

The Morphology and Meaning of the Pārs Based on the Linguistic Evolutions and Historical-Mythological Traditions

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Abstract—The morphology of most Persian words goes back to the Indo-European and Indo-Iranian periods. These words show the beliefs and views of the earliest people about their structure. It is also necessary to search for the vocabulary in the Indo-European and Indo-Iranian periods. During recent centuries, comparative linguistics and mythology have facilitated the common Indo-European lexicon to reconstruct. The Persians have been appeared in the Assyrian inscriptions and affected by the Mesopotamians. It is also worth paying attention to the cultural and linguistic exchanges with the Mesopotamian civilizations. This paper aims to show the morphology of *Pārsa* based on linguistic evolutions and historical-mythological traditions. The method of this study is also to reconstruct both morphology and the earliest form of Persia. Then, it is tried to find the most plausible meaning according to the historical-mythological traditions. In the end, the sickle or scythe is considered the most probable meaning for *Pārsa*.

Keywords—Pārs, Parsumaš, Perseus, corner, leopard, ax, sickle.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE study of toponyms helps a lot in knowing the historical data with few resources. This process can be observed concerning the historical issues and linguistics of the Indo-European peoples.

The Indo-Iranians, the eastern branch of Indo-Europeans, managed to establish several cultures such as *Poltavka*, *Potapvka*, *Andronova*, and *Sintashta* [1, p.11], [2, p.213]. Indeed, the first great migrations were from Central Asia, and the establishment of settlements took place in the land of Iran in the Iron Age II, between 1000-800 BC. The Iranians went to Western Asia and arrived in the Zagros Mountains from where they came into Kurdistan, the regions of northern Iraq, Azerbaijan, and the ancient *Hyrkania* in the North of Iran [3, p.23]. Since the western Iranians were close neighbors of the Mesopotamian civilizations, there is certain historical information about them (the Persians and the Medes). The Assyrian inscriptions are the first documents that point out the kings of the central Zagros under the title of *Paršūwaš šarrāni* or the kings of Persia at 835 BCE and the Medes at c. 744/727 BCE [4, p.60], [5, p.8]. As to *Paršūwaš/Parsumaš*, Tavernier quotes the theories of some linguists: Hoffmann believes that

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Pārsa is equivalent to the ancient Indian *parśu*, and it was the name of a warrior tribe. Eillers analyzes that *Pārsa* is synonymous with the Old Indian *paraśú* = ax or battle-ax and means people with war axes. Harmatta believes that *parsua* in Assyrian text proves that *Pārsa* evolved from **Pārsava*. Skalmowski has recently pointed out that *pārs(u)a*- the equivalent of *pārsva* in the Old Indian, which means side region [6, p.28]. Of course, Kogan quoted Diakonov as saying that Shalmansar III marched on the Diyaleh valley in 834 BC, and then he went to *Parsua*, which means boundary land [7, p.14]. Mallory believes that *pārsa* is derived from the possible Indo-European root **perk/s-* meaning leopard or spotted cat. The word *pars(a)na*=leopard is a spotted wild cat, according to which Mallory theory has changed into *pārs/ Fārs* in New Persian, and it has evolved into *pis*=leopard in the Serikoli dialect [8, p.415].

This paper also aims to answer these questions: What was the oldest form of *pārsa*? To what period does the old word *pārsa* refer? What is the most probable meaning for this word?

II. PARSA IN MESOPOTAMIAN AND IRANIAN TEXTS

Mesopotamian

The old Iranian languages were inflectional ones in which nouns, adjectives, and pronouns were declined and took the ending. Noun and adjective stems are either based on the root without adding a vowel (it is called a root stem), or nominal and present stems or by adding a suffix (vowel) or consonant (consonant) to the root [9, p.263]. There were two types of primary and secondary suffixes: the former was added directly to the root, and the latter was added to nominal or adjective stems. A noun or adjective could also be based on two or more suffixes, and prefixes could be added to stems [10, p.172]. All in all, nominal stems and adjectives were made from the root alone. The suffixes (a, ā, i, u) form noun and adjective in Old Persian, and they took a separate identifier or ending in declinable cases [11, p.99].

Pārsa in the Old Persian inscriptions or the southwestern dialect is a name called a stem (thematic); That is, stems that end in a, and are declined in different cases and took the ending:

- *Pārsa* in singular: Nom. *pārsa^h*; Acc. *Pārs-am*; Gen. *pārs-ahyā*; Abl. *pārs-āt*; Dat. *pārs-ai*; Ins. *pārs-ā*; Loc. *pārs-aiy*
- *Pārsa* in plural: Nom. *pars-āh*; Acc. *Pars-āh*; Gen. *pars-ānām*; Dat/Abl. *Pars-aibiš*; Loc. *pars-aišuv* [12, p.227].

Of course, *pārsa* is found only in indeclinable forms in the Old Persian inscriptions: Nom.sg = *pārsa^h*; Acc.sg = *pārsam*; Gen.sg = *pārsahyā*; Ins.sg = *pārsā*; Abl.sg = *pārsā*; Loc.sg; *pārsā* is an adjective in nom.sg. Roland Kent has also considered *pārsā* as loc.sg. [13, p.196].

Pārsa in Assyrian inscriptions: as suggested in the introduction, it has first appeared in the texts of the Assyrian kings in the Zagros region. In Mesopotamian texts, the words were shown in syllables, a hyphen in Akkadian, and a dot in Sumerian [14, p.16].

- Tiglath-Pileser III: *par-su-a, pa-ar-su-a*
- Sargon II: *par-su-a, par-su-aš, par-su-ma-aš*
- Sennacherib: *par-su-aš*
- Esarhaddon: *par-su-maš*
- Ashurbanipal: *par-šu-maš, par-sa-maš, par-su-u-ma-aš, BAR-su-u-a, par-su...* [15, p.341].

The Assyrian language is one of the sub-branches of Akkadian language in which nouns and adjectives did not differ in form, and adjectives came after nouns. Nouns had the two masculine and feminine genders, two numbers of singular and plural forms, and the abstract noun was used in the feminine form. The oldest form of the masculine plural was ended in *unu, ūtu* and repeating stem. The noun was declined in three cases of the nominative, ending in *u(m)*, accusative, ending in *a(m)*, and genitive, ending in *i(m)* [16, p.144]. There is the phoneme *m* in the Old Babylonian period, which is omitted from the Middle Babylonian period. It is important to note that in spelling cuneiform, a syllable with phonemes of consonant + vowel + consonant was pronounced based on consonant + vowel and vowel + consonant (examples of *par* and *pa-ar* or *gur* and *gu-ur*). As a result, *Parsumaš* can be grouped as follows: *pa-ar-su-a; par-su-aš; par-su-ma-aš; par-šu-maš* [14, p.16].

What should be noted is about the final syllable *maš* and *vaš* in Assyrian [17, p.273], [18, p.20], which has been probably borrowed from Sumerian. The sign *Maš* is both a word meaning "bright and shining, a goat" and a syllable used to make a word (*^d.MASŠ* = Nergal) [19, p.20]. The *Pārsa* is also mentioned in the final syllables in the form of *ma-aš* in Assyrian texts. Besides, the terminal syllable *maš* has been written in names such as *Taššigurumaš* (the name of a Kassite of the Babylonian kings); *Amēl-E-ul-maš*; *Ar-ta-tama/maš* (name of an Iranian); *Piš-gal-Dara-maš* (King of Babylon) in Assyrian-Babylonian cuneiform [20, p.231]. The Akkadian language, which was indebted to the Sumerian language, used the same symbol [21, p.114]. As a result, in Assyrian's vocabulary, this syllable did not indicate a singular case. It appears only in one copy of the Ashurbanipal inscription in the form of *par-šu-maš*. The existence of these two types of Persia in Assyrian inscriptions with the final syllable *maš* and *vaš* has led Maximilians to believe that *pars/šumaš, parsamaš* is the only written form of *parsuaš/parsua* [22, p.321].

Looking at *pārsa* in Assyrian texts, it became clear that the final syllable is in the forms of *u / va, uš / vaš*, and *maš* and Persia appears with two different phoneme *v*, and *m*. It should be taken into account that among the consonants, the phoneme

of nasal-labial *m* has been pronounced like the Hebrew language at the beginning of the word (for example, *maruduk* = *Marduk*) [23, p.114]. After the Old Babylonian period, the phoneme *m* was probably pronounced *w* [26, p.45]. Furthermore, the words were given by Hesychius, the Greek historian of the fifth century BCE, testify that the sun (σῶς) was pronounced among the Babylonians, both *šamaš* and *šavaš*. Moreover, Damascus Damascius (480 AD) has indicated the words *tāmtu* and *damkina* in Greek in two forms *tauthe* and *dauki* (*m* and *v/u*). Some words in Babylonian and Hebrew are translations of Persian ones (*Dārayavauš* and Babylonian *Dāriāmuš*), which they show that the Babylonians pronounced the phoneme of nasal-labial *m* as that of fricative-labial *v* in the later periods. Thus, the phoneme *m* in many cases was pronounced as *v* during the Assyrian and Babylonian periods, and in the middle of the word has been transliterated *v* and *u* (*Ar-ma-da* in Tiglathpileser I, Assurnazirpal, Shalmaneser and *A-ru-ad-da, Ar-u-da*). On this basis, we can assume that the phoneme *m* among the words was pronounced as *v* in the Assyrian period (Assyrian *ka-a-a-ma-nu*, and in Arabic *kāvānu*). Overall, the phonological change *m* was converted to *n* before *š, s, k* (*enku*), and *m* was pronounced as *v* in later periods after *u* (*šumāti, šuwāti*) [24, p.9]. Furthermore, the Iranian names that appeared in the Assyrian-Babylonian texts show that they had a phoneme *v* in the Old Persian, which has appeared in Assyrian texts with a phoneme *m*. To make this process clearer, we will refer to a few names that have been appeared in the Assyrian-Babylonian texts. In the Neo-Babylonian text of the *Bistun* inscription, the phoneme 'v' in *Dārayavahuš* appears with 'm' in the form of *Da-ri-ja-muš* and Elamite *Da-ri-ḫ-ma-u-iš*. The name of the king of the Medes *uvaxštra* is *u-ma-ku-iš-tar* in the Neo-Babylonian, and *Ma-ak-iš-tar-ra* in Elamite [25, p.131]. The Greek Astyages (*uvaxštra* in the Old Persian), the last king of the Medes, is *Iš-tu-me-gu* in the Babylonian texts, which is likely to correspond with the Old Persian **astivaegha* [26, p.47]. The Old Persian *fravartiš* (*Fravahr* in the Middle Persian) has changed into *pa-ar-u-mar-ti-iš* in Neo-Babylonian [25, p.134]. *Artavardiya*, the name of the governor of Darius in the Old Persian inscriptions, mentions in the form of *ar-ta-mar-zi-ia* in the Neo-Babylon [27, p.152]. The name of the land of *Parsuaš*, written *Barsaas* in some sources, was thought to be equivalent to the word Parthia, but there is no sure root for it. Of course, some believe that we cannot say there was a connection between Persia and Parthia [28, p.113]. Some names do not have a specific principle, and Radner quotes the Babylonian word *Amitašši* has been derived from ancient Persian, which consists of the two parts *avita* (from the root *av* = helping), and *asa*=horse [29, p.102].

In Elamite texts, there are some examples of such a final syllable. There is no evidence to prove that there was the sonant *w* in Elamite. It is more likely that the Elamite *u* was a non-syllabic allophone of *u*. It should also be added that the phoneme *m* was used instead of the vowel *v* in Elamite [30, p.8-9]. Moreover, the phoneme *m* in Elamite is more apparent instead of Old Persian *v* and can be seen in most words [31, p.316]. We can mention the Achaemenid-Elamite

names that the middle phoneme of *m* came instead of the Old Iranian *v* as follow: Elamite *ašMi-u-ka-an* and *ašMi-u-ku-an* = the Old Persian **viyuka* and Avestan *kaurva*; Elamite *^{as}Kar-maš* = the Old Persian **Karvya* and Avestan *kaurva*; Elamite *aš-ša-man-da* = the Old Persian *ašavanta*. The initial phoneme *m* in Elamite instead of *v* comes in the Old Persian as well: Elamite *^{as}Mi-ip-ra-ka* = the Old Persian **Vifra-ka*, Avestan *vifra*; Elamite *ašMi-sa-an-na* = the Old Iranian *Viθ-a-na*, Avestan *viθ*; Elamite *^dMa-ir-ma-iš* and *^dMa-ir-ma-iš* = the Old Persian **varman*, Avestan *Varəman* [32, p.90]. In Old Persian, fractional numbers *čišva* (one third) is also found in Elamite *ši-iš-maš*; of course, it should be noted that the Achaemenid-Elamites were influenced by the Old Persian language, especially in vocabulary and syntax [31, p.316].

By examining some other Iranian names in the Assyrian-Babylonian texts, the phonetic evolutions, and adaptation of this word in Persian and Assyrian, it becomes clear that phoneme *v/u* (** parsva*), according to phonological changes, appears in Assyrian-Babylonian and even Elamite texts with the phoneme *m*. The Old Persian *v* in the final syllable was caused to be declined in *u* stem and ended in *š* in the nominative stem (*par-su-aš*) [24, p.9]. On this basis, we can assume that in the ancient stem *pārsa* in the Achaemenid inscriptions, there was a semi-vowel *u* (its weak form *u*). Therefore, we can reconstruct the Older name "Pārsa" in the form of **parsva/av*.

Schmitt states that the Persian tribes were appeared under the name of *parsua* in 843 BC, in the reign of Shalmaneser III (= Persian **parsva-*). Schmitt has transcribes *pārsa* into the vrddhi stem **Pārsya* [33, p.227]. The evolution of cluster *rs* into *xt* also appears in the name of *paxtu*, which can be derived from an origin **parsawa*, and it is very close to the ancient words of Persia and Parthia [34, p.24]. In addition to Assyrian documents, Greek traditions tell us that *Perseus* was the son of *Perseus*, and *Perseus* could be an ancient form of *Pārsa*. Based on the evidence, the words of *par-sa-ma-aš* and *parsuaš* in Assyrian and *Perseus* in Greek can reflect nominative case **pārs-uš/āuš* in the Old Iranian language [9, p.67]. Therefore, *pārsu/av* can reconstruct to decline as follows:

- Singular *pārsu/av*: Nom. **pārs-uš/āuš*; Acc. **pārs-um/āum/āvam*; Gen. **pārs-auš*; Abl. **pārs-auš*; Loc. **pārs-auv*.
- Plural **pārsu/av*: No. ** pārs-āva*; Acc. **pārs-āva*; Loc. **pārs-ušuv-ā* [35, p.132-3].

Greek

Pārsa appears as *Perses/ou/o*, Acc. *Persen* or *Persea*, Voc. *Persa*, *Perse* = Parsia in Greek. The Greeks consider the name of these people to be derived from the name of *Perseus*. The *Pārsa* is combined with other words (*Persisti* = in Persian, *Perso-thiwktis* = Persian pursuer, *Perso-vomos* = Persian rule) But *Perseus* derives from *Perseus* /ews/e, Ionic in eos, and is an adjective of *Perseios* [36, p.556]. Next to it, *Persea* (aiai, ia, eie), the name of an Egyptian tree, derives from the *Pārsa*, and *Perseus* is the name of an unexplained fish in the Red Sea as well that Beekes considers its root to be unknown [37,

p.1179], [38, p.28]. Herodotus reports (3, 7, 59-63): First, the Persians for their equipment, which wore a soft hat and was called Tiara and wore sleeveless shirts with different colors, iron sequins like fish-like scales, and half-pants. The Greeks called these Persians in ancient times *Cephenes*, but they and their neighbors called them *Artaei*. When *Perseus*, the son of *Dane*, and *Zeus* came to *Cepheus*, the son of *Belus*, and married his daughter, *Andromeda*, then a son was born to him, who was called *Perses*. Then he left there, and *Cepheus* had no male children. It was the son of *Perseus*, from whom the Persians took their name [39, p.373].

In Greek mythology, *Apollodorus* (2, 4, 1-2) mentions that *Dane* was the daughter of *Acrisius*, and a prophecy said that *Dane's* son would kill him. So, he imprisoned *Dane* in a bronze tower, but *Zeus* met her in the form of a golden shower or rain, and she became the mother of *Perseus*. Then, *Acrisius* put both *Dane* and the *Perseus* in a helpless box and threw them into the sea, but they came safely to the shores of *Sripfus* (one of the Greek islands [40, p.155]. The same tradition has been repeated by other Greek writers such as *Achilles* (Persian 5-6) and *Hesiod* and other ancient Greek writers [41, p.133], [42, p.620]. About *Perseus* (= the plunderer¹) has come that *Acrisius*, the brother of *Pertus*, had a daughter who was called *Dane*. The luck of the girl was that she won the love of the greatest ruler of *Olympus*. Then, a prophecy seduced his father, *Acrisius*, and he predicted that *Acrisius* would be killed by his grandson, and therefore imprisoned *Dane* in an underground chamber. Regardless, *Zeus* falls in love with her and transforms into golden rain, reaching the ceiling of a room where *Dane* had been imprisoned. From this marriage, a hero is born with divine characteristics. This part of the myth is undoubtedly a reflection of the marital bond between heaven and earth. *Dane* represents the land of *Argus*, and its prison is a reflection of the sky, which covers thick clouds during the dark winter months. *Medusa*, one of the three *Gorgons*, is just as significant in the history of *Perseus* as the terrible dragon in the history of *Apollo* [43, p.189]. The *Gorgons* were three sisters named *Steno* (= strong), *Medusa* (= queen or cunning and cunning), and *Orialeh* (= jump-tall). The *Medusa's* hairs were shaped like a snake [44, p.124].

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As mentioned, the structure of many words has its roots in ancient times, and since there are few historical accounts of them, it has made reconstruction difficult. There are several theories about the root of *Pārsa/parsava*, and there is no certainty about it yet. Of course, it is noteworthy that only the form *parəsu* has been indicated to mean side in *Avesta* [45, p.877]. *Parsava/u* has different meanings in Sanskrit: 1- *parsu*, *us* = masculine noun, implying ribs, curved knife, sickle; the name of a man; (*avas*) noun in masculine plural, a warrior tribe; well wall (Rig Veda, 1, 105, 8); the name of a woman = *parsu-maya*, *as*, *i*, *am*, meaning sharp like a curved

¹This meaning can be based on popular etymology in the Greek language and shows the conflict between the Iranians and the Greeks.

knife, and *Parsukā* is a feminine noun meaning rib. 2- *parsu*, *us*, masculine noun (from *pri*, substitute for *spris* root), = *parasu* meaning ax [46, p.556]. Based on this morphology, it is possible to assume the following roots:

1. The Indo-European **perk* means side and chest. From this root, there is *pārsu* = curved knife, *pārsva* = side, side area in the Old Indian; *parasu* = side and corner in Avestan; *fars* = side in Ossetic [47, p.820]. Mayrhofer indicates its stem in the form of *parsvam* (rarely *ah* in masculine noun) side, side area, gear, corner (rig Veda), *passa-* = side and corner in Pali and *pārsū*, *pārasū* = side in Kurdish [48, p.261].
2. The Indo-European root *perk* means to ask and to propose. Armenian *alers* derives from the root *al*, meaning to pray and ask. There is the same meaning in Old Armenian **hers*, which is found in Lithuanian *piršti*, *peršu* = asking and begging, begging for a girl's hand in marriage [49, p.35]. Another meaning in Indo-European means digging, uprooting, which furrow in modern English derives from **pr̥keha* [50, p.139]. In the New Persian language, the words *pursidan* = ask and seek, and *pādafrāh* = antidote and punishment, come from this root [51, p.368].
3. Another **perk* in Indo-European means "dot and dot and dot" and colorful and spotted animal, which is in Latin *pulcher*, and combines with the suffix *n* in *pr̥sni* in Sanskrit [50, p.331]. This root appears in Middle Irish as *erc*; Welsh *erch*; Old German *forhane*, New German *Farbe* from < **perk-uo* = color, and Greek *praknos* = black spot, *praknon* = black [8, p.537], and comes with the suffix *uo* in Old German *faro*, Middle German *vare* = curve, from < **perk-uo* [47, p.821].
4. Another root **perk* means "spreading, plowing, and grooving"; in Old Indian *parsāna* = slit; Latin *porca* = plowing the land; Kymeri *rhÿch* = plowing; Old German *furuh* [52, p.2341].

According to phonetic laws in Indo-European, roots such as *perk*, which have three consonants with a vowel, can also come in *prek* form and did not differ in meaning [53, p.158]. Based on that of phonetic evolutions, the Indo-European phoneme *k* becomes *s* in Old Persian. In some cases, Indo-European *kn* changes into *šn* in Avestan, and Indo-European *ks* into *š* in Old Persian, but Indo-European *rk* also changes into *rs* in Old Persian [54, p.490]. The Indo-European phoneme *s* becomes *h* in the Old Iranian languages and remains unchanged before *p*, *t*, *k* [55, p.214]. According to *Ruki's* law, *s* changes into *š*; as a result, Persia cannot be assumed to have a root **pers* [10, p.138], and this root means sprinkling, ash, and dust, which in Avesta appears in the form of *paršūya* [47, p.1358]. Overall, these interpretations and the following meanings are worth noting: *parsva* = side area; *parsav/u* = leopard; *parasav/u* = ax, and *parsu/u* = sickle, curved knife.

Side Area and Side

There are some meanings posed to *pārsa* by scholars. *Pārsuh* is a feminine noun meaning "side, curved knife, and

sickle" in Rig Veda and Atra Veda, which is comparable with feminine noun *parasu* = side in Avesta, with *pālsu* = side, blade in Khotani-Scythian; with *pahlūk* in Middle Persian; and with *fars* = side, in Ossetian [56, p.712]. Mallory has introduced *perkūs* in the nominative and *pr̥keus* in the genitive in Indo-European, meaning chest and side. These words have evolved into *pīrsys* = the chest of horse in Lithuanian, *persi* = breast in Russian, *parasu* = side in Avestan, *parsu* = side in Old Irish, and it belongs to the eastern Indo-European branch. Matching *pārsuh* with non-Indo-European words is unreliable, and we can assume that the root of this word is **perk* or **pelk* in Indo-European. In Indo-European languages, *pārsuh* is comparable to the old church Slavic *pr̥si* = breast and is synonymous with Sanskrit *pr̥thu-parsu*, which can be translated as having a prominent breast [8, p.81]. The significance of this meaning is that it is the only word we have in the Sanskrit *pārsvā*, meaning side area in the homonymous form of *parsua*.

Leopard

There are two roots for leopard in Indo-European: one is root **perd* = lion and leopard, which has evolved into *pardalis* = leopard in Greek; *palang* = leopard in New Persian; *pr̥āng* = leopard in Pashto; *pwrnk* = leopard in Sogdian; and *pr̥dāku* in Old Indian that the latter was borrowed from an Iranian source in the Middle Ages. The other root **perk* or **pers* means leopard, spotted wild cat, which changed into *pars(a)na* in Hittite, and according to Mallory, it is probable that it has evolved into *pārs/fārs* in the New Persian language. It seems that there were the two types of creatures are independent and different from the root *per* = 1- spot 2- spotted. Its Hittite form may be related to the *ha-prassun* = wild cat. Of course, there is no evidence for the history of the word in Indo-European terms [8, p.415]. In Hittite, *Paršana* comes with the suffix *ana* (*ulipp-ana* = wolf), and the root *parš* corresponds to *pārs/fārs* = leopard in the Persian language.

It appears *p'ars* (fourteenth century), *bars* = snow leopard, tiger, and Old Turkish *bars* = tiger in a source from Western Mongolia. In some Turkish languages, leopard remains and is probably rooted in a Russian origin of bars. In this case, the Iranian words with the phoneme *s* (Persian *pārs-fārs*, Serikoli *pis* = snow leopard, leopard) are also consistent with those of *d*: Sogdian *pwrδ'nk*, Pashto *pr̥āng*, and the evolution *rd* into *l* appears in *palang* = leopard in the New Persian. The Persian form illuminates the Ossetian forms *fælanck/færank* = leopard and those of the Pamiri such as *palang* = snow leopard in the Waxi dialect and *pəlang* in Iskashemi one. Words with *d* correspond to Sanskrit *pr̥dāku* = leopard and tiger, and the Greek words also have phoneme *d*: *pardalis*, *pordalis*, *pardos* = leopard, *pardalee* = leopard skin [56, p.421]. Of course, these words can also be rooted in **perd* [50, p.142]. Mallory argued that there was no common word for leopards among the Indo-Europeans [50, p.321]. It was only Anatolia in the Neolithic period of *Catal Hüyük* that had its image embossed on the temple walls. The animal has appeared in the North Caucasus, Anatolia, Iran, Baluchistan, northwestern India, and China. The issue of snow leopards should also be added, and

the current distribution of the animal in Turkmenistan, Altai, and the south is towards the Pamirs. Nevertheless, the animal was the principal motif of the Iranian nomadic art settled in the Eastern steppe who occupied all the Pont-Caspian steppes about 3000 BC [50, p.321].

Gamkerlides and Ivanov remind that the early Indo-Europeans had words for leopards, lions, and elephants and that these animals were expelled from northern habitats [56, p.421]. The remains of an adult man have been found among the burial artifacts belongs to *Maykop* culture. Next to him are eight red earthenware vessels, a polished stone cup, and fourteen cups of silver-plated paper, two of which have been decorated with a scene of a Caucasian spotted leopard and a lion [57, p.287]. A stone wall depicts a lion and a leopard, both holding their claws up and both looking back from the Iron Age Akalans. This scene indicates that these animals were known in the area. In Greek mythology, Dionysus sits on a throne with a leopard next to him. His badge is a wreath in his hand [58, p.268].

Ax

This tool appears in the form of parasuh or *parsuh* in Indo-Iranian texts meaning ax, battle-ax, and hook. It comes as *parasu/pharasu-* (masculine noun) in Prakrit, *pharsā* in Indian, and *pašō* = ax in Prachi, which is equal to the Iranian dialects *færæt* = Ax in Ossetian, *parus* in *Yazgholami*, *parasu* in *Shoghni*, and *paða* = ax in Khotan-Scythian, which seems to be derived from the Old Persian **paraθu*. The latter is equivalent to the *parati* = ax in Tokharian, *pelexus* = ax and war ax, and *pelexxon* = ax handle in Greek. Mayrhofer argues that the *parasu* in Old Indian (Aryan **pārasv-a* = people with war axes) may be applied to the Persian people (Old Persian *pārsa*) [48, p.87], [59, p.562]. It may be derived from a source of Greek-Aryan origin **peleku*, which is not yet clear. Some regard it to have older origins and considered it to have pre-Indo-European from the Middle Stone Age **pe-leku* = floor. There was also speculation that it has been derived from the original Akkadian *pilakku/pilaqqu*, meaning ax, and yet it is not convincing, and it never implied ax but duke [48, p.213].

In addition to linguistic issues, war axes represent a favorite weapon of the Indo-Europeans [8, p.128]. Among the words of antiquity, the ax is one of the oldest forms of stone tools used by the species. They held the instrument in their hands and used it to hit the bone and tear the corpse, and used it to cut wood. In some areas, such as Scandinavia, flint axes were polished. The axes were generally flat, and many axes were related to the Late Neolithic Age (Copper Age cultures in the eastern Balkans and the globular amphora culture in Central and Northern Europe). Axes in the later cultures of the Indo-Europeans (the corded ware culture) were often piercing for placing. But some axes were related to the culture of the Late Neolithic period. These were axes, often referred to as "war axes," found in graves of the corded ware culture (in parts of northern Europe known as the ax culture) and were mainly tools or weapons [50, pp.38-40]. Among many Indo-European cultures, especially those related to the Indo-Iranian, the ax is one of the tools used among them. The various types of it have

been found in these cultures. They are used both for household chores and in battle as the *Dnieper-Donets* culture of the Neolithic period appeared in the Black Sea region in the fifth and fourth millennia BC. This culture has been identified from over 30 cemeteries, of which about 800 have been found so far. Some features of the Dnieper culture have been discovered in the east. It includes some thrown arrows, polished stone axes, hand millstones, round millstones, layered flint blades, domestic animals (cattle, pigs, sheep, and goats), and agricultural grains [60, p.1894]. The *Srendy Stog* culture belongs to the Middle Dnieper region in the Lower Don, around 3500-30000 BCE, which has been recognized by over 100 sites on the Ukrainian and southern Russian rivers. Their technology included sharp-edged containers, high flip-flops, and tolls made deer antlers, which are thought to be double-headed, hammers, or battle-axes [8, p.541]. The *Khvalynsk* culture belongs to the Copper Age in the period 4900-3500 BC, in the Middle Volga region. Bracelets, earrings, sheet-shaped copper pendants, perforated axes, and ax-form hammers have been found in this culture [61, p.38]. The Funnel Beaker Culture is referred to the Early Neolithic period in the plains of northern Europe. Flip-flops included daggers, axes, stone battle-axes, round scissors, cross arrows, and knives. Hammer axes were smooth, and the amulets were made of round stones, and amber and pendants were used for decoration [62, p.166]. The *Corded Ware* Culture or battle-ax has been the most visible culture of ax users in northern Europe, and some consider this culture to be the point of dispersal of the Indo-Europeans [2, p.213].

Andronovo culture, which belongs to the Indo-Iranians, has been found in a variety of tools. Vedas refer to knives, flagpoles, stone axes, mace, and sandstone. In *Sintashta*, bronze axes, daggers, axes, hooks, and sharpeners, single-bladed knives were found that could be used to comb horse mane and make wheels. A horse grave has been found in *Balkh*, and there are images of a horse head on the handle of bronze ritual axes [1, p.230]. Axes with a clamp in the form of a fiery handhold from *Sintashta* and *Berzovka* match the *Malinovka* work, according to Kh. Khalikov belongs to the *Zajmishce* stage of pre-Kazan culture in the 16th century BC [63, p.247]. In Greek sources, when we turn to Greek mythology and the book of Arian, we know from the Iranian Amazons that they always carried a shield and a two-bladed battle ax called the *Bipennis* [63, p.247]. Besides, Herodotus reports (1, 213) that one of the customs of the warrior women of Scythian Massagetae was to carry an ax [64, p.269]. The myth of the Amazons in Greek mythology was likely based on the Massagetae. They are considered a branch of the ancient Iranian Tribes. The Bactrians, the other Iranian tribes, used axes called *Sagaris* [39, p.379].

Sickle

The sickles were composite tools made of a series of blades (flint, mineral glass). These were used since the beginning of the Neolithic period in India and Iran. The two regions had advanced agricultural technology. Metal sickles (bronze and copper) appear in the Near East until the fourth millennium

BC, and those of bronze in the South Caucasus (Kuro-Arax culture) until the third millennium BC [8, p.517].

It should be said that the Indo-European **Haegwisi(e)ha-?* = ax has been evolved into Latin *ascia*, Old English *ax*, and Gothic *aqizi*. Indo-European *Sekûr?* = ax has changed into Latin *secures* = ax, from the root *sek* = cutting. Other forms of the same root are found in Latin *secula* = scythe, Old English *sigde*, New English *scythe* = scythe, and *sickle* = scythe. Some consider this root to be from Akkadian *šukkuru*, which has also been borrowed from Sumerian [8, p.37]. The word *parsu*, which means ax and sickle in Sanskrit, may be matched with *perk*, which means to dig, or *perk*, which means crack and slit.

The sickle was also used for household chores, hunting, and fighting among Indo-European cultures, especially those associated with the Indo-Iranian culture. For example, some weapons such as Scythian spears, axes, knives, and sickles have been found [1, p.163]. *Djeitun* culture in the southern Caspian Sea around 6000-5000 BC [57, p.461], and the *Kelteminar* culture of the Early Neolithic culture in the southeastern Caspian about 4000-2500 BCE have the remnants of the blade sickle. Hundreds of metal scythes were discovered from Kuro-Araxes culture from the early Bronze Age cultures in the southern Caucasus to eastern Anatolia and northwestern Iran around 3500 to 2200 BC. The *Kemi Oba* culture is one of the constituent elements of the Kurgan tradition from 3700 to 2200 BCE in Crimea, which can point at the farmers and peacetime scythes from the remains discovered [8, p.326]. The Other Indo-European and Indo-Iranian cultures, such as *Abeshevo*, *Chust*, *Karsuk*, too work with the sickle.

The sickle is widely used throughout the *Andronovo* region, and several species of bronze sickles have been identified. The first group is sickle-shaped knives with a concave blade without a handle. They have also been found in the *Sintasha-Petrovka* and *Alakol* complex and have been widely used in Central Asian steppe culture in western Siberia. The primary types of sickle-shaped knives were multifunctional and were utilized quite similar to their counterparts in the cultures of *Srubne* and *Abesvo*. Their shape changed from a low-curved knife-scythe to a unique type of knife with a straight blade, and then it became a sickle itself. By the end of the Bronze Age, the sickles were mostly perforated with bunches attached to them. *Andronovo* culture has mass production of sickle-shaped knives. The second group of sickles includes those found in the Urals, North, Central, East Kazakhstan, *Samirche*, and many other places. The sickles in the late *Andronovo* period are made of bronze, and Kuz'mina believes that these tools were not sickles but tools for cutting and used to clear floodplains, spreading and picking branches for the herd [1, p.143]. Today Turkmens use a similar species to cut the animals, and it is even possible that the sickles are associated not with agriculture but with herding. *Andronovo* sickles are comparable to those of *Srubne* culture. The third group consists of sickles made of crampon found in the Urals, north, and east of Kazakhstan, and is similar to those of the *Srubne* culture. The fourth group has two-edged arches. They are

found in northern and eastern Kazakhstan, Smyrna, in western Siberia. Harvesting tools have emerged in *Andronovo* and are similar to those in Eastern Europe, *Abeshvo* and *Srubne*, and have evolved into a single line throughout the Eurasian steppes [1, p.143]. In addition to this evidence, there are narrations from ancient Greek writers that can reveal the association between Persia, Perseus, and sickle:

Sickle and Perseus

In Greek mythology, Acrisius, after the birth of his grandson, Perseus, ordered that his mother and child be locked in a box and thrown into the sea to change his predicted fate. But the human intellect does not do anything contrary to God's command. That box, which had been thrown into the sea, was brought by waves to the rocky island of Seriphus. This island had been built by a fisherman called Dictus. He and his brother Polydectes, the ruler of there, embraced Dane and her child with open arms. Polydectes then fell in love with Dane and decided to marry her, and when Paulidctus heard the answer, he enslaved her. As soon as Perseus grew up, it was a very terrible affair for Polydectes and the fact that Gorgon Medusa overpowers him. Medusa was a terrified winged woman who lived with her sisters on the western shores of the ocean. These girls were the daughters of Phorcys and Ceto. Perseus hesitated to do so, set to work. Hermes, meanwhile, came to his aid, and Athena encouraged him to do so. These gods showed him how to get the tools he needed to do his job, which had an invisible helmet, a magic bag, and a pair of winged sandals. These tools were in the hands of nymphs who lived in the sea [43, p.189]. Graes were three sisters made of gray hair [64, p.67]. It was reported that these creatures were born like an aged woman. Their appearance was very frightening, and the two girls had only one eye and one tooth, and each of them used eyes and teeth in turn. They also lived in a dark area dominated by Gorgonians. Perseus advanced under the guidance of Apollo and Athena. He then snatched an eye and a tooth from the girls and forced them to show the way to the nymphs. He was able to get the things he needed in the blink of an eye. After putting on the winged chairs, he rushed to the Gorgons' house and found them asleep. Then Athena showed him Medusa and helped him approach them cautiously. Perseus, with the help of the mirror-like shield of Athena and the sickle-like sword of the god Hermes, was able to overthrow Medusa and put her in a magic bag, and with his invisible hat, she was able to escape and follow the other Grae [43, p.189]. In Greek mythology, Gaia created a mythical metal from which a sickle-like sword was made, with which Cronus castrated Uranus (Fig. 1). The sickle with which Zeus fought the giant Typhon and Perseus beheaded Gorgon Medusa [65, p.96], [66, p.87].

This story reminds us of two mythical narrations; one is the story of the rise of Cyrus, the founder of the Achaemenid dynasty, quoted by Herodotus (1, 108-109), and the other is Astyages, the last king of the Medes, had a daughter named Mandana. One night, Astyages dreamed that water flowed from his daughter, which filled the city and ran throughout Asia. When he asked the Magus for his interpretation, he was

terrified. Astyages gave his daughter to Cambyses, and he kept his value below the material middle classes. In their first year of marriage, *Astyages* had a second dream of a daughter growing up in the vine tree, which encompasses all of Asia, and her dreamers interpreted that her granddaughter would take her place. To prevent this from happening, he left the responsibility of killing him to a member of his family named *Harpagus* [67, p.139].



Fig. 1 Perseus and Sickle

Of course, the Greek mythology of Perseus also mentions a certain *Astyages*, who was one of the supporters of *Agenor*, the ruler of Tiro. He was one of those who intervened in the marriage of Perseus and Andromeda. He had turned into stone when he saw the Medusa mask [68, p.104]. The result of this marriage was a boy named *Perses* who grew up and became a powerful soldier. He conquered many lands, which later became known as "Persia". It is also said Zeus declared to the gods of Olympus that the descendants of Perseus, born on that day, would rule Greece [44, p.55].

Another similarity is Perseus and Moses, who were put in a coffin and left in the water. It reminds us that the birth of great people is related to supernatural phenomena. All these mythological narratives can also be compared to defeat the Medes (Medusa) by the Persians (Perseus), and although the etymology of the two in Greek is based on vernacular one, morphologically, nothing but "Persia and Media" can be assumed for the two words Perseus and Medusa. The Greeks consider the name of the Persian people to be derived from Perseus. Perseus was also the founder of the Persian nation [36, p.556].

Sickle and Mithraism

In Indo-Iranian mythology, Mithras, the god of light, was the protector of the treaties, whose worship spread from east in India to west in Spain, Britain, and Germany. The first written reference to Mithras dates back to the Vedas 1400 BC. With the defeat of the Persians by Alexander the Great, his worship spread throughout the Hellenic world. The soldiers of the Roman Empire accepted the Mithraism cult. At a later time, it became the first rival of Christianity in the fourth century AD. Diocletian even dedicated a temple to Mithras on the Danube River (the protector of the empire) [69, p.742]. Thus, the god Mithras was worshiped in India, Iran, Asia Minor, and neighboring southwest Asia centuries before the Roman Empire. Mithraism was a secret religion commemorated

during the Pompeian campaign against pirates in the Mediterranean in 67 BCE [70, p.7]. In this ritual, there was a staging system in which each member started a series of initial ceremonies from the crow stage. Then he went through five stages (male bride, soldier, lion, Persian, sun runner) until he finally reached his father's final one [71, p.355]. The first stage is the crow, the second is the bride, the third is the soldier, the fourth is the lion, the fifth is Persian, the sixth is the sun, and the seventh is the father [72, p.p45-8]. Each of these stages was supported by a planet. They were the sun, the moon, starting with Mercury and ending with Saturn. The novice must go through seven ones, which shows the ascension of the soul through the stars. It seems that they are the ancient beliefs about the secret religion and general ideas about the stars and the universe [71, p.355]. He must go through seven stages of celestial bodies to return the human soul to the world. To this end, the novice ascends the seven heavens then he walks through the galaxy to return to the essence of the soul. There are seven sets of symbols on the mosaics in the temple of Mithras Felicissimus, the Roman ruler in Ostia, Italy, showing each of the seven stages [72, p.48]. In these seven stages of Mithraism (Fig. 2), the fifth stage was Persian ruled by the moon. At this stage, the novice must have consonance with Persia or be selected from the people. The Persian symbol is a curved sickle or sword (Fig. 3), which is the remarkable point in the fifth stage, and it is the same weapon that Perseus had beheaded Gorgon before. Gorgon is the soul that the novice fights with from the soldier stage. He takes the sickle and tries to destroy his soul, and it is a symbol of the destruction of animal aspects, and the sickle is like the crescent moon [73, p.22]. The sickle is used in Persian painting in the Mithraic religion of Felicius in connection with fertility and is attached to the left thigh like a Persian sword (akinakes) [74, p.136]. At this stage, the novice refines with honey, and he is under the protection of the moon. In ancient Iran, it associates with refinement and fertility. Ulansey points out that Perseus had a son named Perses, and the seventh stage or father corresponds to Perseus (Mithra), and killing a cow by Mithras is like killing Gorgon with Perseus [73, p.22].

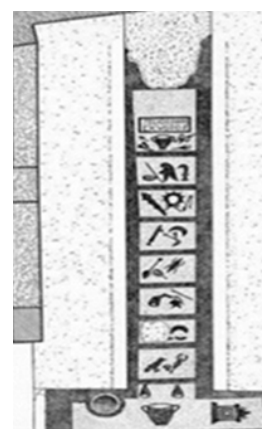


Fig. 2 The Seven Stages of Mithraism



Fig. 3 Sickle as the Persian Symbol

IV. CONCLUSION

The article sought to answer these questions: What was the oldest form of *pārsa*? To what period does the old word *pārsa* refer? What is the most probable meaning for this word? According to *Parsumaš* in the Assyrian inscriptions and Perseus in Greek, it becomes clear that the name of the first *pārsa* was in stem *u* (*Parsav/u*) and the words were declined and changed their structure in the Old Iranian languages. Therefore, the declinable form of *pārsa* has become *parsumaš*, *parsua*, and *paršumaš* in the Assyria language and the name of *Parsav/va* is probably referred to before coming to the Iran plateau.

According to the four points of view, the meaning of "side area" is linguistically consistent with the word *parsva*, and we have not yet found historical and mythological narratives consistent with this meaning. It is not evident according to which geographical location among Indo-Iranian cultures and by whom they were given the title.

Despite the linguistic reasons, "leopard" is not one of the most influential and sacred mythological animals in Indo-European and Aryan mythology; especially since the Indo-Iranians did not mention it in their texts unless we believe that the Persians became acquainted with this animal in the *Andronovo* culture and suddenly named it after themselves.

The name of *ax* (*parsu*) in Indo-Iranian is linguistically similar to *Parsu* and has been used a lot in Indo-European and Aryan societies, but in myths and reports, we did not find evidence that associated this tool with *Pārsa*. In any case, if we can find more effective narrations between Persia and *ax*, it can be regarded as the meaning of Persia.

In final theory, along with linguistics topics, the meaning of *parsu/av* = sickle is consistent with the Assyrian **parsva*. This tool has been used extensively for "grain and flock" and has shaped the life and identity of the Aryan Persian farming community, and mythological issues also support this theory; it is known that the Greeks reflected the history, temperament, customs, and traditions of the ancient Persians and were quite acquainted with the past of them. Hence, it was seen in mythological narratives that the myth of Perseus and Medusa could have been a reflection of the historical accounts of Medo-Persia. Meanwhile, a certain Astyages has entered into the story. This historical process caused this myth and the killing of Medusa by Perseus with a sickle to enter into Greek mythology and then the popular etymology of Perseus and Medusa in Greek. Some heroes had a sickle in Greek

mythology, but the sickle as a Persian symbol in Mithraism emphasizes this myth. Therefore, the author considers sickle for *Parsu/av* more likely than those of the others.

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