
GENNADY BOGOMOLOV

ZURVANISM IN SOGD

This article is devoted to zurvanism, one of the ideological trends of the ancient and early medieval East. Researchers ambiguously evaluate Zurvanism, some of them consider it to be heresy, others as a separate current within Zoroastrianism, the remnants of an older religion, and others as a whole see it only as scholastic conclusions of magicians, inspired by the fatalism and astral teachings of the Babylonian priests. It is believed that Zurvanism arose 8th or at the beginning of 7th centuries BC in Media, and the area of its distribution was associated mainly with Western Iran. Recently, however, a number of finds, including from Sogd, allow us to talk about veneration of Zrvan much further east from Western Iran. Of particular interest in this regard are two types of sealings from the burnt archive from the site Kafirkala in the environs of Samarkand. One of them is a male bust (Sogdian) with sogdian inscription – the name of the owner is “ZrvanB(ag)”. The second type is represented by a sealing with the image of a two-headed character under the arch, which, most likely, depicted the deity Zrvan, personifications of unlimited time, creator, bearer of fate and guarantor of friendship and union. His images are rare and the religious texts dedicated to him are almost not preserved. Apparently, in the era of the early Middle Ages, his visual image was affected by the processed images of Janus. Perhaps, in Sogd, a group of terracottas with the image of a male character with branches in his hands or a crown of branches on his head is also associated with the image of Zrvan. All this shows that Zrvan played a role in the religious views of the population of Sogd.

Key words: Sogd, Kafirkala, bullae, Zoroastrianism, polymorphous creature, Janus, Zrvan, Aion, Zurvanism

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ONE OF THE confusing questions concerning the history of Zoroastrianism relates to Zurvanism. This continual and difficult discussion among researchers concerns the question of whether Zurvanism (Zervanism) was a separate current within Zoroastrianism, heresy, or even an older religion. In addition, and most importantly, how widespread was it? It is believed that Zurvanism arose in the 8th or early 7th century BC in Media and its area of influence appears mainly associated with western Iran (Rak, 1998, p. 115). Recently, however, a number of finds, including those from Sogd, allow us to talk about the veneration of Zrvan much further east of western Iran.

Zrvan (Zurvan, Zervan, Zarevan) is one of the most mysterious deities of the Zoroastrian pantheon, in which he acts as a personification of time and fate. In the texts of the Avesta, he appears as “Infinite time” (*Zrvan akarana*) or as the end times correlated with the created world, which is doomed to perish at the completion of the world cycle (*Zrvan dargahvadata*). The planet Saturn is dedicated to him (Gray 1925: 124-125). In Vidēvdāt (19.13) and in Yasna (72.10), Zrvan

is mentioned as a deity which is the embodiment of time (additionally, in Yasna he is mentioned together with Tkhvasha, the embodiment of space) (Rak 1998: 116). In the Pahlavi essay “Dadestan-i menog-i hrad” (Judgment of the Spirit of Reason) fate, time and decision are indicated among the attributes of Zrvan (*Van der Varden* 1991: 170). It is no coincidence that some researchers at the end of the 19th century (J. Darmesteter, F. Spiegel) did not exclude the possibility that Zrvan and Zurvanism have roots in Babylonian religion and that in historical times he was revered as a deity of fate and even glory (cited according to Gray 1925: 128).

The researchers’ attitude towards him is ambiguous. Thus, M. Boyce considered him a secondary deity, which was put in the forefront only due to the scholastic reflections of the magi and gave rise to an outright heresy (Boyce 1987: 84-85). Others assigned him a special role and did not regard Zurvanism as a heresy, but a religious movement within Zoroastrianism, which contended with the teaching of the main role of Ahura Mazda up to the Sassanid era (Zaehner 1955: 23-24; Yakubov 1996: 160).



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Fig. 1. Bronze figurine from Palmyra, New Babylonian time, obverse and reverse sides (after Trever 1939)

It is believed that Zurvanism differed from main Zoroastrian belief (Mazdaism) by veneration of a single supreme deity Zrvan (Zurvan, Zervana). Zrvan is both heaven and time, sun and darkness, life and death, good and evil, male and female principles (he himself gives birth to twin brothers Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu), this is the unity of all opposites in the universe (Trever 1939: 246). K.V. Trever points to a very interesting New Babylonian bronze plate 13.3 cm high from Palmyra as one of the examples of this thesis. It depicts a fantastic creature with the head of a lion, four wings and bird legs (Fig. 1.1-2). According to its rendering, the creature holds a tablet in front of it, which shows a picture of the entire universe in four tiers. The two upper tiers are the astral world and the gods in heaven, below is the third tier with people on earth and the fourth tier is the underworld, a hell with the terrible female demon Lambartu¹ in the center (Trever 1939: 243-254). She has a lion's head, and she holds a snake in each hand. Apparently, the presence of snakes is an indication of being attributed to Lambartu (or Lamashtu) or to the underworld and death.²

However, at present, there are no authentic "Zurvanite" texts. The myth of Zrvan (apparently central in the teaching of the Zurvanists) reached us in the retelling by two Armenian (Yeghishe Vardapet and Yeznik Kokhbatsi) and two Syrian authors (Theodore bar Konay and Johannan bar Penkaye).

The central myth of Zurvanism represents him as an anthropomorphic creature that existed from the beginning. In order to have son, to whom he was going to give the reins of power over the world, he offered up sacrifices for thousands of years. This re-

¹ This also can refer to Lamashtu (Lamaštu), the lion-headed woman demon, ruler of the evil demons of the underworld. She rises from the underworld and sends sickness to people.

² This interpretation is due to the undeniable merits of the prominent researcher K.V. Trever, it should nevertheless be recognized that this plate does not relate to Zrvan. Currently, there is another interpretation of the plate from Palmyra. J. Black and A. Green believe that it depicts the demon Pazuzu associated with Lamashtu, and served a magical purpose (protection). In their opinion, the emblems of the main gods are placed in the upper tier, thus, replacing their images. In the second tier there is a procession of seven creatures with animal heads (apparently, also magical protection). The third tier shows a sick person lying on a couch, on his side of which there are two priests dressed as fish. A lamp burns behind one of them, and three creatures with animal heads are behind another. The fourth tier shows Lamashtu sailing down the underground river in a boat (Black, Green 1992: 181). Pazuzu images were popular as apotropaia and were widely hung on the wall to protect homes, or worn around the neck, especially by pregnant women.



Fig. 2. Polymorphic creatures – alleged images of Zrvan. 1-2 – a plate from Luristan and a drawing of its details (after *Van der Waden* 1991); 3-4 – figurines depicting the lion-headed creature Aion – Zrvan from the Mithraic sanctuaries (after *Trever* 1939); 5 – drawing of the image on a silver bowl from Bartym (after *Rapoport* 1977); 6-7- drawing of antique grills (after *Yakubov*, 1996); 8 – a vessel from Kadymkal, photo (after *Yusupov* 1998), drawing (after *Rempel* 1987)

sulted in the birth of Angra Mainyu first. According to some fragments of Bundakhishn, it turns out that Zrvan is more powerful than both of these creatures – good and evil. Moreover, the course of the struggle between good and evil, its outcome and everything that happens in this world is already predetermined by him. In the Pahlavi essay “Dadestan-i menog-i hrad” (Judgment of the Spirit of Reason) it is said that all earthly affairs take place according to predestination and the decisive and limited (i.e. final) time, which is Zrvan himself – a powerful, long-term ruler (Chunakova 1997: 100).

It is unknown what represented the special rites dedicated to Zrvan. The notion of Zrvan gained a certain development in Mithraism and Manichaeism. It is believed that the fatalism of Zurvanist views (concerning the power of time and predestination); ideas about Zrvan as the supreme deity (further developed in the Manichaean idea of the “Father of Greatness,” “Father of Light”) were in sharp contradiction with orthodox Zoroastrianism, but received support among the nobility. The tolerance of the authorities, according to Boyce, was explained by the fact that the royal Sassanid family itself professed Zurvanism, imitating the traditions of the later Achaemenid nobility (Boyce 1987: 86). However, I.V. Rak considers Boyce’s conclusion to be excessively categorical and rightly disagrees, pointing out that Zrvan is not mentioned in any of the declarative inscriptions of the Shahan-shahs, which would necessarily emphasize the origin of their power as coming from this god. Finally, his name was not included in the official title (Rak 1998: 116). Although Zrvan as a component was part of the proper names of Iranians, Armenians and, it seems, Sogdians, it is found not only among officials, but even priests. Such are *Zarvādād* – “Given (or created) by Zrvan”, *Zarvanduxt* – “Daughter of Zrvan” or Armenian *Anazarba* (Gray 1925: 128). Nevertheless, almost all researchers note that traces of veneration of Zrvan, including his images, are poorly attributed and almost unknown. From the few texts about him it follows that he was endowed with anthropomorphic features. Therefore, some researchers believe that his only image is presented on a bronze plate (probably part of the belt) from Luristan. According to other researchers, this is not the only one, but rather, one of the earliest images of Zrvan (Fig. 2.1). In the center of the plate’s is a depiction of a winged god with twin heads appearing from his shoulders. The deity has a man’s head, another one (possibly woman’s head) is visible on the chest. The twin figures hold branches in their hands (Fig. 2.2). This is consistent with the

message of the Armenian monk Yeznik Kokhbatsi where Zrvan gave his son Ormazd a sacrificial branch (Van der Waerden 1991: 179-180). A hint that the central character is the deity of time can also be seen in the people around him (accompanying figures) with branches in their hands, which represent the main age categories – youth, maturity and old age.

A number of scholars associate Zrvan with later antiquity statuettes in the form of a winged deity with a lion’s head, which were found in the sanctuaries of Mithras (Fig. 2.3-4). His body is most often entwined with snakes in the shape of rings. These images have something in common with the description of such figures on magical papyri, where this deity is called *Aion*, that is, “eternity,” or “primordial” (Trever 1939: 244). B. Van der Waerden refers to one of these papyri, where he is called the “god of the gods” and “unlimited.” In another text, a fragment of the Roman fortuneteller Messala (53 BC), *Aion* is identified with *Janus* (Van der Waerden 1991: 177). And this identification is not accidental, since the ideas about *Janus* find many points of contact with the ideas about Zrvan. All this contributes to reconsidering some old and new finds. Among the artifacts found during excavations at the citadel of Kafirkala in recent years, the special ones are bullae in the form of lumps of a cylindrical shape or daubs made of highly elastic clay with seals stamped on them. Like modern sealing wax or a seal, they ensured safety or legal confirmation of authenticity of a document (contract, letter, important report). Therefore, most bullae are associated with a written archive. But, they could also seal household objects – storage rooms or some containers and goods (vessels, caskets, bales). Bullae can reflect economic and political relationships, therefore they represent a valuable historical source for the study of administrative management, legal practice and external relations of the early medieval Sogd.

The first type is a small bulla (AB. 02. 3. previous code is A-33) in the form of an oval bar (Fig. 3.1). The clay is dark gray. One side was battered and lost. The front side is oval, almost round, in shape. The impression is applied in the center on the front side. In the upper part above the impression, there is a circular recess which is the trace of a landmark spike. The image shows the bust of a beardless man, turned to his right. His hairstyle is made of straight, long hair falling to the neck and divided into separate loose braids, the ends of which are bent forward. The nose is straight and large. A short inscription in Sogdian letters is placed in front of the image. The bulla belongs to a previously known type with an inscription.



Fig. 3. Bulls from Kafirkala and some analogies. 1 – bull AB 02.3. from Kafirkala; 2 – the same type, bull A-69. from Kafirkala (photo by the author); 3 - bull AB.07.1. (A-10) (photo by the author); 4 - Sassanian jasper seal from the State Hermitage (after *Borisov, Lukonin* 1963); 5 - a silver glass from Koshenev (after *Marshak*, 2009); 6 – two-headed character on the plate-stop of the handle; 7 – is a character on a carnelian seal from the collection of Aman ur-Rahman (after *Lerner, Sim-Williams* 2011)

The reverse side is oval, uneven and noticeably beveled on one edge. Alongside the long axis there is a groove which is an impression of the edge of an object with braiding or a twisted surface. There are braided ringlets on the edges of the bulla. The height of the bulla is 1-1.4 cm. The dimensions of the front side are 2.2×1.7 cm, the back side is 2.3×1.8 cm, and the imprint's diameter is 1.3 cm. Apparently, these were imprints of a nominal seal from some administrative officer or merchant. The inscription reads as "zrwβ" in Sogdian and two options are offered for its translation: a) (') zrwβ "old age," apparently, this is a personal name given to the person as a wish to live to an old age; or b) the name of the god Zurvan / Brahma (Zrvan / Brahma). This name is found only once, and in this form of writing (as "(') zrwβ Bag," i.e. the deity Zrvan / Brahma) it is referred to in Sogdian texts and Vessantara Jataka (Cazzoli, Cereti 2005: 156). Ten more pieces from the collection of Kafirkala bullae published by Sarah Cazzoli and Carlo Cereti belong to this type (Cazzoli, Cereti 2005: 145-149, Fig. 14, No. 243, No. 353). Evidently, in quantitative terms the prints of this seal are more common than others, and at present, there are sixteen identified bullae of this type (Fig. 3.2). Perhaps the owner of this seal was one of the most active correspondents associated with the administration of the Sogdian ruler. It is possible that he himself was an official who carried out some tasks, or a priest vested with the power of a judge.

The second type is represented by another small bulla (AB.07.1, former designation A-10) in the form of a clay lump in a truncated-conical shape. Part of the base and the top of the bulla was fractured and was lost (Fig. 3.3). When applying the stamp, the upper part of the bulla was noticeably off center. The clay is light gray, almost beige. The front side has a sub-rectangular shape, its entire surface is occupied by a print of an oval seal depicting an anthropomorphic character. It has two heads looking in opposite directions while its shoulders are facing frontally. The head turned to the left has a large face (unfortunately, the area in front of it and above is destroyed, however, most of it is extant). This bust has a large, straight nose, mustache and spade-shaped beard. The lips are closed and full, with the mustache displayed in the shape of a long arrowhead. The hairstyle is short, and, like the beard, is made with short incised lines. The second head is turned to the right as if looking down. It has a small straight nose, and round eyes. The mustache and beard differs from the beard and mustache of the first head. The hairstyle is also short and depicted with short incised lines. The ears are drawn

in the form of half-arcs. The torso is shown frontally. The neck is covered with some sort of detail – either the collar of an undershirt, or a torc (necklace). On the chest, a triangular neckline of the robe is visible. Above the bust, there is a semicircular arch, which rests on columns that are supported by bases with double pedestals. The chapters are made in the same way and the trunk of the columns is straight, while the arch is decorated with a wavy line. In our opinion, in the absence of other attributes, this architectural detail is not accidental and is designed to reveal the image. The back side is smooth and slightly convex. The frame of the bulla in the shape of a twisted column is visible via the long axis of the bulla. The height of the bulla is 13 mm (8 mm in the damaged section), the dimensions of the front side are 14×10 mm, the back side is 20×15 mm. As mentioned, the bulla is damaged. Fingerprints of the person who applied the seal survived along the edges of the bulla. It is possible that the bulla could have belonged to an official or a temple minister. The rendering of the two-headed figure immediately reminds one of the image of the two-faced Janus. In Roman mythology, Janus was the god of doors and gates, hence there was an archway above him. It is possible that initially Janus was the god of light and sun, who daily opened the heavenly gates and shed the day upon the earth, and in the evening he locked them up again. Janus was revered as the god of time.

Like Zrvan, Janus was considered the oldest god – the god of origins, therefore, he was the first to whom people appealed. In the notions of the ancient Romans, Janus was the creator of man who gave life on earth, creation of all rivers and streams was accredited to him (Rabinovich 1965: 296). He taught people how to build ships. Perhaps this is a reason why Janus was revered as the patron of roads and travelers. The calendar was attributed to him – the first days of the month when sacrifices were offered to him. The first month of the year was also dedicated to him. New Year festivals from the 1st century BC merged with the festival in honor of Janus. On this day, loud outbursts, quarrels, and abuse were forbidden so as not to anger Janus, who could send a bad year upon people as a punishment (Rabinovich 1965: 297). On art monuments and religious objects, Janus was often depicted with two faces, and his attributes were keys and a staff. In addition, the early images of both faces of Janus were depicted with beards. Later they began to depict him beardless, but on the one hand with a young face, on the other with an old face. However, a bulla with a two-headed character from Kafirkala is not as clear as

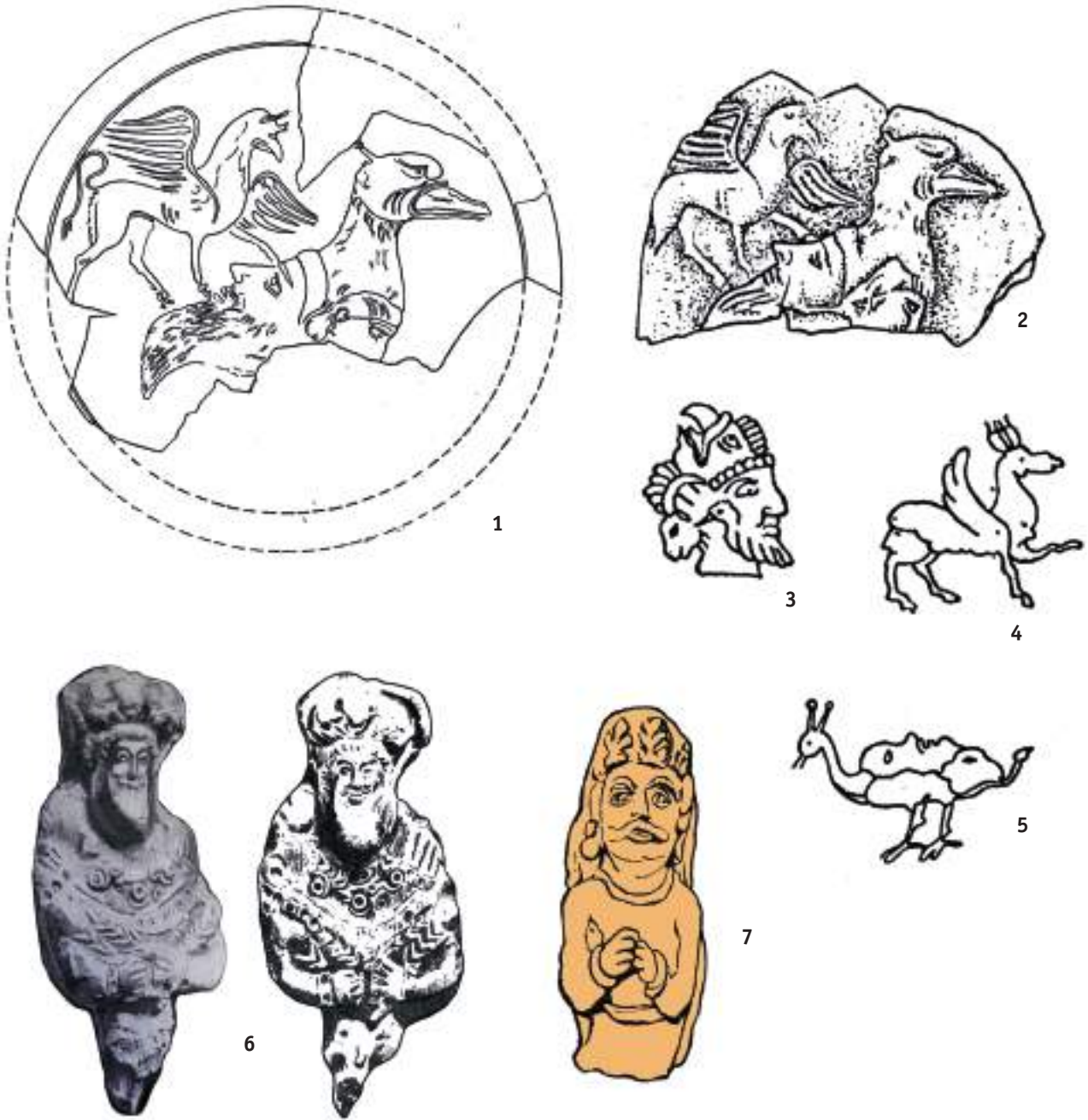


Fig. 4. Polymorphic creatures – alleged images of Zrvan. 1-2 – flask from Koykrylgan-kala (according to *Rapoport*, 1977); 3-5 – drawing of antique grills (after *Yakubov*, 1996); 6 – Sogdian terracotta, a character with branches in his hands (photo and drawing after *Meshkeris* 1989); 7 – Sogdian terracotta character with twigs in the crown (after *Meshkeris* 1989)

it seems at first glance. Of course, it might be assumed that the seal reflects possible Western contacts with some association with Rome or Byzantium where the image of Janus was popular. On the other hand, despite the apparent obvious connection with “western” sources pertaining to the image, its local component cannot be excluded. For example, similar images of arches are found on Sogdian ossuaries, which cannot be attributed as products of Roman or Byzantine ar-

tisans. Finally, the texture of clay from the bulla does not differ from the clay of local bullae. It is unlikely that this image was accidentally chosen by the customer or borrowed by the engraver of the seal as a mere sample. Most likely, it was still used to convey some local religious being, which was understood by others without the need for any attributes or accompanying inscription. This does not exclude the local origin of the seal and reflects local religious beliefs.

Another example of a two-headed creature is found on the decor of a silver cup in Koshenev (Russia). It is believed that it belongs to the work of Sogdian engravers (school C) and dates back to the 8th century (Marshak 1971: 27, 91). A 6.5 cm tall cup has an octagonal body on a soldered ring base. The edge of the cup is bordered by a ring of pearl-shaped balls (Fig. 3.5). The annular handle is soldered to the upper half of the vessel. The outward-facing edge of the handle is decorated with embossed balls, and an flattened abutment in the form of a molded figure plate depicting two men's heads in profile and is soldered to the handle's platform (Fig. 3.6). Moreover, both figures are similar in appearance, but one is bearded while the other possesses a drooping mustache (Marshak 2009: 56). In general, Darkevich supports the opinion of Marshak that this is an image of Silens or their masks that date back to late Hellenistic or Byzantine prototypes (Darkevich 1976: 16).

Similar to the Kafirkala artifacts, the busts of double-faced characters exist in the collection of Sassanian seals from the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. In one case, the seal is cut from agate, in the other from jasper. As on the Kafirkala bulla, the last seal had the bust of a two-headed figure, whose faces were turned in opposite directions. They have a single body, neck and ear with a large earring which consisting of two circular ornaments of different sizes at the apex of their necks. Both faces are bearded, but the beards are depicted differently. There are *kulakhs* on their heads. The head on the right looks younger than the other one who looks older which exactly the same as on the bulla from Kafirkala. In addition this figure, is also dressed in a shirt with a rounded neckline. The neckline is emphasized by a double line. A benevolent symbol is placed above the heads of the figure which is the head of a ram with curved horns (Fig. 3.4). Above all this, like an archway, is contains the inscription – “Hope in the gods. The [Good] name [of God]” (Borisov, Lukonin 1963: 52, No. 48). The Hermitage collection includes another bust with a three-faced image (Borisov, Lukonin 1963: 77, No. 18). However, A.Ya. Borisov and V.G. Lukonin do not identify these characters in any way.

There is another curious example: A cornelian gem from the collection of Aman ur-Rahman. This gem contains the inscribed bust of a man (Fig. 3.7) who is wearing either a headdress or a mask in the form of two faces turned in opposite directions. One face is turned upward on the crown of the wearer's head, the other one is facing outward from the back of his head. In addition, this latter head has a line that lays on the

bridge of the nose which then extends upward and eventually twisting into a rounded ram's horn on the forehead. (Lerner, Sims-Williams 2011: 122).

These fantastical images of polymorphic creatures, which can have two or three heads or fancifully combine human faces with the heads and figures of birds and animals, are found in Hittite art, on Luristani bronzes, in the glyptic art of Sasanian Iran. These are the so-called *grilli*, widespread in the Middle East and Iran. Rare finds of their images are associated with the territory of Khorezm. Just such an accidental find of a small vessel, possibly of Midian origin, from Kandym-Kala (Fig. 2.8), whose vessel's body was made in the form of a sitting lion. On the lion's back is a man's figure with a beard and mustache. On the lion's mane is a anthropomorphic bust standing in the crown of the neck who is bringing a small bowl to his mouth. A handle is placed on the back of the figure depicting a naked human figure stretched to form a semi-circular shape whose hands touch the edge of the crown of the former figure. The crown itself forms the lip of the vessel. The forepaws of a lion rest on a crawling snake (Yusupov 1998: 89-91).³

This collection includes a silver bowl from Bartym (Rempel 1987: 69-70, Fig. 29) and two fragmented ceramic jars from Koikrylgan-Kala (Rapoport 1977: 59-71) (Fig. 4.1-2). Lazar Rempel saw a mythological meaning with an animal epic in these figures which was in line with his theory of the transformation of religious ideas and images in art; whereas Yuriy Rapoport attributed them to religious images and considered them to have special significance. He believed that they symbolized the pristine cosmos, the separation of which was the most important act of creation. For example, this very important scene as depicted on flasks from Koikrylgan-Kala (Fig. 4.1-2) were the last moments of the primordial cosmos, when heaven, earth, water and other elements of the universe merged and remain as a solid creature in the form of a waterfowl, probably a Karshiptar bird) (Rapoport 1977: 63-67). In this case, the original creature acts as a sacrifice, which must be dismembered

³ However, Dr. Khemra Yusupov believed that the mythological symbolism of the vessel is connected with the ideas of Hinduism and reflects the religious myth concerning the goddess Kali (Yusupov 1998: 92-93). However, we offer a different interpretation, especially since Kh. Yusupov himself did not exclude another interpretation of the image. In our opinion, there are simply more parallels with the art of Mesopotamia as demonstrated in the shape of the crown, the bearded head, the lion, the naked figure, the presence of the snake, i.e., all the elements that correlate with the iconography of Zrvan – Aion.

by its own generation. These notions associated with the sacrifice of a deity or its embodiment for a great sacrifice (i.e. the organization of the world) were common to many ancient religions. In this regard, is the interesting hypothesis of R.C. Sechner, which is based on an analysis of the Iranian myth as told by the Armenian monk Yeznik Kokhbatsi in the 5th century AD). According to him, this original being was the ancient Iranian god Zrvan. With the help of prolonged sacrifices, he sought the birth of a son who would create the world, heaven and earth. After the birth of Ormazd from his own body, he offered him as a sacrifice so that “the whole creation was created” (cited according to *Rapoport* 1977: 67). Therefore, the assumption of Yakubov that a polymorphic creature on Koikrylgan jars – the image of a goose being Zrvan – is justified.

More precisely, Zrvan is a bearded head depicted on the back of a bird; the young, beardless face on his chest is Ormuzd, and the griffin attacking them is Ahriman (a being he created to exterminate birds), who seeks to kill the father and son and become king himself. Accordingly, the composition on the Khorezm jars and the Bartym bowl reflects the central myth of Zrvan – the deity uniting the male and female principles, heaven and earth, fire and water, light and darkness, good and evil (*Yakubov* 1996: 159).

Similarly, the images on some gem-grills with double or even triple faces and polymorphic creatures are associated with Zrvan (Fig. 2.6-7). For example, a peacock (Fig. 2.5), which has the face of an elderly man placed on its back and on the chest, that of a young man. On the peacock's tail there is some sort of animal (*Yakubov* 1996: 159). The analysis of archaeological materials and data from written sources made Yakubov to conclude that the religion of Sogdians and other regions of Turan was Zoroastrianism of a zurvanistic nature (*Yakubov* 1996: 162). Perhaps, in this question, Yakubov's position is rather extreme, but the significance and spread of ideas about Zrvan both

in Iran and Central Asia are emphasized by many researchers of Zoroastrianism (M. Boyce, R.Ch. Sechner, K.V. Trever, E.A. Grantovsky, I.V. Rak, etc.). All this evidence demonstrates, nevertheless, that Zrvan played a prominent role. In religious beliefs his image was complicated. This was not only the personification of infinite time, but also the creator, and the arbiter of destinies, as well as the guarantee of friendship and union. Apparently, in the era of the early Middle Ages, his visual image was influenced by the processed images of Janus.

In this regard, the Kafirkala bullae; the image on the cup from Koshenev; and the seal with a two-headed character from the Hermitage collection may depict the deity of Zrvan in his later interpretation. It is possible that some types of Sogdian terracottas, stamped in an open mold, should be attributed to the collection of images of Zrvan. This would suggest possible mass production. One example, is a male figure in royal attire wearing a Sasanian type crown (consisting of wings, a sphere, and a crescent in the center) with two plant branches in its hands (Fig. 4.6). These radially diverge to the forearms (the role of branches in the iconography of Zrvan was already noted above). V.A. Meshkeris dates the figure to the 7th-8th centuries (*Meshkeris* 1989: 218-219). According to stratigraphy, a similar terracotta figurine from Kafirkala is dated to the same time. In another case, the character's arms are folded on his chest, and there is a crown made of branches on his head (*Meshkeris* 1989: 222) (Fig. 4.7).

All this indicates the existence of the cult of Zrvan and his adherents in Sogdian society, and this is not surprising, since from ancient times Sogd was a node of transit trade routes, which contributed to the development of not only economic ties in the form of the movement of goods, but also religious ideas. The interweaving of various ideological beliefs and local notions led to the emergence of new images and ideas, some of which found new life and new ground in the spiritual culture of Sogd.

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