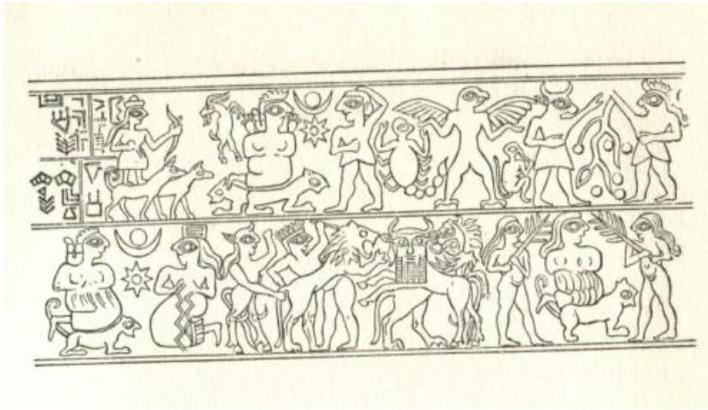


The Lady and the eight-pointed star



On the cylinder seals and tablets of Elam we find the representation of stars, moon and sun from the third millennium B.C. For example, a seal cylinder from Susa, from around 2500 B.C., shows the figure of a goddess seated on lion(s), and next to her the representation of crescent moon, sun-disc and eight-pointed star.¹



A yet older artifact, a vase from Jiroft, shows the representation of the crescent moon and the star with eight points surrounding a central dot.²

We find the image of the rosette, or the representation of the eight-pointed star with crescent moon on the coins of the Parthian and Elymaean kings.

In these examples the star symbol may represent simply the fixed stars (the heaven) as well as the third-brightest object in

¹ . See E. Porada (R. H. Dyson & Ch. K. Wilkinson), *Alt-Iran : die Kunst in vorislamischer Zeit*, Holle Verlag, 1962, 30-1.

² . See J. Perrot, "L'iconographie de Jiroft", *Jiroft: Fabuleuse découverte en Iran, Dossiers d'Archéologie*, 282, 2003, 97-113, 110: N° 14. Ornementation du « vase au bouvier ».

the night sky, after the moon, i.e. the planet Venus; and it is possible that it bore the name of the Lady of Elam, Pinigir, and that of the Lady of Jīruft, and in the Parthian period that of the Lady Anāhīd.

However, it is a habit to connect the sun, and star and moon symbols on Parthian and Elymaean coins to Babylonian or Assyrian astrological and religious traditions. For example John Hansman states that: “In the Assyrian period, where Ishtar is shown on cylinder seals in connection with an eight-pointed star, the association of Ishtar and the planet predominated. This starry attribute is represented by the radiant female heads on the Elymaean coins.”³ And: “It was not from Zoroastrian Persis but, according to our theory, Mesopotamian or Elamite cultural traditions that the Elymaeans adopted the sun motif, and star and crescent symbols.”⁴

But the Assyrian seals with the symbols for the sun god and the moon god and Ištar go back to the early 1st millennium; moreover, the number of the points of the star (/ planet) on these seals varies –we find 6, 7, or 8 points.⁵ On the other hand, astral symbols were used, in Mesopotamia and Anatolia, by “Indo-Europeans”. As an example, on the impression of the seal of the Aryan king Sauštattar, son of Parsatattar, King of Mittani (Sa-uš-ta-at-tar DUMU Par-sa-ta-tar LUGUL Ma-i-ta-ni), dated about 1420 B.C., we observe an eight-pointed star in the middle of winged pole.⁶ On a Hittite stamp seal we find a winged pole with two eight-pointed stars.⁷

According to the old Perso-Aryan vision there are three stations to rise for reaching the paradisiacal world of thought: The stars of the Holy Spirit (*spəntō.mañyava*), the moon that is of the nature of cow (or, containing the seed of animals,

³ . John Hansman, “The Great Gods of Elymais”, *Papers in Honour of Prof. Mary Boyce*, 1, 1985, 229-246, 233.

⁴ . Ibid., 232.

⁵ . For two examples of the 8-pointed star, see H. Frankfort, *Stratified Cylinder Seals from the Diyala Region*, Chicago, 1955, Plate 58 (n° 616), Plate 62 (n° 652). For an example of the 7-pointed star, see Ursula Seidl, *Die babylonischen Kudurru-reliefs: Symbole mesopotamischer Gottheiten*, Vandehoeck & Rupprecht, 1988, 56 (Abb. 19. N° 97). The pictographic sign for stars in old Mesopotamia had different points, 8, 12, or more. See R. Labat, *Manuel d'épigraphie akkadienne*, Paris, 1988, 48.

⁶ . D. Stein, « Mittan(n)i. B. Bildkunst und Architektur », *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, 1994, 297, fig. 2.

⁷ . H. Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals: A Documentary Essay on the Art and Religion of the Ancient Near East*, London, 1939, 275, fig. 89.

gaociθra), and the king-sun with fleet racehorses.⁸ This order, the stars and moon and sun, is constant in the Avesta and Zand.⁹ Even if the planets have taken the names of the deities, there has never been confusion between, for example, the deity Anāhitā (Pers. Anāhīd) and the planet Anāhitā (Venus) –moreover, there is the divine triad Ahura Mazdā and Miθra and Anāhitā in the Achaemenian times, but not the astral triad, i.e., the sun and moon and Anāhitā. The Avesta Anāhitā is represented as a lady wearing a “turreted” crown with exactly eight “crenellations”.

Yt 5.126 *yā hištaite fravaēδamna*

arədvī sūra anāhita
kaininō kəhrpa srīrayā
ašamayā huraodayā
uskāt̄ yāstayā ərəzvaiθyō
raēvaṭ̄ ciθrəm āzātayā
frazušəm aḍkəm vaṅhānəm
pouru.paxštəm zaranaēnəm

127 *bāda yaθa.mqm barəsmō.zasta*

frā gaošāvara sispəmna
caθru.karana zaranaēni
minum baraṭ̄ hvāzāta
arədvī sūra anāhita
upa tqm srīrqm manaoθrim
hā hē maidim nyāzata
yaθaca hukərəpta fštāna
yaθaca aṅhən nivāzāna

128 *upairi pusqm baṅdayata*

arədvī sūra anāhita
satō.starəṅhqm zaranaēnīm
ašta.kaozdqm raθa.kairyqm
drafšakavaitīm srīrqm
anupōiθbaitīm hukərətqm

129 *baβraini vastrā vaṅhata*

arədvī sūra anāhita
θrisatanqm baβranqm
caturə.zīzanatqm
yaṭ̄ asti baβriš sraēšta
yaθa yaṭ̄ asti gaonōtəma
[baβriš bavaiti upāpō]
yaθa.kərətəm θbarštāi zrūne

⁸ . See Yt 12.

⁹ . Cf. the order in the Akkadian “ideology”: *šalam* ^d*Sin* ^d*Samaš* u ^d*Ištar*. (Ursula Seidl, op. cit., 98)

carəmə vaēnaŋtō brāzəŋta
frāna ərazatəm zaranim

‘Who stands welcomingly, Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā, in the shape of a beautiful damsel, with great offensive power, well-built, girded high, straight-and-lofty, of brilliant origin, noble born¹⁰, wearing a mantle with long sleeves, with much adornment¹¹ with gold.

At times, according to the measure (required), with sacred twigs in hands, wearing quadrangular earrings, wears a golden necklace¹², the truly noble Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā, upon that beautiful neck. She would bind tightly her waist, so that her breasts would be well-shaped, and so also her hips.

Upon (her head) has bound a tiara Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā with a hundred gems (or, stars), golden, with eight cogs (or, battlements), made like a chariot, with small banners, beautiful, unapproachable, well-adorned.

A dress of beaver fur has worn Arədvī Sūrā Anāhitā, of three hundred beavers giving birth for the fourth time, when the female is most beautiful, since she is at the top of her growth. The (female) beaver who lives in the waters, if cut at the determined time¹³, her pelt shines forth, for the viewer, as much as silver or gold.’

(Raham Asha)

¹⁰ . Cf. Dk vii, M 651 *ped kenīg kirb ī nēk ī vas-amāvand ī hurust ī bulandebyāst ī rāst ī rayumand tōmag ī āzād*.

¹¹ . °*paxšta-* < *pis*.

¹² . *zaranaēni minum*. Cf. Av. *zarənu.mañi* an epithet of Kahrkāsa = Pers. *dālman* ‘eagle’.

¹³ . *ʒfarštāi zrūne*. Cf. Pers. *zamān brīn*.