



**In Search of the Message of Srōš: Investigation of the Deity Srōš and his
Iconography During the Sasanian Period**

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(181-197)

Abstract

Srōš is a great Zoroastrian divinity in the Avesta and Middle Persian texts. He functioned as a warrior and a fighter against evil, a high priest, and one of the judges of the soul in the afterlife. In the Avesta, four separate hymns are dedicated to Srōš, which implies his important position among the Zoroastrian divinities. The name of Srōš survived as a divine messenger in the Iranian literature of the Islamic period. However, Srōš's name was missing in royal inscriptions, and his name did not appear among the pantheon of Iranian divinities in Greek, Roman and Syriac sources. Due to this absence, the status of Srōš in ancient Iran and his possible visual representation has not given due recognition or attention. In this paper, first the characteristics and functions of Srōš in Zoroastrian literature studies are described. Then, on the basis of Zoroastrian textual sources, and Srōš's status and iconographic evidence in pre-Sasanian Iran and in eastern Iran, and his possible visual representation is investigated during Sasanian period. The results of this study indicate that Srōš was probably depicted both anthropomorphically (charioteer motif) and non-anthropomorphically (the rooster and ear motif), and these images were inspired by Zoroastrian beliefs.

Keywords: Srōš, Avesta, Middle Persian Texts, Rooster, Ear, Divine Chariot.

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Introduction

Srōš is one of the prominent deities in the Zoroastrian pantheon. According to the Gāhān, the Younger Avesta, and Middle Persian texts, he has numerous abilities and qualities. His name appears both as an abstract concept signifying “obedience” or “hearkening”, and as a proper name of the divinity. Srōš also maintains special position in Islamic literature as a “divine Messenger”. Despite numerous references to him in Zoroastrian sources, many questions arise about the presence of Srōš in archaeological evidence. What was the real status of Srōš among ancient Iranians? Did he have a particular visual manifestation? If so, how was he depicted, and according to what artistic and religious patterns? Furthermore, during the Sasanian period, in which Zoroastrianism flourished and visual representations of Zoroastrian deities were part of Iranian culture, what is our knowledge about Srōš?

Clearly, providing explicit answers to these questions encounters problems. Ancient Iranians preferred to preserve and propagate their religious compositions orally. This would be a lost opportunity to discern their beliefs and cults for a modern scholar. Moreover, the present Avesta is not a complete scripture; rather, it is a compilation dating to the Sasanian period. Unfortunately, most of our religious knowledge is limited to royal inscriptions and art, while we have little idea of the other people in society. The royal class mainly chose special gods as their protector. As a result, studying the real status of other divinities, including Srōš, and the identification and interpretation of artistic scenes in various media becomes difficult. It is possible that, in spite of importance of some deities, they do not have any visualization, or perhaps, their figures and symbols have been forgotten today. In addition, our unawareness of artistic patterns for providing religious representations makes distinction between mortal and immortal images complicated.

Considering Zoroastrian scripture, linguistic and archaeological evidence related to Srōš both in pre-Sasanian Iran and in Eastern Iran, the present paper discusses the status and iconography of Srōš in Sasanian period.

Srōš; the status and functions in the Avesta and Middle Persian texts

The word “Səraoša-” in the Gāhān (Kreyenbroek 1985: 7), “Sraoša-” in the Younger Avesta (Srōš Yasn, Rashed Mohassel’s annotation 2003: 9), and Srōš in the Pahlavi texts (Kreyenbroek 1985: 108) is a masculine name (Srōš Yasn, Rashed Mohassel’s annotation 2003: 9), derived from “Srav-”, meaning “to hear, hearing and obedience”, especially “hearkening and obedience to god’s commands”. The name thus denotes one of the greatest divinities in Zoroastrianism who is also a symbol of hearing, compliance, and personification of piety and honesty (Avesta, Doostkhah’s annotation 2013: 1007). In the Gāhān, Srōš is mentioned seven times as a general or proper name (Kreyenbroek 1985: 7). He is one of the few gods named in this part of Avesta, and except for Ashī, no other God has earned this privilege (Srōš Yasn, Rashed Mohassel’s annotation 2003: 8). In Gāhān, Srōš entitled as “the most excellent amongs (all yazatas)” (Y. 33.5), and the one who come for assistance (Y. 33.5) and “accompanied by rewards” (Y. 43.12).

In the Younger Avesta, four verses were dedicated to Srōš that allude to his prominent place in Zoroastrianism. These include the “Srōš Yašt Hādoxt”

(Yt.11), and the “Srōš Yašt sar-e Šab” (Y.57) which is quite lengthy, and recited on the first three nights after death, and every night before sleep through the year. There is also the verse known as “Srōš Darūn,” including six chapters (hāt) of Yasna (Y.3-8), and the “Srōš bāj” or “Nirang-Dast-sho” in the Khordeh Avesta that was recited every morning after getting up, appreciating Srōš for his guardianship and protection throughout the night. Furthermore, all the prayers of the Zoroastrians, in particular, the prayers related to the ceremonies of deceased begins with Srōš bāj (Avesta, Doostkhah’s annotation 2013: 1008-1009).

In addition, Yasna 56 is fully dedicated to Srōš, despite not bearing his name. In the Younger Avesta, Srōš has more functions and abilities: “the one who accompanied by rewards” (Y. 1.7; Y. 3.1, 9; Y. 4.12; Y. 7.1, 9; Y. 56.3, 4; Y. 57.2; Yt. 2.5; Ušahin gāh.2; the smaller Sr.7), “and the one who come for assistance” (Yt. 11.8), “the one whose speech is good, whose speech gives protection, whose speech is timely, who was made sovereign through all-adorned wisdom, having full knowledge” (Y. 57.20), “the one who fashions a strong house for the pious man and woman after the setting of the sun” (Y. 57.10), “The best protector of the pious” (Yt. 11.3), “the vanquisher of the kayaḍa-sinner, the vanquisher of the follower of the kayaḍa-sinner” (Y. 57.15; Yt. 11.10), “the guardian and supervisor of the promotion of all worldly creature” (Y. 57.15; Yt. 11.10), “the protector in both lives (material and spiritual)” (Y. 57.25), “the one who, never sleeping, vigilantly, protects Mazdā’s creations” (Y. 57.16; Yt. 11.11), “the one who, with upraised weapon, protects the entire material existence, after the setting of the sun” (Y. 57.16; Yt. 11.11), “the one who has not slept (afterwards) since the two spirits created, the Bounteous one and the Evil one, watching over the world of righteousness” (Y. 57.17; Yt. 11.12), “the one who because of his strength and victoriousness, familiarity (with religious matters), and knowledge, the Aməša Spənta came down to the earth of seven countries” (Y. 57.23; Yt. 11.14), “the one who watches over the truces and treaties between the Drug and the most Bounteous (spirit)” (Yt. 11.14), “the one who smites Aēšma” (Y. 57.10, 25, 32; Yt. 11.15), “the one who smites Druz” (Y. 57.15; Yt. 11.3, 10), “the one who smites Kunda” (Vd. 19.41), “the one who smites Bushyasta” (Vd. 18.14-17, 22-25), “the one who smites Vidhatu” (Y. 57.25), “the one who smites Mazainya” (Y. 57.17, 32; Yt. 11.12), “the assistant of Mithra in battles” (Yt. 10.41). According to Nyberg, Srōš takes up a large part of the duties of Mithra in the later Zoroastrian tradition (1938: 61); as a result, the role of Mithra diminished and Srōš reached a higher status (*Ibid.*: 66). Srōš is also among the Avestan deities who owns a chariot; “[his chariot] is drawn by four white, radiant, transparent, bounteous, knowing steeds, casting no shadow, belonging to the spiritual realm. Their hoofs of horn are inlaid with gold” (Y. 57.27).

In the Middle Persian texts, the importance and special status of Srōš is preserved. As mentioned in the Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg (PRDd. 56.3), “Srōš should be worshiped separately”. In the Dēnkard (Dk III. 312) and the Zand ī Wahman Yasn (ZWY. 7.20), Srōš is a messenger from Ohrmazd. In the Bundahišn (GBd. 11:112), Dādistān-ī Dīnīk (Dd. 28.5) and Pahlavi Rivāyat (PRDd. 56.3), Srōš is called “the lord and ruler of (this) world”. According to these texts, he has duties toward deceased, such as protecting their soul against demons. It recommended to recite the Srōš Yašt during the first three

days after death, because when the soul separates from the body, only Srōš will be able to save it from the hands of the demons (ŠnŠ. 17.3). It is said that on the fourth day, in the light of dawn he is one of the deities accompany the soul to Činwad-puhl (MX. 1.115), and mediating along with Mihr and Rašn (MX. 1.118). Srōš is one of the the judges of afterlife who performs the accounting with Hormūzd, Vohu Manah, Mihr, and Rašn (Dd. 30.10). After judging the deeds, the souls of the righteous will pass over the Činwad-puhl with the cooperation of Srōš (MX. 1.124; GBd. 11:112). According to Handarzīha ī Pēšīnagān, Srōš takes those to paradise whose good deeds (Kerfah) are more than their guilts (Orion 1992: 84). One of the other texts indicated the role of Srōš in afterlife is the Book of Ardā Vīrāz (Ardā Vīrāz Namag). On the first night after death, Srōš, along with Ādur, meets Ardā vīrāz (AWN. 4.1), and conducts him through the soul-journey to heaven and hell. The ruwān (soul) of Ardā vīrāz then crosses the Činwad-puhl with the assistance of Srōš and Ādur (AWN. 5.2). Srōš is also attested as one of the collaborators of Arta Vahišta (GBd. 4:49). While the Aməša Spəntas stand on either side of Ohrmazd, Srōš stands in front of him (GBd. 11:109). Srōš is mentioned in the Shāyist Nāshāyist (Shāyest nē Shāyest) as the smiter of demons and the destroyer of greed, wrath and want (ŠnŠ. 22.17). In the Zand-i Wahman Yasn, under the command of Ohrmazd, Srōš and Nēryōsang cry out three times, and upon the fourth time wake Sām up from sleep (ZWY. 9.20-22); in other words, they rescue him from Būšāsp. Srōš is especially in opposition to Xēšm (GBd. 6:55). His weapon is a club and bears upon the heads of the fiends (Vd. 19.15).

The representative of Srōš on Earth is a rooster (Avesta, Doostkhah's annotation 2013: 1008). In Vendidad (Vd. 18.22-25), Ādur, the son of Ahuramazdā, on the third part of the night, calls the holy the Srōš for help. He himself wakes up the bird named Parūdar⁽¹⁾; then it lifts up his voice against the mighty Ushah. In Bundahišn, the rooster and the dog cooperate with Srōš in destroying the fiends (GBd. 9:103). In the Mādayān ī Yōšt ī Friyān, "the rooster called the bird of righteous Srōš, and when it crows, it keeps misfortune away from the creation of Ohrmazd" (MJF. 2:24). In the Pahlavi text, Drāyišn ī Ahreman ō Dēwān, Srōš claps his hands to the rooster; and when the rooster crows, the Warahrām fire smites one part and the house-fire, when they kindle it at midnight, (smites) one part; Srōš smites all the rest (Anklesaria 1957: 134).

The name of Srōš is also found in the Islamic literature as the messenger of freedom, and the message-bearer of God (Rashed Mohassel 2003: 9). There is a major caveat to this interpretation, however, insofar as the majority of the appearances of the name Srōš in the Šāhnāmeḥ cannot be considered exclusively as the Zoroastrian deity; rather sometimes Srōš simply refers to a general name meaning "angel" (Heydari and Qassempour 2014: 132-133).

Iconographical Descriptions of Srōš in the Zoroastrian texts

In the Avesta and in Middle Persian texts, the anthropomorphic characteristics of Zoroastrian deities are very limited, and mainly related to their characters, attributes, and functions. This is true of Srōš. Among descriptions of the texts, there are two types of images related to him. First, as a warrior, as in the Avesta, Srōš described with the characteristics of mighty men of valor, martial, and in an armed form:

“The strongest of young heroes, the bravest of young heroes, the most active of young heroes, the swiftest of young heroes, the most dreaded afar of young heroes” (Y. 57.13), “the brave, the valiant, the warrior endowed with strength of arm” (Y. 57.33; Yt. 11.19), “the swift, the strong, the bold, the powerful” (Y. 57.11), “the one with hard weapon” (Y. 3.20; Y. 4.23; Y. 7.20; Y. 57.1; Yt. 11.23; Yt. 13.85; Srōš bāj 1, 4; the smaller Sr.17; Vd. 18.14), “the one who with a shattering weapon, inflicts a bloodless wound on Aēšma” (Y. 57.10), “the one who has a weapon in his hand, sharp-edged, good to thrust against the evil heads of the demons” (Y. 57.31), “the one who with upraised weapon, protects the entire material existence” (Y. 57.16), and the warrior beside Mithra (Yt. 10.41, 100). The weapon of Srōš is a club, which implies the military nature of his personality, and he uses it to smash the heads of demons (Vd. 19.15).

The second type of iconography associated with Srōš is that of the Zoroastrian clergy. In Avesta (Y. 57.23; Yt. 11.14), he is described as a "teacher of religion" and “to him Ahuramazdā taught the religion” (Yt. 11.14). Moreover, Parūdarš is the Sroaš’s Sraošuarəza⁽²⁾ (Vd. 18.14). In Bundahišn, Srōš is Raspi⁽³⁾ and placed after Ohrmazd, who come to the world as Zot⁽⁴⁾ (GBd. 19:148). This position provided him another weapon to destroy demons, and it is invocations and prayers (Y. 57.22).

Archaeological evidence of Srōš in pre-Sasanian Iran

Despite the special position and respected status of Srōš in the sacred Zoroastrian texts, he has not been unambiguously recognized in archaeological evidence. So far, a few images have been attributed to Srōš, but none definitively. One of the earliest images attributed to Srōš is one of the Lurestan bronzes: an idol with a human head strangling two monsters and flanked by the heads of two roosters- (Ghirshman 1963: 41-45). As Kreyenbroek points out, however, “this identification can only be regarded at present as a rather speculative hypothesis” (1985: 176). In the Achaemenian era, on one of treasury tablets from Persepolis which bears Elamite inscription, the toponym “šū-ra-u-šá” is mentioned (Hallock 1969: 431, PF.1541), which Hinz (1973: 79) related to the Zoroastrian deity Srōš. The name of Srōš also attested as part of a personal name in a Greek papyrus from Hellenistic Egypt (Huyse 1990: 130). His name appears in several anthroponyms on the Parthian ostraca from Nisa (Kreyenbroek 1985: 179; Schmidt 2013: 252, 256, 260, 263). However, no representations of Srōš has yet been discerned.

Archaeological evidence of Srōš in Eastern Iran

In Eastern Iran, more conclusive evidences suggesting an association between this region and the reverence of Srōš. One of the oldest images attributed to Srōš is attested in a wall painting at Akchakhan-Kala in ancient Chorasmia. Although the scene was damaged but three colossal gods can clearly be detected. The figure on the left wears a tunic, which its central vertical band adorns with repeated motif of pairs of bird-priests-half-bird, probably rooster, and half-man covering his mouth with a padām, while holding a barsom and in one case a short whip in the hands (Fig.1). The motif of bird-priests recurred later in Sogdian art in several of Samarkand’s ossuaries and Sino-Sogdian tombs. This hybrid figures usually hold a barsom and stand symmetrically beside a fire altar. Similar bird-priests were depicted in the wall painting of Bamiyan, but there they carry a torch (Grenet *et al.* 2004: 275). Skjaervø first associated this motif with Srōš. He

referred to Vendidad 18.14, in which Parūdarš is the Sroaš's Sraošuarəza (*Ibid.*: 278). This identification has been approved by other scholars (Grenet 2007b: 470-471; Riboud 2012; Minardi 2021), however, Shenkar avoids attributing this motif to Srōš. He believes that bird-priests are not divine images, but if one insists on their divine interpretation, Srōš is not the only theoretical possibility, and Haoma can be regarded as well (Shenkar 2014: 148). Due to the motif of Parūdarš on Srōš's tunic, the figure at Akchakhan-Kala regarded as an individual personification of Srōš (Grenet & Minardi 2021: 160-163). Moreover, he is depicted armored, which corresponds to his warrior character described in Zoroastrian texts.

Srōš was also known in Bactria. In the inscription recovered from Rabatak, he occupied the fifth place among the seven deities, each of which having a statue erected in the temple by the Kushan king, Kanishka (Sims-Williams 2004: 56).⁽⁵⁾ This inscription is significant because it indicates that Srōš worshipped as a cultic statue (Shenkar 2013: 220). Furthermore, in the Rabatak inscription, between lines 9 and 10, and immediately after the last letter of Srōš's name, there are traces of an additional interlinear inscription in small letters, mentioned Indian gods Mehāsenā and Viśākha (Sims-Williams 2004: 64). Most of the scholars have related these Indian gods of war and sacred wisdom to Srōš (Grenet 2006: 88; Gnoli 2009: 151). This connection is evident in Gandhāran art, which depicted Skanda dressed in armour, holding a spear and a rooster or other bird (Mann 2001: 118- 119). Skanda also appeared on a Kushan seal (Fig.2), dressed in armor while holding a spear and shield with a large rooster on it. In the Kushan numismatic pantheon, the name of Srōš is absent, but he is represented under the title of his Indian counterpart, Mehāsana (Mann 2001: 121; Shenkar 2013: 214- 215). On the reverse of gold coins of the Kushan king, Huvishka (Fig. 3), Mehāsana holds a standard with a bird (rooster)⁽⁶⁾ finial, and clasps the hilt of a small sword with his left hand (Rosenfield 1967: 79). In the Iranian literature, birds are often associated with warrior-gods (Mann 2001: 119). Srōš, who has a warlike character and has been emphasized as the vanquisher of demons in sacred Zoroastrian texts (Shenkar 2013: 215), he has coworkers such as rooster⁽⁷⁾ (Vd. 18.22-25; GBd. 9:103; MJF. 2.24).

In addition to bird-priests, Srōš has other anthropomorphic representations in Sogdian art. On a fragment of an ossuary (Fig. 4) discovered in Samarkand area, the scene of judgment of the soul in the afterlife depicted as described in the later Pahlavi texts (Grenet 2002: 94). Srōš wears a crenellated crown like his image at Akchakhan-kala. He has a small portable altar/incense burner, and with his left hand, grasps the hand of a figure who unfortunately is missing because of a fracture in the ossuary. Both are facing left toward Rašn. He has a crenellated crown, and holds a scale in his hand (Pugachenkova 1994: 238; Grenet 2002: 94; Shenkar 2014: 146)⁽⁸⁾. Srōš was also identified in two wall paintings from Panjikent; although these attributions are not certain (Shenkar 2013: 218). In the first image (Fig. 5), Srōš (?) is portrayed as a statue carried in a procession. The statue is shown above a large codex or a litter decorated with two divine figures, as if rising from it. He holds a mace in his right hand and probably an altar or a portable incense censer in the other hand. This image corresponded closely to the Avestan title of Srōš, "Tanu. Mąθra"⁽⁹⁾ (Grenet 2007a: 170). In another tentative

image (Fig. 6), Srōš (?) has a nimbus surrounding his head and mounts on a bird, maybe a rooster (Shenkar 2013: 218). Furthermore, names containing the theonym Srōš in Bactria (one name), Topraq-Qal'a, Chorasmia and Sogdiana (Shenkar 2014: 146), indicating that he was known widely in Eastern Iran.

Archaeological evidence of Srōš in Iran during Sasanian period

In Sasanian royal inscriptions and in the inscriptions of Kartīr, the high clergy of early Sasanian, only the names of Ohrmazd and Ānāhītā are mentioned (Humbach and Skjærvø 1983: 9.19; Skjærvø 2011). Thus far, except for the images of Ohrmazd at the Naqš-i Rostam rock relief (Back 1978: 282) and Mithra on a seal (Callieri 1990: 87), no other deity has definitely been attested by inscriptions. However, these are exceptional cases, and commonly there is no explicit mention of the name of deities, instead, their attributes and functions indirectly refer to their identity. Obviously, it would be necessary to interpret such inscriptions through Zoroastrian texts. The best example is attested in Kartīr's heavenly journey mentioned in the inscriptions at Sar Mašhad and Naqš-i Rostam. During his journey, Kartīr encounters divine characters whose identity have been suggested according to the Avestan and Pahlavi texts, in particular, Ardā vīrāz nāmag and Aogəmadaēca (Kellens 1973: 136; Kellens 1975: 466-467; Skjærvø 1983: 294-304; Russell 1990: 186; Shaki 1994; Shaked 1994: 36; Shenkar 2014: 54, 94, 140, 159, 163). This limitation draws attention toward other epigraphic evidence such as inscriptions on seals,⁽¹⁰⁾ as well as the theophoric component in personal names or place names, and uses them as important and valuable resources for understanding the importance and popularity of Zoroastrian deities.⁽¹¹⁾ Despite having enjoyed a significant status in Zoroastrianism, Srōš was among the deities whose name was not mentioned in Sasanian royal inscriptions nor contemporary Greek, Roman, and Syriac sources. However, the name of Srōš was used in combination with a few personal names in Sasanian period (Kreyenbroek 1985: 179).

In Sasanian art, Srōš was not depicted similar to his images in Chorasmian, Kushan and Sogdian art, but the rooster (Fig.7) is among the most popular motifs, especially on seals. Ackerman (1964: 807) raises the possibility that the images of rooster on seals refers to "Parūdarš". According to Shenkar (2014: 145), if the image of Srōš presented in Sasanian art that would have been related to the rooster. Grenet (2014: 115) proposes the image of Srōš in a scene showing a rooster holds a scorpion with its beak. In Zoroastrian literature, whether in earlier texts such as Shāyist Nāshāyist (ŠnŠ. 10.9) and Pahlavi Rivāyat (PRDd. 58.81) or in later texts such as Saddar Nasr (34.3) and Saddar Bundehesh (83.4), and Ravāyāt-ī Dārāb Hormazdyār (Unvâlâ 1922: Vol. I: 265), the rooster was considered as a sacred animal, and killing him severely sanctioned, indeed, regarded as a great sin. Additionally, keeping a rooster at home is advised (ŠnŠ. 10.30) since it prevents Darūj from finding a way into that house (Unvâlâ 1922: vol.II: 413). Therefore, the motif of a lady feeding a rooster with a bunch of grapes on a Sasanian seal is probably the demonstration of such a belief (Koulabadi 2017: 610)⁽¹²⁾. There are several reasons for the relationship between Srōš and roosters. The most important is Zoroastrian texts including the Vendidad, Bundahišn, Matikān-ī Yosht Fryān, and the Pahlavi text about Drāyišn

ī Ahreman ō Dēwān, which refers to the rooster—Parūdarš—as the pet animal of Srōš. In addition, on Huvishka coins and a Kushan seal, the rooster is depicted on the weapon of Mehāsaneh, the counterpart of Srōš. The image of bird-priests also consisted of a rooster and human. However, the image of rooster may have been completely unrelated to Srōš. According to the *Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pābagān*, Ādur Farrobay ī pērōzgar (victorious) was appeared as a red rooster to Ardaxšīr I in order to save him from the poisonous drink.⁽¹³⁾ Moreover, not every image of animals in Sasanian art, including roosters, was necessarily related to a special divinity. As Shenkar has noted, no inscription accompanied the animals and the images did not appear in clear cultic contexts. Some animals may be depicted just because they serve as totems (Shenkar 2008: 241-242), emblems of natural power, exotic interest, aesthetic purpose, apotropaic significance, folkloric meaning, astrological signs, or economic beneficiaries and their associations with human life (Brunner 1979: 34-35).

Another motif probably associated with Srōš is the depiction of an ear on Sasanian seals. The representation of parts of a human body such as hands, eyes and ears is a major part of Sasanian glyptic art. Unfortunately, no inscription accompanied any of these scenes; as a result, the definite meaning is not clear. However, the presence of other symbolic elements (e.g., flowers, birds, ribbons, wings, etc.) in association with the motif of the hand reinforces the suspicion that these images were not meaningless. Grenet (2014: 115) believes that the motif of the ear on Sasanian seals (Fig. 8) is probably a reference to Srōš. The authors consider this interpretation likely, since Srōš is derived from the root “*Srv-*” meaning “to hear, hearing and obedience”, especially “hearing and obedience to the God's commandments and words”. However, one should not overlook that one of the prominent attributes of Mīthra repeated in the Avesta is: “having a thousand ears and ten thousand eyes”. Therefore, relating the ear motif to Srōš is not definite, but not impossible either.

Interestingly, another image seems to be related to Srōš is engraved again on a seal. A beardless male head in full frontal view is depicted above the protomes of two birds—probably roosters—facing in opposite directions and in profile (Fig. 9). As Shenkar notes, “a frontal bust above two juxtaposed animal protomes is a conventional symbolic representation of divine chariots in the Sasanian sigillography”. However, unlike other divine chariots depicted in Sasanian seals (the chariot of Mithra and Māh), the chariot in this seal lacks any wheel, presenting instead a more abbreviated form of the similar divine chariot (Shenkar 2013: 212). The seal bears an inscription “Farrbay” (Gignoux and Gyselen 1982: 143). Brunner (1979: 35), for the first time attributed the motif on this seal to Srōš. Shenkar (2013: 212-13) believes that the clue for identifying this person is the mounts of his chariot, and since in Zoroastrian tradition, the rooster is most closely associated with Srōš, he considers this image as Srōš. According to the *Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pābagān* which Ādur Farrobay ī pērōzgar was appeared as a red rooster, and also the name “Farrbay” on this seal, Grenet believes that the character depicted on the seal could in fact be an anthropomorphic representation of Ādur Farrobay or manifestation of Adūr. However, according to Shenkar (2013: 212-213), Farrobay (alone or as a part of a compound containing

it) is a common personal name on Sasanian seals; therefore, the relation of this name to the image of the seal may be purely coincidence.

The divine chariot is an ancient motif occurring in Urartian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Greek, Roman, Indian, and Iranian art. A few images of divine chariots have been attested in ancient Iran. The Hasanlu Bowl is one of the oldest instances showing the gods riding chariots (Winter 1989). During the Parthian and Sasanian periods, the image of Dionysus riding a chariot originating from Roman and Byzantine world appeared on silver vessels (Ettinghausen 1972: 4-5; Gunter and Jett 1992: 121-125). Other representations of divine chariots are found on a number of Sasanian seals (Herzfeld 1920: 108; Goldman 1988: 100; Callieri 1990: 87; Gubaev *et al.* 1996: 56), and on a unique ossuary from Bīshāpūr (Ghirshman 1948: 298). Literary sources also referred to divine chariots. According to the classical historians (Herodotus 7.55, Xenophon 8.3.12, Curtius Rufus 3.3.7), one of the special royal military processions during the Achaemenid period was the moving of empty divine chariots drawn by white horses. Divine chariots were mentioned in Zoroastrian texts as well. In the Avesta, Anāhītā (Yt. 5.11), Mithra (Yt. 10.67-68, 76, 112, 124-125, 128-132, 136, 143), Srōš (Y. 57.27-29), Ashī (Yt. 17.1, 21), Pārāndi (the smaller Sīrūza.25; the bigger Sr.25), Drvāspā (Yt. 9.2) and Wayu (Yt. 15.56), and in Bundahišn (GBd. 6:56; 7:58-60), the deities of Xwaršēd and Māh owned chariots drawn by horses. The innovation in the imagery on this seal is in having roosters as the animal drawing the divine chariot. As discussed earlier, rooster is a sacred animal related to Srōš, but in the Avesta horses draw the chariot of Srōš. This contradiction is also seen in other divine chariots depicted in Sasanian art. For example, the chariot of Mithra was drawn by two winged horses on several seals and the ossuary from Bīshāpūr, and the chariot of Māh harnessed to bulls on a seal. These images do not correspond exactly with Zoroastrian texts, since in Mihr Yašt, four horses drawing the chariot of Mithra and in Bundahišn, despite the close connection between bulls and Māh,⁽¹⁴⁾ the animals drawing the chariot of Māh were horses. It seems that the Sasanian chariots of Mithra and Māh borrowed their visual appearance from the Graeco-Roman chariots of the sun god Helios and the moon goddess Selene (Goldman 1988: 88). It is noteworthy that the motif of solar and lunar chariots is a popular theme across widespread territories. Unlike Mithra and Māh, Srōš had no counterpart in the non-Iranian world that directly influenced his vehicle. The only source that refers to him as “the owner of divine chariot” is the Avesta. Since there is no complete correspondence between the Zoroastrian texts and religious illustrations, it is not strange that an animal other than horse draws the chariot of Srōš. Moreover, the rooster is the assistant of Srōš, so it is probable that the portrait on this seal belongs to Srōš who drives his own chariot, a vehicle that is pulled not by horses but instead by roosters.⁽¹⁵⁾

Conclusion

The present paper suggests that despite the special place of Srōš in the Avesta and Middle Persian texts, and notwithstanding the persistence of his name in later Iranian literature, Srōš is almost absent in pre-Sasanian monuments (inscriptions and visual representations), as his name appears only in several anthroponyms and potentially in one toponym. Similarly, during the Sasanian period, no inscriptions or iconographic representations are known to refer directly to Srōš. The name of

Srōš is attested in very few personal names as a theophoric component. Yet, the archaeological evidence reflects only a small part of ancient religious life. Since most of the remaining monuments do not have inscriptions or images represented symbolically, they are not easily interpreted. Considering all the available sources including images of Srōš found in Eastern Iran together with references from Zoroastrian literature, three forms of images can be attributed to Srōš, although none of these is definitive. First, the rooster, was a very favored motif during the Sasanian period, especially on seals, which in some cases may have referred to Srōš. Second, the image of ear on seals, although its connection with Mihr can not be discounted. The other is an anthropomorphic representation of Srōš on a seal showing frontal view of a male head above a chariot drawn by roosters.

Endnotes

1. The word “Parūdarš” which is also seen in the Dēnkard (Dk VIII. 44.69) means “the foreseer of the dawn” (Dk VIII. West’s annotation 2013: 163). In the Bundahišn, the rooster is called “Pēš-daxšag” (GBd. 9:85), which means, “having the first sign.” It refers to the morning crow of rooster (GBd. Tafazzoli’s annotation 2011: 181). According to the Vendidad (Vd. 18.15, 23), the ill-speaking people call this bird kahrkatās, which means “when he is not called so, he is powerful” (Avesta, Doostkhah’s annotation 2013: 848).
2. A Mobad stands up in front of Zot when he recites the hymn to Sroaš (Kreyenbroek 1985: 160).
3. A Mobad holding second position in religious ceremonies (GBd. Tafazzoli’s annotation 2011: 196)
4. A Mobad holding highest rank in religious ceremonies (GBd. Tafazzoli’s annotation 2011: 196)
5. The deities listed in Rabatak inscription are, in order, Umma, Aurmuzd, Muzhduvan, Sroshard, Narsa, and Mihr.
6. Here the rooster “symbolizes the solar energy and the agitation of young warriors” (Grenet 2015: 221)
7. In Bundahišn, the dog is another familiar of Srōš (GBd. 9:103).
8. Pugachenkova (1994: 238) believes that Mithra and the soul of the deceased portrayed in the missing part of the ossuary.
9. “Tanu. Maθra” meaning “having the sacred word for body” (Kreyenbroek 1985: 166).
10. The legends on Sasanian seals such as, “Reliance on Mithra” (Bivar 1969: 80), “Burz Mithra”, and “Adur Mithra” (Frye 1978: 210) can be regarded as evidence of the prominent status of Mithra.
11. “The use of theophoric names as an index to the historical conditions of a religion is, of course, beset with many difficulties. The chance occurrence of a name, compounded with the name of a deity, in an inscription could be misleading, but the repeated appearance of various theophoric names, yet compounded with the name of the same deity, could be used as an indication of the popularity of that deity in naming children” (Frye 1975: 62).
12. Grenet (2013: 203) identifies the lady as Daenā and the rooster as a symbol of Srōš.
13. See: KAP. 9.11. Some scholars reads “red hawk” instead (See: Nöldeke, 1878: 59; Horne, 1917: 244; Russell, 1987: 310)
14. See: Avesta (Yt. 10; Māh-Nīyāyeš) and Bundahišn (GBd. 8:65-66).
15. In the Shahnameh, Srōš is described in various anthropomorphic guises. These include “Parī-e Palangineh Pūš” (پری پلنگینه پوش) —“a fairy in garment made of leopard skin”—when he appeared to Kayōmart (Ferdowsi 1987: 23); as “a beautiful “hūrī” having very long hair with a very pleasant smell and a face as beautiful as the heavenly “hūrīs” (فرو هشته از مُشک تا پای موی* بکردار حور) when appeared to Frēdōn (Ferdowsi 1987: 71, footnote 12); and as a “mounted man with a green garment” (همه جامه اش سبز و خنگی به زیر) in an encounter with Husraw II (Ferdowsi 2007: 144).

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Fig. 1: Bird-priests on the vertical band of the God's tunic from Akchakhan-Kala (Minardi 2021: Figs. 1. 3)



Fig. 2: Skanda on Kushan Seal (Mann 2001: Fig. 11)



Fig. 3: Coin of Huvishka (Grenet 2015: Fig. 1)



Fig. 4: Fragment of the ossuary from Samarkand area (Pugachenkova 1994: Fig. 12)

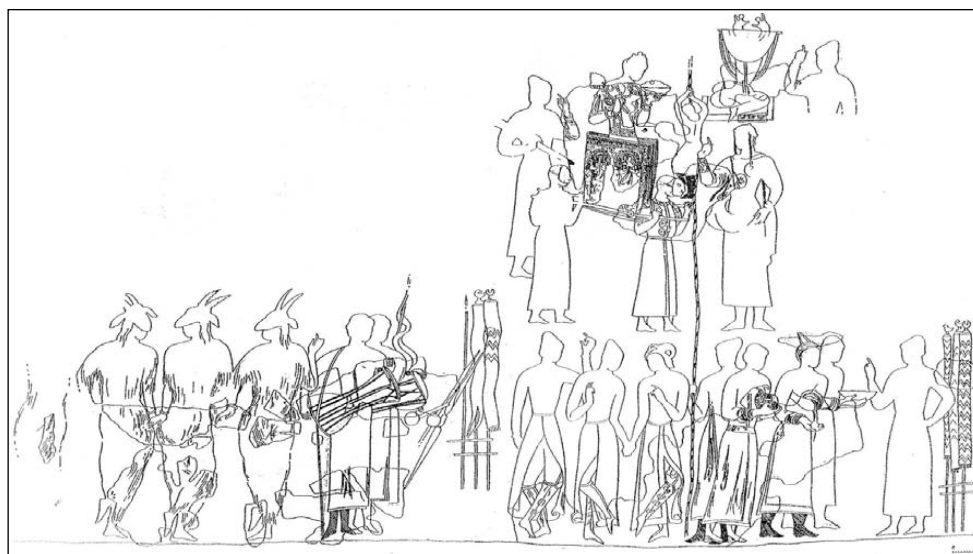


Fig. 5: A golden statue carried in a procession from Panjikent (Shenkar 2013: Fig.6)

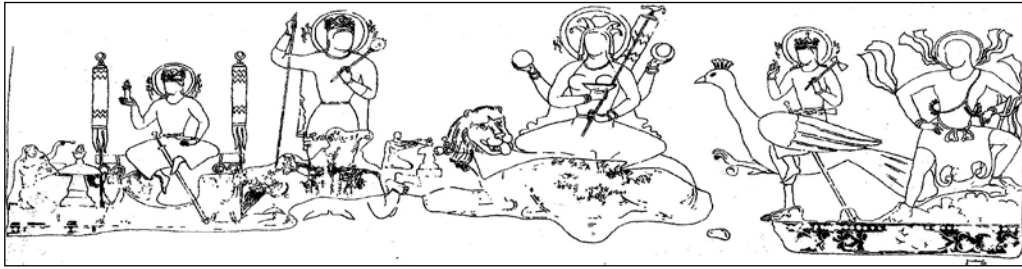


Fig. 6: A group of gods on the wall painting from Panjikent



Fig. 7: A rooster on the Sasanian seal
(Gyselen 2007, 30.G.1)

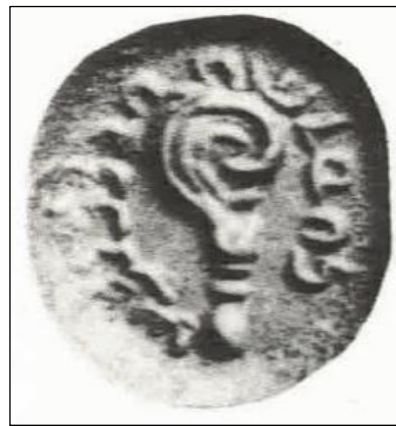


Fig. 8: An ear on the Sasanian seal
(Gyselen 1993: 10.F.1)



Fig. 9: A chariot drawn by roosters on the Sasanian seal
(Frye 1971: Pl. XXXVIII. 68)

در پی پیغام سروش؛ جستاری پیرامون ایزد سروش و شمایل‌نگاری آن در دوره

ساسانی

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چکیده

سروش مظهر اطاعت و فرمانبرداری، یکی از ایزدان برجسته زردشتی است که در اوستا و متون پهلوی بارها مورد ستایش قرار گرفته و به یاری خوانده شده است. وی در کسوت یک جنگجو و ستیزه‌گر با پلیدی، روحانی عالی مقام و نیز یکی از داوران روان در گذشتگان، نقشی کلیدی و مهم در دیانت زردشتی ایفا می‌کند. در اوستا چهار سروده مستقل به این ایزد اختصاص یافته که نشان از اهمیت وی در میان ایزدان مزدیسنا دارد. نام سروش حتی در ادبیات ایران دوران اسلامی و به عنوان پیام‌رسان الهی نیز باقی مانده است. با این حال هیچ‌گاه از او در کتیبه‌های سلطنتی نام برده نشده و در منابع یونانی، رومی و سریانی نیز اشاره‌ای به سروش در میان ایزدان ایرانی نمی‌شود. همین امر موجب شده تا امروزه نقش و جایگاه سروش در میان ایرانیان باستان و تصاویر احتمالی این ایزد در آثار باستان‌شناختی آن‌گونه که بایسته است مورد توجه قرار نگیرد. در این مقاله ابتدا جایگاه، ویژگی‌ها و خویشکاری‌های ایزد سروش در متون مقدس زردشتی بررسی شده و سپس با استناد به همین منابع و همچنین نظر به جایگاه و شمایل‌نگاری سروش در ایران (پیش از ساسانی) و ایران شرقی، احتمال وجود شمایل‌نگاری‌های این ایزد در آثار دوره ساسانی مورد ارزیابی قرار گرفته است. نتایج به دست آمده از این پژوهش نشان می‌دهد که تصاویر مرتبط با سروش به احتمال به شکل غیر انسانی (خروس و گوش) و در یک مورد با سیمای انسانی (گردونه سوار) بر آثار این دوران نمایش داده شده و این نقوش تا حدود زیادی متأثر از اندیشه‌ها و باورهای دینی زردشتی است.

واژه‌های کلیدی: سروش، اوستا، متون پهلوی، خروس، گوش، گردونه الهی.

