

The British
Museum



The legend of the winged disc from Egypt to Iran

The De Laszlo foundation
The Altajir Trust

The Asahi Shimbun Display
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The Legend of the Winged Disk: A Journey from Egypt to Iran

The winged disk and the winged figure are often shown in the art of ancient Persia from 520-330 BC. They appear above the head of the king and symbolise Ahura Mazda, the Zoroastrian Wise Lord, or the Kingly Glory. The origin of this motif goes back to ancient Egypt and Assyria.



A cylinder seal of Darius (522-486 BC) in the British Museum shows the Persian king hunting a lion. The winged figure at the top protects the royal hero. A coin of Datames/ Tarkamuwa (c.378-372 BC), a governor of the Persian satrapy of Cilicia, has the winged disc placed above the left arm of the seated archer.



The winged figure, known in Persian as *farvahar*, is usually associated with Zoroastrians, who regard it as the immortal spirit of each human being that defends the material world against evil.



In modern Iran the *farvahar* has been popular since the beginning of the 20th century, where it appeared on the façade of many public buildings. Today it is regarded as a symbol of national identity. It is often used by modern Iranian artists, such as Aida Foroutan.

The legend of the winged sun disc "Horus-Behdity"

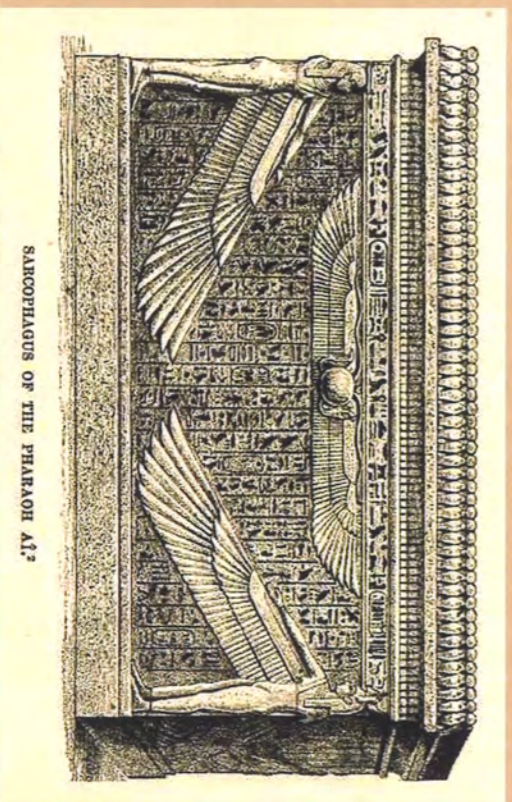
The deity Horus-Behdity is probably the most commonly depicted deity in the history of ancient Egypt. He appears above almost every temple doorway in the form of the winged sun disc, and in the shape of a falcon or sun disc above the king in a large percentage of temple or coffin scenes.



The winged sun disc is highly symbolic representing the Union of Horus the falcon God, and Ra the sun god, the union of the Two-Lands of Egypt, and becomes a symbol of rebirth for the kings.



Horus-Behdity is mostly famous for the large and well preserved Ptolemaic period temple dedicated to him at Edfu in Upper Egypt. At this temple the legend of the origin of the winged sun disc can be found as well, written on the walls of the Edfu temple.



SARCOPHAGUS OF THE PHARAOH AÏ?

Silver stater of Datames (Tarkumuwa)
Tarsus (modern western Turkey),
around 378-372 BC

The governor of the Persian satrapy (province) of Cilicia is shown as a seated archer wearing the nomadic dress with a long sleeved coat and trousers. The winged disc above his left arm, said to protect the king, is either Ahura Mazda, the Zoroastrian Wise Lord, or the symbol of the kingly glory.

Silver stater minted in Tarsus, around 378-372 BC,
bequeathed by Richard Payne Knight



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