

Persian translation of this paper entitled:  
واکاوی نگاره‌های خورشید در نقوش فرش ترنج خورشیدی فراهان  
is also published in this issue of journal.

## Original Research Article

# Examining Sun Motifs in Patterns of Farahan Sun Medallion Rugs

Somayeh Salehi<sup>\*1</sup>, Hossein Noroozi<sup>2</sup>, Hojat-Allah Reshadi<sup>3</sup>

1. M.A. in Arts Research, Faculty Member, Department of Carpet, Faculty of Art, Arak University, Arak, Iran.
2. M.A. in Crafts, Faculty Member, Department of Crafts, Faculty of Art, Arak University, Arak, Iran.
3. M.A. in Arts Research, Faculty Member, Department of Carpet, Faculty of Art, Arak University, Arak, Iran.

Received: 30/04/2020 ;

accepted: 27/09/2020 ;

available online: 21/03/2021

## Abstract

**Problem statement:** Each of the carpets of different regions of Iran can carry a message, concept, or symbol behind their patterns, the discovery of which will accentuate understanding the authenticity and provide the historical, cultural, and ritual values of Iranian rug designs. The carpets woven in Markazi province are among the prominent carpets of Iran; one of the authentic carpets of this province is "Farahan Sun Medallion" rug, to which little attention has been paid.

**Research objectives:** The primary purpose of this study, which is of a qualitative and descriptive-analytical type, is to analyze the sun symbols in this carpet, to discover the conceptual relationship and its special connection with the holiness of the sun, as well as to introduce Farahan sun medallion rugs.

**Research method:** To search this connection, by reviewing the cultural-historical background of the place of this carpet, namely the ancient county of Farahan, the importance of the sun in the past rituals and culture of this land was taken into account. Then, the samples purposefully collected from library and the Internet documents, based on the structure and elements of the visual index, were divided into three categories: main, vase-pattern and Vagirei (recurring patterns).

**Conclusion:** In quest of sun motifs in these three categories, elements such as the three-branched flower tree, the lady sun, the lotus, the geometric sun flower, etc. can be realized, which are classified as human, animal, plant and abstract. Finally, due to the multiplicity and variety of the usage of sun motifs in this type carpet and its conceptual connection with the sun, the patterns of this carpet can indicate the holiness of the sun in the history of this area as well as other regions of Iran and the manifestation of this concept on Farahan sun medallion rugs.

**Keywords:** *Rug, Farahan, Sun Symbols, Sun Medallion.*

## Introduction

Although it is true that in different regions of Iran, sun symbols in different and many of them play the

role of central medallion, which sometimes, such as Shamse (sun-shaped design), resembles the sun, none of them is known as much as Farahan sun medallion rugs. Farahan sun medallion rug is special,

\* Corresponding author: +989186402212, S-Salehi@araku.ac.ir

which is also known as Farahan sun medallion beyond Iran's borders and its image with the same name can be seen in a lot of literature. One of the oldest of this type exists in the Carpet Museum of Iran, the registration information of which has been prepared by "Siavash Azadi"<sup>1</sup>. The registration information place an emphasis on one central medallion and two semi-medallions at top and bottom of this rug, which presents the three positions of the sun in the sky (Interviewee 2). Although the various of this rug, which are usually relatively small in size (about one and a half square meters), are about 100 to 200 years old, it cannot be assumed that this design was initiated abruptly. Since its antiquity backs to the period of the found samples, possibly, this design, like other famous designs of Iranian rugs, has its roots in the distant past and has been formed gradually and its evolution cannot be traced; only the remaining samples or images are available for further investigation.

Since most of the Iranian rugs have their roots in the culture and rituals of the weaving region and contain symbols and concepts behind their patterns and designs, Farahan sun medallion rug can also be considered as one of the renowned rugs of Iran, making these symbols and concepts worthwhile to be studied. On the other hand, the reputation of this rug for having a sun medallion can cause more curiosity in recognizing the origin of this rug and identifying its types. Taking these concepts into consideration, many queries were raised. How is this rug connected to the sun and what symbols of the sun are involved? Since this rug originated from a land called Farahan, what was the importance of the sun in Farahan in the past?

### Research method, hypothesis and statistical population

The main question in this descriptive-analytical article is: "What is the relationship between the sun and Farahan sun medallion rugs?" In an attempt to answer this question, it can be hypothesized that just as in other parts of Iran where ancient rituals, including the sun holiness, have caused the emergence of sun symbols on the carpets of these regions, the holiness of the sun

in the history of Farahan can also have made the sun symbols appear on this carpet.

In this research, which is of a qualitative type, data collected through library studies and field research. However, as this type of carpet has not been woven in Farahan region for at least more than a hundred years and its samples are very rare and exist mostly in the hands of foreign collectors. Rug experts and traders in Arak and Tehran markets and international experts in the field were interviewed either in person or in cyberspace. As the weavers and producers of this carpet are not alive, they were not among the interviewees. Through purposive sampling method, the interviewees were selected. In purposive sampling, the judgment of a person was used as a criterion in selecting items with a specific purpose. In this method, participants are selected by the researcher because they either have a specific feature or are highly knowledgeable about a particular item. This method is mostly used when there is a need for expert samples (Ranjbar, Haghdoost, Salsali, Khoshdel, Soleimani, Bahrami, 2012, 243). Eventually, once studies are carried out, 7 experts and specialists, whose characteristics are mentioned in Table 1, shaped the research community of the interviewees. Besides, in finding the samples of Farahan sun medallion rugs, the assessable statistical population consists of photographs of this carpet available in library and the Internet documents, the number of which does not exceed thirty. These samples were selected using the purposive sampling method and based on this inclusion criteria: having at least one of the major characteristics of Farahan sun medallion rugs, such as its famous border, similar medallion or the structure of medallion and double semi-medallion, etc. In the purposive method, all items having some criteria; this method required selecting items that met a significant criterion. In fact, among the principles of sampling in qualitative research were purposive sampling and non-selection of samples based on statistical probabilities, lack of samples and a comprehensive review of each sample (ibid., 244).

Then, the selected images were analyzed visually and qualitatively and, based on the structure and

Table 1. Interviewees' specifications. Source: authors.

Interviewees	Gender		Education	Field of activity
	Female	Male		
1		*	Associate Degree	Carpet expert and researcher
2	*		Master's	Carpet museum specialist
3		*	Bachelor's	Carpet trader and manufacturer
4		*	Diploma	Carpet trader and manufacturer
5		*	Diploma	Carpet trader and manufacturer
6		*	Master's	Carpet trader and manufacturer
7		*	Bachelor's	Carpet trader and manufacturer

components, were divided into three categories: main, vase-pattern and Vagirei (recurring patterns). After that, the sun motifs common in their designs were studied and analyzed in four sections, namely human, animal, plant and abstract.

## Research background

Regarding the subject of this article, i.e. sun symbols, Mousavilar and Rasooli (2010) in an article entitled “A study of the mythological phenomena of sun and Mehr in the Persian hand-made carpet” has identified and categorized sun symbols in Iranian carpets. It indicates the existence of sun symbols in the carpets of different regions of Iran; however, in this research, these symbols have been analyzed specifically in Farahan sun medallion rugs. Vis-à-vis the medallion concept, Mirza Amini and Bassam (2013) in an article entitled “A study on the symbolic significance of medallion in Persian carpet” has studied the concepts related to medallion in Iranian carpets. Among the issues that have also been addressed are the relationship between medallion and pond in Iranian gardens and water holiness in pre-Islam rituals in Anahita temples and Mehr temples of as well as medallion as placelessness and a symbol of the concept of unity in plurality and plurality in unity in the Islamic period, etc. However, the present study does not take into account the concept of medallion as a manifestation of water or placelessness in Islamic mysticism; it specifically analyzes the sun concepts and symbols in Farahan sun medallion

rugs. Also, Shahparvari and Mirza-amini (2016) in an article entitled “Manifestation of sun motif in Iranian carpet” have discussed the concepts and analyzed the lady sun motif in Iranian carpets. These three articles can be considered as the background of this article in terms of dealing with solar symbols and the concept of the medallion; however, in the present study, the relationship between these concepts and Farahan sun medallion rugs has been examined is surveyed.

## Background of the holiness of the sun in Farahan County

In most regions of Iran, the manifestation of sun symbols on carpets can be searched and this can be related to ancient Iranian rituals and the effect of the holiness of the sun on weavers. Therefore, to know more about Farahan sun medallion rug, like other carpets in other parts of Iran, it is of great importance to know its origin, that is, the county of Farahan and its ancient rituals. As mentioned in the appellation of Farahan (a place of the shining glory or a wide place of abundance), it can be understood that Farahan (a very shining place), which means Fermihan (a shining religious place), must be the known Fardjan (Farthkan means a large place or ancient Far- Dayan which means the place of glory fire). This concept is most likely related to its relatively magnificent shrine, which is the place of its famous ancient fire temple (Zamaninia, 2003, 147). Regarding the relationship between this fire temple and the sun holiness, some verses from Ferdowsi can be referred

to, where he mentioned Farnbagh as Khurad; it seems to originate from the original name of Fardjan, i.e. Far-Dayan (igneous glory). On the other hand, As worship of the fire of Bahram in paragraph 19 of the small Avesta and its corresponding Pazend, the same fire temple of Farnbagh Ka-Ryan is stated under the name of the paradise fire of Azarkhordad (the fire of the sun), which is not unrelated to Ferdowsi's references. This recent name of the fire temple, along with the names of three other famous ancient fire temples, namely Azargoshnasb (male lion fire, between Sahand and Maragheh), Azarbarzin Mehr (Qadamgah in Nishapur) and Vanabak (The Deity Mehr, the same temple of Mazar-e-Sharif), indicates that the famous ancient fire temples in Iran were originally dedicated to the Sun God (*ibid.*, 148). Hence, Zamaninia (2003) mentions that, like other ancient fire temples in Iran, the fire temple of Farahan, not mentioning the Zoroastrian religion, was dedicated to the sun god.

Accordingly, before dealing with the visual analysis and recognizing sun symbols in Farahan sun medallion rugs, the background of the sun holiness in this region was scrutinized and it was found that the existence of the ancient fire temple of Farahan can be a manifestation of worshipping the sun god in the history of this region. Like those of other regions in Iran, Farahan sun medallion rug is formed in a historical background in which the sun was sanctified and respected.

### Identification and classification of different types of Farahan sun medallion rugs

Having examined the background of the holiness of the sun in the origin of the emergence of Farahan sun medallion rugs, we can visually analyze and identify the drawings of sun motifs in this type of rug. To have a better identification of Farahan sun medallion rugs, it is essential to find several samples. In this research, first, by interviewing carpet traders and experts in the field, the main features and characteristics of this type of carpet have been recognized, the ones that make this carpet distinguishable from other. Then, on

the basis of library studies and the interview results, pictures of more samples have been collected from library documents and reputable carpet sites or from the collector galleries.

In the collected samples, in addition to the existence of some similarities in structure, patterns, color and size, some differences can be noticed, based on which sun medallion rugs can be classified into three categories: a) main, b) vase-pattern and c) Vagirei (recurring patterns). In the present article, a total of 28 pictures have been surveyed, including 5 vase-pattern samples, 6 Vagirei samples and 17 main samples.

In Fig. 1 of each category, one of the most prominent samples is shown. The main and vase-pattern categories are common in the structure of medallion two semi-medallions; their main difference is in the repetition of vase in the vase-pattern type. However, in the Vagirei type, the marginal recurring pattern of the main type, in which the geometric sun flower is prominent, is repeated within the carpet text. To know more about Farahan sun medallion rugs, different samples of each category are described and analyzed.

#### • Category 1: main

The one shown in Fig. 2 is the most common design known by this name. Its border is structurally wider than usual and has a large central medallion and two semi-medallions with a serrated frame at both top and bottom, attached to the border. Also, from four corners of the rug, three-branched flowers (Fig. 3) have grown horizontally from the border. The background color is light cream and that of the border is navy blue. The three-branched flowers and two serrated half-stems that resemble a half cypress (Fig. 4) and are attached to both borders and resemble two half pillars are normally single colored. They typically have the same color as the serrated frame of the medallion, the three-branched flowers and the geometric sun flower in the four corners of the rug, which is a kind of red-orange. Interviewees 4 and 5 recognized this color as one of the distinguishing features of this carpet.

The recurring patterns in the border and geometric red flowers and a few large arms in four borders are among the unique features of this type of carpet. The





Fig. 1. Types of Farahan sun medallion rugs based on structural differences and patterns. A) Recurring Patterns, Repetition of the sun flower pattern on the border of context. Source: Personal Collections. B) Vase-Pattern, The presence of a medallion and two semi-medallion, and repetition of the vase, usually in triple rows. Source: Personal Collections. C) The presence of a medallion and two semi-medallions and repetition of three-branched flowers and sun flowers. Source: Souresafil, 1998, 38.



Fig. 2. Farahan, 195\*130 cm, second half of the 13th century A.H., Golestan Palace. Sourasafil, 1998, 38.

interviewee 7 says: “It is because of this recurring patterns in the border that the design of this carpet is called sun. It is also one of the methods of identifying this design”. Also, in this border design, there exist golden vases with two curved branches on both sides, around the handles of which there are red bushes attached back to back (Figs. 5, 6 & 7). In this sample, what makes us contemplate is the difference between the color of the semi-medallions and the central medallion and the close resemblance of serrated frame of the lower semi-medallion to two lions sitting on his haunches, with both forepaws on the ground; their heads are next to one another and their tails are bent upwards. Additionally, the serrated pattern on their back resembles a heavy mane (Figs. 8 & 9), which of course is debatable. Proving this resemblance certainly requires more documents and evidence. The reason that this resemblance was mentioned was simply because of the topics mentioned by the interviewees 1 and 7, as well as the common association of the concept of the sun with the lion in ancient Iranian art, yet there is no reason to confirm it. Having serrated half-stems attached to both borders, which are reminiscent of half cypresses, this rug in some ways resembles the rug



known as “Nazem” or “Haj Khanami” design in Fars Province. Interviewees 5, 4 and 3 confirm this (Fig. 10). Another example from the first or main category is associated with the role of the lady sun (Fig. 11). In this rug, in the center of the sun medallion, there is an



Fig. 3. Three-Branded flower tree, a pattern from the context of Fig. 2 coming horizontally out of the border.



Fig. 4. Half cypress, a pattern from Fig. 2 which is attached to border.



Fig. 5. Recurring border pattern of Fig. 2.



Fig. 6. Geometric sun, large square flowers in the border of Fig. 2, some people believe that sun medallion is the same geometric flower.

octagonal face of a lady sun with a unibrow (Fig. 12), which is placed in the middle of a flower and effectively plays the role of the sunbeams due to its special shape. It should be mentioned that this flower, in other rugs of this style, is usually found in the four corners of the middle frame, not in the center of this medallion. In addition, on four outer sides of the medallion and in the context of the carpet, there are four octagonal human faces with a bush similar to a crown on their heads; they look more like a demon with two horns and a beard (Fig. 13). Among other similarities between this rug and other similar types is having four three-branched flowers of the same color with the middle flower of the medallion, which is horizontally shown in the border and are attached to it. Other three-branched flowers are scattered in smaller sizes and in diverse colors in the carpet. Likewise, there are geometric paisley patterns and motifs of chickens and other animals which are diminutive and abstract, just like the patterns which are common in carpets in Fars province.



Fig. 7. Back to back paisley patterns under the border vase pattern of Fig. 2.



Fig. 8. Two lions with connected head, lower semi-medallion in Fig. 2.

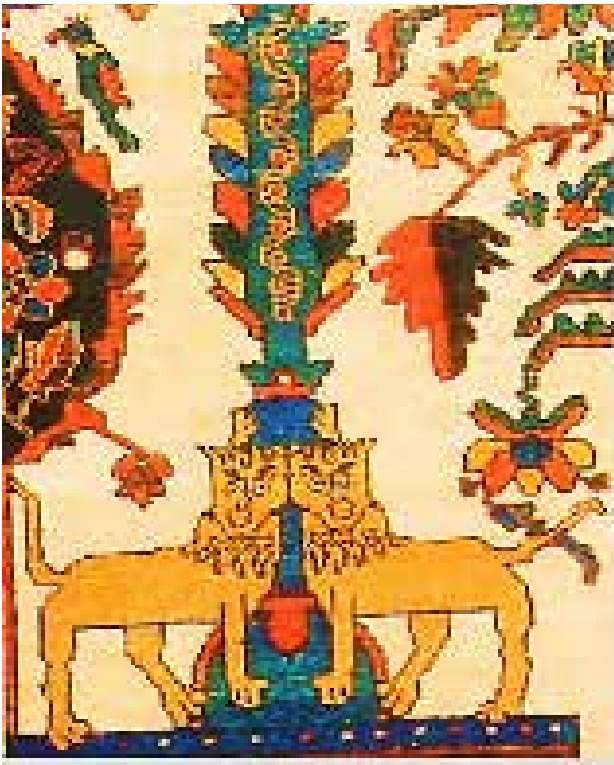


Fig. 9. Two lions protecting the life tree, Shalmzar, Chaharmahal, 14th century A.H. . Source: Mousavilar & Rasooli, 2010.

Generally, the designs of this carpet are drawn geometrically and are reminiscent of the scattered and geometric designs of Fars province carpets. The two semi-medallions are also blazoned at the top and bottom of the rug and are attached to the border. The frame of these semi-medallions, like that of the medallion frame, has the shape of triangular teeth, with a flower blooming from the top of each vertex (Interviewer 6) “The color in these rugs is typically cream in the background and navy blue in the border and frame of the medallion and semi-medallion. Besides, is uniquely designated to the three-branched flowers, the flower in the center of the medallion and a row of parallel teeth with occasional flowers rising from them on both left and right sides of the carpet.” Of course, in this carpet, at the top and bottom of the thorn, there are two same hexagonal medallion tips, the pattern of which is significant (Fig. 14). The border of this rug does not follow similar patterns appearing in



Fig. 10. Hezargol, Pseudo-Nazem vase rug, Farahan, 1900 A.D., 205 \* 144 cm, personal collections, two half cypresses attached to border in this rug is the evidence of their prevalence and the weaver's familiarity with these half cypresses in Farahan county. Source: Personal collection.



Fig. 11. Farahan, 137\*211 cm. Source: Zhouleh, 2002.





Fig. 12. Lady sun in the center of the medallion in Fig. 11.

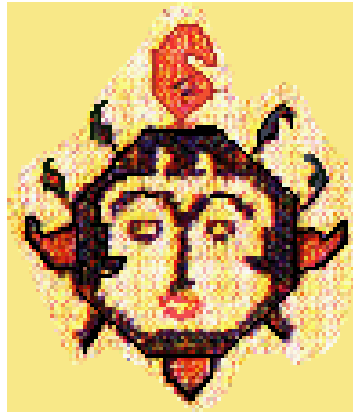


Fig. 13. Lady sun/ four demons in the context of Fig. 11.



Fig. 14. Medallion top with abstract pattern in the context of Fig. 11.

typical sun carpets and includes the famous samovar pattern in its middle margin (Fig. 15). This carpet, in its two narrow margins, carries the paisley pattern which is common in the borders of “Sarbandi”<sup>2</sup> paisley carpets (Fig. 16). Other samples of the first category (i.e. the main one) can be seen in Figs. 17, 18, 19 & 20 and other original samples with the lady sun pattern can be seen in Figs. 21 & 22.

### • Category 2: vase-pattern

In this category of rugs, the medallion is almost in the same style and context, except that its monochromatic serrated frame has been reduced to very delicate teeth, however, the patterns inside the medallion are the same as the ones in the first category and the top and bottom semi-medallions are in the form of mountain-like triangular staircase decorated with colorful small round flowers repeated in parallel diagonal rows like the patterns in Mihrabs (Fig. 24). The context of the rug, like the one in plain rugs, is simply left empty and there are only some vases with two curved handles on the sides, resembling mostly cypresses (Fig. 26). These are blazoned in rows of three at the top and bottom of the rug and the middle vase is served as the top of the medallion. Around the border in the context, a chain of geometric and the same-color paisley patterns is repeated, leading us to the Fars Province (Figs. 23, 25 & 27). In the main border of most samples with vase patters, the same vases in the context are repeated, appearing vertically in the side margins. In

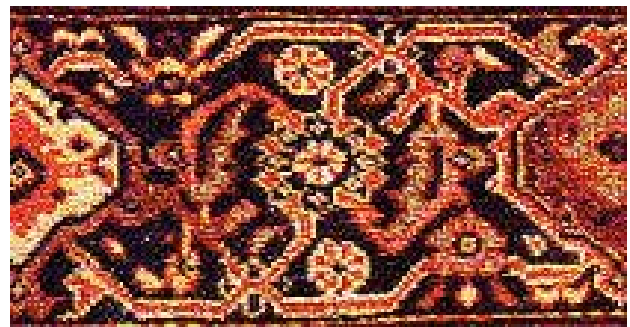


Fig. 15. Marginal recurring pattern of samovar with an 8-petal flower lily in the middle of two rotating leaves as a symbol of fish in Fig. 11.

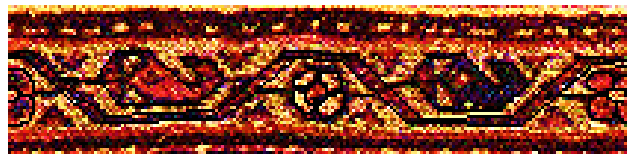


Fig. 16. Narrow marginal recurring pattern in Fig. 11, known as Mobar or Sarbandi.

the narrow margin, the repetition of geometric color paisley patterns can often be realized (Fig. 28).

### • Category 3: patterns

In these samples, the recurring patterns are used, which are often recurring in the border of the main category of Farahan sun medallion along with the red geometric flowers in the four corners of the border. In the caption of Fig. 29, the date 1900 A.D. and the name of a local village near Arak can be seen; in this picture, the recurring pattern in the border is different from the one in the context, where octagonal lotuses are repeated in





Fig. 17. Farahan, 203\*143 cm, 1890. Source: <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2018/rugs-sale-118873/lot.3.html>



Fig. 18. Farahan, 215\*147 cm, 1900 A.D. . Source: personal collection.

its main border (Fig. 31). Nevertheless, in Fig. 30, both the border and the text are woven base on the famous sun medallion pattern. In this regard, the interviewees 4, 5 and 7 said: “This geometric sunflower motif, even if it does not appear on the border and is placed anywhere on the carpet, represents the sun medallion of Farahan and typically emerges in four corners of the border, but we know it as the medallion.”

In (Fig. 36), the combination of this recurring pattern at the top and bottom borders with the recurring fish pattern on both sides of a Houshang-Shahi's carpet has been very significant. The renowned picture known as Houshang-Shahi combined with a recurring fish pattern (Fig. 33) can be seen on the top; this picture is taken from Persepolis designs (Fig. 36). In this picture, above the head of the middle figure, a sun pattern is noticeable with a rhombus shape, two eyes, two eyebrows, no mouth and horizontal sun beams of the round head

that arises geometrically (Fig. 34). One example of patterned carpets in with recurring lady sun motifs is a painting entitled Houshang-Shahi (Fig. 35). This group is generally placed above the throne and behind the king in a semi-complete or complete form. Thus, producing such images, which not only has been used in carpets but also in other Iranian visual arts, displays the holiness of the Shah on the earth and his being supported by a single might; this is manifested in this way (Shahparvari & Mirza-amini, 2016, 61).

Accordingly, it can be stated that the famous Farahan sun medallion, as a recurring pattern with the presence of four red geometric sunflowers in four corners of this carpet, is consciously used to emphasize or follow the mythical concepts of the king and his supernatural powers, bearing a symbolic function.

Having introduced the three categories (main, vase-pattern and Vagirei) of Farahan sun medallion rug, other



Fig. 19. Farahan, 212\*183 cm. Source: [https://www.claremontrug.com/antique-oriental-rugs-carpet/RugImage.aspx?ImgUrl=http://www.claremontrug.com/assets/images\\_rugs/1690/1690\\_Antique-Oriental-Ferahan-Carpet-4-2x6-6.DBC8.jpg](https://www.claremontrug.com/antique-oriental-rugs-carpet/RugImage.aspx?ImgUrl=http://www.claremontrug.com/assets/images_rugs/1690/1690_Antique-Oriental-Ferahan-Carpet-4-2x6-6.DBC8.jpg)



Fig. 20. Horse cover, Farahan 120\*120 cm, second half of 19th century A.D. . Source: [http://www.turkoteck.com/misc\\_00071/ferahan.htm](http://www.turkoteck.com/misc_00071/ferahan.htm)

types of sun medallion rugs woven in Tabriz are very noteworthy. There is a woven sample of the Farahan sun medallion rug which is attributed to the northwestern region of Iran and Tabriz (Fig. 37). In this regard, the interviewee 1 said “A sample of this type can also be seen in Heris city in Azerbaijan province, but we cannot say with certainty that they follow the same pattern, it is just a coincidental similarity in form”. But in the book



Fig. 21. Farahan, 125\*193, 1850 A.D. . Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/B7ZTEdSHmR0/>



Fig. 22. Lady sun on medallion top, part of Fig. 21.



Fig. 23. Farahan, small rug, early 19th century. Source: personal collection.



Fig. 24. Farahan, small rug. Source: Personal collection.

of “The Persian Carpet” written by Cecil Edwards, in Heris rug section, there is a picture of this type of rug woven in Heris with this caption, “The medallions are taken from Arak, Tabriz designers are skilled imitators and rarely create a design” (Edwards, 1989, 85).

This sample matches the previous ones since it has a central medallion, semi-medallions, three-branched flowers and two half cypresses on both sides of the text, which attached to the border. However, using imaginary elements similar to the Chinese and Mongolian ones which are scattered in the context, such as dragons, birds and leopards ripping apart a deer, this sample does not adhere the plan. The famous samovar pattern has been used on the border (Fig. 38).

In general, as can be seen in Figs. 39 & 40, the medallion in Tabriz sun medallion carpets is quite round and regular and the beams coming out of the medallion, like Farahan sun medallions, are not serrated and parallel to each other. In contrast, they are like the

radii of a circle end to the center of the circle, forming equal and delicate triangles with a flower at the top. In addition, in most cases, their main borders are the same as famous medallions in Farahan sun medallion rugs, in which Sarbandi paisley patterns are used in the small margins and are mostly woven from silk.

Recognizing the different types of Farahan sun medallion rugs and describing their significant samples, we can now analyze the sun symbols in this type of rugs. Sun symbols in Farahan sun medallion rugs:

Mousavilar generally describes the visual representations of the sun and Mithraism in Iranian hand-woven rugs as follows:

- 1) Animals (lions, eagles or hawks, horses and fish);
- 2) Plants (Lotuses, Shah Abbasi Flowers, 12-petal Flowers, 8-petal Flowers, Pomegranates and Three-Branched Flowers);
- 3) Abstract and geometric (cross, seven-margin, four-part) (Mousavilar & Rasooli, 2010, 130).





Fig. 25. Farahan 135\*198 cm, early 20th century A.D. . Source: <https://nazmiyalantiquerugs.com/antique-rugs/persian-rugs/farahan/antique-persian-farahan-rug-70123/>



Fig. 26. Golden cypress vase with curved handles on both sides, part of Fig. 24.



Fig. 27. Staircase semi-medallion with recurring, colorful round flowers and connected paisley patterns in the same row around the context, Part of Fig. 24.



Fig. 28. Vertical repetition of vases on the main border, part of Fig. 25.



Fig. 29. Area rug, 110\*175 cm, 1900 A.D. . Source: personal collection.

As stated above, sun symbols the three above-mention categories, indicating that these sun motifs are used in carpets of all regions in Iran; however, in this study, the application of these symbols in Farahan sun medallion rugs was examined to understand the relationship between this type of rug design and the holiness of the





Fig. 30. Farahan, 125\*198 cm, 1870 A.D. . Source: <https://rugrabbit.com/node/162630>



Fig. 31. 8-petal lilies, with a four-pointed star in the center, part of Fig. 29.

sun. Accordingly, in this article, due to the existence of lady sun in the motifs of Farahan sun medallion rugs, human representation was also added to the category of the mentioned sun symbols. Therefore, among the above-mentioned visual representations, in Farahan sun medallion, the sun was traceable in the three-branched flowers, the abstract role of a special large flower in



Fig. 32. Recurring pattern in the context which is the same marginal recurring patterns in sun medallion rugs, part of Fig. 29.



Fig. 33. Varied fish recurring patterns in the context and side borders in rug shown in Fig. 36.

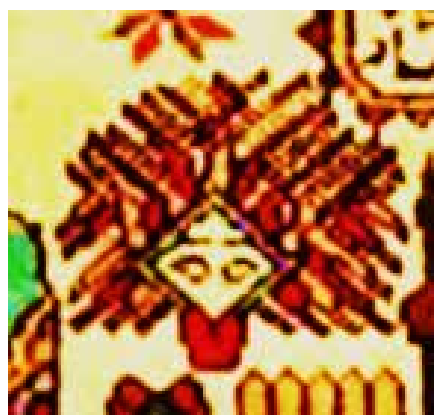


Fig. 34. Diamond sun woman on top of the Hushang Shah's crown, part of Fig. 36.





Fig. 35. Presence of three mythical figures of Hushang Shahi's symbols, part of Fig. 36.



Fig. 36. Compilation of sun medallion recurring patterns with Hushang Shahi's image, 1906 A. D., Farahan. Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bzn3eUMJlau/>

the four corners, triangular serrated patterns and beams of sunlight (the patterns around the medallion), even depicting the lady sun in the center of the medallion and the triple position of the medallion, i.e. the repetition of the medallion in the center and two semi-medallions at the top and the bottom.

As observed in the description of the samples of Farahan sun medallion rugs, "three-branched flower trees" have been used in all samples, thus, among these sun symbols, more attention can be given to the three-branched flower trees and its relationship with the sun. These three-branched flower trees symbolize the sun because, as it can be understood from ancient narratives, the three positions of the sun have long been of great significance in Iranian rituals and have carried deep secrets and each of these three positions has been

praiseworthy and has been considered important. According to "Hamzeh Esfahani", "Artaxerxes I of Persia" built three fire temples in Isfahan in just one day: one at sunrise, the other at noon when the sun was in the middle of the sky and the third one at sunset (Sho'ar, 1988, 38).

The high value given to constellations of the sun in Zoroastrianism has an observable connection with Mithraism. In the rituals of Mithraism, sunrise and sunset and the peak of the sun are of enjoyed special symbolic importance. Respective inscriptions and the block statues show that in the special ceremony of sacrificing the sacred cow, two people named "Koots" and "Kotopats" stand on both sides of Mitra. "Koots" represented the sunrise sun and "Kotopas" was the sign of the sunset and Mehr, which stands in the middle,





Fig. 37. Tabriz carpet with medallion and animals, around 1930 A.D. . Source: Edwards, 1989, 85.



Fig. 38. Lion and dragon battle, deer being ripped apart by leopard, eagle over three-branched flower tree in the context of Tabriz sun medallion carpet, part of Fig. 36.



Fig. 39. Tabriz, pair, silk, 1880 A.D. . Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/B2dbBhDpk3z/>

was the symbol of the midday sun (Samadi, 1988, 143). The superiority of the position of the midday sun in Mithraism was realized by placing Mitra between two saints (or perhaps two angels or half gods). After the three-flowered plants and three-branched flower plants became the mysterious symbol of the three stages of the sun, for a long time, the importance of the midday sun was emphasized by the longer middle branch (or flowers and leaves). In an unknown period of Sassanid art, this superiority had another manifestation. The branch or flower or the middle differs significantly in terms of the shape and nature of the two branches, the two flowers or the two lateral leaves and in this way the superiority of its position becomes more noticeable. Special Sassanid symbols with three crescents or three pomegranates on three-branched belong to this amphibian three-branched plants. Ackerman consider it probables that the three-branched moon-like tree

is a manifestation of the three position of the moon (Parham, 1992, 363 & 364).

If we generalize the triple position of the sun to Farahan sun medallion design, perhaps the repetition of the top and bottom semi-medallions can be perceived as a sign of the position of the sun at sunrise and sunset and the central medallion can be the sign of the sun

at noon. This was approved during the interview with Siavash Azadi. Another motif classified as abstract and geometric motifs is the one being repeated in the border (a red geometric sun-flower with several large branches). These sun motifs which are collected in different types of Farahan sun medallion rugs in Table 2 & Fig. 41.



Fig. 40. Tabriz, late 19th century A.D., 247\*366 cm, Haj Jalili, silk. Source: <https://www.claremontrug.com/antique-oriental-rugs-carpets/persian/neutral/tabriz-northwest-persian-2820>

## Conclusion

To have a better understanding of the various carpets of Iran, which usually contain symbolic patterns, attention can be paid to their origin in the history, as well as to the visual identification of these symbols. Among these symbolic motifs are the sun motifs that can be seen in many carpets of different regions of Iran. It can indicate the ancient rituals of Iran and reflect the holiness of the sun in these regions. One of these regions is Farahan, whose fire temple was based on the worship of the sun god, representing the holiness of the sun in the ancient rituals and culture of this region. The belief in the holiness of the sun, like ancient beliefs in other parts of Iran, can be associated with thoughts and beliefs of weavers to provide the required context to represent sun symbols in regional carpets.

Among these, one of the illustrious carpets of Farahan region is a sun medallion rug. To visually recognize and to identify the types and then to discover common sun symbols, the studied photos of the samples can be divided into three categories: main, vase-pattern and Vagirei (recurring patterns) in terms of structure and main elements. There are common motifs in all three categories, which are considered sun symbols, such as the three-branched flower tree, the lady sun and the

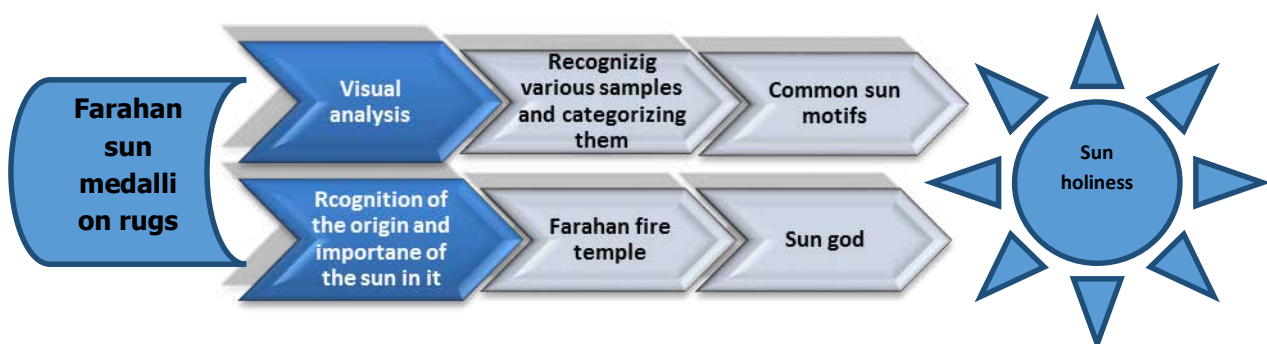












Fig. 41. The process of examining the relationship between Farahan sun medallion rugs and the holiness of the sun. Source: authors.

Table 2. Sun motifs in Farahan sun medallion rugs. Source: authors.

Type	Name	Pattern	Position	Color and size	Symbol	Picture
Human	Lady sun	Lady sun face	Medallion center	Linear radii and red lips, black hair and other components	Holy and heavenly might	
			Quadruple repetition	Medium, same color as context, with horns, beard, crown, red lips, black hair and other components	Holy and heavenly might	
			In combination with medallion top	Face with same color as context, red cheeks, black hair and other components	Holy and heavenly might	
Animal	Fish	Desultory fish motif, leaf fish	Border	Rather large, white-red	Affection symbol and protecting immortality	
Plant	Three-branched flower	Three-flowered or three-leaved Shrubs	Context and attached to the border	Large and red, the same color as the serrated frame of medallion and the sun flower in four corners of the border	The three positions of the sun and the superiority of the affection	
	Water lily	8- petal flower and simple 12-petals	Border and context	Relatively large and red	Symbol of affection and the concept of peace and life	
	Cypress	Cypress vase	Border and context	Relatively large with golden vases and colorful flowers, in three rows parallel to the medallion top	Holy might and immortality	
		Pillars of Half-cypress	On sides of the rug, attached to border	Of varying sizes, and the same color as three-branched flowers and medallion frame and geometric sun flower	Holy might and immortality	
	Medallion and semi-medallion	Big, serrated medallion and semi-medallion	Complete medallion in center and two semi-medallion at the top and bottom of context	Quite large, with a serrated frame of red color, with background of the same color as the context, usually cream	Symbol of the triple position of the sun in the morning, noon and evening in the sky	
Abstract - Conceptual	Flower-sun	Geometric flower with varying broken arms (14, 12 and 16-fold) -reminiscent of swastika	In the recurring pattern of the border, especially in four main corners	Relatively large and monochromatic red and the same color as medallion frame and three-branched flowers	Holiness of sun and affection	



central medallion and two and semi-medallions at the top and bottom of the carpet to symbolize the triple position of the sun, etc. .

According to the research findings, Farahan sun medallion rugs, due to the presence of sun motifs in a variety of types, can be connected to the holiness of the sun in the history of this region, like other regions of Iran.

## Endnote

1. One of the famous carpet experts and researchers

2. Sarband or Saraband is the name of a district around Arak, whose Botemir or Bote Sarbandi carpets belonging to Malmir village are globally recognised.

## Reference list

- Edwards, C. (1989). *The Persian Carpet* (M. Saba, Trans.). Tehran: Farhangsara-ye Tehran.
- Ibn Khaldun, A. (1996). *Tarikh-e Ibn Khaldun* [Ibn Khaldun History] (vol. 3, A. Ayati, Trans.). Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies.
- Mirza-amini, S. M. M. & Bassam, S. J. (2013). A study on the symbolic significance of medallion in Persian carpet. *Quarterly Scientific-Research Goljaam*, (18), 9-29.
- Mousavilar, A. & Rasooli, A. (2010). A study of the mythological phenomena of sun and Mehr in the Persian hand-made carpet. *Quarterly Scientific-Research Goljaam*, (16), 111-131.
- Parham, S. (1992). *Dastbaft-ha-ye Ashayeri va Rousta'i-ye Fars* [Hand-Woven Carpets of Villages and Nomads of Fars Province] (vol. 2). Tehran: Amir Kbir.
- Ranjbar, H., Haghdost, A., Salsali, M., Khoshdel, A., Soleimani, M. A. & Bahrami, N. (2012). Sampling in qualitative research: a guide for beginning. *Annals of Military and Health Sciences Research*, 10(3), 283-250.
- Samadi, M. (1988). *Mah dar Iran* [Moon in Iran]. Tehran: Elmi va Farhangi.
- Shahparvari, M. & Mirzaamini, S. M. M. (2016). Manifestation of sun motif in Iranian carpet. *Glory of Art (Jelve-ye Honar)*, 8(1), 55-65.
- Sho'ar, J. (1988). *A'in-e Shahryari* [Shahriari Rituals]. Tehran: Elmi va Farhangi.
- Souresrafil, Sh. (1988). *Fall of Golden Ages Sarough Carpet*. Tehran: Soroush.
- Zamaninia, M. (2003). *Farahan an Ancient Land, Land Tenure Relations Carpet Spun from the Heart Woven from the Soul. Tehran: Entesharat-e Ketab-e Siyamak.*
- Zhouleh, T. (2002). *Pazhouheshi dar Farsh-e Iran* [A Research in Persian Carpets]. Tehran: Yasavoli.

### COPYRIGHTS

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with publication rights granted to the Bagh-e Nazar Journal. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).



### HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Salehi, S., Noroozi, H. & Reshadi, H. (2021). Examining sun motifs in patterns of Farahan sun medallion rugs. *Bagh-e Nazar*, 18(94), 51-68.

DOI: 10.22034/BAGH.2020.229350.4530

URL: [http://www.bagh-sj.com/article\\_126824\\_en.html](http://www.bagh-sj.com/article_126824_en.html)

