

**EXTENDED
ABSTRACT****Status of Astronomical Symbols in Ancient Iranian Art
(from Prehistoric Era to the End of the Achaemenid Period)****Mahtab Mobini*¹ Parisa Rezai Marnani²****1-Assistant Professor, Department of Art, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran.**

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Introduction

Ancient Iranian astronomers with strong astronomical motives and divine prophecies have always sought to relate celestial phenomena to human behaviors. They believed that there was a strong relationship between what was in the sky and what happened in their lives. About 6,000 years ago, the ancient astronomers recorded celestial movements.

It is obvious that their attention to the sky has been manifested in various ancient art forms. Accordingly, the research questions of the present study are as follows: How did the astrological symbols (e.g., the sun, moon, sky, change of the seasons, and thirty days of each month) have changed and used since the Medes period to the end of the Achaemenian period? Why cosmic symbols were used repeatedly in ancient art? Is the continuous use of astronomical symbols and the existence of constellation in ancient Iranian art can be associated with the people's concern for their livelihood? The most relevant sources for the current study include a study entitled "Analysis of constellation patterns in Iranian paintings" in which the researchers examined the remaining patterns of the ancient Persia until the Qajar period. In addition, the origins of astronomy in religions and ancient traditions were studied. Moreover, the researchers' main focus was to know the place of astronomy in ancient visual art and painting and did not explore other artistic aspects. The present study aimed at examining the same issue (Sabetkar, 2011).

Keyword:Cosmic symbols
Ancient astronomy
Ancient solar symbols
Ancient lunar symbols**Methodology**

The present research was a qualitative study and the data analysis was performed using an analytical method. The data collection process consisted of going to the libraries and taking receipts to refer to the available sources.

Findings

Since 7,000 BC, the sky has been the focus of attention which is the first and foremost feature in the ritual ceremonies. The people of Susa in the fourth millennium BC depicted this meaning into a visual expression. It has consisted of a roof resting on a solid surface on the ground that included two rhombus-shaped and semi-staircases (Figure 1). The shape of the fourth millennium of the sky

simultaneously changed in Persepolis and Susa, meaning that the dome of the sky turned into a triangle. The result of this transformation is the appearance of a spear-like shape that is vertically mounted on a cube representing the earth (Figure 2). Over the course of history, the semi-rhombus staircase-like shapes under the dome appeared as a symbol of the sky. The same pattern on the surface of a pottery fragment obtained from Persepolis can be seen, which is split into two halves, representing the two-dimensional sky that lies between a semi-circular crater (Figure 3). This symbolizes the arch, a pattern that appears once more in the symbolic representations of the sky of subsequent periods (Pope vol. 2, 2008: 1036). Dividing the sky into two halves undoubtedly was for the purpose of dividing the time into two time periods of midnight and noontime. The two ponds that restrict the fields resemble two axes facing one another's back.

The two interconnected axes (Figure. 4) in some cultures are particularly indicative of a series of god and goddesses of sky, sun, or moon. The reason for the two-sided symmetry of the sky may be because of following the tradition of depicting some constellations in pairs.

In addition to the symbolic representation of the sky, the people of Persepolis and Susa also depicted a human incarnation of the sky. He was demonstrated as a man holding two symbolic spears of the sky in each hand (Figure 5). Therefore, it once again shows the dual division of the sky since both are representations of it (ibid, 1037).

The triangle pattern was depicted in a variety forms (e.g., spear, mountain, half of the diagram-shapes double-headed axe). It is one of the representations of the sky, as shown in (Figure 6.) it is often demonstrated as a series of triangles, all of them pointing toward the same side. This repetition of sky patterns poses a fundamental question as were primitive people aware of the sky's layers?



Figure 1
 Representation of the diagram-shaped sky, as depicted in a pottery bowl found in Susa, 4th millennium BC. (Pope vol. 2, 2008: 1034)



Figure 2
 Transforming the dome of the sky into a spear-like shape, as depicted in a pottery bowl found in Susa, (Pope vol. 1, 2008: 218)



Figure 3
 Semi-rhombus staircase-like shape under the dome, as depicted in a pottery found in Persepolis, (Pope vol. 2, 2008: 1036)



Figure 4
 Pattern of two interconnected axes, as depicted in a pottery bowl found in Susa (Pope vol. 2, 2008: 1037)



Figure 5
 Sky-God, as depicted in a pottery bowl found in Susa, BC (Pope. vol. 2, 2008: 1038)



Figure 6
 Pattern of the multi-storey sky, as depicted in a pottery bowl found in Susa, BC (Pope vol. 1, 2008: 218)

Conclusion

The obtained data showed that ancient Iranians continuously used sky-drawn patterns and cosmic signs in their artistic handcrafts. The present research aimed at finding the meaning of each pattern in order to understand the relationships between abstract and natural-like patterns, as well as the processes that lead to creating these patterns. It is known that if humans use symbols and name things, they feel dominant over those things. Therefore, the more a person chooses names and symbols for something, the more s/he feels dominant. For a primitive person who has to deal with natural elements with bare hands, what is more important than climate? As a result, it can be concluded that the symbolic representations of the ancient Iranians were the first steps taken to tame the environment around them.

References

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