

## The Comparative Study of Barsom( branch) in Religious Monuments of Zoroastrianism and Ancient Motifs of Iran

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### Abstract

Religious symbols and elements are integral and sacred part of one religion that sometimes play central role in religious ceremonies and while they are symbols of worshiped God, they are a link between other symbols, too. Barsom is among sacred religious symbols and elements that has a strong presence in both religious and historical texts and ancient motifs and this subject help us while we study the texts and motifs comparatively, we can deal with this question what evolution ,this Barsom has experienced in history of ancient Iran. According to Zoroastrian texts, Barsom was cluster or branches of sacred plant or tree of hoom or pomegranate which was being used by Zoroastrian person in religious ceremony and in order to praise and worship the Creator and gods and for endowments that allow human and animal life. Barsom was representative of presence of God's elements of plants and peremptory God in religious ceremonies and a means of holding religious worship celebration for creation of plant. Zoroastrians considered the sacred and divine value and history for Barsom and by creating a relationship between gods, kings and heroes in ancient times, they added value to the ceremonies and redoubled adherents and religious people's faith to ritual symbols. Also, ancient motifs confirm the evidence of Zoroastrian texts based on Barsom usage in religious ceremonies. Ancient objects and motifs such as bronzes of Lorestan to lithography of Sassanid era, that belong to religious places, emphasizes on religious importance of this sacred element in Iranian religions. Existence of Barsom in religious and holy places such as temples (Sorkh dam and Jeihoon), catacomb and in kings' coronation ceremony also reflects the religious and political aspect of Barsom.

The existing branch of plant in bronzes of Lorestan which possibly belong to Fe-II and Fe-III, it seemed to be the first signs of Barsom in history of Iran which first were appeared as a branch of date palm or pomegranate tree but later the role of Barsom has been more important in Davud's shop catacomb that probably belongs to Mede period, and in next changes until the end of Sasanian periods, increased to several branches of plants or trees. In Jeihoon treasure that probably belongs to Achaemenid period, the role of this branch or plant on votive plaques that the clergyman wear, reflects the another evolution of this sacred religious symbol. Also, obtained firebox of Cappadocia who was a member of Achaemenid empire at that time, has the magi material role in four sides of itself that is on hand of prayer

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and praise. This tradition was continued in Seleuci and Parthian periods , in Fars that partakes governed and in stone motif near Perspolis that a clergyman was seen with camouflage and Barsom. In great statues of Antiochus III, Apollo or Mehr, Zeus in Nimrudagh, Izadmehr was seen holding a Barsom and this is representing of new evaluation that this sacred plant which in the past was used in Mogan's hand and in prayer ceremony, in this works, was seen in great Izad's hand and in coronation petroglyph of Ardeshir II in Tagh bostan, he is holding a Barsom in his hand ,too. Petroglyph of Ardeshir Babakan in Naghshe Rostam shows the scene that Ahouramazda bestowed kingdom, authority and king's spirituality position to the founder of Sassanid kingdom in the form of ring symbol and Barsom.

So, in adaptive approach, we can describe the discrepancies and subscriptions of Barsom usage in this way that Barsom in its evolution of Lorestan bronzes to Petroglyph of Ardeshir Babakan and Tagh bostan, was used to perform ceremonies and spiritual rites in religious ceremony and this sacred branch apparently in the first usage was in the authority of religious people who used them as a plant symbol of creation in their prayer and praise ceremonies. This issue was continued even after that religious ceremonies were affected by Zoroastrian beliefs and Zoroastrian religious people. But in the last step of its evolution, it was affected by religious politics of Sasanian kingdom and its royal ideology and converted to symbol of political and religious / spiritual power of kings. In another words, the sacred branch from religious and ritual ceremony was converted to political and religious symbol of a powerful king. It seems that the kings and Zoroastrian religious people with representation of Barsom in hands of goddesses such as Ahoramazda and Mehr and bestowing it to Kings in enthronement ceremonies that were represented bestowing political and religious power from Godessto kings, actually considered Barsom as a symbol of their legal power and linked religion to politics.

**Keywords:** Barsom, Zoroastrianism, lithography, religious symbols, plant.

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