

# Note on the Cover Illustration

## *The Symbolism of the Crown*

By Nigel Jackson



**T**he numinous mystery of sacral monarchy is encapsulated in the symbolism of the crown and the ancient ceremony of the coronation. Essentially initiatic in nature, the coronation is the rite by which the rightful Monarch is invested with kingship in accord with the Will of Heaven.

The symbolism of the crown, in Indo-Iranian tradition is intimately tied with the concept of *Xvarenab* or *Khvarenab*, an Avestan term commonly translated as 'Glory', sometimes as 'Fortune', depending upon context. The etymology reveals a solar symbolism: the term derives from the Old Iranian word for Sun - '*Xwar*'/'*Hwar*' - and is cognate with Old Indian '*Suvar*', which contains the same meaning. The term also appears in the Median language as '*Farnab*', in Khotanese as '*Pbarra*', and in Kushan-Bactrian as '*Pbarro*'. Later referred to as '*Farr*' or '*Farr-i-Yazdan*', the *Xvarenab* was always conceived to be a fiery, shining aureole, a halo or nimbus radiating from the brow of the rightful King. This was the veritable hallmark and sign of the King's greatness, of his infallible virtue and sovereign power, and his Divine Right to govern. The halos of light and flame depicted around the heads of prophets and saints in Islamic and Christian art have a related symbolic significance, portraying their virtue and their divine favour.

The *Xvarenab* was said to be visible to all in the earliest age of the cosmic cycle. One recalls René Guénon's comments concerning the Ray of the Principle, the effulgence of the crown, the Light of the apex and Summit of the axial Cosmic Mountain, which was formerly visible to all the inhabitants of the Golden Age but which gradually became occluded and interiorized over the course of subsequent cycles of materialization and decline.

The Avestan Hymn (*Yasht* 19 v. 9-13) states,

We worship the strong Mazda, created *kawyan Xvarenab*, created by Mazda, much praised, having superior skills, solicitous, having supernatural power, perceptive ... We worship the strong *kawyan Xvarenab* with *baoma*.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, in Firdausi's epic poem, the *Shah-Nama* or Book of Kings, King Jamshid declares:

I am endowed with the Divine and am at the same time both king and priest. I shall stay the hand of the evil-doers from evil, and I shall guide the soul toward light.<sup>2</sup>

As suggested by King Jamshid's statement, the *Xvarenab* epitomizes regal powers associated with Divine Qualities, and the opulence and the executive abilities of Majesty – it is by the aid of the Divine *Farr* that King Jamshid forges the armour to fight evil, builds his Throne of authority and rulership, and possesses the wisdom to guide and ensure the spiritual and material prosperity of his subjects.

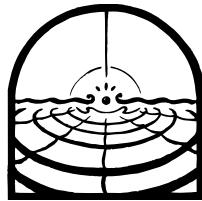
The irradiation of Light and solarity from the brow of the rightful Monarch constitutes the visible sign of his true Kingship, but this is on condition of his being established in Truth (*Asba*). Should the monarch fall prey to falsehood, the *Xvarenab* might flee the royal person, departing like a bird to lie concealed in the depths of the *Vourukasha* sea, submerged in the heavenly ocean under the guardianship of *Apam Napat* (an archaic mythological complex of 'fire in water' which recalls the Vedic pairing *Agni-Soma*).

According to Avestan tradition, the glory of King Yima's *Xvarenab* is said to have departed from him on three occasions when he deviated from Divine Truth. Untruth, misconduct and vices invariably cause the

<sup>1</sup> *An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion* ed. W.W. Malandra, Minneapolis 1983, p.89.

<sup>2</sup> *The Epic of the Kings: Shah-Nama of Firdausi*, trans. R. Levy, London 1967, p.9.

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