

Original Research Article

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نمادهای پیشاسلامی در فرش‌های تصویری ایران از پادشاهان

Pre-Islamic Symbols in Pictorial Carpets of Iranian Kings

Abstract

Introduction: Many Iranian carpets with motifs of pre-Islamic mythological kings are available in museums, almost all of which have the same structure. These kings are depicted with their ancient names and with metaphysical beings, which have three levels. First, the position of the king and Farrah Kiani; second, goblin/demons place; and third, soldiers' place. The transformation of pre-Islamic metaphysical concepts in such carpets has led to symbolic forms. This research, which was compiled to identify the mythical kings in the pictorial carpets of Iran, seeks to answer the following questions: «Using the medium function of the carpet, how did the Iranian carpet designers convey the aforementioned triple layering and what are the symbols of protecting the god Mehr and the goddess Nahid from the kings of the Islamic eras in these carpets?»

Research Method: This research is qualitative and fundamental. The data is collected from libraries and the National Carpet Museum of Iran using the descriptive-analytical approach.

Findings: The existence of pre-Islamic symbols in combination with the story of Semitic prophets, mixed with the images of the kings of the Islamic era of Iran in motifs such as a luminous orb behind the throne belonging to the first level, goblins in the middle part, soldiers and ministers in the last level, is one of the unique combinations of Iranian pictorial carpets. In the thought of carpet designers, metaphysical forces like a bridge have provided a means of transferring pre-Islamic concepts to the motifs of Islamic kings.

Conclusion: The mythology and visual knowledge of the designers of Iranian pictorial carpets have led to the transfer of metaphysical concepts found in the myths of pre-Islamic kings and Semitic prophets to the motifs of Islamic kings, where the symbol of the goddess Nahid is in the form of a pool of water, and the goddess Mehr is in the form of a luminous orb.

Keywords

Iranian Pictorial Carpets, Mythological and Islamic Kings, Mehr and Nahid, Semitic Prophets

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Introduction and Problem Definition

The two perceptual systems of humans are words and images expressed through literature and art. Iranian carpet artists create images based on words/descriptions. For this reason, their mind experiences Logocentrique and Iconocentrique simultaneously, resulting in the combination of motifs from kings of different eras. Identifying the words/descriptions that have led to the integration of the ancient culture of Iran and the myths of the Semitic prophets and are involved in creating these motifs is one of the necessities of this research. The motifs intertwined with the livelihood style of Iranians are agriculture and animal husbandry. This way of making a living caused the ancient Iranians to ask for help from the gods and goddesses who were the patrons of the elements of nature because the amount of support given by the god Mehr (Sun) and the goddess Nahid (water) was related to the prosperity of agriculture and animal husbandry. Of course, these two jobs are not separate from each other and have mutual effects. The greenness of the land and the prosperity of agriculture create suitable pastures for livestock breeders. Agriculture is the recommended profession in the Zoroastrian religion, and the importance of animal husbandry is evident in the combination of the names of mythical kings with livestock. Although the gods and goddesses are responsible for the fertility and greenness of the earth and are the patrons of agriculture, the kings are also the earthly symbol of the god Mehr and receive Farrah Kiani from him. To gain the support and satisfaction of the goddess Nahid, the kings made sacrifices for her to support agriculture and animal husbandry. After the end of the Sassanid period, the duties of mythological gods, goddesses, and kings were assigned to saints and prophets, and carpet weavers depicted a combination of their stories and common features into carpet motifs. This research tries to determine the transmission of pre-Islamic myths and the combination of their symbolic concepts in contemporary Iranian carpet motifs.

Research Method

In this research, the study and collection of images were done based on the published versions of the carpets in the National Carpet Museum and the archives of private collectors. The comparative analysis of images and their relationship with written texts collected in a library-based style led to descriptive and analytical results. The statistical population of the research includes all kinds of pictorial carpets with motifs of kings (myths of ancient Iran or Islamic eras), which, except for the pictures in Tanavoli's book (1989), includes three carpets in the National Carpet Museum and a carpet belonging to a private collector. The analysis of the symbols and their common features has been abstracted to make the comparative study easier.

Research Background

For the first time, the identification of pictorial carpets containing motifs of ancient Iranian kings or Islamic eras was published in the book entitled «Iranian Pictorial Carpets» by «Tanavoli» (1989), which was a source of research inspiration to explain the dominant view of the legitimacy in the Qajar era and the importance of the spiritual position of the Qajar kings, and describes the criteria and aesthetic standards of the motifs of that era. «Shayestehfar and Sabaghpour» (2011) have published an article entitled «Examining Pictorial Rugs of Qajar Period» which tries to present the aesthetic criteria of pictorial carpets descriptively. «Imani, Tavoosi, Chitsazian, and Sheykh Mahdi» (2016) have published an article entitled «The Discourse of Archaism in the Motifs of Pictorial Carpets of Qajar Era», which is the closest research to the current study. Also, «Vandshoari's» (2008) article entitled «The Myth of King Hooshang (Hooshang Shah) in Pictorial Carpets

of Qajar Era», described the mythological carpets focusing on Hooshang Shah. Both recent articles have pointed to the changes in the Qajar era's social causes and the kings' desire to show their spiritual legitimacy. «Ahani, Khazaie, and Abdollahi Fard» (2021) also criticized pictorial carpets in an article entitled «An Analysis of Signs of Power in the Pictorial Carpets of the Qajar Era», using approaches similar to the previous two articles. «Keshavarz Afshar» (2008), in his dissertation entitled «Investigating Pictorial Carpets of the 13th and 14th Centuries A.D.» discussed the image of humans in the pictorial carpets available in the Iranian Carpet Museum and «Reshadi's» (2011) dissertation entitled «The Evolution of Image Weaving in Iranian Carpets from Ancient Times to Today», has done the same work as the previous dissertation; the only difference is that it has emphasized more on the symbolism of ancient kings. Although the studies conducted are valuable, the present article does not rely on social developments in the emergence of the motifs of mythological kings; instead, it focuses on the symbolic concepts in the lower layers of the motifs of ancient kings. This research explores the purpose of carpet designers regarding these motifs by adapting the texts of ancient Iran and finding the common features of pictorial carpet motifs. The Commonalities that are created through metaphysical elements, such as goblins and fairies, the pre-Islamic god Mehr and goddess Nahid or Semitic prophets, transfer the image of the mythical kings of ancient Iran with small and recognizable changes to the motifs of the pictorial carpets related to the kings of Islamic eras.

The Commonalities of the Mythical Kings of Iran (Houšang, Tahamures, Jamšid) with the Semitic Prophets (Solaymān the Prophet and Idris)

God of the Sun (Mehr) asked Idris (Houšang) to go to the sky by the wind, and God took him to the fourth heaven (Yahaghi, 2007, 339). After Houšang, there is Tahamures. In the Avesta narratives, Tahamures gave a gift to the god of wind and, in this way, won over Divan and the magicians (Yashta, 2/143). Jamšid is also after Tahamures. Cup of Jamšid/Jahan-Nama cup had a mysterious feature that everything that happened in the distance was reflected on it (Yahaghi, 2007, 274). The feature of the cup belonging to Jamšid is similar to that of the wind for Solomon/Solaymān. The wind brought news to Solaymān (Yahaghi, 2007, 474); every morning and evening, it travelled a distance of one month (Quran/Saba, 12 & Anbia, 81). Many commentators have said Solomon's carpet was five hundred Parasangs, and he commanded the wind to lift and carry that carpet with all its creatures into the air (Khazaei-Nishaburi, 1995, 254). «Surabadi» also narrates that the Sun, wind, and water asked Solomon to ask God to calm them down (Surabadi, 1991, 280). Some consider the Cup of Jamšid to be the same cup of wine due to the discovery of wine during the reign of Jamšid (Mortazavi, 1953, 24). Of course, comparing wine with Bacchus shows Jamšid's relationship with the goddess Nahid/Venus. Some researchers have found similarities between the Holy Cup of Solaymān and the Cup of Jamšid, as well as the connection of Farah Kiani (Farah-e Jamšid) with the Holy Cup and their connection with the Mehr in Iranian culture (Vahed-Dust, 2000, 440). Although Mithraism and Farrah Kiani are not a perfect match, they have common links. Zamiyad-Yasht (paragraphs 36 and 35) emphasizes that when Farrah was separated from Jamšid, «Mehr» took it. After this incident, Farrah Kiani was handed over to «Mehr», and he was the one who took Farrah Kiani back from the ravager kings. Therefore, wherever Mithraism has been established, it means Farrah Kiani's religion. Among the monuments related to Mehr, many cups and plates can be found which were discovered from Mithraeum and Mithraism shrines. These cups represent life's source and are an important concept in Mithraism (Koyaji, 1992, 62). The concept of «cup» was also explained in the books of Islamic authors, and they

mentioned a goblin who made glass cups for Solaymān so that he could keep an eye on the goblin (Modaresi, 2006, 23). After Islam, the stories of Jamšid and Solaymān became so intertwined that some encyclopedias have been written to define the word «Jamšid»: If the name of a king includes the words Khatam, Negin, Takht, wind, Āsaf-e baraxiyā, Fish, Poultry, etc. means Prophet Solomon/Solaymān (Rampuri, 1984, 258). Another document is related to «Fars», which Iranians considered the territory of Solaymān and the capital of Jamšid's reign. They believed the remaining works of the Achaemenid kings to belong to Jamšid, and changing the name of Persepolis to «throne of Jamšid» is an adaptation of this idea (Sediqiyān, 1996, 110). In Ajāyeb-Nameh, there are explanations about the construction of Persepolis by demons, fairies, and goblins. People believe that non-human forces transported large stone slabs from distant places to Persepolis, which led to the construction of palaces and their huge columns. Otherwise, it was impossible to build Persepolis with ordinary tools, physical strength, and human power (Lari, 2001, 31). This way of thinking is consistent with the Semitic mythology that describes the service of the demons to Solomon/Solaymān. Therefore, in the Islamic eras, they considered Jamšid and Solaymān the same and introduced Fars as the «The center of Solomon's rule» and the king of that land as «the heir to Solomon's rule» (Moein, 2535, 115; Yahaghi, 2007, 294). Saadi also confirms the same idea in the introduction of his Golestan book, which is about Atabak Abu Bakr-Ibne Saadi Zangi, that Jamšid is «the heir to Solomon's rule» and «the successor of Solomon/Solaymān» (Saadi, 1992, 70, 73, & 195). Cyrus's tomb in Fars has also been introduced as the «death place of Solaymān's mother» (Yahaghi, 2007, 294), and the city of Istakhr in Fars is known as «Solomon/Solaymān's Palace» (Tusi, 2003, 178 & 255). The word «Prophet Solomon/Solaymān» can be seen in the carpets that have the motifs of Persepolis (Tanavoli, 1989, 37). Carpets depicting the image of King Xerxes in Persepolis, where the words «the Jamšid's cup» or «Prophet Solomon/Solaymān» are written in the upper frame of the picture, include many representations in Iranian pictorial carpets (Tanavoli, 1989, 17) (Fig 1 and the Jamšid's cup in the hands of Xerxes) and (Fig 2.c).

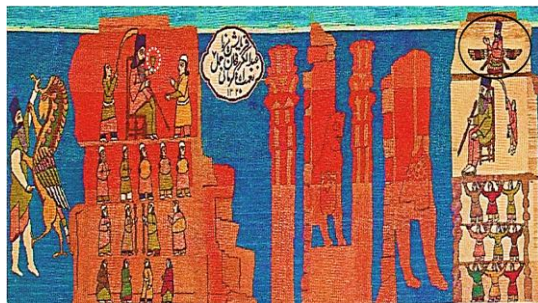


Fig 1. Wool carpet and a scene from Persepolis, place of weaving: Ravar-Kerman, date: 1325 A.H., Dimensions 128 × 60 cm. Source: Tanavoli, 1989, 157.

Description: The right side of the carpet has Farah Kiani/Frohar above the king's head and the left side has Jāme Jam/Jamšid's cup in the king's hands. The number of bearers of the royal throne is odd on both sides. (Numbers 9 and 13).

Tabarsi identifies the primary example of the «Great Temple» as the famous Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. He considered places of worship to be palaces with religious aspects, which is why the people of Iran attributed the impressive building to Jamšid or Solaymān. In this regard, «Jamšid Court» or «Jamšid Throne» and Solomon's Temple have been identified as one. He even places Takht-e Soleymān in West Azerbaijan Province, the fire temple of Adur Gushnasp of the Sassanid period, in the category of shrines (Gholami, 2007, 133 & 134) (Figs 1 & 2).

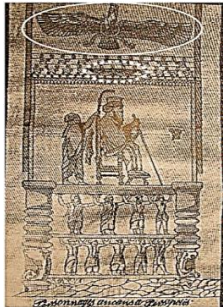


Fig 2.a. Wool carpet, date: 1311. Dimensions: 125 × 198 cm, in 1970. It was purchased by the Hermitage Museum of St. Petersburg. Source: [Ander, 1995, 45.](#)

Explanation: It is the same in all Figs 2. in parts a, b, and c: The presence of Fravashi at the top of the image is a symbol of Farrah and the number of bearers of the royal throne is an odd number (number 9).

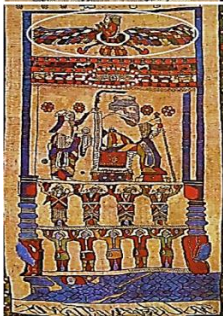


Fig 2.b. Wool carpet, date: 1866-1870. Dimensions: 141 × 203 cm, weaving place: Qashqai, Fars.



Fig 2.c. Wool carpet, in the upper margin of the rug [rectangular frame] there is an inscription in Persian: «Hazrat Solaymān/Solomon». Date: 1222 A.H.

It seems that a group of Iranians have deliberately attributed stories related to divine prophets, including Solomon, to the mythological kings of ancient Iran ([Dezfulian & Sahraei, 2010, 78](#)) because the attribution of Iranian kings to divine prophets and the assignment of pre-Islamic historical and cultural monuments of Iran to Prophet Solomon/Solaymān guaranteed the preservation of historical monuments from the damage of fanatics ([Oshidari, 1992, 235](#)). Although the stories related to Jamšid and Solaymān have a lot in common and Solomon's jinn, along with the soldiers of Persepolis, create a hint of «Jamšid», the presence of the name «Houšang» on top of the carpet, which comes to introduce the king sitting on the throne (Jamšid or Solaymān), introduces Hušang, Jamšid (mythical kings), and Solaymān as one person (Fig 3).



Fig 3.a. Houšang-Shah carpet,
 Owner:
 Mohammad
 Javanmardi, place
 of weaving:
 Timcha Gol, Vakil
 Bazaar in Shiraz,
 date of weaving:
 1313 A.H. Source:
 Author.

Description: Two white frames containing the names of Houšang Shah and Farrah Kiani, along with seven people around the king and five people in the lower part in the uniform of Persepolis soldiers and two ministers on the right and left (the number of soldiers is odd).



Fig 3.b. Houšang-Shah carpet, place
 of weaving: Around
 Hamedan, date: 13th
 century A.H.
 Source: [Tanavoli, 1989, 128.](#)

Description: Two white frames containing the names of Houšang Shah and Farrah Kiani along with three rows of soldiers of Persepolis (15 people) with two ministers on the right and left (the number of soldiers is odd).

Jinn and Fairies in the Stories of Jamšid and Solaymān

In Middle Persian religious literature and Pahlavi writings, a fairy is a demonic creature with magical power that changes its face and body to deceive champions and harm God's creations ([Sarkarati, 1971, 1](#)); however, according to Moein, «fairy» is an illusory and invisible creature and a female jinni who can mate with an earthly human ([Moein, 2002, 249](#)). One of the fairies that plays an essential role in the stories related to Solomon is the Queen of Sheba (Bilqis), a fairy-born creature. Bilqis's father sees a black snake wrapped around a white snake on the hunting ground and intends to destroy it. He helps the white snake and releases it. The white snake, wounded and lifeless in the fight, was left by the river by Bilqis's father. When Bilqis' father reaches home: «... he saw a man with a beautiful face standing inside the house... He said: I am the son of the leader of the fairies and that white snake that you saved... I have a sister ... that you can marry my sister if you are willing...» ([Abdullahi, 2002, 1012](#)). Then Bilqis's father married that fairy, the sister of the white snake, and Bilqis was born from that fairy. The connection between a fairy as a female jinn and a white snake can be found in the terminology of Arabic literature because the word «Jann» refers to a type of white snake, and in the verb form, it means covered. This word is part of the same family as madness and jinn, so Arabs consider jinn and white snake to be part of the same family ([Tavaratani, 2006, 12](#)). The marriage of fairies with humans, which Moein mentioned, is the common factor in the story of Bilqis and Jamshid's father's marriage. «Jami», Jamšid's sister and mentioned in Iranian and Indian mythology, also has a story in Pahlavi's writings. Jami and her brother Jam/Jamšid flee to the Sea of Zerrah after Zahhāk's reign. A demon and a fairy follow them, and after getting to know each other, they agree that Jami will marry the demon and that the fairy will marry Jam ([Afifi, 2018, 490](#)). In this way, Jamšid marries a fairy at the bottom of the Celestial River ([Modaresi, 2006, 13](#)). Therefore, the presence of fairies in the story of Jamšid and Solaymān is one of their common features. In the carpets related to Solomon/Solaymān, similar to the carpets related

to Hušang, two jinn are located at the bottom of the throne, with the only difference that the jinn of Solaymān are standing: Still, the jinn of Hušang is sitting (Fig 4).



Fig 4.a. Solaymān carpet, date: 13th century A.H., number: 1692, place of weaving: Tehran. Source: Author.



Fig 4.b. Solaymān carpet, date: 13th century A.H., place of weaving: Kashan. Source: Author.

The Mythological Commonalities of Hušang and Fereydoun

According to the Shahnameh, fire's origin is attributed to Houšang, and it seems that fire was unknown until his time. Therefore, the ancient Iranians named «Sadeh» to celebrate the birth of fire. Of course, for the Sadeh celebration, they also recorded the number of hundred children of Gyumerth/Gayumars/Keyumars. But its other story is related to Fereydoun. After Fereydoun defeated Zahhāk, he punished Zahhāk's cook (Armāyel); however, Armāyel claimed that he saved some young people from death and sent them to Mount Damāvand. Fereydoun accepted his claim and went to Mount Damāvand with an army. Armāyel told them to light a fire on the roofs to determine their number. That night happened at the same time with the tenth day of the month of Bahman, which was called Sadeh (Biruni/*Al-Tafhim*, 1939, 258). Therefore, the founders of the Sadeh festival are both Fereydoun and Houshang. In addition, the other aspects of Fereydoun and Idris (Houšang) are knowledge of astrology and magic (Yahaghi, 2007, 634 & 86) and seeking help from the Goddess Nahid. Hušang sacrificed one hundred thousand horses, one thousand cows, and ten thousand lambs, thus obtaining Farrah Kiani. Fereydoun also sacrificed herds of cows and horses to the goddess Nahid. Sacrifice is common between Gyumerth/Keyumars, Houšang, Jamšid, and Fereydoun. Some Islamic narratives have considered Zahhāk's reign and Fereydoun's struggles to be the same time as Noah's prophethood (Biruni/*Athar al-Baqih*, 1998, 292). In the pictures of many carpets related to Houšang, we are faced with two examples of the Mehr image. First, a Sun-like orb symbolizes Mehr and is behind the king's throne while the king also holds his sword vertically. The rest of the elements in the picture, including the jinn sitting below the king's throne, the odd number of people present in the carpet scene, except for the king, and the soldiers in Persepolis, who are located in the lower part of the carpet, are common (Fig 5, in all of which the presence of the Sun-like orb as a symbol of Mehr is common). In the first group of this sample of carpets, two compositions can be seen. A. The number of Persepolis soldiers at the bottom of the picture is four, and with one on the right side of the king, they become five (Figs 5. a. & b.) B. The number of Persepolis soldiers at the bottom of the picture is five, and with the two people on either side of the king, they form a group of seven (Figs 5. c. & d.).

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Fig 5.a. Houšang-Shah carpet, place of weaving: around Malayer, date: 13th century A.H. Source: Tanavoli, 1989, 132.

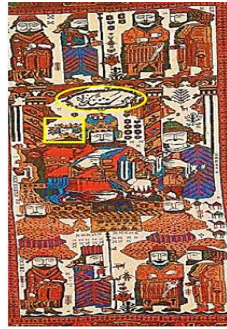


Fig 5.b. Houšang-Shah carpet, place of weaving: Baluch, Khorasan, date: early 14th century A.H. Source: Tanavoli, 1989, 150.



Fig 5.c. Houšang-Shah carpet, place of weaving: around Malayer, date: late 13th century A.H. Source: Tanavoli, 1989, 148.



Fig 5.d. Houšang-Shah carpet with foreign diplomats, place of weaving: around Malayer, date: 1320 A.H. Source: Tanavoli, 1989, 130.

Second, there are two Sun-like orbs, two flower bushes or two dwarfs on both sides of the king's head. The Sun-like orbs are the symbol of Mehr, and the red flowers are the symbol of Venus/Nahid. In these images, either the king does not have a sword in his hand, or the sword is placed horizontally on the king's knee, which may be a symbol of peace and tranquillity. In addition, in this section of carpets with the Houšang-Shah image, there must be a lion. In the myths of ancient Iran, the lion is a symbol of the god Mehr and the goddess Nahid; however, having a difference, the lion of Nahid can be recognized as the lion of Mehr. A lion without the Cross/Sun symbol is the symbol of the Nahid, while the Cross/Sun sign is the symbol of Mehr (Pashootnizadeh, 2015, 65-68). Therefore, the presence of the lion is an emphasis of the Mehr and the Nahid (Fig 6).



Fig 6.a. Houšang-Shah carpet, place of weaving: Hamadan, Dargazin, date: late 13th century A.H. Source: Tanavoli, 1989, 134. Description: Two Sun-like orbs with two different colors, white and yellow, on both sides of the king, symbolizing the god



Fig 6.b. Houšang-Shah carpet, place of weaving: around Hamadan, date: early 14th century A.H. Source: Tanavoli, 1989, 140. Description: Two Sun-like orbs on the two sides of the king, symbolizing the god Mehr and the goddess Nahid.



Fig 6.c. Houšang-Shah carpet, place of weaving: around Malayer, date: 1301 A.H. Source: Tanavoli, 1989, 138. Description: Two small people.



Fig 6.d. Houšang-Shah carpet, place of weaving: around Hamedan or Zarand, date: 1312 A.H. Source: Tanavoli, 1989, 136. Description: Two red roses.

Mehr and the goddess
Nahid.

Goddess Nahid, the Commonality of Noah and Jamšid

Although the story of Noah's Ark and War Jam-Kard (Jamšid Garden) are very similar, their other similarity is the «grape» symbol, which is related to the goddess Venus/Nahid. In the narrations of Nowruz-Nameh, a king from the descendants of Jamšid is attributed to planting grape seeds; however, Christian religious literature attributes planting grapes and making wine to Noah. Many narrations attribute the discovery of wine to Jamšid, and the explanation is that because of the perishability of grapes, they took their juice to prolong its shelf life. After a short period, the grape juice became bitter, and Jamšid thought that it had turned into poison, so he put it in the vat. Incidentally, one of the maids fell seriously ill. She decided to commit suicide due to pain and illness. So, she drank some grape extract, and after that, her pain subsided. She explained this incident to Jamšid. Jamšid also drank from it, and after this incident, wine was used to cure most diseases. Therefore, they named it «Shah-Daru/ the lord of all medicines» that cures all diseases (Yahaghi, 2007, 799). Ancient Greek and Roman vineyards were known as «Bacchus/Dionysius», and this word is pronounced «Bacchus» in Armenian and «Bokh/Бог» in Russian, which means «God» (Akbari & Elikai-Dehanu, 2005, 43). «Mary Boyce» believes that the word «Lady/Bogh» is definitely the Mesopotamian title of «Goddess» that was used for Ishtar/Inanna and Venus (Samudi, 2008, 37 & 36). «Bagh-Dokht» is composed of «Bagh», which means God/God and «Dokht», which means daughter and together become «Daughter-God/God-Daughter (Goddess)», which is the title of the goddess Anahita/Nahid since ancient times and it was the planet Venus. «Bagh-Dokht» in the Persian language was faced with the transformation of «gh» to «i» and became «Bi-Dokht» (Farahvashi, 1995, 165). Therefore, Bacchus/Baghus is associated with the Iranian goddess Nahid. The same mythological pattern exists in the stories related to the protagonists named Hārūt and Mārūt/Khordād and Amordād Amesha-Spenta/Haurvatat and Ameretat in Islamic narratives, who are two angels and come to earth to judge. A woman from Noah's children, named Zohre/Venus, which becomes «Bi-Dokht» in Persian and «Anāhid» in Hebrew, complained to them about her husband. They deceived her and separated them, then killed her husband and drank wine secretly at the request of Venus. So Zohre/Venus also learned the great name of God from those two who were drunk and went to heaven (Yahaghi, 2007, 433 & 432). In these texts, the connection between the goddess Nahid, Noah, wine, and Jamšid is obvious. Wine is a symbol of the goddess Nahid, which is associated with Jamšid and Noah. Jamšid had many requests from Anahita and gave her ransoms; Nahid also fulfilled Jamšid's desires (Modaresi, 2006, 31). Goddess Nahid/Goddess of water, according to the Torah and Quran, in the story of Noah's flood, appears as boiling water from the earth and abundant rain from the sky. In the story of Noah, the ark lands on Mount Ararat/Ārārāt (Genesis of the Torah: Chapter 8) and this mountain is the same place mentioned in the Quran as «Judi» (Quran/Hud, 24) and Hert and Mert (assistants of the god of vineyards) who force the winds to bring rain on the Ararat/Ārārāt (Yahaghi, 2007, 864). Therefore, the elements of «wind» and «rain/water» are essential components of these texts. Noah, after the end of the storm, first sent a crow and then a dove to tell them that the water had receded so that they could get off the ship. The crow did not return and was busy eating the carcass, so Noah sent the dove. When the dove returned and brought good news, he was given the title of «the herald of Noah». The pigeon is respected in Iranian mythology and is known as «the herald of Nahid» (Yahaghi, 2007, 622) (Diagram 1).

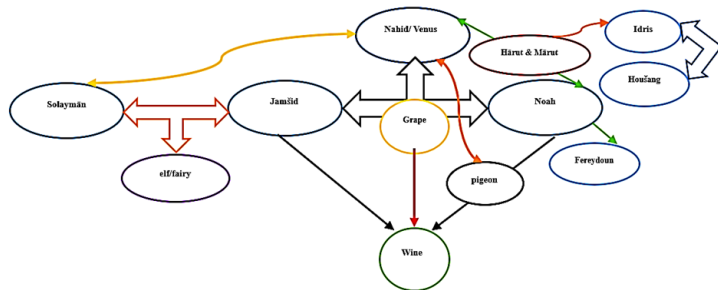


Diagram 1. The relationship and aspects of commonality between the prophets of Semitic religions and the mythical and pre-Islamic kings of Iran. Source: Author.

Idris and Mehr in Connection with Houšang, Fereydoun, and Jamšid

Gyumerth/Keyumars, who was the first human in the world, lived with the soul of the first cow, and later, the cow's soul got a body (Yahaghi, 2007, 714). After Gyumerth/Keyumars (Adam's successor), Houšang (Idris' successor) ascended the throne. Idris was the second prophet after Adam. In the 3rd century A.H., the Mandaean Sabians living in Harran/water worshipers considered Idris, the patron of crops and herds, to be their prophet and possessor of the divine book. While carrying a lamb, he became known as the chief shepherd and lived on earth for three hundred and sixty-five years (equivalent to the days of one solar year) when he died only for one hour, and that was at sunset. When Idris was taken to heaven, he had a needle and a bit of thread with him¹, so he could not go beyond the fourth heaven/constellation of the Sun. The Mandaean Sabians equated Idris with Hermes, and in the Middle Ages, Persians equated Hermes with Houšang (Nasr, 1962, 2). According to traditions, Houšang is the second king of Iran after Gyumerth (Yahaghi, 2007, 895 & 896), and the similarity between Houšang and Idris is that they are in second place. In announcing the Quran, Idris has the three qualities of prophethood, kingship, and wisdom (Khazaili, 1962, 88) and the story of Harut and Marut happened during Idris's lifetime (Ibn Qaysrani, 2003, 11) (Diagram 2).

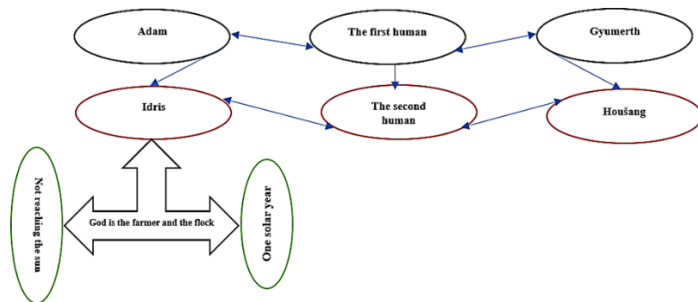


Diagram 2. Similarity between Gyumerth and Houšang with Adam and Idris. Source: Author.

In the description of Idris, agriculture, shepherding, and the Sun are mentioned. The Persian name for the Sun is «Khurshid/Xoršid» and is similar to Jamshid/Jamšid. The second part has a common name for both, and it has «Shid/Šid». «Shid/Šid» and «Khashat» are attributes of «Khor (Sun)» (Yahaghi, 2007, 291). Mehr is also related to the Sun and entitled «the owner of vast pastures». According to Mehr's myths, cow's blood caused the creation of all creatures on earth (Masson & Pugachenkova, 2005, 99). In Mehryasht, Mehr's duties are to guard vast fields, guard the people, and ensure their welfare (Mehryasht). Jamšid is «the owner of a great herd», and Fereydoun is a descendant of «the owner of many cows». Abu Rihan al-Biruni mentions in Athar al-Baqiyyah that all of Fereydoun's ancestors have

compound names with the word «cow». In the Bundahishn text, Fereydun's father's name is Abtin, which is interpreted as «the owner of many cows» (Faranbagh-Dadegi, 1990, 58). Among the other cases that lead to the connection of Fereydoun's stories with the cow is that he was entrusted to the guard of the cow. In addition, Fereydoun, after overcoming Zakhāk, frees the cattle of the Ethfiyān that were captured by Zakhāk (Biruni, 1998, 296). In fact, the word «cow» in English is derived from the name «Kaweh», who secured the kingdom of Fereydoun by making a flag with his cow leather apron. Then, Balami approves the sacrifice of herds of cows for the Goddess Nahid by Fereydoun (Bala'mi, 2001, 147). Even when Zakhāk asks for respite from Fereydoun and makes him swear on his ancestor's blood, Fereydoun swears on the blood of a bull that was in his ancestor's house to kill him (Ferdowsi, 1936, 65). Idris also has a lamb on his shoulder. In addition, in the description of Nowruz, Gardizi explains Jamšid sitting on a calf that moves towards the south and has defeated the demons (Gardizi, 1968, 241). In ancient Iranian belief, the movement of the cow is the cause of the beginning of Nowruz and the new year, and they believe that placing the egg on the mirror and its rotation at the moment of the new year is due to the earth being thrown from one horn to the other horn of the cow (Yahaghi, 2007, 692). In addition, the symbol of Mehr, which is in the crown of the king and is worn during Mehregan and Nowruz celebrations, is mentioned. Jamšid is so bright that people are amazed when they see Jamšid that shines like the Sun and imagine that there are two suns in the sky (Biruni, 1998, 280). Regarding the naming of the Mehrgan festival, the birth of the Mehr/Sun is also mentioned. The other is that it was on this day that Fereydoun was weaned, and he rode on a cow. A luminous cow appeared in the sky, whose horns were made of gold and whose legs were made of silver, and pulled the chariot of the moon (Yahaghi, 2007, 793) (Diagram 3).

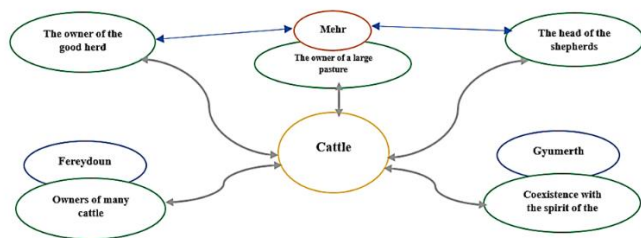


Diagram 3. The relationship of prophets and kings with cows and the Sun .Source: Author.

Therefore, cows, herds, lambs and, in general, animal husbandry and agriculture are related to Mehr and Nahid. Venus/Nahid is in the third house, and Sun/Mehr is in the fourth house. In Aban-yasht, Mehr and Nahid are related to each other. Sometimes, they are like eyes for each other, and sometimes Venus is considered the mother of Mehr, or the source of the river Venus/Nahid is from the Sun/Mehr orb. In Mehrisht, Mehr is also likened to the moon (Mehr-yasht), and for this reason, pulling the chariot of the moon by the cow on which Fereydoun is riding expresses the symbolic meaning of Mehr. Venus/Nahid also finds a subtle connection with Idris and Noah in the story of Harut and Marut. Idris is similar to Mehr because he lived for 365 years (Yahaghi, 2007, 87) and because Idris was the second prophet who achieved Farrah Kiani/sovereignty, he is similar to Solaymān. Farrah Kiani/sovereignty is also transferred from Jamšid to Mehr, and then Fereydoun receives it. According to the Zamiyad-Yasht text, Jamshid had Farrah for a long time (Afifi, 2018, 487). This Farrah was given to him by God/Ahura-Mazda. Then Jamšid took Farrah Kiani from Mithra/Mehr/Sun, as Jamšid has been interpreted as the god of light on earth and Mitra as

the god of light in the sky (Warner, 2007, 266). The symbolic meaning of the image in this sample of carpets is based on the stories related to the kings of ancient Iran, and for this reason, several repeatable symbols can be followed. The first position is that of the soldiers of Persepolis, which is located in the lower part of the image (usually a third in the lowest frame of the carpet). The number of these soldiers is four or five; however, in general, the number of soldiers and the king form a group of five or seven people. The middle of the carpet is dedicated to the king's attendants, and they appear in the form of demons/goblins (Figs 3, 5, & 6) or humans (Fig 7) next to the throne. This part of the carpet represents the combination of elements in Islamic narratives with the stories of the mythical kings of Iran. Farrah Kiani is located in the highest part of the carpet because it is a symbol of Mehr, who is the guardian of Farrah Kiani. Mehr's support for the prosperity of the king is shown by two pictorial factors, which are either the symbol of Fravashi/Faravahar (Figs 1 & 2) or the Sun, which is located under the king's name and behind the royal throne (Figs 3, 5, 6 & 7).

Houšang and Jamšid; Elijah and Idris

The similarities between Houšang and Jamšid, and especially their common ancestor, along with the similarities between Jamšid and Fereydoun or Jamšid and Solaymān, have caused their myths and stories to merge. The name «Houšang» means «the giver of good position». According to the narrations, he is the second king of Iran and after Gyumerth/Keyumars⁴, who reigned over seven countries with the volition of Ahura-Mazda and Amesha-Spenta². He was not only the ruler of humans, but he also subdued the demons. During the reign of Houšang, security and comfort reigned, and in Shahnameh narratives, Houšang is the first person to extract metals, as well as to discover blacksmithing and fire. In addition, he taught his nation how to irrigate the land, agriculture, and make clothes (Yahaghi, 2007, 895 & 896). For the first time, Jamšid made weapons, swords, Canvas fabric, sewing clothes (Ibn al-Nadim, 1967, 22), spinning and producing silk³ and dyeing with various colours. He forced the demons to obey him and make bricks, build houses and baths (Bala'mi, 2001, 130). The author of Fars-Nameh wrote: Jamšid, when he made demons and devils his servants, assigned them to hard work (Sediqiyān, 1996, 81). Jamšid, in addition to building «War Jam-Kard», also built houses and, according to Bala'mi, Houšang, founded the city of Babylon and Shush and built mosques (Bala'mi, 2001, 228). In this regard, both of them have acted similarly in regard to construction and urban planning. Since the word «Jamšid» is equivalent to «the owner of a great herd», he has been likened to the Sun in the sky, and the stars are like his sheep. According to the narrations, Houšang is also in the position of the Sun and has the title of «the giver of good position». For this reason, both are in a good position (the place of the Sun and the sky). Another similarity is in the preparation of clothes, metals, blacksmithing/making of weapons, architecture, and giving sacrifices and ransom to please Nahid. According to the writings of «Ibn al-Nadim», Satan teaches Jamšid to «write», and then Jamšid transfers writing to his nation (Ibn al-Nadim, 1967, 22). If we assume that Idris is the same as Houšang, Jamšid has another commonality with Houšang/Idris in «writing» (Yahaghi, 2007, 86). Idris and Jamšid are associated with the symbol of cow and lamb (herd), and Mehr and wind are inseparable elements of both of them. The sovereignty over seven countries is also shared between Houšang, Jamšid, and Solaymān. The name Elijah⁵ is mentioned many times in the Quran, and in the announcement of the Quran, Elijah and Idris are assumed to be the same (Khazaili, 1962, 187). Some commentators have introduced Elijah as Idris in verse 85 of Surah An'am and verse 123 of Surah Safat and attribute the characteristics and stories of Idris to «Elijah» (Tabarsi, 1993, 510). In the announcement of the Quran, «Elijah» is considered close to the

Persian word «Ās» or «Mūrd», and for this reason, «Ās» is considered to be a symbol of greenness and immortality (Khazaili, 1962, 192). This plant is a symbol of the initial creation of the goddess Nahid (Yahaghi, 2007, 776). Therefore, «Elijah» is related to Nahid and Idris. On the other hand, because Nowruz is a celebration to praise the goddess of water/Venus/Nahid⁶, the similarities between Idris/ Houšang and Jamšid increase. The establishment of the «Khorram Rooz» or «Nawad-Rooz» festival, which is the first of the four festivals of the month of Dey (Persian word for January), is attributed to Houšang. According to Persian narratives, it is the celebration of the union of Houšang and his brother (Biruni, 1998, 295). The similarity of the words «Dey» and «Xor» can be found in the Zoroastrian calendar. The 11th day of every month is called Khir/Xor, which is the day of the Sun. According to Biruni, «Dey» is the name of the tenth month of every year, which is also called «Khor/Xor Mah» (Yahaghi, 2007, 338). The word «Nawad-Rooz/ninety days» corresponds to «Nowruz⁷» in terms of pronunciation in the Persian language. If it meant «ninety», it should have been written with a space after the word «days». Anyway, if the meaning is «ninety», it implicitly refers to the remaining ninety days until Nowruz because Iranians celebrate the last day of autumn (Yaldā Night) for the creation and birth of the Mehr (Sun) (Yahaghi, 2007, 913). In addition, the Sun is a symbol of royalty, authority, and royal glory in ancient Iranian sources (Yahaghi, 2007, 339). Therefore, the first day of the month of «Dey» (Persian word for January) is the first day of the return of the Sun. It is consistent with what Biruni announced about the equality of Xor and Dey. Jamšid is also the lord of the Sun and appears from the place of sunrise (Karnoi, 1962, 78). In this regard, taking into account the common characteristics of Iranian kings with Semitic prophets, the intermingling of stories and the role of Iranian carpet motifs is obvious (Diagram 4).

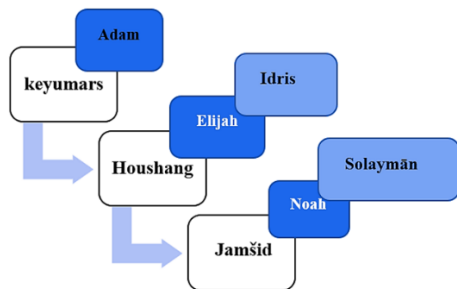


Diagram 4. Matching the stories and common characteristics between Iranian kings and Semitic prophets. Source: Author.

Carpets with Images of Islamic Kings/Nader Shah Afshar

In the images of the Islamic kings, there are four attendants with different clothes from the soldiers of Persepolis, who, together with two attendants in the upper part of the carpet and two ministers on both sides of the king, create a group of eight people (even number) (unlike the kings pre-Islamic). Although the goblin below the throne has disappeared, it seems that these two goblins have been replaced by two attendants on top of the carpet. The critical issue is that the conventional division has remained unchanged. One or two ministers are placed in the middle part of the carpet, and soldiers in the lower part. The pond with a beautiful plant growing near it in the upper and lower directions is a symbol of the support of the Nahid to the king, which is located in the middle of the vertical frame of the carpet and the lower part in the horizontal divisions of the carpet frame. The Sun orb, which symbolizes Mehr and the spiritual light of the king, is added to the king's seat or throne and is a symbol of a king with great spiritual power who is worthy to reign with the support of Mehr. He is considered the earthly representative of Mehr, like Jamšid, who is introduced

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in religious texts as the light of the earth. The highest position for Mehr or his symbol is Farrah Kiani, who is seen in the form of Fravashi/Faravahar/good thought and is at the highest level with the king's head. The alignment of Fravashi/Faravahar's symbol in these images implies the concept of enlightenment of thought (Figs 3, 5, 6, & 7). Farrah Kiani in carpets with motifs of Islamic kings becomes a decorative motif on top of the king's throne to evoke Mehr's patronage in the mind of the audience, and the pond with flower bush symbolizes Nahid's patronage of the king. In addition, it is a symbol of encouraging the prosperity of the agricultural profession, which is an essential and recommended occupation in the Zoroastrian religion (Fig 7).

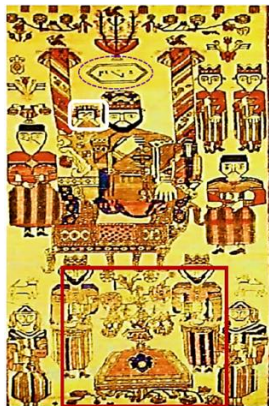


Fig 7.a. Nader Shah carpet, place of weaving: Hamadan, date: late 13th century A.H. Source: Tanavoli, 1989, 178. Description: The Sun-like orb symbolizes the god Mehr and the water pond symbolizes the goddess Nahid.



Fig 7.b. Nader Shah carpet, place of weaving: Kerman, date: late 13th century A.H., storage place: National Carpet Museum. Source: Author. Description: The Sun-like orb symbolizes the god Mehr and the water pond symbolizes the goddess Nahid.

Conclusion

Iranian carpets have always been a platform for transmitting the culture and beliefs of Iranians in the form of images. The carpets discussed in this article contain symbolic elements that result from combining the stories of pre-Islamic and mythological kings of Iran with Semitic prophets. Myths and written sources in religious literature or oral culture have led to the formation of this sample of carpets, which until now was only measured from the aspect of kings' desire to express legitimacy in the matter of government. The role of existing motifs has made pictorial carpets a powerful medium in presenting pre-Islamic concepts and has led to symbolic exchanges of motifs along with the images of kings of the Islamic eras. The plants in the background of this sample of carpets are reminiscent of «War Jam-Kard» or Jamšid garden for the audience. The demons/goblins located in the lower part of the king's throne implicitly describe the stories of Jamšid, Houšang, and Solaymān. On the other hand, the similarities between Semitic prophets and pre-Islamic kings have been effective in the formation of this group of motifs. The kings present in these carpets are introduced to the viewers with their names woven above their heads, thus bringing the stories related to them to life in the minds of the audience. For example, Houšang is sitting on the throne and is introduced to the viewers by the name woven on top of his head; however, other visual elements are implicitly reminiscent of Jamšid and Solaymān. In addition, Farrah Kiani, which the king receives from Mehr, shines in a form similar to the Sun next to the king's head and as a symbol of good thoughts. Another batch of the same type of carpets is simply an indication of the efforts of the designers to recreate the prominent motifs of Persepolis, which are drawn in the form of Fravashi/Faravahar as the symbol of Farrah Kiani and in the highest part of the carpet frame to remind of good thoughts, words, and actions. These three principles and especially good thoughts are the king's helpers in the matter of kingship; therefore, it is placed in the highest position of the

carpet frame. Carpets with these themes are a bridge between pre-Islamic and Islamic culture. The combination of Iranian myths with the descriptions in the Quran and other books related to Islamic periods has caused the formation of particular pictorial components in these carpets. In this way, although in the depiction of Islamic kings (Nader Shah) there are no demons/goblins, the division of the carpet into three sections, the final, the middle, and the first, has remained constant, and the four crews present in the final section have replaced the soldiers of Persepolis. In the middle section, the presence of ministers remains as before. In addition, the first place, which belongs to the king and his throne, has also remained unchanged; however, there have been some changes in the roles of Islamic kings in comparison with pre-Islamic kings. For example, it can be pointed out that the rule of placing people around the king is not observed. It is as if the style of one person on the right side of the king and four soldiers in the lower part or two people on the sides of the king and five soldiers in the lower part, which is customary in Houšang carpets, has been mixed and he has made a new rule for the arrangement of people in Nader Shah carpets. However, the presence of the main factors, including the inscription to introduce the king on top of the carpet and the symbols of Mehr and Nahid to protect the king, is still the main base of royal carpets. Finally, it can be concluded that the transfer of concepts through descriptions in texts has led to the formation of these Motifs. Pre-Islamic mythological kings have characteristics and descriptions that create similarities with Semitic prophets. Then, these characteristics have been shown in the form of carpet motifs. The archetype of Farrah Kiani and the support of Mehr and Nahid also remain unchangeable factors.

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Conflict of Interest

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Appendix

1. Jesus Christ was taken to heaven on the condition that he did not have any cutting tools with him. However, the needle that was in his pocket due to negligence prevented him from rising above the fourth heaven (the constellation of the Sun). In fact, he became a housemate with the Sun (Yahaghi, 2007, 593). The 25th of December was originally the birthday of the «invincible Sun» and the birthday of the «Mehr», which was later recorded as the birthday of Jesus Christ. The first historical reference to the Mehr dates back to 80 A.D. and the book Thebaid by Satius: «The Mehr won over the horns of the stubborn bull under the stone slabs of the Iranian cave».
2. The number of Amesha Spenta is six, which, after adding Ahura Mazda (God), creates a group of seven and is actually the same number used to name the entire world: «Seven Lands of the Earth».
3. Although Jamšid has been introduced as Tahamures' successor, Tahamures learned silk weaving from the demons (Yahaghi, 2007, 260).

4. Idris was the first person to experience calligraphy and sewing clothes. He also attributed wearing clothes, establishing cities, compiling astronomical laws, and adjusting the calendar to him (*Mojmal al-Tawarikh wa al-Qasas*, 184).
5. Elijah is Idris because Elijah has appeared and disappeared. Then, he was chosen as a prophet again. His name was Idris before his disappearance (Quran/Maryam, 56 & 57). After that, he appeared as Elijah (Quran/Safat, 124) (Hassanzadeh Amoli, 1999, 642).
6. At the dawn of Nowruz, people bathe themselves with qanat water to cleanse themselves of all sins because this day belongs to the angel of water (Yahaghi, 2007, 835).
7. Abu Rihan Biruni, Tabari, and Bala'mi have mentioned the origin of Nowruz in the period of Solomon (Biruni, 1998, 325; Tabari, 1988, 118; Bala'mi, 2001, 88).

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