestation. He also translates farnah as God-given fortune.

Shahbazi acknowledges taking inspiration or guidance from W. H. Bailey,⁴² Prof. R. N. Fry, Prof. P. Calmeyer and Prof. Mary Boyce.

J. Mary Boyce: No Representations of Ahuramazda. Motif Represents Khvarenah

Prof. Mary Boyce (1920-2006) in *A History of Zoroastrianism: Volume II: Under the Achaemenians*⁴³ (1982) states, “A more convincing interpretation of the symbol is... that it represents Avestan khvarenah, Median farnah, the divine grace sought after by men to bring them long life, power and prosperity.”

In her article *Ahura Mazda* at Encyclopaedia Iranica (1984) reiterates, “No representations of Ahuramazda are recorded in the early Achaemenid period. The winged symbol with male figure, formerly regarded by European scholars as his (Ahuramazda’s representation), has been shown to represent the royal khvarenah.”⁴⁴



Mary Boyce
Image: Kevin Shepherd

⁴⁰ A. S. Shahbazi, *An Achaemenid Symbol (Part) I, A Farewell to Fravahr and Ahuramazda*, in *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran – Neue Folge*, Vol. 7 (Berlin, 1974), pp.135-144.

⁴¹ A. S. Shahbazi, *An Achaemenid Symbol (Part) II, Farnah (God Given) Fortune Symbolised*, in *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran – Neue Folge*, Vol. 13 (Berlin, 1980), pp.119-147.

⁴² W. H. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in Ninth Century Books* (Oxford, 1943).

⁴³ *A History of Zoroastrianism: Volume II: Under the Achaemenians*, Volume 2 (Brill, 1982), pp. 102-5 (also see V.4.B.).

⁴⁴ For Boyce’s references, see *History of Zoroastrianism II* (Leiden, 1982), p. 103 n. 82; Boyce and Grenet, *History of Zoroastrianism III* (Leiden, 1991), p. 104 and nn. 197-98.

While Taraporewala, Shahbazi and Boyce may have valiantly attempted to change the farohar motif's interpretation and name to 'farnah', the names 'farohar' or 'fravahar' are now engrained in popular culture.

5. The Farohar/Fravahar Motif Today

By calling the Median-Achaemenid era winged motif a 'farohar' or 'fravahar', the Zoroastrian body politic in India and Iran appears to have initially agreed with Sacy, Unvala and Moulton that the motif represented the fravashi. After these scholars published their opinions on the matter, the farohar motif has come to represent far more than the meaning they ascribed to it. It has become the principal symbol of the Zoroastrian faith and can now be found displayed on the façade of several fire temples. It is also a popular personal adornment and accessory used as a visible Zoroastrian identifier.

In this spirit, perhaps, the motif can now evolve from its past meaning to symbolize the unity of the soul, fravashi and khvarenah/farr as the united fravashi/farohar of those who have lived as ashavans in harmony with their fravashi thus having realized their khvarenah, their farr – their higher purpose in life. In the after-life, the fravashis of these individuals may serve as our guardian angels – ever protecting, ever beneficent, and ever ready to heed the supplications of the worthy. Perhaps the farohar/fravahar motif can also symbolize the highest ideals to which a living person and community can aspire.

The motif can then represent what it means to be a Zoroastrian and embody the rich heritage of Zoroastrians.

Perhaps it already does.



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PART V APPENDICES

1. Etymology, Word Forms and Related Words

A. Fravashi/Farohar/Fravahar

- fravashi (Av)> fravarti/fravartish (OP)>[frawardi?/fraward (Ph)> farvard?/farvardi? (NP). Also Fravartish (OP)>Φραόρτης (Gk Fraórtis)/ Φραόρτεω (Gk Fraóртеo)>Phraortes (Eng)
 - Is farvardin = farvard-din? = farohars of the holy (q.v. GB. 3.18). Farvardin Yasht (Yt. 13) that extols and memorializes the farohars (cf. GB. 3.18) / fravashis?
 - Farvardin Yasht is recited at Farokhshi (cf. frawakhsh) ceremony.
 - Farvardigan (farvardi-gan or farvard-i-gan?) are the last ten days of the year dedicated to the fravashis – also called Mukhtad.
- related words / homonyms:
 - fra-wa-khsh (Ph), fra-w-sh/fra-wa-sh (Ph)>far-okh?(see above)
 - fra-wa-hr/fra-wa-har (Ph)>fr-o-har/far-o-har (Ph)>for-u-har>fra-va-har/ faravahar
 - fra-va-rane (Av) = choose, pledge

B. Khvarenah/Farr

- khvarenah (G)>khvareno/khvanvaitish (Av)>khorreh?
- word forms:
 - kavaem khvareno / kavayehe khvarenangho (with Mazdadatem)
 - khvaretaha khvarenangho (with Mazdadatem)
 - antithesis: duz-khvarenao/dush-khvarenao (Yt. 19.95/10.105) (duz=evil)
- related words:
 - farnah (OP)>farr (NP) & farrah (NP)
 - akhvareta = a-khvareta = non-khvarenah? / non-personal? / unattached? / not-patronized? Or akhvareta = akhva-reta (see below for akhv) = independent?

C. Khvar

- khvar (Av) = sun
- related words:
 - khvar-khshaeta>khwarr-khshaeta>khur-sheed = sun-radiant (radiant sun); Yima-khshaeta (Yima-srira)>Yam-sheed>Jam-sheed = Yim-radiant (radiant Yim)

D. Khv

- ahu>akhv>khv? = (sovereign) self

E. Akhv

- (ahu = lord/sovereign?)>akhv>akhvadat>khvadai>khodai>khoda
- ahu-astvant = lord incarnate (temporal lord endowed with free will)

2. Passages from Zoroastrian Texts

(FT = Free translation; KE = K. E. Eduljee. Translation by James Darmesteter are also provided. Some passages which are difficult to translate consistently in their entirety are not accompanied by a full translation. Phrases within them have been used by us as a source of information.)

A. Avesta

(i) Connection between Fravashi (Farohar) & Urvan (Ravan, Soul)

Y. 16.7.

Khvanvaitish ashahe verezo yazamaide, yahu iristinam urvano shayente ya ashaonam fravashayo, vahisitem ahum ashaonam yazamaide raocanghem vispo-khvathrem.

(Darmesteter) And we worship the glorious works of Righteousness in which the souls of the dead find satisfaction and delight [(Pazand) which are the Fravashis of the saints], and we worship (Heaven) the best world of the saints, shining, all glorious.

(FT-KE) We extol/revere the asha (abiding) khvanvaitish deeds of those urvan (souls) of the dead that dwell with the asha (abiding) fravashis and we extol the highest goodness of the bright (enlightened) whole khvathrem.

Y. 23.4.

Ayese yeshti ashaunam fravashinam, ukhranam aiwithuranam paairyotkaeshanam fravashinam, nabanazdishtanam fravashinam, havahe uruno fravashi (my soul's fravashi?), ayese yeshti vispaeiby ashahe ratubyo, ayese yeshti vispaeiby vanghudhabyo yazataeiby mainyaoibyascha gaethyaeibyascha yoi henti yasnyacha vahmyacha ashat hacha yat vahishtat.

Y. 71.18.

Haom urvanem yazamaide, havam fravashim yazamaide

(FT-KE) Our soul is revered, our fravashi is revered.

(ii) Connection between Fravashi, Tan (Body) & Urvan (Soul)

Yt. 13.40. The verse appears to summarize the function of the fravashi in a person. These verses are difficult to translate with any precision.

Ashaonam vanguhish sura spenta fravashayo yazamaide. Yao ughrao aiwithurao varethrakhnish vanat-peshanao raremao

vivaitish vichirao sravashemnao srao-tanvo asno-urvano (near soul?) ashaonish.

Yao dathrish verethrem zbayente, dathrish ayaptem chakushe, dathrish bantai drvatatem.

(iii) Connection between Fravashi and Assistance in Bird (Angel?) Form

Yt. 13.70. Fravashis come to a person's assistance (as a guardian spirit/angel)

Tao he jasaonti avanghe yezi-she bavainti anazaretao khshnutao ainitao atbishtao ughrao ashaunam fravashayo, tao dim ava nifravayente manayen ahe yatha na meregho hu-pareno.

(FT-KE) They, the asha-abiding fravashis, come to assist those who are pleasing and not hurtful or offensive. To them, the fravashis will assuredly come flying like birds well-winged.

(iv) First and Only Mention of Khvarenah in Gathas

Y. 51.18. [Jamasp Hvogvo seeking (his?) God-gifted personal khvarenah?]

Tam chistim de-Jamaspo Hvogvo ishtoish khvarena. Asha verente tat khshathrem manangho vanguhish vido. Tat moi daidi ahura – hyat mazda rapen tava [that indeed was given (endowed) by Ahura – that Mazda placed (clings) within you?].

cf. daidi Ahura (given/gifted/endowed) by Ahura, with Mazda-datahe in Yt. 19.0.

cf. hyat (that/which) Mazda rapen (placed within/upon/clings) tava, with Yat (which) upanghachat (settled over/clings) Haoshyanghem (Hushang) in Yt. 19.26.

(v) Zamyad Yasht (Yt. 19) Speaks to Two Different Khvarenahs: Kava & Akhvareta

Two kinds, both God-given (Mazdadatem):

1. Kavaem Khvareno / Kavayehe Khvarenangho
2. Akhvareta Khvarenangho

Kava (royal?) & a-khvareta [not-khvar/non-khvar (sunless?)/ownerless/unattached/ unclaimed (to a personal) khvarenah? Or Akhva-reta (see etymology at Appendix I) independent.]

The Kava-Khvareno comes to/over Hoshang, Tahmuras and Jamsheed at 19.26-31. Then in 19.34-35 it flies away from Jamsheed in the shape of a Vareghna bird. Another person cannot seize this khvarenah – as with any khvarenah that does not belong to a person. [One implication of the proverbial story in the Yasht is that we should be content with our khvarenah and not be jealous or greedy for the khvarenah (here, good fortune) possessed by others.]

(vi) Khvarenah – Heritage of the Aryan Lands

Yt. 19.57

Aat us-patat frangrase, turo ash-varecao spitama Zarathushtra, zrayanghat hacha vourukashat akhanm daoithrim daomno, ithe itha

yathna ahmai noit tat khvareno pairi-abaom yat asti airyananm dakhyunanm zatananm azatananmcha yatcha ashaono zarathushtrahe.

(FT-KE) Thereupon rushed the conniving Frangrasyan, the Tura(nian), out of the Vourukasha Ocean uttering curses and lamenting, “I could not seize the khverano – that of the Aryan nations born and unborn and of asha-abiding Zarathushtra.” [This is in reference to the Kava-Khvarenah and Akhvareta-Khvarenah. See Yt. 19.56-64 for several references to the khvarenah and the Aryan nations.]

In the previous verse 56 and again in 59 and 62, we are told that Frangrasyan stripped himself before entering the ocean Vourukasha where the bird-like khvarenah had settled. This scene is reminiscent of the Saena bird settling on a tree growing in the midst of the ocean Vourukasha during the very early history of the earth. However, the English translations of the Zamyad Yasht’s verses have the bird hiding in the depths of the ocean, which could mean far from the shores. With Frangrasyan trying to seize the unattached Akhvareta Khvarenah, we are left with the impression of someone trying to seize a bird that flies away out of his grasp even after having approached it swiftly or with stealth.

The practical implications of the Zamyad Yasht are to embed a maxim to be retold time and again in the future – a maxim that the Aryans must never forget. Rule over the Aryans is not a privilege that can be forcibly seized. While only an Aryan may receive this privilege, it is nevertheless not a birthright. Even Aryan monarchs who are heirs to the throne must continually work to deserve keeping the position. In the legend of King Feridoon, the founding king of Turan, Tur was a brother of the king of Iran, Iraj – both Aryans, but the former and his heirs went astray and lost all claim to the Aryan farr. Therefore, the Turanian King Frangrasyan’s Aryan lineage was insufficient to earn him the royal Kava-Khvarenah – he was a despicable evil character.

When King Darius the Great ascended to the throne of Persia – the lead Aryan nation during Achaemenid times – after a palace coup, revolts broke out all over Aryana. The one claim Darius may have desired the most was that the Aryan Kava Khvarenah had come to reside with him. The earliest surviving Achaemenid use of the farohar motif above a monarch may be that on the inscriptions of Darius at Behistun/Bisotun recounting his success at quelling the rebellions.

(vii) Connection between Fravashi & Khvarenah

Yt. 13.1 (Divine assistance through the khvarenah to the fravashis.)

Mraot Ahuro Mazda Spitamai Zarathushtra [Spake Ahura Mazda (to) Spitama Zarathushtra]: *Aeva te zavare aojas-cha khvareno avas-cha* (assistance) *rafnascha*

framrava erezvo Spitama yat ashaonam fravashinam (asha-abiding fravashis) ukhranam/ughranam aiwithuranam

Yatha me jasen avanghe (that I may assist), yatha me baren upastam ukhra/ughra ashaonam fravashayo (asha-abiding fravashis).

(viii) Connection between Zarathushtra, Khvarenah & Leadership

Yt. 13.41. (cf. 13.40)

Dathrish ahmai vohu khvareno (for this is provided the good khvarenah) yo hish atha frayazaite yatha hish ho-na yazata.

*Yo ashava zarathushthro ratush astvaithyo gaethayao (corporeal) bareshmush (leader) bipaitishtanayao (of humans?) *kahmai-chit yaongham jaso kahmai-chit anzanghanm biwivao.**

(ix) Connection between Mithra & Khvarenah

In Yt. 19.34-35 The khvarenah flees from Jamsheed in the shape of a bird and is seized by Mithra.

Yt. 19.34

Aat yat him aem draokhem vacim anghaithim cinmane paiti barata vaenemnem ahmat hacha khvareno mereghahe kehrpa frashusat.

(FT-KE) When he (Jamsheed) began to find delight in words of falsehood and untruth, the (Kava) khvarenah was seen to flee away from him in the shape of a bird.

Yt. 19.35

aom khvareno hangeurvayata mithro...

(FT-KE) That khvarenah was seized (reached for) by Mithra... (i.e. when the khvarenah flew away from Jamsheed, it flew to Mithra).

Meher (Mithra) Yasht verses mentioning the khvarenah: Yt. 10.4, 16, 27, 62, 66, 67, 105, 108, 127, 141. These verses link the khvarenah with the sun through Mithra's association with the sun (khvar) as in verse Yt. 10.51.

Yt. 10.16 describes Mithra as khvareno-dao, the khvarenah-giver and Yt. 10.27 describes Mithra as khvarenao-varayeiti, the khvarenah-recaller. Yt. 62 states that the khvarenah will not be granted to anyone who is a deceiver – who lives by the lie. Yt. 10.66 links the Kava Khvarenah with the fravashis of those who are asha-abiding. Yt. 10.67 reaffirms the khvarenah are Mazda-dhata (divinely gifted). Yt. 10.105 reintroduces the concept of the dush- or duz-khvarenah, the anti-khvarenah – base ambitions or the misuse of one's talents or one who has been led astray. Yt. 108 reaffirms Mithra as the one who bestows the khvarenah on those who are worthy. Yt. 127 ends with *nikhshata ahmat vazata atarsh yo upa-sukhto ukhrem yo kavaem khvareno*, which implies that the wise and the strong are followed by a blazing fire and the Kava Khvarenah.

B. Bundahishn

(i) Connection between Spiritual & Corporeal Elements

(GB. = *Greater Bundahishn* tr. B. T. Anklesaria; LB. = *Lesser Bundahishn* tr. E. W. West)

GB. 1a.4. then Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazda) produced (from?) the Fire, the Khvarag; Ohrmazd attached to it the ray from Endless Light, so good is its astral body as is the Fire's desire. [In 1a.2 Ohrmazd created forth Fire out of Endless Light...]

GB. 3.13. Ohrmazd produced forth humankind in five parts: body, life [vital spirit – jan, evidenced by breathing and consciousness], soul [urvan], form [karp-advenak cf. Platonic 'form'], and farohar; as, body is that of matter; life is that which is connected with the wind and has the production and bringing of the complexion; the soul is that which listens, sees, speaks, and knows, with the consciousness, within the body; the prototype is that which stays on the Sun station; the farohar is that which is before Ohrmazd the Lord; for that reason, Ohrmazd so created that when men die, during the antagonism of Ahriman, the body may unite with the earth, the life with the wind, the prototype with the Sun; and the soul with the farohar (fravashi), so that they cannot destroy the soul (cf. unity of soul and fravashi).

GB. 3.18. The sixth of the Spirits is Khordad (Hordad). Of the material creations, Khordad accepted (to be the guardian) of the waters. To assist Khordad, Ohrmazd created Tir, Vad/Baud (Wad) and Frawardin. Tir (Sirius) during the antagonism of Ahriman, seized the waters and with the help of frawardin, that is, the farohars of the holy, consigned it spiritually to the wind (Vad/Baud). The wind conducted and passed the water swiftly to the regions, and with the co-operators (farohars?) it comes down as rain by means of clouds.

[Note: This passage is similar to the Farvardin Yasht 13.6-14 firmly linking the word forms fravashi to farvard(i). The farohars as well as the farr seem closely connected to the waters. A disassociated farr appears to reside in the waters.]

GB. 3.24. The farohars of men saw, by means of the wisdom of all knowledge, the evil that would arrive in the material world on account of the wicked Ahriman, and the final inoffensiveness of the Adversary; and they agreed to go to the material world, in order to become perfect and deathless again, in the final material life, up to eternity and eternal progress.

GB. 14.6. [R. C. Zaehner at *Dawn & Twilight of Zoroastrianism* p. 267 quoting GB. 101.2-5]: Mashye and Mashyane grew up from the earth in the form of a rhubarb plant. It was as if their hands were clapped to their ears, and they were joined to one another, joined in limb and form. And above the twain hovered their khwarr.

GB. 14.8-9. [R. C. Zaehner at *Dawn & Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (1961) p. 268 quoting GB. 101.9-12 = LB.. (Indian) 33.16-20]: It (the khwarr) is put into the body of the person for whom it was created for a person's own-work (khvesh-kari) was fashioned (first) and the body was created for individual work. This means the soul was created first, then the body. The soul directs proper work within the body.

GB. 14.10. Both of them (then) changed from the astral body (of a plant) in to the astral body of a human, and that khwarr, which is the soul, entered spiritually into them. [Note: in the reading of this passage it is not clear if the khwarr is being equated with the soul or if the insertion of the soul results in the form of a spiritual bonding with the khwarr.]

LB. 31.2. This, too, it says, that the farr of Feridoon settled on the root of a reed (kanya) in the wide-formed ocean.

(ii) Birds in the Bundahishn

GB. 13.10. The fourth genus is that of those flying on wings, of which the three-fingered (toed) 'Saena' is the largest and the pheasant the smallest.

GB. 13.22. Tenth, one hundred and ten species of birds: its thirteen species: such as the 'Saena' bird, the Karshipta, the eagle, the vulture which they call the black eagle, the crow, [the owl,] the cock [which they call the parodarsh (cf. Vd. 18.15)] and the crane.

GB. 13.23. And eleventh, the bat; of these there are two which have milk in their breasts and suckle their young ones: the Saena bird and the bat, which fly at night.

GB. 13.29. He Ohrmazd spoke, when Ohrmazd produced the falcon bird, that is, the sparrow hawk, "I have produced thee, O Varigak bird! I have greater affliction than delight from thee; for thou dost the will of the Evil Spirit more than that of mine. Like the wicked man who is not sated with wealth thou too art not satiated with the slaughter of birds. But, if I had not produced thee, O bird Varigak! he, the Evil Spirit, would have produced the winged wolf who, in thy astral body, would not have allowed the creatures to live."

GB. 13.34. As one says, "First the Kar fish, that is, the Araz, descended to Sawahi through the waters of the Arang, the beneficent animals proceeded to Wourubareshti and Wourujareshti, the Saena bird to the ocean Frakhtkart, and the powerful horse to Fradataps and Vidataps."

GB. 13.35. They went there six months before the flying birds. Within a year's duration there arrived the mountaineers, besides the Saena bird. Within two years, there came the aquatic and those living in burrows,

besides the Kar fish. Within three years, there came the grazing animals, besides the horse.

GB. 13.36. There was amongst the oxen that one, such as the ox Sriso, whom they call 'Hadhaya;' amongst the asses the ass with three strides; amongst the birds, too, the Chamrush; and amongst the fishes the 'Vas-i panchasatvaran.'

GB. 15.13. As regards birds such as the eagle, the black eagle, the Saena bird and others bigger than the flying birds, one says that they are forty days in the seed state, thirty days in the mixed state, fifteen days in the egg formation and ten days up to the growth of the feathers; the others are seven nights in the seed state, seven nights in the mixed state, seven nights in the egg formation till maturing and seven nights up to the growth of the feathers.

GB. 15.16. The starling of the mountain, whom they also call the small 'hera' of the mountain, goes to the summer habitation in summer and to the winter habitation in winter; it brings forth young ones thrice in a year; the first time, its young one lives in winter, once it lives in cold and warmth, and once in summer. Its young one devours the worms.

GB. 16.4. The tree of many seeds has grown in the ocean Frakhvkart from all these seeds, whereon are the seeds of all these plants, along with those which have come into being from the sole created 'Gav'; and every year, the 'sen' bird perches on that tree and mingles those seeds in the water and Sirius seizes them with the rain water and rains them on to all the regions.

GB. 17.11. (First amongst the birds produced was) the Sen of three fingers (toes). It is not the chief; for the Karshipta is the chief, the bird [which] carried the revelation to the enclosure which Jam prepared.

GB. 17A.1. And of birds the Chamrush bird is worth all the birds betwixt [the sky and the earth], except the 'Sen' of three fingers (toes).

GB. 24.24. As regards the bird Chamrush one says, "Many from the non-Iranian districts assemble, every three years," on the summit of Mount Alburz, in order to go to the Iranian districts, for bringing damage and to effect the devastation of the world. Then Burz Yazad comes up from the deep Lake Arang, arouses the bird Chamrush, on the summit of all that lofty mountain, who plucks all those non-Iranian districts [just] as a bird does the grains of corn."

GB. 24.25. [And] as regards [the bird] Karshipta one says, "It knew how to articulate words and [it] carried and propagated the Revelation into the enclosure prepared by Jam [Jamshed]; and there they utter the Avesta in the language of birds."

GB. 24.28. And about the bird “Of holy love” which [they call] the bird ‘Zor-bara Vohuman,’ as also the holy bird, one says, “An Avesta is assigned in its tongue; when it speaks the devs flee from it and [do] not [keep] their abode thither. [It prepares its abode in the desert and remains in non-Iranian districts, for this reason that the devs cannot] hold [their abode thither].”

GB. 24.31. All other beasts and birds also are created in opposition to [the devs and] the noxious creatures.

GB. 24.32. As one says, “Which are the birds and beasts all in opposition to the noxious creatures and sorcerers?”

C. Denkard

Dk.S. 3.367. Exposition in the good religion regarding light and darkness and the benefit and harm accruing therefrom. Be it known that the soul is benefited by the light (i.e. the Yazadi-khoreh [Yazad-e Khwarrah], the active influence of angelic powers) [this author: Yazad-e Khwarrah = divine khvarenah] which discloses (to the soul) to an unbounded extent, faith in immortality, cheerfulness, light, love, deliberation and deeds of piety and merit. Just as wisdom and truth are beneficial for immortality, so also the sun, moon and stars are beneficial to water, the vegetable, and brute creation, men, rain, and other good creations, by averting the damage of Ahriman. Their light possessing as it does this beneficial virtue is known as the reliever of suffering. The light of the sun clears off the obstacle of the sinful (i.e. keeps off unholiness) and the light of the sun (also) loosens the fetters of the rain (i.e. sends down the rain which was held back). Through (spiritual) darkness the immortal soul suffers harm in (the shape of) fear and terror and dread of blindness, and setting (i.e. dying) without doing any work and ignorance (of spiritual knowledge). People are excessively damaged by ignorance, falsehood, the stoppage of the sun in its course, the passing away of (the sun's) heat and by other evils. And this damage is repaired by the working of the Yazads (angels) in their midst (i.e. in the midst of the evils.)

3.382. ...we find from the good religion that the victorious farohar is the presiding object which guides the light [i.e. to all of creation and the soul], we infer that these victorious farohars by their angelic luster, influence for good the sky, air, water, and earth. Again, when the sun, the moon and the stars appear to us full of light, we infer that powerful holy farohars preside over them. ... [Our note: in assigning the task of guiding the spiritual and physical light throughout the spiritual and material creation to the farohars (fravashis), we see the farohars in a role that we would expect to find under the guardianship of the angel Mithra.]

D. Shahnameh

The Homai bird of the celestial sphere (sepehri) and the farr of a righteous leader: *Homai-e sepehri be-gostard parr; hami bar sarash dasht sayeh ze farr*. (FT-KE) As the heavenly Homai extends its wings; over the head spreads the shadow of the farr.

E. Karnamak-i Ardeshir-i Babakan

Karnamak-i Ardeshir-i Babakan or *Book of the Deeds of Ardeshir son of Babak* (date unknown) Translated by Darab Dastur Peshotan Sanjana (1896).

[The story recounts how Sassanian Ardeshir-e Papakan (who reigned from around 224/6 to 241 CE) deposed Parthian/Arsacid King Ardaban (Artabanus) IV or V (r. 216-224/6). A young Ardeshir under the tutelage of Papak, Governor of Pars had been summoned to the court of King Ardaban (Artabanus) V from which he fled and was chased by King Ardaban. During that chase Ardeshir was followed by the Kayanian Khvarenah as an eagle or a (winged) ram – and this was witnessed by the locals through whose lands he passed as he was fleeing.]

3.11-22. “Accordingly, Ardaban did not hesitate, but hastened onward. When he reached another place, he asked the inhabitants, ‘At what time did those two riders pass (this place)?’ They replied, ‘At midday they rode on (from here) as swiftly as a violent wind, and an eagle* followed them as their companion.’

[*Our Note: A. S. Shahbazi has ‘aluh’, which means divine and ‘varrak’ meaning ram.⁴⁵ He also cites Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh* as stating that the farr appeared as a winged stag (i.e. a large bird with the face of a ram or stag = guzan NP). (Also, see other animal-head winged images at Appendix V.5.D.)]



Sassanian era winged ram as in Uni. Of Mich. Art Publication. Image: A. S. Shahbazi.

“Ardaban seemed astonished at this, and said, ‘Consider that we know the pair of riders, but what is the propriety of the eagle following them?’ (So) he questioned the high priest (his minister), and the latter answered as follows, ‘It is the Gadman (khwarr) of the Kayanian sovereignty, which has

⁴⁵ A. S. Shahbazi, *An Achaemenid Symbol (Part II)* (Berlin, 1980), p. 138-9.

not reached him (up to now), so it is necessary that we should ride on (quickly) that we might catch him before that Gadman is attained by him.'

"Ardaban impetuously hastened onward with his cavalcade, and the next day they passed over seventy frasangs [1 frasang = approx. 6 km?]. On the road he met a body of people belonging to a caravan, of whom Ardaban inquired, 'At what place have those two riders met you?' They said. 'Between you and them there is still a distance of twenty frasangs; and we have noticed an eagle that was very large and swift, seated on the horse with one of the riders.'

"Ardaban asked the high priest, 'What does that eagle which accompanied them on the horse indicate?' The high priest replied as follows, 'May you be immortal! (It is) the Majesty of the Kayanians (which) reaches Ardeshir; it is not possible to get hold of him by any (such) means, (so) hereafter you and (your) horsemen should not take any more pains, nor fatigue the horses (any further) and kill them; but you should seek means of a different kind against Ardeshir.'

"When Ardaban heard such advice, he turned back and came to his capital. Afterwards he got his forces and heroes equipped, and dispatched them with one of his sons to Pars, in order to catch Ardeshir."

3. Quotes from Classical/Medieval Texts

A. Herodotus

On the religion of the Persians:

Histories 1.131. Πέρσας δὲ οἶδα νόμοισι τοιοῖσινδε χρεωμένους, ἀγάλματα μὲν καὶ νηοὺς καὶ βωμοὺς οὐκ ἐν νόμῳ ποιευμένους ἰδρῦσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖσι ποιέουσι μωρίην ἐπιφέρουσι, ὡς μὲν ἐμοὶ δοκέειν, ὅτι οὐκ ἀνθρωποφυέας ἐνόμισαν τοὺς θεοὺς κατὰ περ οἱ Ἕλληνας εἶναι: [2] οἱ δὲ νομίζουσι Διὶ μὲν ἐπὶ τὰ ὑψηλότατα τῶν ὀρέων ἀναβαίνοντες θυσίας ἔρδειν, τὸν κύκλον πάντα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ Δία καλέοντες: θύουσι δὲ ἡλίῳ τε καὶ σελήνῃ καὶ γῆ καὶ πυρὶ καὶ ὕδατι καὶ ἀνέμοισι. [3] τούτοις μὲν δὴ θύουσι μούνοισι ἀρχῆθεν....

Translation by A. D. Godley (Cambridge, 1920): “As to the customs of the Persians, I know them to be these. It is not their custom to make and set up statues and temples and altars, but those who do such things they think foolish, because, I suppose, they have never believed the gods to be like men, as the Greeks do; [2] but they call the whole circuit of heaven Zeus, and to him they sacrifice on the highest peaks of the mountains; they sacrifice also to the sun and moon and earth and fire and water and winds. [3] From the beginning, these are the only gods to whom they have ever sacrificed....”

Translation by George Rawlinson (London, 1858): “The customs which I know the Persians to observe are the following: they have no images of the gods, no temples nor altars, and consider the use of them a sign of folly. This comes, I think, from their not believing the gods to have the same nature with men, as the Greeks imagine. Their wont, however, is to ascend the summits of the loftiest mountains, and there to offer sacrifice to Jupiter [*Our note: should be Zeus. For some reason Rawlinson has substituted the Roman equivalents of the Greek gods], which is the name they give to the whole circuit of the firmament. They likewise offer to the sun and moon, to the earth, to fire, to water, and to the winds. These are the only gods whose worship has come down to them from ancient times.”

[At *Histories* 1.209, Herodotus alludes to the concept of wings attaching themselves on a person fated to be king. Catering perhaps to the Greek propensity for prophecy through dreams (with the benefit of hindsight), in his own inimitable way, Herodotus engages in myth making. For us what is significant is that a vague notion of the Aryan concept of a khvarenah/farr had reached his ears albeit distorted. Translation by George Rawlinson.]

1.209. ἐπεὶ δὲ ἐπεραιώθη τὸν Ἀράξεια, νυκτὸς ἐπελθούσης εἶδε ὄψιν εὐδῶν ἐν τῶν Μασσαγετέων τῇ χωρῇ τοιήνδε: ἐδόκεε ὁ Κῦρος ἐν τῷ ὕπνῳ ὄραν τῶν Ὑστάσπεος παίδων τὸν πρεσβύτατον ἔχοντα ἐπὶ τῶν ὤμων πτέρυγας καὶ τουτέων τῇ μὲν τὴν Ἀσίην τῇ δὲ τὴν Εὐρώπην ἐπισκιάζειν. [2] Ὑστάσπεϊ δὲ τῷ Ἀρσάμεος ἐόντι ἀνδρὶ Ἀχαιμενίδῃ ἦν τῶν

παίδων Δαρεῖος πρεσβύτατος, ἐὼν τότε ἡλικίην ἐς εἴκοσί κεν μάλιστα ἔτα, καὶ οὗτος κατελέλειπτο ἐν Πέρσῃσι: οὐ γὰρ εἶχε κω ἡλικίην στρατεύεσθαι. [3] ἐπεὶ ὦν δὴ ἐξηγέρθη ὁ Κῦρος, ἐδίδου λόγον ἐωντῶν περὶ τῆς ὄψιος. ὡς δὲ οἱ ἐδόκεε μεγάλη εἶναι ἡ ὄψις, καλέσας Ὑστάσπεα καὶ ἀπολαβὼν μόνον εἶπε “Ὑστάσπες, παῖς σὸς ἐπιβουλεύων ἐμοί τε καὶ τῇ ἐμῇ ἀρχῇ ἐάλωκε. ὡς δὲ ταῦτα ἀτρεκέως οἶδα, ἐγὼ σημανέω: [4] ἐμεῦ θεοὶ κήδονται καὶ μοι πάντα προδεικνύουσι τὰ ἐπιφερόμενα. ἤδη ὦν ἐν τῇ παροιχομένη νυκτὶ εὔδων εἶδον τῶν σῶν παίδων τὸν πρεσβύτατον ἔχοντα ἐπὶ τῶν ὤμων πτέρυγας καὶ τουτέων τῇ μὲν τὴν Ἀσίην τῇ δὲ τὴν Εὐρώπην ἐπισκιάζειν. [5] οὐκὼν ἐστὶ μηχανὴ ἀπὸ τῆς ὄψιος ταύτης οὐδεμία τὸ μὴ ἐκεῖνον ἐπιβουλεύειν ἐμοί: σύ νυν τὴν ταχίστην πορεύεο ὀπίσω ἐς Πέρσας καὶ ποίεε ὅκως, ἐπεὶ ἐγὼ τάδε καταστρεψάμενος ἔλθω ἐκεῖ, ὡς μοι καταστήσεις τὸν παῖδα ἐς ἔλεγχον.’

Translation by A. D. Godley (Cambridge, 1920): “After he had crossed the Araxes, he dreamed that night while sleeping in the country of the Massagetae that he saw the eldest of Hystapes' sons with wings on his shoulders, the one wing overshadowing Asia and the other Europe. [2] Hystaspes son of Arsames was an Achaemenid, and Darius was the eldest of his sons, then about twenty years old; this Darius had been left behind in Persia, not yet being of an age to go on campaign. [3] So when Cyrus awoke he considered his vision, and because it seemed to him to be of great importance, he sent for Hystaspes and said to him privately, ‘Hystaspes, I have caught your son plotting against me and my sovereignty; and I will tell you how I know this for certain. [4] The gods care for me and show me beforehand all that is coming. Now then, I have seen in a dream in the past night your eldest son with wings on his shoulders, overshadowing Asia with the one and Europe with the other. [5] From this vision, there is no way that he is not plotting against me. Therefore hurry back to Persia, and see that when I come back after subjecting this country you bring your son before me to be questioned about this.’”

B. Strabo

Geography 15.3.13. “τὰ δ’ ἔθνη τὰ Περσικὰ καὶ τούτοις καὶ Μήδοις τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ ἄλλοις πλείοσι, περὶ ὧν εἰρήκασι μὲν πλείους, τὰ δὲ καίρια καὶ ἡμῖν λεκτέον. Πέρσαι τοίνυν ἀγάλματα μὲν καὶ βωμοὺς οὐχ ἰδρύονται, θύουσι δ’ ἐν ὑψηλῷ τόπῳ τὸν οὐρανὸν ἠγούμενοι Δία: τιμῶσι δὲ καὶ ἥλιον, ὃν καλοῦσι Μίθρην, καὶ σελήνην καὶ Ἀφροδίτην καὶ πῦρ καὶ γῆν καὶ ἀνέμους καὶ ὕδωρ.”

Adapted translation by H. C. Hamilton and W. Falconer (London, 1903): “The manners and customs of the Persians are the same as those of the Susians and the Medes, and many other people; and they have been described by several writers, yet I must mention what is suitable to my purpose. The Persians do not erect statues nor altars, but considering the heaven as Zeus, sacrifice (worship) on a high place. They worship the sun whom they call Mithras, the moon, Aphrodite, fire, earth, winds, and water.”

C. Diogenes Laertius

[Diogenes Laertius was a Classical writer from the third century CE who cites Hermodorus the Platonist (cf. II.1). The following are quoted from his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Prologue (Translation by R. D. Hicks).]

(1) “Τὸ τῆς φιλοσοφίας ἔργον ἔνιοί φασιν ἀπὸ βαρβάρων ἄρξαι. γεγενῆσθαι γὰρ παρὰ μὲν Πέρσαις Μάγῳ” “There are some who say that the study of philosophy had its beginning among the barbarians. “καθὰ φησιν Ἀριστοτέλης ἐν τῷ Μαγικῷ καὶ Σωτίων ἐν τῷ εἰκοστῷ τρίτῳ τῆς Διαδοχῆς.” “They urge that the Persians have had their Magi... for which they cite as authorities the *Magicus* of Aristotle and Sotion in the twenty-third book of his *Succession of Philosophers*.”

(2) “Ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν Μάγων, ὧν ἄρξαι Ζωροάστρην τὸν Πέρσην, Ἐρμόδορος μὲν ὁ Πλατωνικὸς ἐν τῷ Περὶ μαθημάτων φησὶν εἰς τὴν Τροίας ἄλωσιν ἔτη γεγονέναι πεντακισχίλια: Ξάνθος δὲ ὁ Λυδὸς εἰς τὴν Ξέρξου διάβασιν ἀπὸ τοῦ Ζωροάστρου ἑξακισχίλια φησι, καὶ μετ’ αὐτὸν γεγονέναι πολλοὺς τινὰς Μάγους κατὰ διαδοχὴν, Ὀστάνας καὶ Ἀστραμψύχους καὶ Γωβρύας καὶ Παζάτας, μέχρι τῆς τῶν Περσῶν ὑπ’ Ἀλεξάνδρου καταλύσεως.” “The date of the Magians, beginning with Zoroaster the Persian, was 5,000 years before the fall of Troy, as given by Hermodorus the Platonist in his work on mathematics; but Xanthus the Lydian reckons 6,000 years from Zoroaster to the expedition of Xerxes and after that event he places a long line of Magians in succession, bearing the names of Ostanas, Astrampsychos, Gobryas and Pazatas, down to the conquest of Persia by Alexander.”

D. Ammianus Marcellinus

We cite this quotation on page at II.5.A.

[*Rerum gestarum libri* (Tr. C. D. Younge).]

23.6.31. “*abundat aequae civitatibus ditibus Media et vicis in modum oppidorum exstructis et multitudine incolarum. utque absolute dicatur, uberrimum est habitaculum regum.*” “They have also as many cities as Media and villages as strongly built as towns in other countries, inhabited by large bodies of citizens. In short, it is the richest quarter of the kingdom.”

23.6.32. “*In his tractibus Magorum agri sunt fertiles, super quorum secta studiisque, quoniam huc incidimus, pauca conveniet expediri. magiam (Magian) opinionum insignium auctor amplissimus Plato machagistiam (machagistian) esse verbo mystico docet, divinorum incorruptissimum cultum, cuius scientiae saeculis priscis multa ex Chaldaeorum arcanis Bactrianus addidit Zoroastres, deinde Hystaspes rex prudentissimus Darei pater.*” “In these districts the lands of the Magi are fertile; and it may be as well to give a short account of that sect and their studies, since we have occasion to mention their name. Plato*, that most learned deliverer of wise opinions, teaches us that Magiæ is by a mystic

name Machagistia, that is to say, the purest worship of divine beings; of which knowledge in olden times the Bactrian Zoroaster derived much from the secret rites of the Chaldæans; and after him Hystaspes, a very wise monarch, the father of Darius." [* Note in English translation by J. C. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library edition (1939-1950): "at Ax. 371D; Isoc. II.28, 227A". Ax. = Axiochus. Isoc. = Isocrates.]

E. Chardin

We cite this quotation on page at III.4.A.

[*Voyages de Mr. Le Chevalier Chardin, En Perse, Et Autres Lieux De L'Orient*, Volume 9, p. 84.]

"Au dessus de ces hommes, tout au plus haut, il y a une Figure mystérieuse, qui se voit par tout cet Edifice au haut de chaque représentation, & qui doit marquer quelque chose d'important. Cette Figure est un buste d'homme, entièrement vêtu comme les autres, qui tient de la main gauche une espèce de Cercle, passé dans un autre Cercle, & enté sur un corps ailé, dont il ne paraît que les ailes. Ne serait-ce point, comme dans l'Apothéose des Grecs & des Romains, l'âme du Héros qui s'envole au Ciel sur la fumée du sacrifice, ou plutôt la Métempsychose des Indiens, ou l'âme, qui va de corps en corps, & qui fait un Cercle éternel? Si nous savions bien exactement la Religion de ceux qui ont consacré cet ancien Temple, nous devinerions plus sûrement ce que cet emblème signifie. Quelques Voyageurs l'ont prise pour la Figure d'un Serpent, & ils ont dit que ces Anciens Ignicoles adoraient le feu, le Soleil, & le Serpent; mais cette erreur vient plutôt des yeux que de l'esprit. Cette figure est fort petite & fort élevée; la meilleure vue à peine d'en reconnaître les traits, en la regardant d'en bas. Je m'y trompai de même à mon premier voyage, & je pris cette Figure pour un enfant ailé, attaché à une Croix, & entouré d'un Serpent; mais l'aidant mieux considérée sept ans après, & toutes les fois que j'y ai été depuis, je la reconnus faite comme elle est dans la Figure, & je la trouvai uniforme & toute semblable en tous les endroits de ce Monument. Monsieur Thévenot, homme fort exact dans les observations, la représente presque comme je fais, & n'y a point trouvé de Serpent."

Translation by this author: "Above these men, always above, there is a mysterious figure, who is (seen) throughout this building at the top of each representation, and which thus shows (it is) something important. This figure is a bust of a man, fully dressed as the others, who holds in his left hand a kind of circle, (and who) passes into another circle, grafted on to a winged body, (or that) which appears to be wings. Is it not, as in the Apotheosis of the Greeks and Romans, the soul of the hero who flies to heaven as the smoke of sacrifice, or rather Metempsychosis [transmigration of the soul] of Indians, or the soul, which is body in body – and that is an eternal circle? If we knew exactly the religion of those who have dedicated this ancient temple, we'd guess most likely what this symbol means. Some travelers have taken this to be the figure of a serpent, and they said that

these ancient Ignicoles [fire adorers] worshiped fire, the sun, and the serpent, but this error comes from the eyes of the mind. This figure is very small & very high. The best view just to recognize the features is seen from below. I deceived myself on my first trip, when I took this figure to be a winged child, tied to a cross, and surrounded by a snake. However, with the benefit of a better reflection after seven years.... “

F. Silvestre de Sacy

We cite this quotation on page at III.4.B.

[*Mémoires sur diverses antiquités de la Perse: et sur les médailles des rois de la dynastie des Sassanides* (Paris, 1793), pp. 266-70.]

“Les voyageurs dont parle ici Chardin, qui ont cru voir un serpent dans cette figure symbolique, sont Herbert Be Mandelsio (92). Hyde leur fait le même reproche (93). [(Thomas) Hyde (1636 – 1703. Oxford orientalist) makes of them the same criticism.] Struys, au lieu d’un serpent, croyait y reconnaître un lézard (94). Thévenot en parle comme d’une idole “qui représente un homme aile, dont le corps est passé dans un anneau, & qui est assis sur un arc (95).” [Thévenot (1633-67, French traveller to Persia) speaks of it as an idol, “which is a winged man whose body goes into a ring, and who is sitting on a rainbow”.] Pietro della Valle a pris cette figure pour celle du diable (96).

“Ce que Herbert & Mandelsio ont pris pour un serpent, Struys pour un lézard, Thévenot pour: un arc, ce sont les deux extrémités de sa ceinture dans laquelle est passé, comme dans un anneau, le corps de la figure ailée, & qui se projettent en divergeant au-dessous de ses ailes déployées.

“A la description de Chardin, je joindrai celle d’un voyageur Anglais, William Francklin, qui a visité en 1787 les ruines de Persépolis: “Outre les figures qui se trouvent fréquemment répétées sur ces ruines, on en voit, dit ce voyageur, une fort extraordinaire, & qui est, je crois, un emblème de l’ancienne religion des Perses [I believe, an emblem of the ancient religion of the Persians]. Cette figure représente un homme pose contre un pilier, qui tient dans sa main un petit vase; il a une ceinture qui l’entoure par le milieu du corps, & dont les deux extrémités se projettent a une grande distance au-delà de ses habits, & ressemblent fort a des ailes: il est vêtu d’habits longs, avec un bonnet en forme de tour (97).

“William Francklin fait encore mention de cette même figure en d’autres endroits de sa description des ruines de Persépolis & de Nakschi-Roustam (98).

“J’ai dit que le docteur Hyde croit voir dans cette figure un symbole de l’âme du roi dont on voit la représentation sur se même monument. [I said that Dr. Hyde thinks he sees in this figure a symbol of the king's soul, which we see in the representation yet at the monument.] M. le comte de Caylus y reconnaît le scarabée Egyptien, symbole de la divinité, représente avec les ailes déployées (99). L’explication du docteur Hyde aurait plus de vraisemblance, si cette figure ne se

trouvait que fur des tombeaux. On pourrait y voir, avec Chardin, l'emblème de l'âme quittant le corps mortel pour s'élever au ciel. La conjecture de M. le comte de Caylus, a une application plus générale, & ne s'éloigne pas beaucoup de celle que je vais proposer ; mais il me semble que c'est dans la religion des Perses plutôt que dans les antiquités Egyptiennes, qu'il faut chercher l'explication de ce symbole, & voici celle qu'elle m'a fournie. [The explanation of Dr. Hyde would be more likely if this figure was (only) on tombs. One can see, as with Chardin, the emblem of the soul leaving the mortal body to rise to heaven. The conjecture of the Comte de Caylus has a more general application, and not far away from what I'm going to suggest, but it seems to me that it is in the religion of the Persians rather than in that of the ancient Egyptians (that we need) to look for an explanation of this symbol, as provided by me here.]

*“Suivant la théologie des Parsis, les êtres raisonnables, produits par le bon principe, sont intimement liés, tant les génies que les hommes, a une substance spirituelle qui est désignée sous le nom de **férouher** [designated/named as the **farohar**]: les animaux terrestres aquatiques ou volatiles, n'ont ni âme ni férouher: le férouher est distingué de l'intelligence & des autres facultés de l'âme; il est, suivant M. Anquetil, le principe des sensations. Ces substances spirituelles existaient longtemps avant la création des hommes [These spiritual substances existed long before the creation of men: they unite in a man at the time of birth]: elles s'unissent à l'homme au moment de sa naissance, & le quittent à l'instant de sa mort; elles combattent les mauvais génies produits par Ahriman, & font la cause de la conservation des êtres. Le férouher, après la mort, demeure uni à l'âme & à l'intelligence, & subit l'examen du jugement; s'il a fait le bien, il reçoit l'immortalité pour récompense ; s'il a fait le mal, il est puni & précipité dans l'enfer (100).*

“Il serait peut-être difficile de concilier parfaitement tout ce que les Parsis disent de ces substances spirituelles, & l'on peut croire qu'ils ont ajouté beaucoup de fables à l'idée que Zoroastre s'en étoit formée. Quoi qu'il en soit, c'est le férouher que je crois reconnaître, tant dans les figures symboliques de Persépolis & de Nakschi-Roustam [Anyway, the farohar (is what) I think I recognize in both the symbolic figures of Persepolis & Naqsh-e Rostam] que j'ai décrites, que dans les deux figures de la grande arcade du mont Bi-sutoun, prises par les voyageurs pour des figures d'anges ou de renommées. En leur donnant cette signification, je ne les regarde pas comme l'emblème de l'âme ou du férouher de tel ou tel être en particulier, mais comme une représentation symbolique des férouhers en général, de ces productions d'Ormuzd, de ces émanations de a divinité, qui font occupées sans relâche à combattre Ahriman ou ses productions [By giving them (the motifs) this meaning, I do not see (them) as the emblem of a particular soul or of a particular farohar, but as a symbolic representation of farohars in general, these creations of Ormuzd , these emanations of a divinity, who is occupied (in) a relentless fight (with) Ahriman or its products], & a protéger ceux qui rendent a Ormuzd, a toutes ses productions; & surtout au feu, le culte qui leur est

dû Suivant les livres des Parsis, on doit adresser des prières aux férouhers; ils viennent au sacrifice qui leur est offert ; ils secourent l'homme qui leur adresse ses vœux; ils quittent pleins de satisfaction le lieu où on les a invoqués, ils y répandent des bénédictions; ils portent les prières a Ormuzd, ils assistent le mortel qui prie avec pureté en présence du feu. [Next, we must address the prayers to the farohars – they who come to (receive) the prayers that are offered to them; they succor the human who addresses their vows; they leave in full satisfaction of the place where they were invoked, they spread blessings; they carry the prayers to Ormuzd; they assist those mortals who pray with purity in the presence of fire.]

“Il n'est pas difficile après cela, de comprendre pourquoi cette figure symbolique accompagne presque tous les monuments de Persépolis, pourquoi on la voit placée au-dessus du prince qui est en présence de l'autel sur lequel brûle le feu sacré, pourquoi elle couronne les décorations des tombeaux. [It is not difficult after this to understand why this symbolic figure accompanies almost all the monuments of Persepolis, why we see (them) placed on top of the prince who is in the presence of the altar on which the sacred fire burns, why it crowns the decorations of tombs.]

“Cet emblème n'est pas moins bien placé à l'entrée de la grande arcade du mont Bi-sutoun. Car il est bien essentiel de remarquer qu'entre les bienfaits dont, suivant les livres des Parsis, l'homme est redevable aux férouhers, ceux qui sont rappelés le plus souvent, c'est qu'ils procurent l'abondance & la conservation des eaux, ainsi que la production & la végétation des arbres. Rien assurément ne convient mieux au lieu dont il est ici question.

“La plus grande différence que je remarque entre les figures ailées de Persépolis & celles du mont Bi-sutoun, c'est que les premières sont représentées avec une barbe touffue, & les autres sont des figures de femmes. Ce dernier caractère convient bien aux férouhers, qui dans plusieurs passages des livres des Parsis, sont appelés des êtres femelles [...farohars that in several passages from the books of the Parsees, are called female beings, but we suspect that this is a more modern idea]; mais on peut soupçonner que c'est une idée plus moderne, & que c'est par cette raison qu'on n'a point observé ce caractère sur les monuments de Persépolis & de Nakschi-Roustam.”

Notes :

(92) Relation du voyage de Perse & des Indes, par Th. Herbert, trad. Franc. Paris, 1663, in-4 pag. 241. Voyage de Mandelslo, trad. Franc. Pag. 11.

(93) Histor. rel. vet. Perf. pag, 305.

(94) Voy. de J. Struya, Amsterdam, 1681, in-4 pag. 317.

(95) Voy. de Thevenot, Amsterdam, 1727, in-12, tom. IV, pag. 508.

(96) Voy. de Pietro della Valle, trad. Franc. ed. de 1745, *tom V, pag. 334.*

(97) Observations made on a tour from Bengal to Persia in the years 1786-7, with a short account of the remains of the celebrated palace of Persepolis &c. *London, 1790, pag. 211.*

(98) *Ibid.* pag. 213 & pag. 232.

(99) Mémé. de l'Acad. des infer. *tom. XXIX, Hist. pag. 133.*

(100) *Lorsqu'un homme est mort, ou qu'il a été tue (c'est ce qu'on lit dans le petit traité qui commence par les mots Eulemai eslam(?), & qui contient une partie de la doctrine des Parsis), «ce qu'il y a en lui d'air, s'unit à l'air; la terre, se réunit à la terre, l'eau, à l'eau, & le feu, au feu: l'âme (revan), l'intelligence (housche), &: le jugement (bouï?), ne font tous trois ensemble qu'une feule chose; Us s'unissent au férouher, & ne font avec lui qu'une feule chose. Si les péchés de cet hom me l'emportent fur ses bonnes œuvres, ils font soumis aux châtiments; fi, au contraire' ses mérites l'emportent fur ses fautes, ils font introduits dans le paradis.»* (Manuscrit de M. Anquetil, n. 13, *pag. 211.*) *Voyez Zend-Avesta, tom. Ier 2 part. Notices, pag. XXXVII; Même. de l'Académie des inscriptions & belles - lettres, tom. XXXVII, pag. 622. & suiv. Voyez aussi la table des matières du Zend-Avesta, au mot Férouer & les textes qui y font indiqués.*

4. Quotes from Modern Texts

A. Zaehner, R. C.

The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism (New York, 1961), pp. 151-3.

“For once the Pahlavi translation of this word is impeccable: it is rendered as *khweshkari* which literally means ‘own-work’. As every man has his Fravashi, so does he also have his *khwarenah*, his *fortuna* or destiny, but it is not destiny in the sense of a predetermined fate, but that for which you are created, your own perfection, your final cause. You can be false to your destiny as Yima was in one of the legends concerning him, and you thereby become separated from your *khwarenah* which is more intimately yourself than your own soul for it pre-exists you (*Greater Bundahishn* 101). More specifically the *khwarenah* is the fulfillment of God’s purpose, for ‘the Creator created his creation for action, and specified for each individual creature his own sphere of action. Any action that contributes to the natural development (*ravakih*) of a creature is the *khwarenah* of that creature.’ (*Denkart* ed. Madan, 341.11).”

“‘A man should do himself [the work that is peculiarly] his. If he fails to do so, no one else can do it for him’ (*Denkart* ed. Madan 342.21). Each man has his own individual *khwarenah*, and to this he must cling, for it is the instrument of his salvation. The *khwarenah* is not a kind of mystic nimbus as some would have us believe, it is *work* in fulfillment of your final cause. ‘The Creator created his creation for action (work), and creatures are the Creator’s agents. Their work can only develop satisfactorily by obtaining a right view (*bavandak-menitārih*) of their *khwarenah*, that is, by doing their own job. By making a success of one’s own job one furthers the Creator’s work and thereby conforms to his will and pleasure; but by neglecting one’s job out of conceit one frustrates that *khwarenah* which is the Creator’s work, fails to conform to his will, and suffers thereby’ (*Denkart* ed. Madan 343.19, 334-3).”

B. Boyce, Mary

Boyce, M. – *A History of Zoroastrianism: Volume II: Under the Achaemenians*, Volume 2 (Brill, 1982), pp. 102-5.

The Figure in the Winged Circle

“It seems likely that the figure in a winged circle once appeared on the now vanished walls of the Tachara; but, probably by chance, the surviving occurrences of this symbol at Persepolis are all associated with Darius’ grandson, Artaxerxes I. On each side of the northern doorway of the Tripylon or Central Palace (also called the Council Hall), which was built by this monarch, there are identical sculptures which show him, like Darius, as a stately figure followed by two smaller attendants. He carries a sceptre in

one hand, a three-lobed flower in the other. One of the attendants holds a parasol over the king's head; and above it floats the winged symbol, essentially the same as that at Behistun, but with differences in detail [for the whole sculpture see Schmidt, *Persepolis I*, Pls. 75-6; Tilia, op. cit., Pl. XXVII, Fig. 26]. The figure in the circle, which here faces the same way as the king, wears not the ancient cylindrical crown of Mesopotamian gods, as at Behistun, but one identical with the king's, which is high and slightly flared; and it is clad moreover in the royal robe. Like the Behistun figure, it holds the ring of divinity in one hand, and has the other raised in salutation. The wings differ from the Behistun ones in that their ends are tapered, not blunt; and the feathers, painted red and green, were, it seems, edged with another colour, probably gold, as were circles painted near their tips [the use of colour on the winged symbol at Persepolis, first noticed by Herzfeld, was closely studied by Judith Lerner, and has been gone into in detail by G. and A. B. Tilia, see Tilia, op. cit., 31-9, with figures and plates, and especially Pl. B]. These details suggest that this particular form of the symbol was copied from pieces of cloisonné jewellery, showing the winged sun-disk, which were perhaps brought back from Egypt after Darius' reconquest of that land [see Tilia, op. cit., 38-9. An Egyptian origin for the Persepolis type of the winged symbol was first postulated by E. Porada, review of Schmidt's *Persepolis II*, JNES XX, 1961, 67 (q.v., 66-8, for a detailed discussion of the stylistic development of the Achaemenian symbol)]. Since the winged disk was an important symbol for the Iranians, such objects might be expected to have attracted their attention there.

"In the eastern doorway of the Tripylon again there are identical sculptures, which show the king enthroned under a canopy, the crown prince standing behind him. Both are upon a platform which is borne up on the raised arms and outspread hands of twenty-eight men, representing the twenty-eight nations of the Empire. Above the canopy floats the figure in the winged circle, exactly as it appears over the parasol in the northern doorway [see Schmidt, *Persepolis I*, Pls 77-9; Tilla, op. cit., Pl. XXVII Fig. 25; Shahbazi, *Persepolis Illustrated*, Pl. XXVI. On the 'platform' (Pers. *gathu-*) on which the king and prince are raised, see P. Calmeyer, art. cit. in n. 40, p. 361 with n. 38; Nylander, art. cit. in n. 53, 148-50].

"Similar scenes are represented on an even more majestic scale in four doorways of the great Hundred-Columned Hall (or Throne Hall) begun by Xerxes and finished by Artaxerxes I. In the doorways on the south side, the king is again enthroned upon a platform supported by twenty-eight bearers. In those of the north side he is shown similarly enthroned above his imperial guards, giving audience to a high official [see Schmidt, op. cit., Pls. 96-113; Tilia, op. cit., Pls. XXII, XXIII; Shahbazi, op. cit., Pls. XXVIII, XXIX; and in detail on the throne-supporters G. Walser, *Volkerschaften*, 51 ff.; P. Calmeyer, *The Subject of the Achaemenid Tomb-Reliefs, Proceedings of the 3rd*

Annual Symposium on Archaeological Research in Iran (Tehran, 1974), pp. 233-6, cites an older Perso-Elamite relief showing the king upon a platform supported by bearers]. Over the royal canopy in all four sculptures there once floated the figure in a winged circle, and in the southern doorways the carving is still well enough preserved in situ for it to be seen that here too the figure wears the same crown as the king; and here, moreover, it holds, not the ring of divinity but a three-lobed flower, as does the king himself [see Tilia, *op. cit.*, 40; and for reconstructions of the damaged figures, *ibid.*, p. 34 Fig. 1; *opp. p.* 36, Pl. A].

“Although no representation of Darius himself with the figure in a winged circle survives on the walls of Persepolis, one is preserved on a famous cylinder seal of his, recovered from the sands of Egypt [see Survey IV, Pl. 123A; Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, p. 221 with Pl. XXXVIIId]. This shows Darius engaged in a lion-hunt—a traditional Assyrian theme. The king stands in a chariot, shooting with bow and arrow at a snarling lion, while another beast lies dying beneath his horses’ hooves. Between the king and the lion at bay, just above head-height of the monarch and his charioteer, hovers the figure in the winged circle. He faces the same way as Darius, and wears the same crenellated crown as the king; and he is shown in the usual calm, conventional pose, right hand raised, the left holding the ring. The design is set between palm-trees, and the seal bears a trilingual cuneiform inscription (in Old Persian, Elamite and Babylonian): ‘I, Darayavahu, the king’.

The Winged Disk

“In addition to these representations of the figure in a winged circle there appears in a number of carvings at Persepolis the simple winged disk without figure. This too has the tapered wing tips of the ‘Egyptian’ type. One place where it regularly occurs is on the royal canopy which appears to have been erected over the Great King wherever he gave audience [see Calmeyer, *Iran XVIII*, 1980, p.57 with n. 19. For a detailed study, with plates, of these canopies and the winged symbol on them see Tilia, *Studies and Restorations I*, p. 183-90]. In the Tripylon sculpture of the king enthroned, the winged disk, without tail or appendages, is set on the canopy between borders of twelve-petalled rosettes, and is flanked by rows of snarling lions, striding towards it from left and right [see Tilia, *loc. cit.*, 188 with Pl. CXII]. The canopy was similarly represented on the former facade of the eastern stairway of the Apadana, where Xerxes was shown giving audience beneath it [on this as the original position of the ‘Treasury Reliefs’ see *ibid.*, Ch. III, with a reconstruction of the sculpture, fig. 3 *opp. p.* 190. On the identification of the king see A. Shahbazi, *The Persepolis “Treasury Reliefs” Once More*, AMI, N.F. IX (1976), 151-6; R. N. Frye, *Persepolis Again*, JNES XXXIII (1974), p. 383.]; but in the sculptures of the Hundred-Columned Hall the canopies are deeper and more elaborate [see Tilia, *op. cit.*, Pl. CXI]. There two winged disks, with tail and appendages, are shown one above the other, separated by

a third band of rosettes. The lower one is flanked by striding, snarling lions, the upper one by ‘angry bulls with their heads bent down and their horns pointed forwards as if they were going to attack’ [ibid., 188].

“The winged disk appears again in the upper panel of the Apadana stairway facade, and similarly on the stairway facade of the Tachara, also attributable to Xerxes. Here the winged disk, with tail and appendages, is once more set between bands of rosettes, but is now flanked by a pair of seated sphinxes-lion-bodied, winged creatures with human heads, royally crowned and bearded. Each sphinx raises its right paw in the customary gesture of salutation; and behind each is carved a row of nine palm-trees [see ibid., Pl. CXIII].

“That the Achaemenian use of the simple winged disk goes back at least to the time of Darius is proved by a cylinder seal from Persepolis. This shows Darius (identifiable by his crenellated crown) seated, with his son Xerxes standing facing him. Each holds a flower in his left hand, and raises the right in the gesture of salutation; and between them floats the winged disk, with tail but no appendages [see Schmidt, *Persepolis II*, 10 with Pl. 8, seal no. 26; Calmeyer, *Zur Genese altiranischer Motive: V Synarchie*, AMI, N.F.X, 1977, p. 192-3]. Like a number of other representations of the symbol without figure [cf., e.g., Schmidt, op. cit., Pl. 8, seal no. 24 with p. 10], this has a pair of horns, one of the traditional signs of divinity, set on the upper rim of the circle.

The Interpretation of the Winged Symbol

“The figure in the winged circle thus appears as superhuman, raised as it always is above the human plane, hovering protectively with the ring of divinity in its hand; and the winged disk also appears on high, and is shown repeatedly as an object of veneration. It is associated moreover on the walls of Persepolis with various powerful symbols; with the rosette, symbol of long life and immortality [which indeed is to be found carved everywhere on the site, even under marble slabs placed beneath the pivot-stones of doors (see Herzfeld, *Iran in the Ancient Near East*, p. 233)]; with snarling lions and menacing bulls, the symbols of might; and with date-palms, which represented fecundity and wealth.

“The earliest suggestions for the meaning of the figure in the winged circle were that it represented either the fravashi of the king – for the fravashi is conceived as a winged spirit [for the bibliography of this interpretation – first advanced by de Sacy in 1793 – see Shahbazi, *An Achaemenid Symbol I*, AMI, N.F. VII (1974), 137-8] – or Ahuramazda himself, the only divine being to be named by Darius [for the bibliography see *ibid.*, pp. 138-40 – where Shahbazi established that this interpretation too rested on very slight foundations]. In ancient times, however, the fravashi was thought of as female, whereas the figure in the circle is always male [this

point is made by Shahbazi, *ibid.*, p. 138]; and the variations now established in its appearance (notably in its crown), and the fact that sometimes, in both gesture and apparel, and in the objects which it holds, it is the mirror-image of the king beneath, make it wholly improbable that it should represent the supreme God [this identification was accordingly rejected, independently, by Shahbazi, art. cit.; and P. Calmeyer, art. cit. in n. 65].

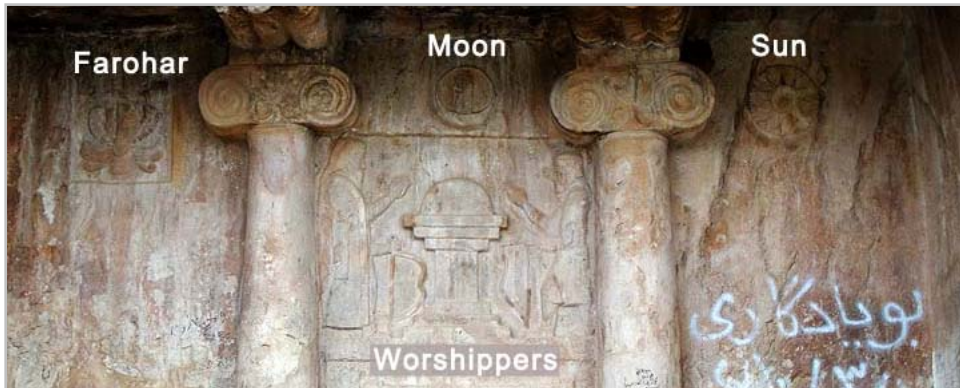
“A more convincing interpretation of the symbol is accordingly that it represents Avestan khvarenah, Median farnah, the divine grace sought after by men to bring them long life, power and prosperity [for this interpretation – first put forward by I. Taraporewala, JCOI II, 1928, 16 n. 1, 25 n. 21 – see Shahbazi and Calmeyer in the articles just cited; and further Calmeyer, art. cit. in n. 40; Shahbazi, art. cit. in n. 6. For the conception of khvarenah see in detail Bailey, *Zor. Prob.*, Ch. 1 and 2, and cf. HZ I 42-3, 67. The interpretation of the ring of divinity as being understood by the Iranians to represent khvarenah – J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *La Royauté iranienne et le khvarenah*, in *Iranica*, ed. Gnoli-Rossi, p. 375-86 – appears to have little to support it]. The simple symbol of the winged disk, it is suggested, represents khvarenah as it is accessible to all men, while the figure in the circle is the royal khvarenah, which accompanies each ruler and attaches itself to a whole dynasty through the sacred power of royal blood. That this royal khvarenah was indeed visualized as a spirit-counterpart of the king himself is illustrated by a strange Sogdian tale recorded centuries later. This relates how a ‘Caesar’ was tricked into believing that he was dead. As he lay in his coffin a thief ‘placed the diadem of majesty on his head and put on royal garments. He approached the coffin where the Caesar was lying, and spoke thus to him: “Hey, hey, Caesar, awake, awake! Fear not, I am your Farn!”.’ [W. B. Henning, *Sogdian Tales*, BSOAS XI, 1945, 478-9 (cited by Shahbazi, art. cit. in n. 6).]

“In the Avesta khvarenah is conceived as manifesting itself in the form of a falcon (*vareghna*): ‘Khvarenah departed from king Yima... in the shape of the falcon-bird’ (Yt. 19.35). This remained a living concept for the Iranians, for in the *Karnamag-i Ardashir*, a Persian romance of the fifth century CE, the king’s ‘farnah’ appears in the shape of a falcon, and with its wing clashes a cup of poison from his hand. [KnA (ed. D. Sanjana) IX.11. On the deliberately fostered confusion between Adur Farnbag and Farnah see Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, p. 123, and article on Adur Farnbag in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. E. Yarshater. In general, on the falcon in Old Iranian literature and thought see B. Stricker, *Vareghna, the Falcon*, IJ VII, 1963-1964, 310-7.] Further, the word khvarenah is linked by etymology, it seems, with *hvar* ‘sun’; and in the Avesta the sun itself is celebrated as a direct bestower of khvarenah: ‘When the sun makes his light shine... the invisible yazatas stand ready... They gather up that khvarenah (of his), they store up that khvarenah, they distribute that khvarenah over the Ahura-created earth, to

prosper the world of Asha' (Yt. 6.1). The magi had thus a double reason to find in the falcon sun-disk a fitting symbol for their own concept of khvarenah. The winged disk was known as a sun-symbol in lands outside Egypt (see Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, p. 209); and scholars are now inclined to think that when the Assyrians set a figure within the disk, they sometimes meant it. To represent a sun-like second self of the king, seen in .his aspect of the 'sun- god of the whole of mankind' (one of his royal titles) [See M. J. Seaux, *Epithetes royales akkadiennes et sumeriennes* (Paris 1967), p. 284 (cited by Calmeyer, art. cit. in n. 40, p. 360 n. 35, cf. p. 358 n. 26). Sometimes, however, even with the figure within the circle the symbol appears to represent Shamash directly, see, e.g., P. Amiet, *L'art antique du Proche Orient* (Paris 1977), fig. 574 (a reference I owe to the kindness of Dr. Calmeyer)]. Moreover, the disk itself 'became a "glory", such as the seal-cutters often stud with stars' [Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, p. 212] – a 'glory' which in Mesopotamia was used to exalt a divine being's appearance and to terrify his enemies. The symbol thus elaborated, one may suppose, was then adopted by the Deiocids as the special symbol for the royal khvarenah, which had bestowed on them splendour and power, and had given them authority to rule in place of the Assyrians. Median personal names, as we have seen, attest devotion to farnah in western Iran in pre-Zoroastrian times. Khvarenah/farnah belonged of old within the sphere of the Ahuras, and was under their protection; and so, even if the pagan Deiocids used the symbol, there was no doctrinal reason why the Mazda-worshipping Achaemenians should not have retained it. Its frequent appearance in their art accords admirably with the exaltation of the king which is so much that art's aim; yet it need not be doubted that when Darius was shown reverencing khvarenah he was also thought to be venerating its creator, Ahuramazda, whom he invokes so repeatedly in his inscriptions."

5. Images – Motif Variations

A. Double Winged & Person in the Moon



Images above the door to the late 7th to early 6th cent. BCE tomb at Qyzqapan, Iraqi Kurdistan (also see III.2.C). What appears to be the figure of a man within a circle (the moon?), takes centre place in upper region of this layout with the farohar-like motif to one side.

Image: Smithsonian.



The men in the farohar-like motif and moon(?) appear to match while differing from the worshippers (magi?) below.



Impression sketch of Achaemenid era (6-5th cent. BCE) seal from Oxus Treasures. Note left image where impersonal farohar motif has two sets of 'feet' – above & below – and a person/king within a circle below. The right image includes a personal farohar motif.
Image: *Achaemenid History X* by Pierre Briant, p.228.



Achaemenid era earring. Gold with cloisonné style inlays of turquoise, carnelian, and lapis lazuli. Diameter: 5.1 cm (2 in.). Said to have been found in Mesopotamia.

Note the double-winged farohar motif surrounded by men in circles (moons?). As can be expected, the presence of six surrounding men in circles has and will spawn a speculative frenzy. A. S. Shahbazi either responding to or anticipating the interpretation that this is Ahura Mazda surrounded by six Amesha Spentas (archangels) notes that if there is any (later) gender assignment to the Amesha Spentas, it is three male and three female (q.v. *An Achaemenid Symbol, (Part) II*, pp. 122-4.). Instead, Shahbazi's proposes the six men being six Persian nobles who surrounded King Darius the Great. Simple artistic licence for six men in circles is an overlooked possibility and the person in the circle could well be the same person depicted in the farohar motif (as in other motif-circle scenes), or an ancestor, or even the person's fravashi as an archetype – these being among several possible explanations.

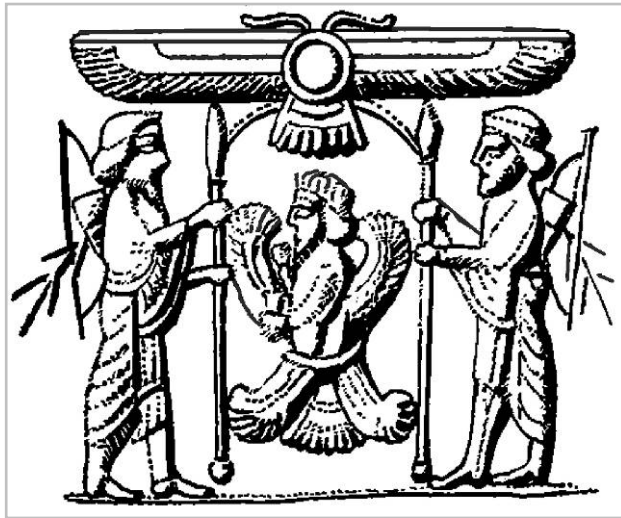
The frequent association of a farohar motif with possibly the same man in a moon/circle awaits further research based on supporting information (void of speculation). In the absence of such objective information, it may be more prudent to say we just do not know what symbolism, if any, is intended.

Image: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

B. Double Winged & Impersonal Khvarenah



Achaemenid era grey-blue chalcedony cylinder seal from Hillah, near Babylon, Iraq. Image: British Museum.



Achaemenid era cylinder seal impression. The scene shows two Persian soldiers facing a double-winged farohar motif wearing a crown. One interpretation of the impersonal farohar motif above them is that it typifies the khvarenah of the soldiers performing their assigned (noble) task of protecting the royal Aryan farr. The 'feet' of the impersonal motif above can be seen on top of the motif's circle rather than below, where we often see them. In the winged torso, note the bottom pair of wings where we would expect to find 'feet'. Image: Drawn by G. Tilia and as reproduced by A. S. Shahbazi in *An Achaemenid Symbol, (Part) II*, p. 123.



Impression made by the cylinder seal above. Here the farohar motif can be seen as a combination of an impersonal motif (the male figure does not emerge from within) and a winged persona (in the style of other double-winged images) behind. The man (king?) to the left is not battling the griffins as shown in other scenes. Rather, his right hand is raised in possible respect. Curiously, the image to the right depicts a creature with a human-like body embracing or squeezing the life out of two antelope-like animals.

This figure stands on the head of two sphinxes. If we were driven to speculation, we might see the sphinx as a person's base (animal) persona and the farr as the higher (angelic) persona. The man (king?) could have the ability to subvert his base persona and tame evil as typified by the lion-like griffins.

Antelopes do not kill other animals. Lions kill and take life. Image: British Museum.

C. Battling the Winged Beast (Evil)

The beast being battled here may be mythical creatures symbolizing evil.



Impression of an Achaemenid era seal showing an impersonal farohar motif above a man (king?) battling a winged griffin-like beast. The griffin slaying scene may depict the king's role as a hero battling and vanquishing evil. Note the sphinx beneath their feet. The man in the circle appears to match the man battling the beast. These types of scenes are sometimes interpreted as hunting scenes. However, given their mythic nature, we wonder if they are an allegorical portrayal of a noble king ruling in grace while protected by the royal farr – and thereby having the ability to vanquish evil. Image: Walter's Museum, Baltimore, Maryland, USA. (Location of the seal's discovery is not stated.)



Impression of an Achaemenid style seal discovered at Gordion, (Cappadocia/Phrygia) Central Turkey (home to King Midas and the Gordian knot) showing a man standing on a sphinx-like beast facing a farohar motif and an apparent mirror image. Note the man in the circle and compare with the image above. The Aramaic inscription reads "Seal of Bn', son of Ztw...." Image: Penn Museum, University of Pennsylvania, USA.



Achaemenid cylinder seal impression once again showing a man (presumably a king with a crown) standing on the head of two sphinxes having subdued two beasts. Here an impersonal farohar motif is shown above a (date?) palm. All the elements in this scene can have allegorical significance proclaiming the king to be a hero who rules in grace and who can subdue evil. The presence of wings may symbolize a spiritual entity.

D. Animal-Head or Body Khvarenah/Farr (Good)

For a discussion of the khvarenah/ khwarr/farr with animal heads, see V.2.D. In usage (as with the soon to become Sassanian King Ardeshir I), the winged animal (ram/stag) sometimes appears at an intermediate stage – just before the khvarenah/farr gets attached to a patron. These mythical creatures are seen as beneficial – good.



Achaemenid era (4th-5th cent. BCE) horned winged ram from Takht-e Kuwad (cf. the name Khwada), Tajikistan. Image: British Museum.



Sassanian era (3rd-7th cent. CE) winged ram in Uni. of Mich. Art Publication. The khvarenah/farr which flew over Sassanian King Ardeshir I is described as an eagle, a winged ram or a winged stag. Image: A. S. Shahbazi.



Silver rhyton c. 700 BCE (a fake?) from Kalmakarra Cave, Elam, Iran. Seized by US from a smuggler and returned to Iran in September 2013.



The Achaemenid era cylinder seal impression. Note the head on the farohar motif. Image: Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

E. Animal Head Khvarenah or Simorgh?

Sassanian Era Silk Twill & Platters



Sassanian era (6th – 7th cent, CE) silk twill.
Image: Victoria and Albert Museum.



6th cent. Sassanian silver platter with creature popularly identified as a simorgh. Image: British Museum.



7th cent. Sassanian silver platter with a creature popularly identified as a simorgh. Image: Smithsonian.



Sassanian era platter with animal head winged creature. Image: Wikipedia.

6. Miscellaneous Notes

A. Soudavar Criticizes Parsees & Pits Zoroastrians against Scholars

In an article titled *Iconography of Farr(ah)/Xʷarənah* at Encyclopaedia Iranica, Abolala Soudavar criticizes the Parsees for considering the farohar motif to be a representation of the fravashi. He states, “Scholars had considered them as symbols of Ahura Mazda, while the Parsis saw them as frawahrs or fravashis.” Further, “In refutation, Pierre Lecoq demonstrated that there were many examples that contradicted A. Shapour Shahbazi’s argument [that the motif represented the khvarenah in an article]⁴⁶ and that the Parsi interpretations lacked solid grounding (Lecoq, *passim*).” In making these comments, Soudavar by implication dismisses Shahbazi’s scholarship, ignores the work of several scholars and has pitted his camp of so-called “scholars” against the Zoroastrian community, in effect saying that Zoroastrians don’t know what they are talking about – that “scholars” of his ilk (likely non-Zoroastrians) know better. This amounts to intellectual arrogance and a patronizing approach towards adherents of a religion who consider their beliefs sacrosanct. Soudavar appears to be ignorant about Zoroastrian beliefs as well as Professor Mary Boyce’s conclusions agreeing with Shahbazi.

B. Boyce Rejects Some Western Interpretation of Farohar as Ahura Mazda

Prof. Mary Boyce in an article *Fravaši* at Encyclopaedia Iranica: “Moulton accordingly (J. H. Moulton, *Early Zoroastrianism*, London, 1913a, repr. 1972, p. 260), rejecting the then prevailing Western interpretation of the Achaemenid winged symbol as that of Ahura Mazda, identified it as the king's fravashi and it is still generally regarded as a fravashi symbol by Zoroastrians. Strong arguments, however, have by now been put forward by Western scholars for its representing khvarenah (for references see Boyce, *Zoroastrianism II*, p. 103 n. 82; Boyce and Grenet, *Zoroastrianism III*, p. 104 and nn. 197-98).”

C. Boyce on Unity of Zarathushtra’s Spirit & Body

Prof. Mary Boyce in an article *Fravaši* at Encyclopaedia Iranica: In *Denkard*, 7.2.15-47; Mole, pp. 16-23; Boyce (1984), pp. 72-73, Zarathushtra’s *frawahr*, i.e., *urvan*, is united on earth with his bodily substance (*tan-gohr*) and *khwarrah*; and in a work on creation (*Bundahishn* 3.23-24).

⁴⁶ A. Shapour Shahbazi, *An Achaemenid Symbol. II. Farnah ‘(God Given) Fortune’ Symbolised*, in *Archeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* (Berlin, 1980), pp. 119-147.

D. Boyce on Aberrant Icon use by Parthians & Sassanians

Prof. Mary Boyce in an article *Ahura Mazda* at Encyclopaedia Iranica: “The worship of ‘Aramazd’ with images is attested during the Parthian period, especially (through the accident of surviving sources) in Armenia (see Armenian religion). Zoroastrian iconoclasm, traceable from the beginning of the Sasanian period, gradually put an end to the use of all images in worship; but “Ohrmazd” appears represented in Sasanian investiture scenes as a dignified male figure, standing or on horseback....”

E. Dhalla’s Apparent Compromise Position on Fravashi

An apparent compromise position by Dastur M. N. Dhalla in *History of Zoroastrianism* (New York, 1938) p 233: “The Fravashi represents Ahura Mazda in man....” We do not find this statement supported in the *Avesta*. We understand that while the fravashi is God-given it is not God. Several authors have adopted the term ‘Divine Spark’ as a way to understand or define the fravashi.

F. The Term ‘Fire Altars’

Mark Garrison in an article titled *Fire Altars* at Encyclopaedia Iranica and CAIS: “Fire altar is a term adopted by modern researchers to designate the stand upon which sacred fire was placed. Strictly speaking, the designation ‘fire altar’ is incorrect, since the structure was not used to receive a sacrifice, but simply to hold the fire for the purposes of veneration, probably contained within a metal or clay [or stone] bowl. Mary Boyce has suggested the appellation ‘fire-holder’; although more accurate, this designation has not won wide acceptance (Boyce, *Zoroastrianism* II, p. 52; Houtkamp, p. 24). Because the term fire altar has such immediate and direct connotations of Zoroastrian worship, it should probably also be restricted to those structures which have a clear Zoroastrian religious context.”

It appears that ancient Greeks used an altar to sacrifice a live animal as part of a worship ritual and that the word ‘sacrifice’ was synonymous with ‘worship’. The use of this terminology misrepresents Persian-Magian-Zoroastrian religious practice entirely.



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