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THE ILLUSTRATIVE PROGRAM IN *FRAGARDS* 10–11 OF WĪDĒWDĀD (MS. 4000)*Hanna Vertiienko*

PhD (History)

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A small number of Avestan manuscripts with an illuminative component are known. Among the illustrated Iranian documents, there are manuscripts containing simple and small illustrative motifs included into the text. The article focuses on the analysis of illustrations of *fragards* 10 and 11 of Wīdēwdād in ms. 4000 (University of Tehran No. 11263). This document is the oldest Iranian liturgical manuscript with illustrations and dates to 1607/1627. According to the author, the main reason for the appearance of these textual illustrations at this time was the cultural life during the Safavid Dynasty (1501–1722). Its reign was characterized as a revival of the old Iranian traditions when Iranian artists had more freedom to paint humans and animals, flowers and plants on decorative carpets and tiles. The types of illustrations in ms. 4000 are considered in the article. The author draws attention to the pictorial motif known as “Lady Sun” (*Khorshid Khanum*), which was used as a decorative element on carpets and Bakhtiari talismans that were hanging on the walls on weddings and to protect against the “evil eye”. The iconography of the “Lady Sun” and the image of the “female guise” from among the illustrations of *fragards* 10 and 11 of Wīdēwdād in ms. 4000 have many similar features. Probably this suggests common iconographic roots of these motifs, which reflect certain aspects of Iranian culture associated with apotropaic ideas.

Keywords: Wīdēwdād; illustrations; types; “female guise”; “Lady Sun”; carpets; Safavid Dynasty

*čon ‘ārež-e to, māh nabāšad rošan
hamrang-e roḡat gol nabūd dar golšan
abrūy-e kamān gozar konad dar gošan ...¹*

Avestan manuscripts are seldom illuminated and for now five such ones of the Wīdēwdād² (mss 4045, 4050, 4055, 4060 – from the hand of Mihrābān Anōšagruwān, and 4062 – Pouladi collection) are known (**Fig. 1**). Before this decorative tradition came to light, a few manuscripts were known to have simple illustrative motifs [Cantera 2019, 7–8] and on one of the most famous, ms. 4000, will be the focus of my attention³. Some scholars have understood them to be “marginal illustrations” when describing the Pouladi collection [Gholami, Pouladi 2019, 50] or “decorative elements” in mss. 4000 and 4010 [Ferrer-Losilla, Martínez Porro 2019, 39]. Gholami and Pouladi’s “marginal illustrations” were divided into three groups (decorative, directive, separators) [Gholami, Pouladi 2019, 50–57]. If the Wīdēwdād is a text that was not learnt by heart but read directly from a manuscript [Ferrer-Losilla 2015, 208], these some directive illustrations could perhaps make more sense.

On the list of more popular small illustrations are animals (birds, horses, goats), foliate patterns, plants, and human beings. They occupy different positions in the manuscript – on the borders or inside the text [Gholami, Pouladi 2019, 50]. The position of a “decorative”

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image is important to explain it. If we find it on the border, it could be a comment for the text. But the situation is different when the image is inside the text. There was enough space to draw it there, perhaps it was produced to add an image just after the process of writing or during the process of changing the ink, especially when we see an image incorporated into the text “organically”. For my analysis I will discuss *fragards* 10 and 11 of the *Widēwdād* with small illustrations. The manuscript 4000 (Ave 976; University of Tehran, no. 11263) is the oldest Iranian liturgical manuscript, dating to 1607 CE (/1627), and was copied by Frēdōn Marzbān Frēdōn Wāhrom Rostom Bundār Šāhmardān Dēnyār [Andrés-Toledo, Cantera 2012, 208–209]. This manuscript was first described by Mazdāpour [Mazdāpour 1999, 4, no. 1] and then published in 2013⁴ [Afshar, Mazdāpour 2013]. The *Avestan Digital Archive* collaborator of this manuscript, Ferrer analyzed the ms. 4010 together with Martínez Porro providing characteristics for the decorative elements in ms. 4000. The more popular images there are different birds (VS3, VS4, VS17; VS8, VS16, VS18, VS19) and less so are animals (VS5, VS6; VS15). These scholars insisted on the fact that there is “no systematic study on the use” of them and gave the semantic interpretation for some birds based on amulet practice in Sasanian (224–651 CE) times [Ferrer-Losilla, Martínez Porro 2019, 39–40]. For *fragards* 10 and 11 of *Widēwdād* manuscript 4000 they identified their decorative program as *plants* [Ferrer-Losilla, Martínez Porro 2019, 39].

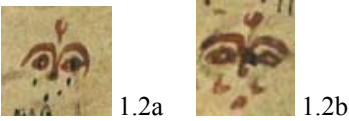




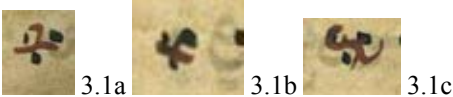
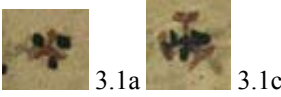



Fig. 1. The examples of “floral” illustrations in the Iranian Avestan manuscripts (*Widēwdād, fragard 1*) (after: © Avestan Digital Archive)


While some of the illustrations share similar elements with plants, I am proposing to reexamine this supposition. These *fragards* have **three types** of images (see **Tab. 1**) and they were incorporated inside the text. If we try to divide these illustrations into three groups (decorative, directive, separators) which were proposed by Gholami and Pouladi [Gholami, Pouladi 2019, 50–57], the situation will be as following.

Tab. 1
The types of images in the *fragards* 10–11 of *Widēwdād*

Type	<i>fragard</i> 10	<i>fragard</i> 11
1		
1.1	1.1a 1.1b	

1.2		
1.3		
2		
2.1		
3		

Revising these types would be better to begin from more common to rare one. The **type 3**  is not unique to individual *fragards*. For example, we see the same images in *fragard* 12 and 13 and could potentially be identified as a “sprig”. But, to my mind, it is the same mark as three dots circled in a simpler way⁵ and not necessarily connected with plants at all. It has the variation in this *fragard* and its position between the paragraphs suggests that it acted as a *separator*. According to Cantera such images (in ms. 4161) were used “solely to indicate an abbreviation” [Cantera, Mazdapour 2015, 18].

The **type 2**  was in a group with unidentifiable forms [Ferrer-Losilla, Martínez Porro 2019, 39] and it is also represented alongside other images in the next *fragards*: 9 (trees with a bird at the top) and 14 (crutch cross). This unidentifiable one is presented in *fragard* 2, and in *fragard* 1 it has two ways of drawing: up and upside down (**Fig. 2**), and we find it in *fragard* 22.

As a result, we could establish the fact that this image is fixed at the beginning of Widēwdād ms. 4000 and at the end of it and is not rare in other *fragards*. Providing the identification for so popular image is extremely important. At first glance it has some features with trees or flowers but its differences in drawing (up and upside position) in *fragard* 1 suggest some doubts about it (**Fig. 2**).

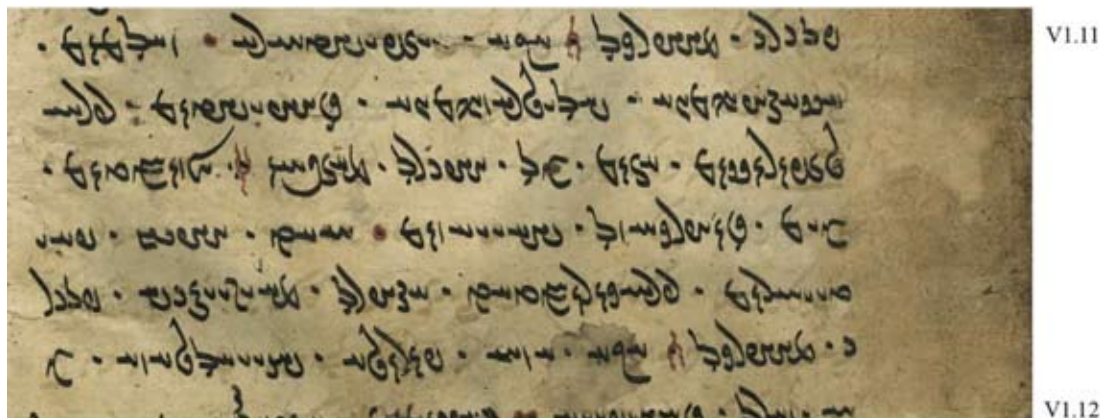

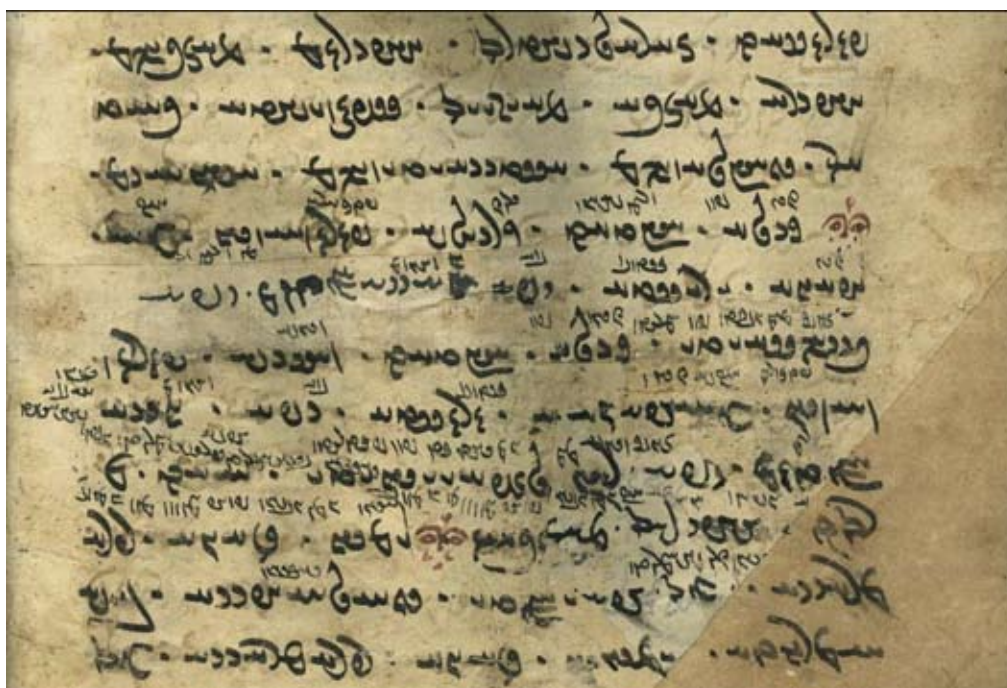


Fig. 2. 1.11–12 *fragard* of Widēwdād in ms. 4000 (70v) (after: © Avestan Digital Archive)

In the same position we could see the **type 1**  at the beginning of 10 and 11 *fragards* and it could be a characterizable image or mark for them (cf. 172v and 186v in ms. 4000). In line 4 of *fragard* 10.1 there is enough space left for this image to have been intentionally added at the time of copying⁶ (**Tab. 2**).

Tab. 2
10.1–2 *fragard* of Widēwdād in ms. 4000 (172v)
(after: © Avestan Digital Archive)


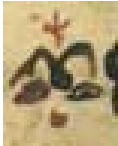



*pərəsaṭ, zaraθuštrō. ahurəm. mazdaqm.
ahura. mazda. mainiiō. spəništa. dāt
arə. gaēθanqm. astuuaitinqm. ašāum.
*kuθa. aētaṭ. druxš. pərənāne. yā.
haca. irista. upa. ʼauuaṇtəm. upa
duuqsaiti. kuθa. aētaṭ. nasuš. pərən
nāne. yāhaca.a. ərəsta. upa. juua
ṇtəm. upa. rēθpaiieiti. ātaṭ. m
rōṭ. ahuraō. mazdā *ime. vaca. fra
mruua. yō. haiṇti. gāθāhuua. biš
āmṛūta. ime. vaca. framrauua. Yō*

It perhaps suggests that the copyist in general did not leave free space without a purpose, and in this example, it was designed to be inserted during the process of writing the text. The special red mark appears around the black word-dividing dot, the base for painting this mask. As a result, we see the combination of two inks in a small image. The next and the same one appears in the next paragraph in line 9 (all positions of it are listed in **Tab. 5**). I identify this image as having a “*female guise*” in foliate pattern. In some cases, one can see the pupils of the eyes pointed as black dots (**Tab. 1, type 1**). The same image with facial features is found in ms. 4062 of Pouladi Collection (YV10, fol. 34r) [Gholami, Pouladi 2019, 53] but this image has the opposite colours (**Tab. 3**). The publishers of this collection insisted on the importance for the study of these illustrations found in YV10.

Tab. 3

The “female guise” in Avestan manuscripts (after: © Avestan Digital Archive)

V10 (ms. 4000)	V11 (ms. 4000)	YV10 (ms. 4062)
		

Also, there is a similar image between *Widēwdād*'s *fragards* 21 and 22, but it could be closer to an astral symbol (ms. 4000, fol. 256v) (**Fig. 3**). We find one more astral small picture in VS10.4 (173r) (**Fig. 4**). It was written by pencil (?) on the border and not incorporated in the text, and it is the sun with facial features. It could be added by the user or owner after the production of the manuscript [Gholami, Pouladi 2019, 51].

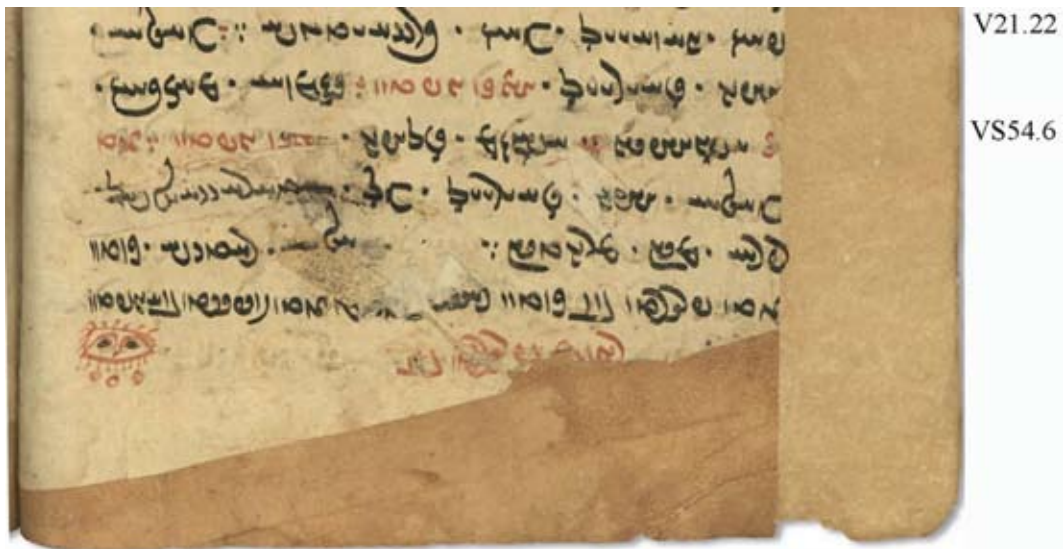


Fig. 3. The astral symbol (?) between *fragards* 21 and 22 in ms. 4000 (fol. 256v) (after: © Avestan Digital Archive)

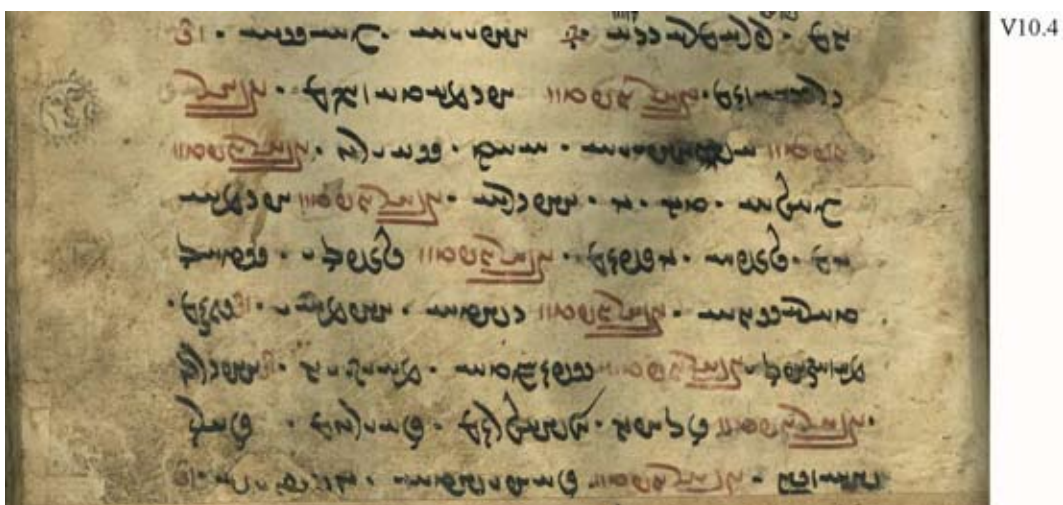









































Fig. 4. The astral symbol (?) on the border of opposite *fragard* 10.4 in ms. 4000 (fol. 173r) (after: © Avestan Digital Archive)

Ferrer-Lasilla and Martínez Porro have found the logic for the appearance of these small pictures – after some formulae that are related to the question-answer structure [Ferrer-Losilla, Martínez Porro 2019, 40] and this example goes by this rule. The type 1 (1.2a) was drawn after *dātare gaēθanqm astuuaitinqm ašāum* and the same type (1.2b) – after *āaṭ mraōṭ ahurō mazdā*. In the next places of this manuscript (VS 10.3, 7, 11) where these images were painted, their places in the question-answer structure were not changed. In the case of V10.1–2, 3, 7, 11 of ms. 4000 we could see the connection between the mark and the presence of the Pahlavi translation (see also **Tab. 2**). If we compare some manuscripts (mss 4000, 4010, 4025), not all of them follow this rule. The position of any mark could be clear if it agrees with another one in the same *fragards* but found in another manuscript (**Tab. 4**).

Tab. 4
Illustrative program in *fragard* 10 in several manuscripts

Wīdēwdād	ms. 4000 1607	ms. 4010 1608	ms. 4025 1622
10.1 ... <i>pərəsaṭ</i> ·			
... <i>ahura. mazdā</i> ·			
... <i>spāništa</i> ·			
<i>dātare gaēθanqm astuuaitinqm ašāum</i> ✱			
✱ <i>kuθa. aētaṭ</i> ...			
<i>in the end</i>			
10.2 ... <i>ahurō mazdā</i> ✱			
✱ <i>ime. vaca</i> ...			
✱ <i>ime. vaca</i> ...			
✱ <i>ime. vaca</i> ...			
<i>in the end</i>			
10.3 ... <i>ašāum</i> ✱			
✱ <i>āaṭ. mraoṭ</i> ...			
... <i>ahurō mazdā</i> ✱			

※ime...※āaṭ...			
<i>in the end</i>			
10.7...aṣāum※			
※āaṭ. mraoṭ...			
...ahurō mazdā※			
※ime. vaca...			
<i>in the end</i>			
10.11...aṣāum※			
※āaṭ. mraoṭ...			
...ahurō mazdā※			
<i>in the end</i>			

Discussion

There is a general suggestion that “decorative images do not give additional explanations to the text” but have some technical purpose for the priest [Gholami, Pouladi 2019, 50]. But why in this period did copyists use different types of marks in the manuscripts? Every *fragard* in ms. 4000 has “its” mark which could characterize the text (an exception being *fragard* 20?). If the main purpose of all these small pictures is indeed for divisions, why demonstrate these variabilities in the manuscripts? The interrelationship between the text and the small pictures could be deeper than we have thought before. Perhaps the main reason relates to the cultural life during the Safavid Dynasty (1501–1722). Its reign was characterized as a revival of the old Iranian traditions that “followed Sassanian patterns in the areas of art and literature” [Khorasani 2006, 43]. In this period Iranian artists had more freedom to paint humans and animals, flowers and plants on decorative carpets and tiles [Khorasani 2006, 43–44]. These changes in Iranian culture could influence a copyist who was rewriting a manuscript. Ms. 4000 was written by Frēdōn Marzbān in 1607/1627, that is, during the reign of Shah Abbās I (r. 1587–1629), the greatest Safavid ruler. The poor quality of these small pictures in some places of manuscripts could demonstrate their first attempt in this new artistic sphere.

Azizi and Tabatabaei Jabali provide the history of the sun motif and the positions of the two elements: the “sun” and “woman” in Iranian culture as well as the motif known as the “Lady Sun” (*Khorshid Khanum*), which was also used as a decorative element on carpets [Shahparvari, Mirzaamini 2016, 60; Salehi, Noroozi, Reshadi 2021, 57, *fig. 11*; 58, *fig. 12–13*] (**Fig. 5**) and in Bakhtiari talismans [Azizi, Tabatabaei Jabali 2022, 41] that were hanging on walls on the occasion of weddings and for keeping the ‘evil eye’ away [Gluck, Gluck, Penton 1977, 235] (**Fig. 6**).



Fig. 5. A “Lady Sun” decorative element on the carpet
(after [Shahparvari, Mirzaamini 2016, 60; Salehi, Noroozi, Reshadi 2021, 58, *fig. 12–13*])



Fig. 6. Bakhtiari talismans with the “Lady Sun” images
(after [Gluck J., Gluck S. H., Penton 1977, 238 = Azizi, Tabatabaei Jabali 2022, 41, *fig. 6.4*])

To sum up, I want to emphasize that the iconography of the “Lady Sun” in the mentioned Bakhtiari talismans and the “female guise” image in the Wīdēwdād have many similar elements. The eyebrows are often depicted as thick and connected and sometimes thin, which are straight or arched. The nose in most examples is connected to the eyebrows and the lips are mostly drawn in an oval shape and small size. The chin is decorated with a colored triangle or a plant branch-like motif much like women’s tattoos [Azizi, Tabatabaei Jabali 2022, 34]. We could then assume the common iconographic roots of these figurative motifs, thus reflecting certain features of Iranian culture specifically associated with apotropaic ideas.

¹ “Like your face, the moon would not be bright! / Like your colour, there was not any flower in the garden! / Arch-eyebrow passes through armor...” (from a love poem written in an Avestan manuscript of Pouladi’s Collection) [Gholami, Pouladi 2019, 47].

² For the meaning of term see: [Andrés-Toledo 2016, 3].

³ The article is based on a paper at the International scientific conference “XXVI Krymskyi Orientalistic Readings” (Kyiv, 30 November 2023) [Vertienko 2023, 18–21], and is a part of the author’s research project “Conceptual sphere of ancient Iranian texts and imagery” for 2023 at the Wolfson College, University of Oxford.

⁴ For translation see: [Andrés-Toledo 2016, 243ff]; for previous translations see: [Andrés-Toledo 2016, 105]; for contents and structure see: [Andrés-Toledo 2016, 5–8].

⁵ For example, see the same *fragard* in ms. 4040.

⁶ As usual, individual words (and compounds) in Avestan manuscripts are written with a dot between them and it is common to find a single letter at the end of a line or a single letter on the next line. But another situation we could find in ms. 4161 where “the words are never divided between two lines” and “the scribe sometimes starts writing the word and then notices that there is not going to be enough space, and so deletes the beginning of the word and completes the line with red dots” (see: [Cantera, Mazdapour 2015, 19]).

⁷ For these beliefs in Iran see: [Donaldson 2015, 13–23]; for a comparative studies cf.: [Westermarck 1926, 414–473].

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G. B. Вертієнко

Ілюстративне оформлення фразгардів 10–11 Відевдата (за рукописом ms. 4000)

Відома невелика кількість авестійських рукописів з ілюстративним компонентом. Серед ілюстрованих іранських документів є рукописи, що містять прості та невеликі образотворчі мотиви, включені в текст. Стаття присвячена аналізу ілюстрацій фразгардів 10 та 11 Відевдата в манускрипті 4000 (Тегеранський університет № 11263). Цей документ є найдавнішим іранським літургійним рукописом з ілюстраціями, що датується 1607/1627 р. На думку авторки, головною причиною появи цих ілюстрацій у цей час було культурне життя за династії Сефевідів (1501–1722). Це правління характеризувалося відродженням старих іранських традицій, коли іранські художники мали більше свободи в зображенні людей і тварин, квітів і рослин на декоративних килимах і кахлях. У статті розглядаються типи ілюстрацій у манускрипті 4000. Авторка звертає увагу на живописний мотив “Пані Сонце” (Хоршід Ханум), який використовувався як декоративний елемент на килимах і бахтіарських талісманах, що вивішувалися на стінах на весіллях і для захисту від “лихого ока”. Іконографія “Пані Сонця” та зображення “жіночої подобі” з ілюстрацій фразгардів 10 та 11 Відевдата в манускрипті 4000 мають схожі риси. Це може свідчити про спільні іконографічні корені цих мотивів, які відображають певні аспекти іранської культури, пов’язані з апотропеїчними уявленнями.

Ключові слова: Відевдат; ілюстрації; типи; “жіночої подобі”; “Пані Сонце”; килими; династія Сефевідів

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