

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Fereydun, the Mythical Warrior Who Was a Doctor

Abstract

This study explores the character of *Fereydun* (in Middle Persian: *Frēdōn*) within the context of ancient Iranian mythology, emphasizing his significance as both a warrior and a healer. To appreciate *Fereydun*'s role, it is essential to understand the broader framework of Iranian mythology, which boasts a rich history dating back over a millennium BCE. These narratives, rooted in Indo-European epics, share numerous themes with Indian mythology, particularly the dichotomy of good versus evil. Central to this mythology is the eternal struggle between *Ahura Mazda*, the embodiment of absolute goodness, and *Ahriman*, the personification of evil. *Ahriman*'s relentless attempts to disrupt *Ahura Mazda*'s creation include inflicting diseases upon humanity. In response, *Ahura Mazda* enlists a troop of celestial beings and humans, among whom *Fereydun* emerges as a prominent figure endowed with superhuman abilities. *Fereydun*'s narrative is particularly notable for his triple role as a combatant against evil, an enchantment expert, and a purveyor of healing knowledge. This research posits that *Fereydun*'s abilities are not merely heroic but also encompass medicinal powers, positioning him as a pivotal figure in the fight against ailments created by *Ahriman*. The study employs etymological analysis to elucidate the meanings behind *Fereydun*'s name and correlate them with his extraordinary capabilities. By examining *Fereydun*'s combativeness alongside his healing powers, this research aims to illuminate the ancient Iranian perspective on the role of physicians as societal heroes and guardians of health.

Key words: Ancient Iran, Ancient Texts, *Fereydun*, Healers, Humanities, Medicine, Mythology, Physicians

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Introduction

In order to understand *Fereydun*'s character and his place in ancient Iranian culture, it is essential to first explore Iranian mythology. This mythology has a very ancient history, with narratives dating back to more than the first millennium BCE. Derived from Indo-European epics, these myths share many elements in common with Indian mythology, including gods, mythical creatures, warriors, and other heroic figures.

The most significant theme of ancient Iranian mythology is the clash between good and evil forces. According to these traditions, the world serves as the battleground for the struggle between *Ahura Mazda*, the supreme god of absolute goodness, and *Ahriman*, the embodiment of destruction and absolute evil. Due to his malevolent nature and enmity with *Ahura Mazda*, *Ahriman* continually seeks to attack *Ahura Mazda*'s created world with his followers and demons from the realm of darkness, aiming to inflict harm. One of the consequences of his actions is the introduction of various diseases. In response, *Ahura Mazda* devises a plan to counter *Ahriman*'s assaults, enlisting an army composed of chosen celestial beings and humans.

Each human character in these narratives plays a purposeful role, and depending on their function, they may possess superhuman abilities granted to them by the heavenly beings called *Izads* (or *Yazdān*) to aid in the creation of *Ahura Mazda*. Occasionally, some characters exhibit more than one extraordinary ability, indicating special favor from the gods. Among these powerful mythological figures in Iranian lore is *Fereydun*, whose name appears in numerous ancient Iranian texts known as *Avesta*. Following *Ĵamšīd*, *Fereydun* is one of the most celebrated heroes in Iranian mythology, with his stories recounted throughout various eras, from ancient times and the Middle Ages to the Islamic period. *Fereydun*'s enduring popularity may stem from his dual role as both a warrior and a king, endowed with superhuman powers. His diverse abilities include miracles (called *Varj*), which contribute to his status as a superhero.

This research aims to discuss the identity of *Fereydun* and to determine his unique position in Iranian mythology as a warrior with the ability to heal. As previously mentioned, in the mythological narrative of ancient Iran, *Ahriman* created disease and suffering to undermine *Ahura Mazda*'s creation. Conversely, to combat these afflictions, *Ahura Mazda* commissioned the *Izad Aryāman* (or *Ērmān*) to prevent the spread of diseases through the development of medicine and medical knowledge. Following *Aryāman*, the first individual to practice medicine was *Ōrit* (referred to as "*Aθrat*" in Arabic sources). However, according to tradition, the third person endowed with medical knowledge and therapeutic skills was *Fereydun*, the son of *Ātbin*. In addition to his healing powers, he also utilized spells to neutralize the magic of demons. Assuming that *Fereydun* possesses three powers based on the etymology of his name, medicine is one of these powers that originated with him and was ultimately bestowed upon him by the *Izads*.

To understand *Fereydun*'s superhuman abilities, this research employs etymological analysis. Utilizing the etymological theory of Manfred Mayrhofer, we will explore the meaning of *Fereydun*'s name and compare it with his remarkable abilities to ascertain whether his knowledge of medicine and therapy is related to the meaning of his name. This article also aims to examine *Fereydun*'s combativeness alongside his extraordinary medical abilities, thereby clarifying the historical perspective of the Iranian people regarding the status of doctors as heroes and guardians of health within society.



Literature Review

Tafazzoli (1999) conducted comprehensive research on both pre-Islamic and Islamic period sources that discuss *Fereydun* in the Encyclopedia Iranica. Mola'ie (2009) provided a detailed analysis of the etymology of *Fereydun*'s name in his article, highlighting his three abilities and referencing sources from the Islamic period. He also attempted to demonstrate that *Fereydun* is a transformed character derived from another mythological figure. Zarshenas (2009) extracted and analyzed various medical fields in ancient Iran from *Avestan* and Middle Persian texts. Abdollahi and Pourgiv (2012) investigated medical knowledge in ancient times, examining medical practices in ancient Iran through the lens of mythology, ancient Iranian religious texts, and historical accounts. Finally, Bazhdan, Abolqasemi, and Mirfakhraie (2014) conducted research on the characters *Aθrat* or *Θrit* and *Fereydun* as the first doctors among humans in mythology. Hemmati Tarahomi, et al. (2018) explored the role of myths as culturally significant narratives that reflect the beliefs and values of various societies, with a focus on ancient Persian mythology. Their article examines the creation myths involving *Ahuramazda* and *Ahriman*, highlighting the belief in the emergence of humans and animals from vegetation. The study draws on primary sources such as *Bun-Dahišn* and *Vazidagiha-i-Zaddisparam*, as well as mythological analyses, to illustrate the interconnectedness of creation themes in ancient Persian culture. Also, in Hemmati Tarahomi, et al. (2021) the authors explore the traditional beliefs of antiquity surrounding medicinal plants in ancient Persian culture. They examine how these myths shaped the understanding and usage of various herbs and medicines in healing practices, reflecting the interplay between mythology and medicine in historical contexts.

Fereydun and His Forces

Fereydun (in *Avesta*: *ḡraētaona-* /θræ:tæonæ/, in Middle Persian *Frēdōn*), Fereydoun or *Āfridun* is one of the exceptional characters among the mythological heroes of Iran. He appears after *Ĵamšid*, and according to the narrative, *Fereydun* is from his generation¹. His mythological role is to combat the greatest demonic creatures and cleanse the earth of their pollution. According to the *Avesta*, his father *Ātbin*, which appears in the *Avesta* as *Āθβiia-* /a:θvijæ/ (Bartholomae, 1904, p. 323), was the second person to correctly per-

1- According to the narrative of the *Shahnameh*.



form the ceremony of pressing and extracting the juice from the sacred plant *Hōm*. As a reward for this pious work, *Fereydun*, an exceptional child, was given to *Ātbin* as a divine gift.

In ancient Iran, *Hōm* is a plant whose juice was obtained through a special ceremony that involved reciting specific prayers. In the ancient texts of the *Avesta*, this drink is described with the attribute of “death warder,” and its properties for combating disease and promoting longevity are mentioned (Bartholomae, 1904, pp. 751, 1732). Consequently, the birth of *Fereydun* was accompanied by the ceremony of preparing a holy drink that symbolizes health and immortality. This event also served as a precursor for *Fereydun* to attain the most significant divine power granted to certain individuals among creation. The *Avesta* narrations state that after *Ĵamšid* lost his charisma, known as *Farrah*², due to committing a sin, this *Farrah* separated from him in three phases, taking the form of a bird before reaching a celestial being or other special individuals. In paragraph 36 of *Yašt* 19 of the *Avesta*, it is noted that this force reached *Fereydun* during the second separation from *Ĵamšid*, thus granting him kingship *Farrah*:

Yt.19.36. yaṭ. bitīm. xvarəṇō. apanəmata. xvarəṇō. yimaṭ. haca. xšaētāt. šusaṭ. xvarəṇō. yimaṭ. haca. vīuuəṇhuṣāt. mərəyahe. kəhrpa. vərəynahe: aom. xvarəṇō. haṇḡəuruuāiata. vīsō. puθrō. āθβiiānōiš. vīsō. sūraiīā. θraētaonō. yaṭ. ās. mašiiānqm. vərəθrauuānqm. vərəθrauuastəmō. ainiiō. zaraθuštrāt.

“When the *Farrah* turned away for the second time, when the *Farrah* turned away from majestic *Yima* (=Ĵamšid), when the *Farrah* flew away from *Yima*, the son of *Vivanghan*, in the shape of a falcon bird, that *Farrah* was reached for by the crown-prince of the *Āθwya* (=Ātbin) clan, of that mighty clan, by *θraētaona* (*Fereydun*) who was the most steadfast among the steadfast mortals other than *Zarathushtra* (=Zoroaster)” (Humbach, and Ichaporia, 1998, p. 38).

In this manner, *Fereydun* was able to perform supernatural actions due to the presence of *Farrah*. This event may serve as the source of his remarkable powers. Additionally,

2- *Farrah* (or *Khwarnah*, *Avestan*: *xvarəṇah*-, Old Persian *farnah*-) signifies “divine glory, charisma” and is a celestial force that sustains creation. Its most potent forms are bestowed upon exceptional beings, such as warriors, enabling them to achieve invincibility or triumph through its assistance (Hinnells, 1997, p. 94).



understanding the meaning of his name can provide insights into the connection between *Fereydun* and his abilities.

1- The Etymology of the Name *Fereydun*

To better understand *Fereydun*'s character and his role in Iranian mythology, we should first examine the etymology of his name. In myths, the significance of each character is often reflected in the meaning of their name. Linguists have proposed various interpretations regarding the etymology of *Fereydun*, and we will discuss the most plausible theories.

Lincoln linked *Fereydun*'s name to the number three, suggesting that his character represents an evolution from *Θrita-* (*Thrit/Θrit* or *Aθart* in Islamic texts), meaning “the third person”, who was the first mythical human to practice medicine (Lincoln, 1981, pp. 104-105). However, it appears he overlooked the complete form of the *Avestan* name (*Θraētaona-*) and its component “*taona*” for unspecified reasons. The most comprehensive etymological analysis comes from Mayrhofer, who divided the *Avestan* name into two parts: “*Θraē-*” meaning “three”, and “*taona-*” derived from the root “*tav-*” meaning “to be able” or “power”. Thus, *Fereydun*'s name can be interpreted as “having triple power” (Mayrhofer, 1979, p. 81; Bartholomae, 1904, p. 799).

Next, we must consider how the *Avestan* form *Θraētaona-* evolved into Middle Persian *Frēdōn* and eventually modern Persian *Fereydun*. Languages continuously evolve over time, leading to phonetic changes. The ancient name *Fereydun* (= *Frēdōn*) has also undergone transformations, including the shift from the phoneme “*th*” (“*θ*”) to “*f*,” a change observed in several European languages, such as Russian. A notable example is the Greek name Theodore, which becomes Feodor in Russian. Additionally, the transition from the consonant “*t*” to “*d*” is a common development in the history of Iranian languages.

2- The Description of *Fereydun*'s Amazing Works in Ancient Texts

With the power of *Farrah* and the support of the *Izads*, *Fereydun* ascends to the throne after defeating the tyrant king *Zahhāk*. However, his world remains plagued by demons and the malevolence of wicked forces. With the backing of *Ahura Mazda* and the *Izads*, *Fereydun* is destined to triumph over these enemies of creation. He confronts the forces of evil using the great powers that stem from his *Farrah*. As previously discussed, the meaning of *Fereydun*'s name signifies his three powers. But what are these forces? The answer to this question can be found in the descriptions of his deeds.

A. Heroic and Warrior Force

According to the *Avestan* text, *Fereydun*'s greatest heroic deed is defeating *Zahhāk/Dahāk* (*Avesta*: *āži-dahāka-* /*æzi:-dæha:kæ/*). In the *Avesta* narrative, he is depicted as a dragon resembling a huge snake with three heads, three snouts, and six eyes. *Zahhāk* is considered one of the powerful demonic creatures created to destroy the world of *Ahura Mazda*. This is stated in paragraph 37 of *Yast* 19 of the *Avesta*:

Yt. 19.37. (Θraētaonō.) yō. janaŋ. Ažīm.dahākəm. Θrizaŋanəm. Θrikamərəδəm. xšuuāš.ašim. hazaŋrā.yaoxštīm. āsaojanhəm. daēuuīm. drujəm. aγəm. gaēθāuuuiiō. druuanŋtəm.yqm. āsaojastəmqm. drujəm. fracā. kərəntaŋ. aŋrō. mainiiuš. aoi. yqm.



astuuaitīm. gaēṯqm. mahrkāi. aṣahe. gaēṯanqm.:

“(Thraetaona) who slew Dahāk, (the dragon) of three mouths, three heads, six eyes, of a thousand rays, that very strong incarnation of demonic deceit, that deceitful evil to the world, that by far strongest incarnation of demonic deceit which Angra Mainyu (=Ahriman) fabricated against the corporeal world in order to destroy the world of truth” (Humbach, and Ichaporia, 1998, p. 39).

It is important to note that *Zahhāk* (*Dahāk*) is portrayed in Islamic-era texts, particularly in the *Shahnameh*, with a more human-like appearance to enhance believability for the audience of that time. While the *Avesta* and some Persian texts from the Islamic period present *Fereydun* as the slayer of this dragon, the sixth book of the *Dinkard*—some portions of which interpret the *Avesta*—indicates that *Fereydun* refuses to kill *Dahāk* at the behest of *Ahura Mazda*. This refusal is based on the belief that killing *Dahāk* would release harmful demonic entities known as *Xrafstar* /*xræfstær*/ from his body, resulting in pollution and disease in the world.

DK 6.B.4. *ēn-iz paydāg kū Frēdōn Azdahāg ōzadan kāmīst, Ohrmazd guft kū-š nūn ma-ōzan čē purr ī ēn zamīg xrafstar bawēd.*

“As can be seen from the text, *Fereydun* wanted to kill the dragon (*Dahāk*). *Ahura Mazda* said to him: “do not slay him now, otherwise this land will be full of “*Xrafstar*”” (Mirfakhraie, 2015, p. 91).

Conversely, the same texts indicate that, at the end of the world, *Dahāk* will be slain by another great Iranian warrior *Garšāsp* (Amouzgar, 2010, pp. 62-63; Dhabhar, 1913, pp. 146-147).

Following his victory over *Dahāk* and his ascension to the role of King-Hero, *Fereydun* battles the demons of Mazandaran. According to this narrative, the *Māzani* demons invade the land of *Xwanirah* (*Avesta*: *Xvaniraθa*-). The inhabitants of this land seek refuge with *Fereydun* and implore him for assistance. In response, *Fereydun* confronts the *Māzani* demons and expels them from *Xwanirah*. Had *Fereydun* not engaged in this battle, *Ahriman* and his malevolent forces might have dominated the region. This account is detailed in the 40th paragraph of the 26th chapter of the book *Mēnōg ī Xrad* in Sasanian Middle Persian.

MX, 26.40. *ud az Frēdōn sūd ēn būd...u-š anē-z was māzandar dēw zad ud az kišwar Xwanīrah bē kard.*

“It was a benefit of *Fereydun* that he killed *Māzani* demons and drove them out of the *Xwanirah*” (Tafazzoli, 1973, p. 44).

B. Miraculous Powers and Enchantment

In the *Avesta*, divine magical powers (or *Varj*) are attributed to *Fereydun*. One of his abilities was the capacity to change his own appearance or that of others. In an *Avestan*

narrative found in the 5th *Yašt*, stanzas 61 and 62, *Fereydun* transforms the skilled boatman Paurva, who is wandering in the sea in search of his home, into a vulture for three days and nights. He keeps Paurva aloft continuously until the goddess *Anāhitā* intervenes, rescuing him and safely returning him to the earth.

Yt. 5.61. *Pāuruuō. yō. vifrō. nauuāzō. yaṭ. dim. usca. uzduuqnaiaṭ. vərəθraja. taxmō. Θraētaonō. mərəyahe. kəhrpa. kahrkāsahe.* 5.62. *hō. auuaθa. vaza-ta. θri. aiiarəm. θri. xšaparəm. paitiš. nmānəm. yim. xvāpaiθīm. nōiṭ. aora. auuōirisiiāṭ. θraošta. xšafnō. θritiiiai. frāymaṭ. ušāṇhəm. sūraiiā. viuuaitīm. upa. ušāṇhəm. upa. zbaiaṭ. Arəduuīm. sūrqm. Anāhitqm:*

“61. *The clever boatman Paurwa worshipped her (Anāhitā) as brave victorious Thraetaona (=Fereydun) caused him to fly up in the form of a vulture. 62. Thus, he flew for three days (and) three nights in the direction of his own house. He could not descend. At the end of the third night, he came to the dawn, to the lighting up of the early dawn. At the dawn, he invoked Ardwisur Anāhitā*” (Malandra, 1983, p. 124).

In the ancient text “*Aogəmadaēcā*,” *Fereydun* is depicted as a figure of remarkable enchantment abilities:

101. *was nērang³ andar gēhān ō pēdāih āward.*

“(Fereydun) brought so much enchantment and countercharm to the world” (Geiger, 1878, p. 29).

The narratives written in Middle Sasanian Persian describe how *Fereydun* employed powers of dispelling and enchantment to perform extraordinary feats, including transforming demons into stone, assuming the form of a dragon, and vanquishing enemies by hurling hailstones and rocks from his nose (Amouzgar, 2010, p. 58). Additionally, he utilized aspects of these magical abilities for healing purposes. It appears that *Fereydun* wielded the powers of white magic and enchantment in service of both heroism and healing. This facet of *Fereydun*’s abilities became so esteemed among Iranians throughout various eras that they created amulets and charms in his name (Tafazzoli, 2010, p. 187).

3- In Middle Persian, *Nērang* translates to “enchantment” and “dispel” (Mackenzie, 1971, p. 58) and is used to nullify magical and demonic harm. Zoroastrians believe that these spells stem from *Izads* (= Zoroastrian deities) and are distinct from magic associated with *Ahriman* and his demons.



Furthermore, in the *Shahnameh*, one of the most significant epic texts of the Islamic period, there is a narrative in which *Fereydun* transforms into a dragon to test the courage of his sons, appearing before them in this fearsome guise:

چُن از بازگردیدنِ این سه شاه شد آگه فریدون بیامد به راه

When Fereydun learned of his sons' return, he stood in their way in the form of a dragon

ز دلشان همی خواست کاگه شود ز بدها گمانیش کوتاه شود

He wanted to be aware of their intentions and get rid of the bad thoughts in his mind

بیامد بسان یکی ازدها کز و شیر گفتی نیابد رها

He took the form of a dragon from whom even the lions could not escape

خروشا و جوشان به جوش اندرون همی از دهانش آتش آمد برون

Roaring and flaming fire came out of his snout

چو هر سه پسر را به نزدیک دید به گرد اندرون کوه تاریک دید

When he saw the three sons up close, he appeared like a dark mountain in the middle of the dust

بر انگیخت گرد و بر آورد جوش جهان شد از آواز او با خروش

He raised dust and roared, as if the world shook from his voice (Khaleqi-Motlaq, 2007, p. 103)

C. Treatment and Medical Force

According to the *Avesta* and the surviving Pahlavi texts from the Sassanid period, *Fereydun* possessed medical knowledge in addition to his skills in battle and magic. The earliest reference to *Fereydun's* healing abilities is found in the 13th *Yast* of the *Avesta*, which praises the warriors and adherents of the Mazdaism religion.

Yt. 13. 131: Ōraētaonahe. Āθβiiānōiš. aṣaonō. frauuašīm. yazamaide. paitištātē. garənaūšca. tafnaošca. naēzaheca. sārastōišca. vāuuaršiiāšca. paitištātē. aži. karštahe. tbaēšanhō:

"We praise the righteous spirit of Ātbin's (son) Fereydun, to resist scabies and fever and constipation and chills and impotence, to resist the damage caused by dragons" (Malandra 2018, p. 164).



In this paragraph, it is stated that although the meanings of the diseases mentioned are not entirely clear, and this interpretation is based on the most reliable theories of linguists, it is certain that *Fereydun* was the first individual to provide treatment for these ailments, and thus his spirit (*Frawahar*) has been lauded.

The *Dinkard* (or *Dēnkard*) is a nine-volume work in Middle Persian compiled in the early Islamic centuries, though its themes are rooted in the Sassanid era and it includes commentaries on the *Avesta*. *Fereydun*'s healing powers and medical knowledge are referenced in the seventh book of the *Dinkard*, which also appears to discuss the creation of painkillers by his hands.

DK7.27: *sēj ud ēnīgīh spōzīdān biziškīh, ud nimūd ō mardōmān any-iz was kard abd ud gēhān sud-kārīh.*

“(Fereydun) disappeared the tightness and drove away the pain (with) medicine, and showed people many wonderful things and (in) the benefit of the world” (Rashed-Mohassel, 2008, p. 202).

In the Middle Persian text *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* (the religious stories), which addresses various religious questions, *Fereydun* is referred to as *purr-bēšaz*, meaning “full of healing”. His reign is compared to the golden age of the Kingdom of *Ĵam* (*Ĵamšīd*), symbolizing the immortality of creatures and the avoidance of disease. This comparison underscores the significance of *Fereydun*'s healing powers within Zoroastrian religious texts.

DD 36.26: *ān ī purr xwarrah čiyōn Ĵam ān ī purr-bēšaz čiyōn Frēdōn* (Jaafari-Dehaghi, 1998, pp. 118, 120).

“One who is full of glory like *Ĵam*, one who is full of healing like *Fereydun* ...” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, 1998, p.119).

The term *bēšaz* in this context corresponds to *baēšaza-* in the *Avesta*, meaning “treatment” (Bartholomae, 1904, p. 914). In Middle Persian, it appears in different forms, such as *bēšaz* “healing” and *bizešk* “doctor” (Mackenzie, 1971, p. 18). The word *bizešk* has evolved into the modern Persian term *Pizišk* (پزشک) (see Ghalekhani, and Mahmoudi, 2016, pp. 139-140).

D. Combined Treatments: Application of Charm for Treatment

Earlier, we discussed the superpowers of *Fereydun*. It is important to note that the enchantment and magic associated with *Fereydun* were sanctioned by the *Izads* and were fundamentally distinct from all forms of demonic magic. It appears that *Ahura Mazda* and the *Izads* endowed *Fereydun* with benevolent powers (akin to “white magic” in European culture) to counteract the magic of demons and dark sorcerers, enabling him to heal demonic afflictions.

In addition to the mythological evidence regarding *Fereydun*'s superhuman abilities, various texts from the Sassanid era, which were recollected in the Islamic period, con-



tain amulets and charms invoking his protective powers. One of the most notable of these texts is the *Riwāyāt ī Pahlavi*, written in Middle Persian, which is found in all manuscripts alongside the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*. This text, compiled in the late 9th and early 10th centuries AD, includes materials such as calendars, religious rituals, vows, sacrifices, injunctions, and the healing properties of beads (see Tafazzoli, 2010, p. 153). Beyond its mythological and ritual content, this book also features sections on enchantments and charms, one of which addresses the spell for blood clotting:

Ravāyāt ī Pahlavī 63.6. āb az xān<ī>g kē bast bast pad framān nēw Frēdōn az kōf andar āmad tan-ē asprēs nihuft ud tan-ē asprēs paymōxt ud nō[h] tabarzēn pad dast dārēd.

“Someone closed the water from the spring <which> closed it at the command of the lionheart Fereydun <which> came out of the mountain. <with> the body that hid (= covered) the race-course, <with> the body <that> covered the race-course (= the greatness of his body was such that it covered the race-course), while he has nine axes in his hand (Mirfakhraie, 2011, p. 185).

The phrase “stopping water” as stopping blood mysteriously appears in this charm, employing metaphors and similes that reflect the literary traditions inherited from ancient times to aid in healing. Notably, the mention of *Fereydun* in this charm underscores the ancient Iranians’ belief in his enchanting powers.

In a special edition of the *Khorda Avesta*, known as the *Zand-i Yasna*, which was compiled by Zoroastrian magi—likely in the 19th century and printed in Bombay—and today it has been removed from this book due to some considerations, there exists a chapter titled “*Afsōn ī Šāh Frēdōn*” (*The Charms of King Fereydun*). This chapter, composed of prayers and enchantments, addresses ailments such as eye sores, eye diseases, smallpox, headaches, and various other illnesses (Mobed, and Mobed, 1881, pp. 424-403).

Archaeological evidence also indicates that motifs of *Fereydun* were sometimes depicted on charm beads. A jewel from the Sassanid period features a warrior engaged in combat with a demon (Figure 1). The presence of a mace with a bull’s head in the warrior’s hand⁴ suggests that this figure may represent *Fereydun*. Researchers propose that this jewel

4- In Iranian mythological accounts, Fereydun’s mace, adorned with a bull’s head, was known as the “*gurz ī gāwsar*”.



bead served as a charm to combat serious illnesses, with the demon symbolizing the disease that *Fereydun* ultimately defeated (Bivar, 1967, p. 525).

In addition to Zoroastrian literature, similar themes are also present in Manichaean texts. *Māni*, an Iranian who resided in the city of Babylon, claimed to be a prophet during the Sassanid dynasty under Shapur I. The texts indicate that he was a skilled physician and psychiatrist, as well as knowledgeable in pharmacy. His religion attracted followers in Iran during the Sassanid era and gradually spread throughout Central Asia over several centuries (Sundermann, 2009, pp. 197-200). Numerous texts related to this religion exist, some of which were composed after *Māni*'s lifetime. Notably, *Fereydun* is mentioned in a Middle Persian spell associated with the Manichaeans, indicating that he was not only revered among Zoroastrians but also sought after by other Iranian religions for healing.



Figure 1. Image of a warrior on a decorative talisman, possibly depicting *Fereydun*, defeating the cannibalistic demon with the *gāwsar* (Bull-headed) mace; Faulkner Collection, London (Bivar, 1967, p. 525)

(ii R) (26) h['m'g .[(27) prydw nyr 'm'd [(28) 'wm sh phyq[yrb] (29) 'wd prwdg 'y 'dwryn '[ndr] (30) 'yst 'd hynd 'wd tb(r) ['y] (31) tyj 'wd wswb'g pd ds(t) (32) d'rym 'wm sfsyr 'wd (33) [cy]l'n 'y hswd 'y 'rm 's (34) ['y p'k pyr'mwn 'wb 'yyd (35) 'wm 'spswn 'yg gwyns u (36) 'snwysn 'y prystg'n [...] (37) 'b 'g 'st 'wd hft cyl'n (38) 'stft pwl'(wd) 'ym pd dst (39) [gry](ft)[] pd wzrg (40) 's]tft'n.

“... *Fereydun* shall throw down ... all. Three forms are in me, and a belly of fire. In my hands I hold a sharp and stirring hatchet, I am girding with whetted sword and dagger of pure adamant, and have with me the whip of speech and hearing of the angels.... The seven daggers of hard steel that I have grasped with my hand ... in great ... the hard ones ...” (Henning, 1947, p. 40).

Fereydun's healing abilities are also referenced in some Islamic sources. In the book *Bani al-Muluk*, Hamzah-i Esfahani notes that *Fereydun* created an antidote from snake venom and established foundational medical knowledge, preparing herbal medicines to combat ailments in living creatures (Hamzah Al-Isfahani, 1961, p. 34). Additionally, Ibn Balkhi identifies *Fereydun* as the founder of medical science in his work *Farsnameh*:

One of *Fereydun*'s notable contributions was his extraction of medicines from desert and mountain plants to treat both people and animals. He also established the charms that individuals employed to alleviate pain and disease (Ibn Balkhi, 1984, p. 36).

In the translation of *Tabari's history*, Bal'ami describes *Fereydun*'s engagement with scholars and physicians as follows:

"He respected scholars and sages; Fereydun was the first to study astrology and was dedicated to the science of medicine, mixing ingredients to produce antidotes" (Bal'ami, 1958, p. 30).

Another scholar from the Islamic period who referenced *Fereydun* in his work is Abu Rayhan al-Birouni. In *Āthār al-Bāqiyah*, he describes the month of March and the celebration held on its fifth day, known as *Spandārmazgān*. He recounts a ceremony among Iranians in which spells were cast and antidotes prepared to ward off the harm and venom of scorpions. This ritual involved writing incantations on a square piece of paper before dawn, which was referred to as *Fereydun* (Birouni, 1923, p. 229).

Conclusion

This research illustrates that *Fereydun* is an exceptional hero with a significant role in shaping the mythological history of Iran. He stands out among mythological figures associated with healing—such as the healing *Izads* like *Aryāman* and human figures like *Ōrit*—by embodying both the roles of hero and warrior as well as healer and physician. These abilities grant him a unique function within Iranian mythology. In his mythological narrative, *Fereydun* diligently works to eliminate demonic afflictions, including diseases that, in ancient beliefs, were caused by demons.

From a mythological perspective, *Fereydun* should be regarded as a physician who, wielding the powers of enchantment and white magic, employed his healing knowledge to combat the pathogenic aspects of the supreme evil *Ahriman*. He acted as a warrior and hero in the presence of *Ahura Mazda*'s forces. Furthermore, he bequeathed his healing knowledge to future generations, inspiring admirers of this wisdom throughout various ages in the context of Iranian culture.

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