Abstract—The rituals of fire among the Iranians originate in the general Proto-Indo-European and Indo-Iranian eras when they lived in regions known as the Pontic-Caspian (Indo-Europeans) and Kazakhstan (the Andronovo culture belonging to the Indo-Iranian tribes), and we can get to know about their vulgar heritage despite their separation from each other during several millennia. The early Aryan settlers of Iran had brought their cults to their new home and were bequeathed to them by their Indo-Iranian ancestors. Tradition speaks of several great sacred Iranian fires consecrated by the pre-Zoroastrian kings. Ātār or fire is comparable to the Vedic Agni. Ātār's functions and elaborately are delineated in the later Avesta. This paper aims to show the fire cults among the Iranian Lur tribes who originate in the past. Therefore, it will be searched for rituals equally in Indo-European and Indo-Iranian Periods and Old Iranian Texts and their frequency among the Lur tribes. In addition to the library books, we tried to interview the chiefs of Lur tribes. Finally, we concluded that the fire among the Lur Tribes is a sequence of beliefs of the Proto-Indo-European and Indo-Iranian Periods reflected in Old and Middle Iranian texts.

Keywords— Indo-European, Ancient Iran, Fire, Lur, Zoroastrian.

I. INTRODUCTION

Indo-European is a title for the large and well-defined linguistic family that comprises most European languages in the past and present across Iran and India in Asia. This great family stretched to the newly discovered continents of America and Oceania [1, p.1]. The great Indo-European family is composed of 101 (or more branches) major groups that hold evidence in antiquity and it is possible to have close relations with other lingual families [2, p.36]. There is historical, archaeological, and linguistic evidence to suggest that the homogeneous societies of Eurasians who spoke the Proto-Indo-European language migrated and expanded around 4000 BCE. Some scientists identify these societies with the Gimbutas’ theory or Kyrgyz and Kurgan cultures of the Black Sea and the Caucasus [3, p.2]. Some scholars such as Mallory and Adams believe that the homeland of the Indo-Europeans was somewhere around the steppes environment of the Pontic-Caspian region. The bitter cold of the steppe regions was the most dangerous factor among the Indo-European families. There were hearths and fireplaces in the excavated settlements, which indicate the importance of the fire among the Indo-Europeans [4, p.8].

Having migrated from the Proto-Indo-European families, the Indo-Iranian group inhabited central Asia (now identified as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), from where some Iranians migrated to the Iran plateau, and the Indo-Aryans migrated to the subcontinent [3, p.4]. Central Asia was the first place where settlements were built on the Iran plateau by 1000-800 BC. The Iranians moved into western Asia and arrived at the mountain Zagros from where they came to Kurdistan, parts of northern Iraq, Azerbaijan in Iran’s north-west, and ancient Hyrcania [5, p.20].

Since some western Iranian branches, such as the Persians and Medes, became the close neighbors of the Mesopotamian civilizations, the written texts of the Mesopotamian civilizations point them out. Their name for the first time comes into view in Assyrian inscriptions during the reign of Shalmaneser III at 835 BCE as the 27 Paršuwaš tribes and Medes (c.744/727 BCE), while the name of the eastern Iranians can clarify in the Vedas of the Indians and the early ancient Iranian empires. We can divide them into diverse groups:

1. North Iranians: they comprise the Scythians in the extensive steppes of the Ukraine whom Ossete lived eastwards of it, the Saka of Xinjiang (they consist of Khotanese and Tumshuq, modern Sariqoli), Saka of Tigraxauda (those who put on a pointed cap) in western Central Asia, and the Saka of Haumavarga (those who pressed Soma or Haoma).
2. West Iranians: they are made up of the ancient Medes (the Medes of Rai and Azerbaijan), the Modern Kurds, Baluchis, and the Persians, along with the Lurs who extend from Malayer to the Persian Gulf.
3. Eastern Iranians dwelt in the eastern and northeastern Iran, such as Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Tajikistan, Bactrian Sagdian (modern Yaghnobi), and Choresmen [6, p.4].

To the best of our knowledge, there is no book or an article that aims to investigate the Lur ceremonies with their background, and this article aims to study the fire cults and beliefs among the Lurs and their precedent. This article also follows where the fire beliefs of the Lurs originate.

II. THE BACKGROUND OF LUR TRIBES

The Lur tribes stretch from Fārs and Xuzistan provinces to the west of Isfahan and Zagros highland zones and speak Lurish dialects. They divide into the two groups:

- Small-Lur Groups comprise Filis around Xuramabad
The three-gender system was in proto-Indo-European beliefs, which changed into the two-gender system in the Middle-Indo-European, and it was simply between the animate and inanimate. In the Proto-Indo-European languages, there were sometimes pairs of words associated with a specific gender but had the same meaning as the active principle was *hpgwnis (animated), but as a physical entity *peh2yr.
(inanimate). The water, the other vital element, as a living, moving essence was \( *\text{h2ēp} \) (animated), but as an inert and motionless element \( *\text{tyd} \) (inanimate). If one of the genders coincided with divine status, it was, as a rule, the animate. In this case, we see Agni or ‘fire’ and Apah ‘the water’ as the recipient role of hymns [17, p.135], [18, p.71]. With the extinct distinction of gender in the Modern Indo-European language, each new dialect used the main word for general fire based on its linguistic process [19, p.146].

There are a few examples from other Indo-European languages for fire as \( \text{h2ēhxtr} \) and \( \text{peh2yōr} \). The former derives from the verbal root \( *\text{h2ēhxv} \) = burn and the weak root \( *\text{HeHl} \) [20, p.374]. It is the proto-Iranian \( *\text{āt} \) from this root, which first meant fireplace. Helmut Rix believes that \( *\text{āt} \) may be cognate with the PIE \( 3^\text{rd} \) root \( *\text{h2ēh₁s} \) ‘to dry up’ [21, p.257]. Moreover, \( *\text{āt} \) in the New Persian and \( *\text{ātār} \) in the Old Persian can be derived from the PIE \( *\text{xehxstr} \) or \( *\text{āt(ē)r} \) [4, p.202].

Then, \( *\text{āt} \) in the Old Persian has evolved into the \( *\text{ātāx} \) in the Middle Persian, \( *\text{ātā} \) into the New Persian, and \( *\text{ātāx} \) into the domestic dialect [22, p.16]. The first priest of the fire was addressed \( \text{atavaran} \) in Avestan and \( \text{avthar} \) in old Indian [23, p.267], which cannot pertain to the \( *\text{āt} \) word [4, p.202]. About the PIE \( *\text{bhrehvātēr} \), some attempt has been made to compare it with Old Indian \( \text{bhṛrāt} \) ‘bearer, preserver, protector, husband’, which derives from a PIE root to mean protector. On the contrary, Oswald Szezerenyi proposes that it can be composed of \( *\text{bhrr} \) (-zero-grade of bher- ‘carry, bear’) + \( *\text{h2ēhxtr} \) fire. It is reasonable to assume that in Proto-Indo-European families, they would assign the young males to procure firewood and take care of the household fire [4, p.84], [20, p.39].

IV. THE SACRED FIRE AMONG THE ANCIENT IRANIANS

In the Iranian mythology Hososhaangha, the king of the Pēshdăd dynasty has to do with the discovery of fire. According to Shah Nameh, once, the king met a monster by chance and threw a huge stone to kill it. The stone stroke a rock and immediately came out sparks of fire. In a Pahlavi text named Bundahishn, this assigns to Mashyva and Māshyahān. They are the first human couple in Zoroastrianism who was brought into being by Ahura Mazdāh. Based on Old Iranian texts, the first ancestor of the human race extracted fire from the plane tree and box tree, i.e., after blowing the fire; they could produce a flame, which they fed with dry leaves of lotus, palm, and myrtle [24, p.9].

Herodotus gives an account of the Persian customs, “it is not their custom to make and set up statues as temples and altars, but those who make such they deem foolish. Since I suppose, because they never believed the gods, as do the Greeks, to be in the likeness of men; but they call the whole circle of heaven Zeus, and to him, they offer sacrifice on the highest peaks of mountains; they also sacrifice to the sun and moon and earth and fire and water winds. They did not build altars or kindle fire; they did not use libations, music, fillets, and barely meal” [14, p.17]. Herodotus reports that the Persians did not build altars to pray fire [15, p.164]. We observe in Old Iranian texts that libation is used in Persian and Indian cults. The drinking of Haoma (the sacred plant) was one of the chief ceremonies during a sacrifice. Moreover, the Persians had fire-temples called dāityō gātus, house of the law, and Darius the Great at Bihstun rock in Kimanshah province expressed displeasure that the Gaumata the Magian (a tribe of the Medes) demolished the temples of gods [25, pp.78-9]. Hauq quotes from Pausanias, a famous Greek traveler, and geographer of the 2nd century, about the fire-worship of the Magian class: A room was in the temples of the Persians where have been found ashes from burnt woods [25, p.11]. Herodotus points to Croesus, whom Cyrus the Great decided to throw into the fire [14, p.111], and this declaration may show that Cyrus the Great did not believe in Zoroastrianism and did not venerate fire [24, p.52]. He (III, 15-16) writes about Cambyses, “he entered the house of Amasis, straightway he bade carry Amasis’ body out from its place of burial and commanded to burn it; for the Persians hold fire to be a god” [26, p.23].

The Indo-Europeans venerated fire as a holy element, which burnt in the perpetual hearth of their temples. After the migration of the Indo-Iranians to central Asia, they brought the fire rituals to the new settlements, and the Iranians, as we know, connected with the naphtha springs, which there were in the areas of Tiflis, Salain, Shemakhi, and Baku and Mesopotamia until Darius the Great period [27, p.137]. It is reasonable to say that rituals are more remaining than a theological system, and the principal gods of the Zoroastrian cult concerning water and fire are still the same as those of the rustic customs of the ancient Stone Age [28, p.3]. In the Zoroastrian religion, the cult of the sacred fire was the main distinguishing of this ancient faith. Fire plays a significant role in the Zoroastrian ceremonies and rituals. It is the personified symbol of righteousness and the son of Ahura Mazdāh in Avestan texts. There were the binding duties of the five daily prayers for every Zoroastrian person related to a weapon in the fight against evil or Ahriman. In this ceremony, prayer bound the sacred cord, washed both hands, and his eyes gazed at the symbol of righteousness, fire [30, p.200].

Fire is a purifying factor, which results in heat and light [31, p.148]. We find a large number of texts in Avesta about its importance, “we praise fire, the divine purifier, and we would approach you two, O primeval ones in the house of this thy holy Fire, O Ahura Mazdāh, Thou most bounteous Spirit! Who brings pollutions to this (Thy flame) he wilt Thou cover with pollution” [29, pp.273, 280], or in Vendidād “Whereover the wind shall bring the perfume of the fire thereunto the fire of Ahura Mazdāh shall go and kill thousands of unseen Daevas, thousands of friends, the brood of darkness” [32, p.112]. In the following parts, we will indicate the relation of fire with the Iranian themes that originate in the Indo-European and Indo-European Periods.

3. Proto-Indo-European
V. Fire Cults and Beliefs Among the Lurs from the Ancient Times

A. Fire and Family

As mentioned, the Lur tribes, as a group of ancient people among Iranian peoples, have retained some Indo-European and Indo-Iranian customs. One of these is the relationship between the word of fire and family. It is worth considering that Lurs, especially those who have protected the ancient customs more than modern Iranian people, use the word ‘fire’ for family. There is nowadays an anecdote in the Persian language as known his oven is blind, which refers to someone who does not have any children; when a lur person wants to pray for another person, he uses the phrase of may your fire keep blazing, that is, ‘may your family stay alive’. This belief should indicate an ancient tradition, and we ought to search for its roots.

It became clear that the earlier inventions and natural phenomena like fire, hunting, fishing, burying, the use of skin, and magic-religious terms for animals have roots in the Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods [33, p.60]. The Indo-Europeans utilized fire in their religious rituals, and it was the principal factor in the Indo-European rites. There is significant evidence for its importance among the early Indo-Europeans because the sanctified phenomena have to do with the geographical environment, and Indo-European texts and those of the Vedic and Avestan talk about the mortal cold. The fire and hearth also had a prominent role in the Indo-European societies [4, p.263].

In the Proto-Indo-European societies, the domestic hearth placed at the center of each house belonged to a family and was utilized in religious and social ceremonies. An altar gave a particular impression of the Indo-European religious faiths. Thus, these faiths connected ancestor adoration with the fire, and the domestic hearth turned into the symbol of family. In the customs of the Romans, Greeks, and Indo-Aryans, a new fire was found with the beginning of a new domestic establishment. After performing some rituals around the fire, a child was accepted into the family in ancient Greece. Therefore, the hearth had a significant part in gathering the Indo-European family around each other, and there have been a large number of fireplaces among the excavated cemeteries of the Indo-European cultures [4, p.263].

B. Fire and Oath

When we sit near an aged Lur person, he swears on the fire to emphasize the accuracy and truthfulness of his claim, although there may not be any fire around him to prove it. As it was said, Zoroastrian fire is the holiest emblem and the most original symbol of universal light that is Ahura Mazda’s fire. Indeed. Moreover, fire is the significant sanctifier of physical
impureness and the best sanctifier of spiritual dirtiness or evil
[23, p.107]. Therefore, Zoroaster in the Gathas points out that
fire distinguishes between the innocent and guilty person and
the incorporeal and corporeal world [37, p.22], [23, p.107].
The ordeal was considered the indicator of innocence and guilt
in legal claims. If it were very troublesome to discover the
truth by legal evidence, the contesting parties would be put to
physical ordeal [23, pp.15, 18]. The two ordeals in ancient
Iranian texts are called the warm ordeal and that of cold. The
former (var i garm) was practiced with the molten metal on the
chest or consisted of walking through fire [38, p.305]. Among
some Indo-European languages like the Celtic and Germanic
languages, the word for the oath (*hxehx-i-to) derives from
the root of *hlei ‘go’ i.e., one goes about a fire in swearing an
oath [4, p.61]. In the Manichean texts, the fire applies ādur waxšan yōzdahr for the clean-burning fire [39, p.26].

In Indian mythology about the judicial procedure, Mithra
and Varuna connect with titles related to natural phenomena.
The former also gazes down at the covenants to oversee those
who maintain the covenant and break it [33, p.3].

There are some instances in the sacred texts about taking an
oath, which have the manner of a curse. Mithra, the angel of
truth and treaty, goes along with a Dami Upamana at the
ordeal court [23, p.106]. In Iranian mythology Siyavasharan, an
Iranian hero passes through the fire to prove his innocence.
In a Middle Persian text, Shāyišt Neshāyast gives an account of
the six fire ordeals. In reality, this chapter writes about the
fire, which primarily plays a significant role in the fire test at
the end of the world or the last judgment [30, p.48]. In the
Persian language, the word swearing an oath comes from this
ancient custom; Saokǝntavant in Avesta as an adjective means
havving sulfur, which evolved into sogand (burn or swear) in
the new Persian language [41, p.54].

C. Fire and Soul of the Deceased

Contrary to the ancient Mesopotamian beliefs, the Indo-
Iranians believed that the body is mortal, but the soul will
survive in another world where the Indian Yama or Iranian
Yima rules. The Avestan and Pahlavi texts write about two
different worlds: the earthly/physical world and the heavenly/
mental. In Zoroastrian faith, everybody comprises ‘Tan’
(body), ‘Farnah’ (splendor), ‘Fravahr’ (defending soul against
demonic forces), ‘Ruvan’ (ghost), and ‘Boy’ (feeling). Fravahr
or soul links the body with the physical birth, and as long as
the body is alive, they will be together, and since Ahreman
(Satan) introduced death into the world, the body will
collapse, but the soul is immortal. Rituals concerning the
deceased have to do with Fravahrs (the soul of the dead),
and fire plays a significant role in these rituals. In the Zoroastrian
calendar, the first month of the year is dedicated to the soul
(Fravahr) of the deceased [42, pp.86, 121]. There is a close
coalition between the spirits of the deceased and the sacred
fire, and festivities should be held for the dead in the month
dedicated to fire [23, p.67]. In these rituals, ceremonial actions
concerning the first days are considerable. These ceremonies
were both to defend the soul from evil powers and give it the
strength to reach the underworld. On Thursdays, some Iranian
tribes light a fire at the grave of a loved one that has passed.
This ritual among Lur tribes lasted for one week; suggesting it
might be dedicated to the number seven and Ahura Mazda,
and the six immortals or Ameshaspandin.

Since there is a link between the soul and fire based on
Iranian mythology, they believe that the souls or Fravahrs will
return to the physical world on some occasions [33, p.12].

From the archaeological point of view, chiefs or head-tribes
first came to power as a result of increasing cattle, sheep, and
goats in the Proto-Indo-European societies in about 5200-5000
BCE. In other words, the spread of animals and their farming
in the steppes caused to increase in the rapid advancement of
chiefs [42, p.159]. With the immigration of the Indo-Iranians
into Central Asia, they kept in touch with the population of the
Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex (BMAC). They
were already in contact with urban centers such as northwest
India, Elam, and northern Mesopotamia. After inhabiting
Central Asia, they were impressed by charming non-Indo-
Iranian elements. They developed a new social structure which
was called khanate and ruled by a landlord (Khān) residing in
reinforced farmhouses (Qala) [43, p.5].

Afterward, kings replaced Khans and a ritual that celebrated
the fire. That is to say, the temple fire, like the dynastic one,
continued to assume the same traditional hearth fire.
Therefore, it has continued to burn a wood fire at the temple
[33, p.63]. In ancient Iran, when a king died, his successor's
first job was to manage the burial ceremonies. The flames of
the sacred fire gave a particular impression of God's blessing
for the king. When a king passed away, the fires were put out
and on regularly during the new king's coronation [44, p.76].
The same customs were current among the ancient Germans,
Greece, and India, where the fire was ceremonially extinguished at the death of the chiefs of the household or tride [4, p.263].

VI. CONCLUSION

The Iranian tribes lived in a nomadic way and kept the same
customs as Indo-Iranian and Indo-Europeans. This process is
seen in some noble Iranian tribes living in the same style as
the old customs. In this regard, we see some ceremonies that
have survived from the Indo-Iranian and Indo-European eras.
In the meantime, the same customs in primitive times have
reflected in ancient Iranian texts. Therefore, we can
reconstruct many customs and rituals of other Iranian tribes,
such as the Kurds and Bluchers, which live in a semi-nomadic
style.

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