

Analysis of Totemic Cow and its Association with the Fereydoun Family in Ferdowsi's ShahnamehMasoumeh Zandie¹, Kheironnesa Mohammadpour^{2*} and Nahid Sharifi³¹ Department of Persian Literature, Payame-Nour University, Iran
E-mail: Zandieh436@gmail.com² Department of Persian Literature, Payame-Nour University, Iran
E-mail: nmohamadpour@yahoo.com³ Department of English Literature, Payame-Nour University, Iran

*Corresponding author: nmohamadpour@yahoo.com

Abstract: The origin and source of national epics are old oral tales that are conveyed to the future generations and also are recorded in epic works. Hence, these works reflect the thoughts, ideas, and rituals of the nation they belong. Moreover, since totem and totemism is an old ritual that dates back to the distant past of most of the nations, it is reflected in the form of epic. This paper particularly deals with the manifestation and embodiment of totemic cow in the Shahnameh and its association with Fereydoun's Family.

[Masoumeh Zandie, Kheironnesa Mohammadpour and Nahid Sharifi. **Analysis of Totemic Cow and its Association with the Fereydoun Family in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh..** *Life Sci J* 2012;9(4):1739-1747] (ISSN:1097-8135).
<http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 265

Keywords: Totemism, Totem, the Shahnameh, Fereydoun, Cow

Introduction

Totem and totemism is discussed in books on the history of religions (including *A History of the World's Religions* by John Boyer Noss). Claude Levi Strauss, the French intellectual, wrote a book titled *Le Totemisme aujourd'hui* (Totemism, 1963). Of course, the works of this great scientist are difficult to understand due to his ignoring the ability and understanding of different classes of the society that are the audience of such topics. In addition, Sigmund Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1918) also studies the traces of totemism in the fields of psychology and anthropology with regard to the habits, customs, and beliefs of Arab and Jewish Semitic families and tribes and many different tribes in ancient Africa, America, and Europe. Mircea Eliade and Carl Gustav Jung discussed totem and totemism in their many works and theorized about these matters as well. Among Iranian scholars, Dr. Mehrdad Bahar and Muhammad Jafar Yahaqi have also occasionally referred to family totems of some of the mythical figures of the Shahnameh.

This research is conducted by the library method and the results are presented in a descriptive-analytic way. Therefore, after discussing totem and its origin and providing the related definitions and characteristics, totemic cow and its manifestation in the story of Fereydoun in the Shahnameh is studied.

The word *Totem* is derived from the language of Indian tribes because these tribes considered animals as their ancestors and the exclusive god of their tribes and thus cherished their god and refused to eat it (Qarashi, 2001: 70). "In fact, worshiping and honoring animals and plants in some old nations have led to the creation of totemism." (Qadyani, 1995: 31) It should also be

mentioned that "In mythology, god is often embodied in the form of a certain animal" (Freud, 1976: 302).

Based on the definition of totem, "in totemism, all the tribesmen respect and put belief in some animals and plants and consider the spirit of that particular animal as their special protector. Totem refers to an honored object. For the totem was an animal of which they were afraid because of its power and rigor. Similarly, anthropologists also use the word Totemism for the worship of objects. The primitive tribes considered their totems as their godfather. Sometimes the tribal people tattoo the sign of their totem on their bodies because they think the attributes of the totem is transferred to them. Therefore, tribesmen considered themselves and also the totem worshiped by their tribes as humans. They sometimes appear in the form of their particular totem..." (Samadi, 1988: 13, 14).

Therefore, in general it can be said that: "Totem is first of all the ancestors of a group, and also a guardian and benefactor spirit that sends his messages through revelation. Furthermore, though it is dangerous to other people, it knows it offspring and does not harm them." (Freud, 1976: 7)

Felicien Challaye believes that "in most communities, the child inherits the name of the totem from his mother" (Challaye, 1976:12). However, according to Freud "totem is inherited from both parents" (Freud, 1976: 7). Furthermore, "totem is a slogan that is considered as the sign of the lineage of a group. Sometimes they draw this slogan on the ground, or on a shield, a tent or a house. The sign of totem is usually tattooed on man's body...Totemic images are more scared than the totems themselves. The sanctity of totem and its images is transferred to human beings. The reason for the sanctity of the person is that primitive

mankind believed that while he is literally human, he is also an animal and sometimes a part of the totem and thus he derives its name as well. Therefore, similarity of the names brings about similarity of natures..." (Challaye, 1976: 12).

In 1900, Ronak divided the laws of totemic religion into 12 general verdicts. The summary of these verdicts is as follows:

- Killing and eating some types of animals is forbidden. Human beings raise these types of animals and take care of them.
- Sudden death of an animal requires mourning. The body of the dead animal shall be buried with the respect similar to the burial of human beings.
- In some cases, only a special part of the body of the animal is not consumed.
- If there is a necessity for killing a religiously illegal animal, people will apologize to the animal and try to mitigate the negative results of killing it by taking different measures and procedures.
- When an animal is sacrificed based on the regulations, a formal ceremony will be held for him.
- In some formal occasions, during religious rituals people wear the skin of some of the animals. Peoples that still follow totemism use the skin of their totem for these ends.
- Tribes and people name themselves after the name of totemic animals.
- For many tribes the images of animals denote certain signs by which they decorate their weapons. Men draw animal figures on their bodies and tattoo the figures in order to print them permanently.
- According to their beliefs, if the totemic animal is dangerous and dreadful, it will not harm the members of the tribe that is named after it.
- The totemic animal will support and protect the tribesmen.
- The totemic animal informs the tribe of the future events and guides them as well.
- Members of a totemist tribe often feel kinship with the totemic animal (Freud, 1976: 137-139).

According to all the sources and works that have discussed this topic, one of the principal rules of totemism is the prohibition of killing the totemic animal (Palmer, 2006: 39).

Totemism or at least its impacts can be observed in the history of ancient Iran. In accord with Iranian narratives, Kai Khosrow and Ardeshir were fostered by a female dog and a goat, respectively. Achaemenid was also raised by an eagle (Azadegan, 1993:71). Even some examples of plant totemism can be found in Iranian mythology: some dynasties were thought to have kinship with some types of plants. That is to say, a special plant (tree or bush) was considered as the ancestor of a dynasty. Mandrake is a mythical plant that is considered as a typical example of plant totems.

When death came up to Keyumars, he fell on his left side and his semen fell to the ground. The semen was then purged and purified by the sunlight. After forty years, Mashya and Mashyana grew out of Keyumars' semen and formed a plant named rhubarb. At the beginning, Mashya and Mashyana were so twisted together that their arms were hung around their shoulders and their bodies were stuck together. Then spirit was blown into them and they took the form of human beings (Yahaqi, 1996:393). Mehrdad Bahar believes that rhubarb had been the tribal totem of primitive Iranians (Bahar, 2002: 29).

Therefore it can be concluded that traces of totemism can be seen in Iranian culture. Now we are going to see to what extent this ritual is manifested in the Shahnameh, which is a precious historical document that clarifies important historical and pre-historical events and the life of primitive Iranians.

Cow

In Indo-European languages the word *Geo* refers to earth, life, and existence. Various Persian words of today such as *Gaav* (cow; Persian: گاو), *Giah* (plant; Persian: گیاه), *Gan* (Persian: گان), *Gian* (Persian: گیان), *Jaan* (life; Persian: جان), *Geyhan* (universe; Persian: گیهان) and *Jahan* (world; Persian: جهان) are derived from this word (Qarashi, 2001: 22). Even the root of the word Keyumars, which was originally an Avestan name (Gayyamartan; mortal live) and then a Pahlavi name (Gayomart), is derived from this word (Yahaqi, 1996: 122). In addition, "in the Avesta the word Gav/Gava (Persian: گاو) is the nickname of Sogdiana. In the first Fargard and Nadidad the name of Sogdiana is mentioned along the names of 16 countries created by Ahura Mazda (God). Charles-Joseph de Harlez¹ believes that Geo was the capital of Sogdiana. In any case, this word had been a sacred and ritual nickname meaning development, blessing, and life (Qarashi, 2001: 138, 139). In the ancient India the name Gotar (i.e., superior cow) had been a popular name (Qarashi, 2001: 95). According to this book, this word has other meanings in Sanskrit. One of its meanings is "militant", which is of course written as *Gavista*, a part of which contains the word Gav (i.e., cow) (Qarashi, 2001: 211).

In ancient pre-Zoroastrian Iran, the moon (who illuminates the dark night) was always worshiped, because the Aryans residing in this land believed in many gods and worshiped elements of nature. According to the oldest potteries that are discovered, antelope, stag, and rabbit are three animals that belong to the moon. After awhile, the cow was considered by Iranians as the symbol of the moon (Samadi, 1988: 20, 21). Later, as the importance of the sun increased, cow and hog (that belonged to the moon) were known to be

¹ Belgian orientalist and translator of Avesta.

the animals of the sun. Phyllis Ackerman¹ considers the following rule as the characteristic of some civilizations (including totemic civilizations): the dominant owns the beaten (totems) (Samadi, 1988: 21).

While having its general meaning in the Avesta, this word appears as a common noun that refers to the livestock. In Zoroastrian culture the word cow is still used to refer to a class of animals including bufflehead (Persian: گاو میش), hog (Persian: گاوگراز), and grampus (Persian: گاو ماهی). In modern Persian language, the word sheep (Persian: گوسفند) that refers to both ewe and ox had been originally *Geospand* (meaning sacred cow). Cow is an extremely respectable animal in Mazdaism. They seek help from the guardian angel of the cow and refer to the fourteenth day of the month as Gooshrooz. Maybe this is the reason for the prohibition of sacrificing cows in religious rituals mentioned in the Gathas (Yahaqi, 1996: 360).

In the ancient Iranian mythology there is another type of cow that is named Ovagdat. This sort of animal carries the seed of the quadruped and even some useful plants. This species is similar to the Iranian mythical tree that carries the seed of all the plants². Ovagdat or Evakdat means unique. In the primordial time this type of cow had been the only creature on earth. Similarly, Keyumars, the first human, was also made from the soil afterwards. Ogvadat is sickened by Satan (Ahriman) and dies. Upon the death of Ovagdat fifty five types of medicinal plants grow out of its corpse and different animals grow out of his semen. The myth associated with this animal later was incorporated into Mithraism. However the cow in Mithraism is an evil animal. Another type of cow, which protected the border between Iran and Turan, is also seen in the stories. This cow is also killed by Kavous (Yahaqi, 1996: 360). In the selections of Zadsparam a relation can be seen between cow and water. During the day Satan sees the unique cow, which is a white and bright animal shining as the moon, near the Amu River. He wants to harm the animal but since the cow is near the water the animal is protected by the power of water because according to the mythology water is the best protector of every sacred animal against Satan (Qarashi, 2001: 211). Here a threesome relationship can be observed: the interrelation between the moon, water, and cow (Amuzgar, 1997: 32).

In Iranian ancient mythology the moon is as valuable as the sun. In Zoroastrian culture the moon is worshiped three times a month. Even Bundahishn introduces the moon as the protector of the semen of the quadruped and animals. Iranians believed that the moon had a

carrousel that was pulled by a cow that was made of light, two golden horns, and ten silver feet (Yahaqi, 1996: 385).

So far we have realized that the three of them are holy. It is not only in ancient Iran that water is considered as a holy element, because many ancient cultures value and respect it. These three creatures are similar in that they all vitalize and enliven. In some stories the cow (which means existence and life) and the water (which is the origin of creation) are considered as the principals of life. The moon is also the generator of rain and the seed of the living.

The Shahnameh does not mention the unique cow that is created before (or at the same time as) Keyumars (the first earthly human). Even it does not introduce Keyumars as the first human being; rather, it considers him as the first king of the world. Hence, we will not continue this discussion. Now we are going to study the manifestation of the cow in Shanameh.

This animal is mostly seen in the story about Fereydoun. However, "some of the legendary heroes that are described in the Avesta and some newer holy Zoroastrian text books probably belong to the pre-Zoroastrian era. In the pre-Zoroastrian Persia people who spoke Indian and Persian (that related through their language) were still considered a single group of people. With the advancement of the Zoroastrianism prophet and spread of this religion in Iran some of the pre-Zoroastrian notions and traditions were incorporated into the Avesta and especially in the Yashts³. Zam Yasht (the nineteenth Yasht) gives a full description of the heroes. All of the heroes also appear in the Shanameh that was written more than two thousand years after the Avesta." (Curtis, 1997: 26, 27).

Fereydoun is one of the heroes whose battle with Zahhak has been widely reflected in Iranian myths and the Shahnameh. From now on we will talk about Fereydoun and the relation between this hero and cow.

Fereydoun and His Family

Aubteen (Abtin)

"The father Fereydoun (the sixth Pishdadi king) is often known as Aubteen. However, in Pahlavi textbooks such as Bundahishan, Asbuyan, and Asbyan the names Aspyan and Athfyan are used to refer to the family of Fereydoun. Based on all the available stories it can be concluded that the family name of the ancestors of Fereydoun had been Athfyan. This word is another form of the word Aubteen...In the Islamic textbooks (such as Tarikh al-Taban⁴, etc.) this name is written as Athfyan and in the Shahnameh (and other Persian textbooks) it is

¹ The author of "Some Problems of Early Iconography".

² According to ancient stories it is a tree named Harvisp that carries the seed of all the plants and hosts the nest of simurgh.

³ A collection of twenty-one hymns in Younger Avestan.

⁴ The History of the Prophets and Kings.

written as Aubteen. It seems that the latter word is another form of the word Autbeen.” (Yahaqi, 1996: 31) According to the author of “*The Rituals and Legends of Ancient Iran and China*”¹ the name of Fereydoun’s father was Aspin-Tora (Kouyaji, 1974: 181). In the Avesta it is written as Athwya (or Aspyan). Tora is a cow named Hozvaresh, whose Arabic name is Thor. Tora was the adjective that was attached to the name of Fereydoun’s father (Yahaqi, 1974: 31).

Fereydoun and Iranian Stories

Pahlavi form of the name Fereydoun is Faritun. In Avestan language it is known as Thraetaona, which is derived from the word Threath (meaning the third person). Fereydoun is called by this name maybe because he was the younger than his two brothers². In the Shahnameh, his brothers are called Kianush and Birmaya (Kazzazi, 2000:294, 295). Based on another account this name was written as Trita-Aptya, which means the third child of water (Bahar, 2002: 474). Hence, this word is related to the named of his father (Aubteen), because the word Aubteen consists of two parts: Aub (meaning water) and teen.

According to another account “as far as the time and place value network is involved, in the late Stone Age (from the Bronze Age to the beginning of the Iron Age) proper nouns and names of places were introduced into Indo-European languages. These names were proportionate to the culture and vision of the societies of that time. Fereydoun is an Aryan mythical hero, who is named Thraetaona (meaning three times more powerful) in the Avesta. His main weapon was a trident using which he killed a three-headed dragon. One must feel himself completely in that situation in order to be able to conceive the purpose of the usage of this number (3) in all those names. (Qarashi, 2001: 8).

According to Jalaladdin Kazzazi, later on the word “Thar” (the first part of the name) was turned into the word “Far” in Pahlavi and Persian languages (Afterwards it formed the names Faritun and Fereydoun). Furthermore, Avestan adjectives that were used to describe him included Venisaputharo Athbyanoesh and Visororya Thraetaona which meant Athfyan dynasty and powerful dynasty of Fereydoun, respectively. Another Avestan adjective used to describe him was Janthe Azhnish Dahakay (the killer of Zahhak’s snake) (Kazzazi, 2000: 295).

According to Ali-Akbar Dehkhoda, Fereydoun is one of the greatest fictional figures of Iranian stories narrated

by Indian-Iranian tribes and also a Pishdadi king who was one of the offsprings of Tahmuras Diveband (Dehkhoda, 1998, vol 1: 17140).

Tabari and Biruni have mentioned the names of Fereydoun’s ancestor together with the word cow (Persian: گاو). In addition, based on Darmesteter’s account the reason for using the word cow was that Fereydoun’s family members were all farmers. In Bundahishn, Aspyan and Athfyan (i.e., Autbeen) is used to refer to the Fereydoun family, and Porgav (a person who owns many cows) is used to refer to his father (Safa, 1973: 465).

Not only were all of the Fereydoun’s ancestors named cow, but also he had a cow (either a cow or a bull) named Purmaya or Birmayoun who raised him. There is no trace of the existence of this cow in the Avestan and Pahlavi works. Moreover, there is also a relation between the name of this cow, the name of Fereydoun’s name in Pahlavi books (Porgav), and the name of his brother in the Shahnameh (Birmayeh).

According to the Shahnameh, Fereydoun was raised in a meadow and was nourished by Birmayoun³. In Bundahishn it is described as follows:

It is also said that Fereydoun’s splendor got stuck in the straws of Fraxkard Ocean and Dargah⁴ went there and unleashed a cow on that land by the use of magic. He reaped straws for one year and fed the cow. Therefore the splendor was transferred to the cow. He milked the cow and fed his three sons (Vamoun, Shoun, Changrangha or Yand) and thus the splendor was transferred to Faranak (and not to the sons) (Sarkhosh, 2010: 123). Therefore, the royal splendor was transferred from the straws to the cow and from the cow to Faranak (the mother of Fereydoun). Hence, the splendor is not transferred to Fereydoun via his father because it was transferred to him via his mother (Sarkhosh, 2010: 124).

In the Shahnameh, Fereydoun says the following words about the cow:

My sire was fortune's favourite,
But still Zahhak seized on him in Iran
And slew him cruelly, so I have set
My face against Zahhak's throne in revenge.
He slew the cow Birmaya too - my nurse,
A very gem of beauty. What could he,
That villain, gain by slaughtering that dumb beast?
Now I am ready and I purpose war. (Ferdowsi, vol 1, Zahhak, 323-325⁵)

“Based on the Iranian stories, Fereydoun is closely associated with health and medicine. His armor is

¹ A book written by Jahangir Kourji Kouyaji.

² He had two brothers, both of noble birth and older than himself, Hight Kaianush and prosperous Purmaya. (Ferdowsi/ Vol. 1/ Zahhak/ 255 and 256) (translated by Warner, Atkinson, and Zimmerman)

³ See Ferdowsi, vol 1, Zahhak, 106-131.

⁴ Faranak’s father according to ancient stories.

⁵ Translated into English by Warner, Atkinson, and Zimmerman.

Bahrami and he owns a charm and divine splendor (Varj¹) such that according to a legend in the fifth Yasht of the Avesta Fereydoun turned a lieutenant into a carcass, who was flying for three days. He is also praised for treating illnesses, nightmares, and hallucinations using Faravahar." (Rastgar Fasayi, 2000: 194, 195). "In Farvardin Yasht Fereydoun is able to cure some sorts of diseases and resist scabies, fever, and snake poison. Therefore, Fereydoun is praised as a warrior and healer." (Curtis, 1997: 29). According to Mehrdad Bahahr, his treatment method can tell about the primary structure of Indo-European tribes in which the chieftain is the magician and champion of the tribe as well. In the case of Fereydoun, he is a champion, king and a magician as well because when his children return from their honeymoon, he turns himself into a dragon by the use of magic (Bahar, 2002: 227 and 228).

Kouyaji draws similarities between Fereydoun and Zahhak and Marduk² and Tiamat³. He considers Marduk and Fereydoun as two bulls. On the other hand, Fereydoun, who wants to revenge the death of his nurse (Birmaya), can be considered as a bull or champion because he has an ox-headed mace and a bull as his brother (Birmayoun). His father is also known as a cow. His Derafsh Kaviani (i.e., royal standard) is also very similar to a cow. Marduk is also a capon castrated bull or even a bull god. In fact, Marduk and Assur (the Babylonian god) are the same. Assur had also a standard that displayed the image of the head of a bull with erected horns. In fact, the bull had been his standard. In addition, both of them defeat a dragon. Fereydoun kills the three-headed dragon and Marduk kills Tiamat (who captures the seas) (Kouyaji, 1974: 180, 181).

The author of *"From another Species"* believes that Fereydoun is related to the sun on one hand and to the water on the other hand. He argues that the first part of the word Aubteen is composed of the word Aub (meaning water), and thus considers it as a proof of his claim (Kazzazi, 1989: 54). Once again the relationship between water and cow is stressed. In fact, it can be said that dragon is the symbol of drought and famine against which the cow rises. The cow turns itself to the rain and protects the world against this evil power.

Derafsh Kaviani

¹ Dehkhoda, 1998, vol 15, p 23156.

² Marduk was the greatest God (the God of the gods) of Babylonia in the ancient times and the killer of Tiamat (Ma'sumi, 2008: 73).

³ Tiamat was an anarchist dragon and symbol of sea and saltwater. It was killed by Marduk. After its death the creatures are created out of his body members (Ma'sumi, 2008: 85 and 192).

The word Derafsh (meaning standard; Persian: درفش) is spelled the same in Pahlavi language. Another form of the word is Derakhsh which derives from Derakhshidan (shining; Persian: درخشیدن). Maybe the Derafsh Kavian (Kaveh's flag) is named so because of the shining jewels, which were added to it by Fereydoun (Kazzazi, 2000: 355). Other forms of this word include Kabian, Kafian, Kavan, and Gavan Derafsh, Kaveh's flag, and Fereydoun's standard (Yahaqi, 1996: 192).

According to the literature, the Pahlavi equivalent of the word Derafsh is Alam (standard; Persian: علم) because whenever they opened the standard it would illuminate the world by its shining jewels. This standard was in Iran's treasury by the end of the Sassanid era (kingship of the last Yazdgerd), but in the Battle of al-Qadisiyyah it was captured by the Muslims. The Muslims took the standard to Umar ibn al-Khattab. Umar had the jewels removed from the standard and its cloth burned. The Hom Yasht, refers to a standard named "Gav Derafsh" (bull-like standard). Some researchers call it the Derafsh Kiavni, but the Gav Derafsh had been flag used by the Assyrian. Other researchers argue that the royal standard (Derafsh Kavian) derives its name from the word Kouy or Kavian (meaning King), which is used as an adjective that is equivalent to the word royal. Hence, Derafsh Kaviani means royal standard or flag (Yahaqi, 1996: 192).

However, in the book titled "Iran History of Flag" the Derafsh Kaviani is introduced as a national standard which was different from the royal standard. If the king could not participate in a battle, he would send the royal standard (which represented victory and triumph) to the battle.

It was an honor to keep the standard. Hence, the military commander chosen for this task could also have the golden timpani, elephant, and shoes as the accessories required for accomplishing this task (Nayyer Nouri, 1965: 18-20).

In some sections of the Shahnameh references are given to the royal standard. Based on the descriptions provided in the Shahnameh, the royal standard is not the same as the Derafsh Kaviani. For example:

There is a turquoise throne blue as the Nile,
A flag charged with a yellow sun, the stall'
Crowned with a golden moon, the case of purple.
Who is the man thus stationed in the centre? "
Hajfr replied: "The Shah, and at his gate
Are elephants and lions." (Ferdowsi, vol 2, Sohrab, 547-549⁴).

These lines are in the form of a question-answer dialogue between Sohrab and Hajir. In this battle Kaveh's flag was hung to the doors of the stable and

⁴ Translated into English by Warner, Atkinson, and Zimmerman.

Rustam's tent but Rustam's flag was in the form of a dragon:

As to yon green enclosure
In front whereof are stationed many troops,
While in the midst a splendid throne is set
With Kawa's flag before it. On the throne
A paladin is seated, one that hath
The Grace, the neck, and shoulders of a hero,
And seated thus is higher by a head
Than any of the people standing near. (Ferdowsi, vol 2, Sohrab, 558-560¹).

There is a dragon, look! upon his standard,
And on the staff-top is a golden lion. (Ferdowsi, vol 2, Sohrab, 566²).

In other parts of the Shahnameh, where another commander is in charge of keeping the standard, the king has his own standard:

"Iranian soldiers prepared themselves for the war, except for Tus, the son of Nodar, who had a timpani and a golden shoe and carried the Derafsh Kaviani. (Ferdowsi, vol 3, Siavush, 3580 and 3581).

Therefore, this standard is not the same as the royal standard; rather, it is the national standard and the first standard that made by Kaveh by forging leather. Perhaps this nominal complication is caused by the shape of the word Kaveh (Persian: کاور), which is similar to the word King.

On the other hand, as it was mentioned earlier, the similarities between Fereydoun and Marduk (both of whom defeat a dragon), the fact that Marduk owns a cow-like flag, and the fact that the Derafsh Kaviani is named Gavan Derafsh³ (flag of cows) in Dehkhoda's Dictionary and Encyclopedia of Mythology and Fictional References, suggest that the Derafsh Kaviani had been also a cow-like flag that belonged to the Fereydoun family. Fereydoun used this flag and an ox-headed mace to fight Zahhak.

Kaveh

According to Moein Encyclopedia, Kaveh is the name of one of the famous mythical athletic families of Iran. Moreover, the name of some of the figures of this family (such as Kaveh, and his two sons Karen and Kobad) is mentioned in the Shahnameh (Moein, 1996: 1542).

The Pahlavi equivalent of Kaveh is Kavag, which is definitely related to the words Kouy and Kay (king) (Kazzazi, 2000: 302). In some Islamic textbooks (such as the translation of Tarikh al-Taban) this word is written as Kabi (Yahaqi, 1996: 346).

"The story of Kaveh is not mentioned in the Avesta. Even in works written in Pahlavi no trace of this story can be found. However, the existence of a story about Kaveh in the Sassanid era cannot be denied. Arthur Christensen wrote a treatise in Danish. In his work, he tries to demonstrate that the Avesta and Zoroastrian religious books do not include a myth about Kaveh and thus the myth of this mythological character belongs to the Sassanid era. The story of Kaveh is an imitation of another ancient myth which helps to define the Derafsh Kaviani (meaning Kaveh's flag). However, Derafsh Kaviani is actually defined as the Royal Standard." (Dehkhoda, 1998, vol 12: 18122)

Hence, assuming that both Kaveh and Derafsh Kaviani belong to the Sassanid era, the Derafsh Kaviani can be considered as the royal standard of that time. Nevertheless, this point cannot be discussed in this paper. Based on some evidence it seems, however, that the king's standard and the royal standard had other usages and that there was a difference between these flags and Kaviani's flag. This flag is manifested differently in the Shahnameh. In other words, it belongs to the family of Fereydoun, whose symbol is cow. In addition, Kouyaji associates cow-like flag with Assur⁴. He also draws other similarities between Marduk and Fereydoun. The Kaviani flag mentioned in the Shahnameh (especially in the story about Fereydoun) is the symbol of Fereydoun and his revolt against the three-headed dragon (Zahhak).

On the other hand, Fereydoun had an ox-headed mace⁵ made before rising against Zahhak because he wanted to crush Zahhak's head with it. This mace is also the symbol and representative of cow. Of course, this mace did not only belong to Fereydoun because other dragon killers (such as Garshab) had also such a mace. Therefore it can be concluded that cow and dragon has been in a long-time war that may date back to the pre-historic era and the days of creation.

Fereydoun and the Shahnameh

¹ Translated into English by Warner, Atkinson, and Zimmerman.

² Translated into English by Warner, Atkinson, and Zimmerman.

³ See Dehkhoda, 1998, vol 7, p. 10633; and Yahaqi, 1996, p. 192.

⁴ Assur is a Babylonian god whose counterpart is Marduk.

⁵ He drew an image on the earth that was similar to the head of a bull.

The story of Fereydoun in the Shahnameh begins when one night Zahhak dreams of three warriors after a thousand years of tyranny. One of the warriors (the third and the youngest one) approaches him with an ox-headed mace and puts a leashes him and takes him to Mount Damavand. After his dream is interpreted Zahhak realizes that a person named Fereydoun will be born who will overthrow him. Finally:

Years passed away, calamity approached
The dragon-king, the blessed Faridun
Was born, the fashion of the world was changed.
Of cypress height he shone forth with the Grace
Of kings of kings which crst Jamshid possessed,
Was like the sun, as needful as the rain
To earth and fit as knowledge to the mind
Revolving heaven loved him tenderly.
Then lived the cow Birmaya, chief of kine,
Born with a coat all bright and peacock-hued.
The wise, the archmages, and astrologers
Collected round her; none had seen or heard
Of such a cow before. (Ferdowsi, vol 1, Zahhak, 106-113¹)

As the Shahnameh suggests Fereydoun and the cow are the same. The cow is unique and beautiful like a colorful peak-cock.

Meanwhile Fereydoun's father is captured by Zahhak's courtiers and his brain is given as a food to his snakes. Fereydoun's mother, Faranak, takes her child to the meadow where Birmaya lives. The guardian of the cow and the meadow accepts Fereydoun and feeds him for three years with the milk of the cow².

The cow becomes famous and thus upon revelation Faranak takes Fereydoun from the meadow to the border of India, where Mount Alburz stand. He gives Fereydoun to a religious man living in that mountain. Zahhak kills Birmaya, and according to the myths and narratives, Fereydoun swears to Birmaya's blood to kill Zahhak.

He came and slew the noble, tender nurse
That could not speak to thee. (Ferdowsi, vol 1, Zahhak, 170³)

This cow is Fereydoun's nurse and maybe murder of this cow is the reason for Zahhak's gloomy fate. Zahhak prepares a testimony in order to exonerate himself. He orders everybody to testify that he is innocent. At this point Kaveh the blacksmith rises and asks Zahhak to free his youngest son, who is captured by Zahhak's guards. Zahhak inevitably frees his son. However, Kaveh refuses to testify that Zahhak is innocent, tears the testimony, and leaves the court. He summons the people and puts the leather that he used to put around his

foot on a spear and goes to Fereydoun. Fereydoun also adds a star to the leather, decorates it with silk, and calls it the Derafsh Kaviani. Then, he creates his famous ox-headed mace⁴ and goes to fight Zahhak⁵.

Murder of a dragon by a hero is a frequent theme and motif that is seen in many cultures. Iranian culture does also include many examples of this motif. This mythical manifestation form also been repeatedly manifested in the Shahnameh. The heavenly hero always defeats the dragon in a hard battle. This can be considered as the symbol of the victory of divine forces over evil forces.

"Murder of dragons in mythology is a religious and ritual act, which is generally associated with cosmologic events and beliefs about creation and recreation of the world. According to this type of mythology a triumphant God that has a sun-like or fire-like face fights an evil demon (who captures the seas) with a snake- or dragon-like body and defeats it. Therefore, the seas are freed and the evil spirits and heavenly spirits live in peace. (Yahaqi, 1996:189).

The following lines from the Shahnameh can partly demonstrate the point:

With head raised o'er the sun he girt his loins
For vengeance for his father, and set forth
Upon the day Khurdad right joyfully
With favouring stars and splendid auguries. (Ferdowsi, vol 1, Zahhak, 269, 270⁶)

And:

Now Faridun, when twice eight years had passed,
Sought out his mother on the plain and said:
"Disclose thy secret, say who is my father,
What is my lineage, whom shall I declare
Myself in public? Let me have the truth." (Ferdowsi, vol 1, Zahhak, 149-151⁷)

It also mentions Mount Alburz in the following lines:

The realm is mine, your fortune's star
Is bright, for me alone did God send forth
From Mount Alburz by Grace, and for your sakes,
To set the world free from the Dragon's bane.
(Ferdowsi, vol 1, Zahhak, 449-450⁸)

Regardless of the above lines Fereydoun is sometimes introduced as a fire worshiper (Yahaqi, 1996: 331).

¹ Translated by Warner, Atkinson, and Zimmerman.

² See Ferdowsi, vol 1, Zahhak, 106-131.

³ Translated by Warner, Atkinson, and Zimmerman.

⁴ They took the work in hand, and having wrought.
(Ferdowsi, vol 1, Zahhak, 263 and 264).

⁵ See Ferdowsi, vol 1, Zahhak, 183-245.

⁶ Translated by Warner, Atkinson, and Zimmerman.

⁷ Translated by Warner, Atkinson, and Zimmerman.

⁸ Translated by Warner, Atkinson, and Zimmerman.

However, the above lines refer to Fereydoun's uprising on the day Khرداد. The day Khرداد was the sixth day of the month. This day was also in charge of nursing the waters (Yahaqi, 1996:104). We discussed the relation between cow and water earlier. It was also mentioned that the moon, water, and cow are interrelated, while cow is does belong to the moon. Later, the sun overcomes the moon and the essential characteristics of the moon are transferred to the sun.

Maybe this is when Fereydoun overcomes the sun. On the other hand, since he was 16 years old he climbs down Mount Alburz and asks his mother about his background. Perhaps this reflects another relationship between day Khرداد and the sun, because the sixteenth day of each month is named the day of Mitra/Mehr or the Sun. Moreover, according to the mythology the sun lives behind the Mount Alburz, and Fereydoun also climbs down this mount and revolts against Zahhak.

In short, based on the contents of the Shahnameh, the dragon-killer Fereydoun who is associated with cow is related to either the sun or the moon.

Conclusion

One of the principals of totemic religions is that the people and tribes name themselves after the name of their totemic animal. As it was shown, the nicknames of all the ancestors of Fereydoun were names combined with the word cow. In addition, based on the contents of the Shahnameh and the available stories, cow was Fereydoun's nurse. This is associated with one of the principals of totemism according to which the totem (Fereydoun's nurse in this case) protects and supports its tribesmen. On the other hand, since this cow is murdered by Zahhak Fereydoun (that has the sign of cow) revolts against Zahhak (that has the sign of dargon). This is because killing a totem is taboo and Zahhak is punished for killinh the totem.

Another principal of totemism was that tribes use the images of animals as pictures representative of themselves. Fereydoun also had an ox-headed mace made to use it in his fight against Zahhak. In this war, the mace of Fereydoun is the symbol of the Athfyan family.

As it was mentioned, splendor is transferred to Fereydoun via his mother (Faranak). This is also suggestive of another important principal of totemism.

On the other hand, according to some of the scholars there are similarities between Fereydoun and Marduk (the Assyrian god who defeats the Tiamat). Marduk, like Fereydoun, was associated with cow because he also uses a standard charged with a cow in his battle against the dragon-like Tiamat. Therefore, Fereydoun's Kaviani Derafsh is also charged with the image of a cow. He also uses this standard to defeat a dragon (Zahhak).

Another recurring motif in these stories is their reference to number three: Fereydoun is the third son of the Athfyan family; he also has three son; and he has trident (a three-headed mace. Number three is also

associated with the moon because moon has three phases: first it is in the form of crescent, then we have the full moon, and at the end of the month it disappears. All this narratives are representative of a religion which values cow. It even suggests that the Athfyan family and Fereydoun were worshiper of the cow.

Cow was somehow the totem and symbol of Fereydoun and his family. In the Shahnameh, ge uses it in various ways in his fights against the dragons.

Bibliography

1. Azadegan, Jamshid. 1993. *Primitive Religions: A Study of Totemism*. First edition, Mirath Melal Publications.
2. Amuzgar, Zhaleh. 1997. *Iran Mythical History*. Second edition. SAMT Publications.
3. Bahar, Mehrdad. 2002. *A Study of Iranian Mythology*. Fourth edition. Tehran. Agah Publications.
4. Palmer, Michael. 2006. *Freud, Jung, and Religion*. Translated by Muhammaf Dehganpour and Qolamreza Mahmudi. Tehran. Roshd.
5. Dehkhoda, Ali-Akbar. 1998. *Dehkhoda's Dictionary*. Assembled under the supervision of Muhammad Moein and Seyyed Jafar Shahidi. Volume 7,11,12,15. Second edition. Tehran, Dehkhoda's Dictionary Institute.
6. Rastergar Fasayi, Masnour. 2000. *Dragon in Iranian Mythology*. First edition. Tehran. Tus Publications.
7. Sarkhosh, Faeqeh. 2010. *The Myth of Earth and Heaven: Earth and Heaven in Iranian Thought*. First edition. Tehran. Tarfand.
8. Challaye, Felicien. 1976. *A Brief History of Great Religions*. Translated by Manuchehr Khodayar Muhebbi. Second edition. Tehran. Tahuri Library.
9. Safa, Zabiullah. 1973. *Epic Storytelling in Iran (from the oldest times to the fourteenth century)*. Third edition. Tehran. Amir Kabir Publications.
10. Samadi, Mehrangiz. 1988. *Moon and Iran (from the oldest times to the emergence of Islam)*. First edition. Scientific and Cultural Publications Company.
11. Ferdowsi Tusi, Abolqasem. *The Shahnameh*. Passages were extracted from the Moscow edition by Saeed Hamidian. Fifth edition. Tehran. Qatreh Publications.
12. Freud, Sigmund. 1976. *Totem and Taboo*. Translated by Muhammad Ali Khanji. Second edition. Tehran. Tahuri Library.
13. Qadiani, Abbas. 1995. *The History of Religions in Iran*. First edition. Tehran. Anis Publications.
14. Qarashi, Amanallah. 2001. *Water and Mountain in Indian-Iranian Myths*. Tehran. Hermes Publications.
15. Curtis, Vesta Sarkhosh. 1997. *Iranian Myths*. Translated by Abbas Mokhber. Second edition. Tehran. Markaz Publications.

16. Kazzazi, Jallaladin. 2000. *A Letter from the Ancient Times (revision of Shahname Ferdowsi and a report on it)*. Volume one. Tehran. SAMT Publications.
17. Kazzazi, Jallaladin. 1989. *From another Species (a study of Iranian culture)*. First edition. Tehran. Franklin Publications.
18. Ma'sumi, Qolamreza. 2008. *An Introduction to Ancient Myths and Religions of the World*. Second edition. Tehran. Surah Mehr Publication Company.
19. Moein, Muhammad. 1996. *Persian Culture*. Ninth edition. Tehran. Amir Kabir Publications.
20. Nayyer Nouri, Hamid. 1965. *The History of Iran's Flag and the Lion and Sun Sign*. Published by the Institute of Social Studies.
21. Yahaqi, Muhammad Jaffar. 1996. *Encyclopedia of Myths and Fictional References in Persian Literature*. Second edition. Tehran. Soroush Publications.

11/6/2012