PAYKAREH
Volume 14 Issue 40 Summer 2025 Pages 76-90

Original Research Article

Iconology of the Goddess and Ibex Motifs on the Round Hairpins of the Lorestan Civilization

Taj al-Din Gilani[1]; Asghar Javani[2]

1. Corresponding Author, Master of Fine Arts in Painting, Faculty of Visual Arts, Isfahan University of Art, Isfahan, Iran.
Email: gilani1393taj@aui.ac.ir
2. Professor of Painting, Faculty of Visual Arts, Isfahan University of Art, Isfahan, Iran.

Received: 10 November 2024 Revised: 15 April 2025 Accepted: 3 May 2025

Abstract

Introduction: The subject of «mother» has consistently been one of the oldest artistic themes, prominently present in the works left behind by human civilizations. The depictions of Goddesses on the bronze artifacts of the Lorestan civilization are another piece of similar evidence supporting this issue. Among these bronze artifacts are round hairpins depicted with the image of the Mother Goddess alongside the ibex. The central role of the woman in the depiction of the hairpins from Lorestan, alongside the ibex, is the central question addressed in this article. The primary aim of this research is to uncover the functions of the woman and the ibex on the bronze hairpins of Lorestan through an iconological approach at three levels: Description, analysis, and interpretation.

Research Method: The present research method is analytical and falls under the qualitative research category, with data collected from the library and documentary sources.

Findings: In this research, employing an iconological approach, the role of the Mother Goddess and the ibex was first described, followed by an analysis of their mutual relationship through iconography, which revealed symbolic meanings such as fertility, procreation, water demand and rainfall, blessing, and the abundance of divine gifts. Finally, through a conclusive interpretation of various evidence, the functions of the Goddess and the ibex as superior powers of rain invocation, magic, attracting good, and repelling evil, as well as the ideal mother, the earth woman, and fertility, and the political powers related to the matriarchal era of the mentioned motifs, were identified.

Conclusion: The goddess at the center of the round hairpins from Lorestan, as the feminine element of existence, complements the earth, which, in conjunction with the male ibex, the god with round horns, fertilizes nature. These two superior human and animal powers, by dispelling evil and creating a safe and calm environment enclosed in the circular form of the hairpins, demonstrate the blessed connection between earth and sky in the beliefs of ancient humans.

Keywords

Iconology, Goddess, Ibex, Hairpin, Lorestan Bronze

How to cite this article: Gilani, T, & Javani, A. (2025). Iconology of the Goddess and Ibex Motifs on the Round Hairpins of the Lorestan Civilization. *Paykareh*, 14(40), 76-90.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22055/pyk.2025.20018

©2025 by the Authours.This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0 license)
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0

Introduction and Problem Definition

The Great Ancient Goddess, with her associated symbols, has been worshipped as a dominant belief in many cultures. In ancient times, various rituals were held in different cultural contexts under this belief. From the ancient civilization of Lorestan, various bronze artifacts have been discovered, among which are round hairpins adorned with human, animal, and plant motifs, arranged in a circular pattern with a rod-like base. The central motif of the hairpins depicts women in various shapes and postures, accompanied by animal and plant motifs. Belief in the feminine force of existence in Lorestan's civilization has taken on a local flavor and is linked with ibex, a mythical and indigenous animal of the region. Following the beliefs, convictions, and needs of the ancient people of this civilization, it has been influential as a companion and helper deity, as well as a superior power in the fate of the people, bringing about numerous blessings. The ancient motifs of goddesses found on the bronze hairpins of Lorestan carry institutional values and messages rooted in the cultural, political, and social fabric of that era. The image of the ibex, along with the goddess's figure on the hairpins, is one of the symbolic elements frequently reflected in the bronze artifacts of Lorestan. Symbolic components in the linguistic symbolic system manifest themselves verbally, visually, or behaviorally. The cultural symbolic system, as displayed in myths, is conveyed through language in texts and narratives, and is fundamentally represented through images in artistic works. It appears that the coexistence of motifs featuring women and ibex in the intellectual dimensions of the ancients is not ordinary imagery; they were worshipped as deities and likely possessed different natural and supernatural aspects that significantly influenced the fate of ancient humanity, highlighting the roles of women and ibex in the ancient world. Understanding the surface and deep structure of the image of the woman and the ibex, and interpreting the connection of the concepts of these two images on round hairpins with the central figure of the woman, is necessary and essential; therefore, this research aims to analyze the image of the woman and the ibex on the round hairpins of Lorestan at different layers of meaning. In this research, we interpret the intended motifs using an iconological approach, focusing on how to align and differentiate their functions. This research aims to explore the connection between the two superior powers of humans and animals, as well as the common and parallel goals they share. It also examines the significance of the woman's role at the center of the hairpins of the Lorestan civilization, in conjunction with the ibex. Understanding the insights and beliefs of the creators, commissioners, and audiences associated with the mentioned motifs of this civilization through semantic comparison, analysis, and interpretation is a necessity for this research.

Research Method

The present research is analytical, categorized as qualitative, and is considered developmental in terms of its objectives. The method of data collection sources is library- and documentary-based. Among the round bronze haipins of the Lorestan civilization, two case studies, numbered 1 and 2, from the region of Sorkh Dom, Kouhdasht in Lorestan, featuring the goddess and the ibex motifs, are preserved in the family collection of Houshang Mahboubian in London and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, respectively. These two samples were examined at three levels using Panofsky's iconology approach as a systematic and purposeful method, as outlined in Table 1. At the first level, pre-iconography or the primary and natural meaning of the motifs of the goddess and the ibex and their visual connection in the case studies is described; at the second level, iconography or the secondary and conventional meaning with multifaceted symbolic

concepts of the ibex, goddesses, and their semantic connections in textual, visual, and narrative evidence is specified. At the third level, due to the coexistence of goddesses with the ibex within a broader system of indigenous, cultural, literary, and religious concepts, the surface and deep layers of meaning of the aforementioned motifs in the ancient civilization of Lorestan have been explored through the intrinsic and substantive interpretation of the motifs.

Table 1. The theoretical framework of Erwin Panofsky's iconology at three levels. Source: Authors.

Level 1	Pre-Iconography	Description of Motifs- Carrying the primary or natural meaning of motifs
Level 2	Iconography	Analysis and Perception of Meaning- Discovering the semantic relationships of patterns and examining their multifaceted and symbolic concepts
Level 3	Iconography	Intrinsic or Content Interpretation - Interpreting symbolic components in relation to the broader cultural, indigenous, religious, and philosophical symbolic systems.

Research Background

In terms of research background, various studies have been conducted in different sources regarding the description and analysis of the motifs on the bronze hairpins of Lorestan. However, no research has been conducted with an iconological approach to the connection between the motifs of goddesses and the ibex on the round hairpins of this civilization. «Mahmoudi and Sodaei» (2023), in an article entitled «Comparative Study of the Female Motif in Mesopotamian Art and the Lorestan Hairpins Based on Jungian Archetype», aiming to identify the visual and conceptual relationship of female motifs and discover the intellectual heritage in the mentioned civilizations, have concluded that the role of women in the art of Lorestan and Mesopotamia is rooted in the same archetype of goddesses in their art, symbolizing renewal, blessing, and the dissemination of beliefs in matriarchal societies. This suggests the similarity of their inner essence and reminds us of Jung's archetypes, which are all based on the shared human essence and unconscious. In the article entitled «Analysis of Fertility Symbols in Bronze Hairpins of Lorestan», «Mirzaei Rashnou et al.» (2019) posed the question of how the symbols related to the goddess of the bronze hairpins of Lorestan are evaluated. They concluded that, in addition to the image of a woman, other motifs, such as fish, pomegranates, rams, and eight-petaled flowers on the hairpins, signify fertility, blessing, and abundance. In the article entitled «Semiotic Analysis of the Motifs on the Iron Age Hairpins in Central Zagros», «Salek Akbari et al.» (2019) aimed to understand the nature of the motifs used on the hairpins through Saussurean structuralist semiotics. They concluded that by categorizing the motifs into paradigmatic and syntagmatic groups, the hairpins can be divided into three sections: feminine, masculine, and horned human. These motifs were intended to represent three deities: The masculine, the feminine, and the underworld. Among these motifs, there are signs of the dominance of the feminine deity over the masculine, as well as the connection between these two deities. The only published source related to the present research topic is by «Gilani» (2018) in a master's thesis entitled «Iconology of the Goddesses' Motifs on Bronze Hairpins of Lorestan in the Iron Age». To understand the iconology of the motifs of goddesses on round bronze hairpins, it has been concluded that the fertility power of women in the motifs of goddesses, at the center of the pins, as the feminine element of existence, complements the earth and, in conjunction with animal and plant motifs, represents the concept of fertility. The superior

human power of the goddess, accompanied by the supernatural forces of animals and plants, dispelling evil and creating a safe and peaceful environment, encompassed within the round form of the hairpins, has been the savior of ancient humans in achieving their desires, overcoming fears, and resolving the problems and limitations of humanity dependent on nature. The present research, derived from the thesis mentioned above, aims to analyze and interpret, using Panofsky's iconology approach, the reasons for the coexistence of the ibex with the goddesses in the round hairpins of the Lorestan civilization.

Theoretical Foundations

«Panofsky» first defined the term iconology in the inspiring preface to his famous book, «Studies in Iconology». He presented a thoroughly scientific, disciplined, and truly robust method of iconography and iconology through his extraordinarily excellent expression. Panofsky, in this book, has sought to distinguish between the old interpretation of iconography as the pictorial representation of a theme through a figure and iconology as the understanding and perception beyond the representations of symbols. He has defined the distinction between subject or meaning and form, identifying three stages of interpretation. He has examined the historical, social, cultural, and political contexts related to the works to uncover the hidden meanings in the artworks and has sought to understand the religious, philosophical beliefs, and various inclinations of a period, country, and nation (Panofsky, 1972, 16). Panofsky proposes three stages in order to uncover the hidden layers of meaning in works of art. His approach begins with the pre-iconographic description stage, which includes the description of the image and the visual patterns of the work (Orrelle & Horwitz, 2016). The second stage is iconographic analysis, which deals with images, stories, and parables rather than themes. This analysis presupposes knowledge of specific subjects and concepts conveyed through literary sources or oral traditions (Panofsky, 2017, 44); the third stage is the interpretation of iconography, which he termed iconology. Iconology is related to the symbolic values embedded in images; widespread values and symbols that form the basis of a nation's way of thinking and also influence the culture and worldview of its people (Orrelle & Horwitz, 2016). His theoretical framework is presented in Table 1. With the iconology method, one can understand the beliefs, convictions, and thoughts of a tribe or nation, aided by a multitude of evidence from historical, literary, and artistic contexts, as well as the core content of motifs that are repeated in various forms.

Pre-Iconography of the Goddess and the Ibex

Among the Iron Age jewelry, round bronze hairpins have been found in graves and religious sites, such as the Sorkh Dom Temple in Kouhdasht, Lorestan. According to «Moori», the broad round hairpins of this civilization, made of metal or copper, belong to the Iron Age II (Moori, 2000, 107). In the center of the round hairpins, images of women are combined with plant, animal, mythical, and geometric motifs. According to «Ghirshman», some of these rods terminate in a round plate on which a prominent human head is carved, which must be the head of the mother goddess worshipped by the Asian tribes from Anatolia to Susa (Ghirshman, 1992, 48). Throughout all ancient times, women have been revered for their superior ability to give birth. The widespread presence of the female figure at the center of round bronze hairpins indicates the sanctity of women in the philosophical thought of the ancients. Ancient humans depended on the fertility of women and nature for their survival. The scarcity of water and rain leads to his creativity and use of iron for trade and livelihood. The Iron Age begins under conditions where most human settlements have perished due to drought (Talaei, 2015, 55). Therefore, the drought caused people of that era to resort to

superior powers such as goddesses and supernatural forces of animals like the ibex for survival and overcoming limitations, and to depict countless images of them according to their beliefs on various backgrounds. The background of the studied hairpins in Figs. 1 and 2 consist of round bronze plaques depicting the face of a goddess from chin to forehead at the center, surrounded by a circle, illustrated using the bas-relief engraving technique. Around the central figure, four-horned ibexes are depicted kneeling in front of a plant or tree situated between them, above and below the goddess's image, in a realistic style. Despite the long horns of the ibex in these images, it can be said that they are male. The composition of the images mentioned above is symmetrical, and the rotation of the ibex around the central figure of the goddess has created a visual movement. The linear and visual form of the circle surrounding the goddess at the center of the hairpin, along with the surrounding ibexes, creates movement in the artwork's space, indicating the meaningful relationships between these motifs. The overall structure of the case study hairpins, in terms of form, composition, execution technique, gender, and the number of human and animal elements, is similar to each other. The form of the goddess's face in Fig. 1 is triangular, while in Fig. 2, it is depicted as circular. The positioning of the ibex's hands and feet in the images is different. The depiction of the tree or plant appears once above the goddess's head in Fig. 1 and four times in Fig. 2. The circular linear form in Fig. 2 is repeated twice around the head of the goddess and the ibexes. In contrast, the multi-petal floral motifs appear as prominent circular volumes in Fig. 1. To uncover the meaning of the motifs and examine their multifaceted and symbolic concepts, we have delved into the iconography of the motifs as mentioned above in the next section.



Fig 1. Case study of a round bronze hairpin from the civilization of Lorestan, featuring a central depiction of a goddess and four ibexes. Source: Mahboubian, 1997, 192.



Fig 2. Case study of a round bronze hairpin from the civilization of Lorestan, featuring a central goddess and four ibexes. Source: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, n.d.

Iconography of the Goddesses

Since the dawn of humanity, people have always sought to discover their own nature and have worshipped their creator. «The Mother Goddess is the oldest artistic subject of humanity» (Toynbee, 1983, 350). In connection with nature and the projection of the earth's mercy and blessings, humans had conceived the Mother Goddess in their minds as a tangible and material element, endowed with grace and kindness, the power of birth, and the ability to produce offspring. «Campbell» believes that the concept of the goddess is related to the reality that you were born from your mother (Campbell, 1998, 350). In the Iron Age, humans faced drought, and to survive themselves and nature, they firmly believed in superior

powers, such as the goddess, as the supportive forces of nature and the protectors of plants and animals. In Iranian mythology, Ameretat, the female deity, is another manifestation of the salvation and immortality of the lord of plants. She causes plants to grow and increases the strength of sheep. She strives to prevent plants from wilting (Amouzgar, 2006, 15). The need for marriage, beauty, and childbearing has been an inherent characteristic of women throughout all eras, and in the past, they would turn to deities for this fortune and luck. One of the deities of ancient Iran was «Ashi», who grants women beauty, fortune, and prosperity, and bestows blessings upon their homes (Nyberg, 2004, 66). In ancient societies, the superior reproductive qualities of women were considered sacred, elevating them to a divine status. The symbolic and mythical values attributed to women contributed to their rise to power in primitive societies, where they assumed leadership roles. For these reasons, matriarchal societies were formed. In the beliefs of the people of Lorestan, goddesses were believed to possess superior and mysterious powers that influenced the individual and collective behavior of the tribe and community. Belief in magic involves seeking help from the hidden and concealed power in inanimate objects; therefore, with the belief in the effectiveness of hairpins adorned with the images of goddesses or the mother goddess to attract security and tranquility, they would attach the hairpin to themselves as an influential object possessing magical power and benefit from it with various intentions. In ancient times, throughout the Iranian plateau, men and women wore amulets and talismans around their necks for multiple purposes (Lahiji, 1998, 250). Due to their sacred realm, goddesses embody concepts, such as the central mother, the womb of existence, the origin of the earth's creation, fertility, love, abundance, greenery, the elixir of life and immortality, death, war, growth and flourishing, the rain-bringer, and the source of the water of life, etc. Belief in the superior powers of goddesses has led to the creation of diverse images and numerous narratives across different cultures. This notion has taken on a local flavor in Lorestan, where it is reflected in the bronze artifacts and ancient hairpins of this civilization. The image of the goddess at the center of the round bronze hairpins signifies the essential and central role of women in the realm of existence and social life, as well as their god-like power, which is embodied in the connection with the ibex. To understand the deep structure of the bond between these two superior powers, in addition to the iconography of the ibex, we will analyze visual evidence and narrative stories.

Iconography of the Ibex

The horns of the male goat symbolize supernatural power, divinity, kingship, strength, victory, abundance of herds and crops, reproduction, and fertility. In Iranian mythological beliefs, since the male goat possesses a masculine stature and warrior strength, it can be equated with the powerful and combatant deity Bahram. In the Bahram Yasht, it is stated: «Bahram Ahura, created in the form of a beautiful mountain ram with spiraled horns, attacks the demons» (Pourdavood, 1977, Karda 8, verse 23). The male ibex, with its sharp and combative horns, can be an embodiment and animal manifestation of Bahram. This animal, with its herd-leading power, possesses a masculine nature. Horned gods are considered symbols of the warrior spirit, fertility, and are also regarded as masters of animals. According to Campbell, the ibex might symbolize masculine power (Campbell, 1998, 47). The connection between the moon and tides, storms, and rain strengthens its relationship with plants. The circular horns of the ibex, which resemble the crescent moon, are believed by the people of Lorestan to influence rainfall, to such an extent that images of this animal have repeatedly been depicted alongside springs, reflecting the influence of magical or religious beliefs. The depiction of the ibex with long twisted horns is a masterpiece of the

bronze craftsmen of Lorestan, who have also infused their imagination into it. In ethnic and mythological beliefs, the ibex is a celestial symbol that connects the earth to the cosmos. «Jabz» believes that the ibex is one of the constellations in the northern sky, also known as the horned goat. The ibex is also the goddess of the moon (Jabez, 1991, 23-25). Wherever an ibex is seen, it is a sign of water and vegetation. In most works of art, Anahita is depicted as an ibex. In the bronze artifacts of Lorestan, the ibex appears alongside Anahita, symbolizing the goddess of fertility, water, and prosperity (Afzaltousi, 2012). In many civilizations, the ibex is often associated with goddesses, serving various functions. In Greek culture, the ibex is often depicted alongside goddesses or in the motif of a goddess, symbolizing the concepts of love and friendship. In the temple of Aphrodite in Athens, the goddess was depicted in the form of a seated male ibex (Jiran, 2003, 150). The ibex, a symbol of power and warrior spirit, has been depicted alongside Gilgamesh on multiple bronze artifacts. According to «Hatam», artists depicted horns on their heroes to make them appear distinguished, intelligent, warrior-like, and genius (Hatam, 1995). Ancient people strongly believed in the influence of good and evil forces on their lives; therefore, animals were considered sacred, thought to have a magical effect on their destiny. The ibex has a ritualistic and mythological function in many bronze engravings and is often depicted alongside goddesses and Gilgamesh, the beloved hero of this civilization. It seems that the goddesses shared common aspects with the ibex in matters of weather, rain-making, and magical powers, and they were intertwined with the ibex in their duties. The connection of this sacred animal with the goddesses has been depicted on round hairpins following beliefs and rituals. The coexistence of the ibex with the concepts of superior masculine power and symbols of water and rain with goddesses, who themselves were supporters of springs and waters, indicates a purposeful connection of the mentioned motifs; therefore, the images of the ibex and the goddess are manifested as the two superior powers of human and animal on the hairpins.

Visual Evidence of the Goddess and the Ibex in Ancient Civilizations

Goddesses and symbols associated with birth and fertility were worshipped in Iran and ancient civilizations. The Hasanlu Bowl is an ancient artifact from the civilization of Iran that shows the close connection between the goddess and the ram. In part of this bowl, a goddess is depicted with outstretched hands on the back of a ram. In Fig. 3, above the goddess, two attendants are perhaps leading two sheep for a sacrifice or another ritual. Sacrificing horned animals, including rams and ibex, was one of the ancient rituals in pre-Islamic Iran to appease the gods.

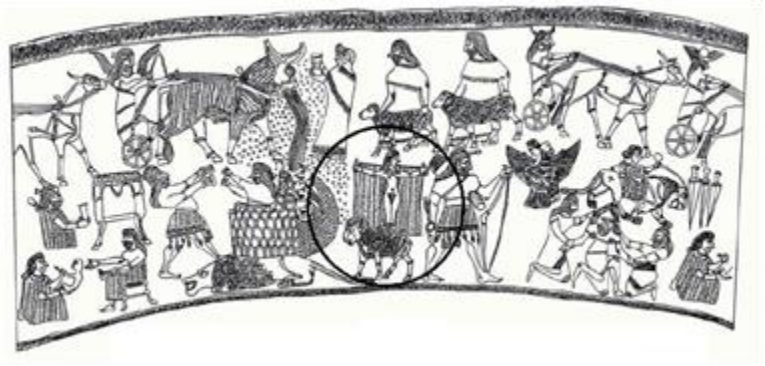


Fig 3. The extended motif on the Hasanlu Bowl, featuring ritualistic images of humans and animals. Source: Kouzehgari, 2021.

In the cylinder seal of the Shahdad civilization (Fig. 4), a lady is observed with plants growing from her body, and her figure is placed on two-horned male ibexes, which have turned their heads towards the goddess. This image depicts the growth and birth of plants through the superior powers of humans and animals. The cylinder seals uncovered from Shush depict goddesses sitting on the back of an ibex, with their feet placed on the back of another ibex-fish. There are other images of women in this composition, one of which is combined with a fish, indicating the connection between the goddesses and the ibex with water. In another bronze piece from the civilization of Lorestan, there is an image of a naked goddess pressing her breasts with her hands, and an ibex is perched on her head. The milk-shedding of goddesses is associated with fertility rites. This image serves as suitable evidence of the connection between goddesses and the ibex in the bronzes of the Lorestan civilization, which is symbolically associated with birth and water.



Fig 4. Cylinder seal of the Shahdad civilization with images of a goddess and an ibex. Source: Hakemi, 1997, 661.



Fig 5. Cylinder seal of the Shush civilization with images of the goddess and ibex. Source: Amiet, 1972, 35.



Fig 6. Cylinder seal of the Shush civilization with images of the goddess and ibex. Source: Amiet, 1972, 35.



Fig 7. A bronze piece from the civilization of Lorestan, depicting a goddess and an ibex. Source: Ghirshman, 1992, 40.

Figure 8 shows the face of a goddess in the center of a round hairpin, surrounded by winged ibexes depicted in a circular pattern around the lady. In the belief of the people of the Lorestan civilization, the ibex was revered and considered sacred, worshipped as the rain goddess. The bond between the ibex and the goddess in this image, along with supernatural concepts, signifies good fortune and auspiciousness. In Fig. 9, another example of the ibex accompanying the goddess is seen on a round bronze piece, where a woman is giving birth, emphasizing the concept of childbirth. The ibex, as a protective and supportive deity, is

depicted alongside her, illustrating the ibex's conceptual role with fertility in this image. Figure 10 shows a goddess at the center of a hairpin, accompanied by several ibexes and a horse. Many kings sacrificed horses and horned animals to the goddesses (Bahar, 1999, 249). Depending on human needs, motifs evoke different meanings in conjunction with the deities, and in this image, the ibex and horse may share a common role in connection with this lady. Figure 11 also depicts a lady at the center of a hairpin, surrounded by several ibexes and plants, illustrating the shared essence of life, which is dependent on water, birth, and the fertility of plants, with the ibex and the goddess. Figure 12 shows a combination of the ibex with pottery; the emptiness of the pottery, in terms of its lack of protection and storage capabilities, is associated with the goddesses and the ibex. Figures 13 and 14 depict the ibex and the goddess separately, which, due to the significance of these two powers, have numerous examples in various fields of Lorestan bronze art. The sanctity of the mentioned motifs, with their common purposes, causes their connection. What we saw in these images was an emphasis on the two powers: The human deities and the animal, the ibex, which were creatively combined and depicted in various contexts by the artists. The ibex, in the role of a valuable sacrificial animal, a fertility bringer, a protector, an angel, and a lucky and wish-granting animal that also influences the descent of rain, becomes a companion and helper of the goddesses. In the belief of the creators and audiences of these works, the depictions of goddesses as protectors of waters and the ibex as the rain angel were closely linked. They sought a safe and peaceful environment full of goodness and blessings, free from evil, and aspired to bring human happiness, comfort, and tranquility, thereby bestowing goodness, blessings, and fertility upon life and nature.



Fig 8. A round bronze hairpin from the civilization of Lorestan, featuring a central depiction of a goddess and four winged ibex. Source: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, n.d.



Fig 9. A round bronze hairpin from the civilization of Lorestan, featuring a central depiction of a goddess in the act of giving birth and ibex. Source Los Angeles County Museum of Art, n.d.



Fig 10. A round bronze hairpin from the civilization of Lorestan, featuring a central depiction of the goddess of the ibex and animals. Source: Goddard, 1979, 77.



Fig 11. A round bronze hairpin from the civilization of Lorestan, featuring a central depiction of the goddess, ibex, and plants. Source: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, n.d.



Fig 12. Ceramic rhyton with an ibex design. Source: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, n.d.



Fig 13. Bronze rad-shaped hairpin from the civilization of Lorestan with the form of an ibex. Source Los Angeles County Museum of Art, n.d.



Fig 14. A round bronze hairpin from the civilization of Lorestan, with a central depiction of a goddess. Source: Ghirshman, 1992, 337

Literary Evidence of the Goddess and the Ibex in the Civilization of Lorestan

1. Local Legend of the Taral Girl: In the beliefs of the people of Lorestan, who were herders and farmers, there is a story titled «The Angel of Rain and the Demon of Drought», which emphasizes the impact of the feminine role on rain-making and the fight against drought. In the story of the Taral girl, the rain angel descends upon the villagers after seven years of drought to deliver her mother's message, having fought the drought demon «Pousha» in the sky for seven years. The Rain Angel has asked the people to ascend to the heights, play musical instruments, create a commotion to scare the demon Pousha, and clear the way for the clouds to reach the sea. The girl herself, with the clattering of two stones that she strikes together on a height, defeats the drought demon with her mother's help, and it rains. Since then, the people of Mehrab village, in gratitude for the service of the Taral girl, the rain goddess, play musical instruments and drums at that place every year. This belief has been preserved among the Lore tribes to this day. In years of drought, they ascend to the heights and make a noise so that the Taral angel can defeat the demon of drought, «Pousha», and rain can fall upon the earth (Asgari Alam, 2012, 381-383). This story reflects the rain-seeking rituals performed by goddesses in the mythological era of Lorestan civilization, which, despite the passage of millennia, still remains in the hearts of the people

of this region. Therefore, it can be imagined that the images of the goddesses on the hairpins of Lorestan, which were related to women, were associated with water, rain, rain-seeking, and fertility. For this purpose, they were offered to temples as votive tablets or tied as magical objects on their bodies.

2. Local Legend of the Dal Girl: The Dal Girl (Dal means eagle in the Lorestan language) is an oral story among the people of Lorestan; the story of a girl who hatches from an egg and is raised in an eagle's nest, becoming a maiden of perfect beauty. A prince falls in love with her and tries to obtain her at any cost. The prince has commissioned an old woman to trap her. The old woman, with the trick of slaughtering an ibex and cooking it over a fire, traps the daughter of the eagle. She pretends to be weak while slaughtering the ibex, and the Dal girl, witnessing the old woman's foolishness, comes out of the cave and slaughters, skins, and cooks the ibex for the old woman. The old woman nails the hem of the girl's dress to the ground and takes her to the prince's palace, but on the way, the old woman ties the girl to a tree and presents her ugly daughter to the prince instead. A lion eats the Dal girl in the forest. Two drops of blood from the girl fall to the ground, and two seven-colored reeds grow from them. The shepherd of the prince, who has brought the flock for grazing, sees the reeds and makes a flute from one of them, which produces a strange sound when played. One day, the shepherd plays the reed flute in the prince's presence, and the prince becomes aware of the old woman's cunning. The shepherd takes the prince to see the seven-colored magical reeds, which have a diameter the size of a human waist. He splits the healthy reed with a sword and brings out the Dal girl, marrying her (Firoozmandi et al., 2012). This story is a prominent example of the connection between women and ibexes in the legends of Lorestan; because the Dal girl is a goddess of local fertility specific to the Zagros region, especially Lorestan, which has taken on a regional and local flavor, including in the way of life and the sacrifice of an animal like an ibex; an animal that was domesticated in the Zagros for the first time, and since it was the foundation of the food, clothing, and shelter of the Zagros inhabitants, the importance they placed on this creature also influenced their beliefs and religion.

3. Local Narrative of the Story of Datala: The story of Datala and the demon is one of the tales of Lorestan literature, in which a woman triumphs over evil with her feminine strength. The story revolves around a male demon who resides in a cave near the city of Pataq and subsists on the city's livestock every day. This demon greatly torments the people of Pataq. The men lack the strength to fight this demon. In the meantime, an old woman named Datla promises to capture the demon for the city's people. Datala, with a spindle and some wool, goes to the cave and waits for the demon. The demon, upon seeing Datala, intends to eat him, but Datala cunningly convinces him to become his servant, and the demon agrees. One night, when the tired demon returns home and quickly falls asleep after eating, she tightly binds him with a rope made of woven wool, captures him, and overcomes the demon (Asgari Alam, 2012, 486-489). This story refers to the magical power of women in the Lorestan civilization, which is said to ward off evil. It reminds us of the struggle of goddesses against destructive forces in mythological beliefs. In this context, we see an example of a woman's dominance over animals in the bronze plaque of a round hairpin, which is connected to the deeper structure of this story.



Fig 15. A round bronze hairpin from the civilization of Lorestan, with a central depiction of a goddess and four winged ibexes. Source: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, n.d.

Iconology of the Goddess and the Ibex

In ancient beliefs, the horned ibex is considered the male celestial god, with various functions, including serving as a sacrificial animal, a fertility bringer, a protector, a lucky animal, and a grantor of wishes. It is associated with goddesses in the role of a rain angel and is more prominently depicted on the heads of bronze hairpins. The mentioned motifs transcend the natural concept and acquire a divine and godly aspect. The story of the Dal girl is a representation of the Mother Goddess myth in the Lorestan civilization, where the sacrifice of the Dal girl and the ibex by the river, as well as the regrowth of the reed plant from the sacrificial blood and the reunion of the Dal girl with the prince, symbolize death and rebirth, the power of creation and fertility by goddesses and fertility deities along with the ibex. In the local narrative, the Taral girl is known as the Rain Angel, and to combat the drought demon Apooush and bring rain, she attempts to attract the clouds by striking stones together. The lives of ancient people, who depended on water, often involved seeking the help of superior powers in their beliefs to address this necessity. In Figs. 5, 6, and 7, the pattern of a woman sitting on the back of an ibex and signs of water are visible. The ibex has been depicted multiple times beside springs and on pottery. Considering the rain-bringing function of the goddesses and the rain angel in the local story of the Taral girl, and the similar role of the ibex in bringing rain, one can understand the water-seeking power of the motifs on the studied brooch. It can be imagined that the ibex is named the powerful helper of the goddesses, as the successor of the Taral girl, the rain goddess. Just as in Fig. 8, the ibex is depicted surrounding the goddess like a winged angel. Therefore, in the deep structure of the image and concept of the ibex on the round hairpin under study, it can be compared to the Taral girl, the rain-bringer. The invocation of women's superior power to eliminate the destructive forces of nature is a remnant belief from the matriarchal era. The internal structure of the mentioned story of Datala refers to the concept of the revered grandmother and the superior power of women in defeating the demon, the destructive and evil force of nature. Perhaps the title of queen or heroine can be attributed to Datala, who held political and social power in her era. Women with power have clashed with evil forces in the pursuit of peace for ancient humanity during the matriarchal era. In Fig. 15, two animals are depicted in the hands of a lady, symbolizing the dominance and power of the goddesses of Lorestan. In the era of patriarchy, a hero like Rostam goes to battle against Akvan Div and the forces of evil. In the local narrative of Datala, this duty was entrusted to a woman. Is the image of the female hero in the mentioned hairpin not Datala? Are the

defeated demon or the forces of evil in these literary and pictorial narratives not the same as the drought demon? In this context, considering the motifs of the case studies in this research, the heroine seeks the superior and beneficial power of the ibex to repel evil and request rain. With the defeat of the forces of evil and the drought demon, the ibex, the rain angel, appears. This was the duty of the female hero of ancient Lorestan, whose belief is reflected in the function of repelling evil and attracting the forces of good, water, and rain, as depicted on the hairpins. With a natural interpretation of the role of the woman and the ibex on the hairpin under analysis, the central figure may be a noblewoman who commissioned the engraving of her image alongside the ibex. We might call the woman the woman-hunter and consider the ibex, outside of mythological beliefs, as the same common prey. With this interpretation, the economic function of the ibex as a food source becomes clear. On the other hand, if we consider the woman as a symbol of the earth and the ibex as the male god, the coexistence of the celestial and terrestrial symbols—namely the male god (the ibex) and the female (the goddess)—brings about the creation and fertility of existence, which exemplifies the roles of the woman-earth and the ibex-sky as the creators of nature. The goddess and the ibex are represented in the round form of the hairpin. These circular compositions are thought-provoking and have come into existence due to supernatural reasons. «Hinnells» believes that the ancient Iranians consistently envisioned the world as a round plate (Hinnells, 2009, 29). The round form of the hairpins, the circular horns of the ibex, and the adaptable land align with the concept of the circle, which symbolizes goddesses. In ancient symbolism, the circle was regarded as a symbol of the goddess (Golan, 1991, 13). In the analyzed images of the hairpins, the ibex, a male deity with circular horns, symbolizes goodness, bravery, courage, fertility, and assistance, surrounding and protecting the goddess, the female deity who symbolizes the creator of the earth, the exemplary creator of existence. The circular motion in the composition of the ibexes around the goddess conveys the concept of time and evokes the cosmic rotation of celestial bodies. The depiction of the goddess in the center of the hairpin refers to the supreme feminine power, the creator of existence, who is united with the male power of the ibex. These motifs, as two deities or two superior powers of humanity and animals, have been created within the circle of existence in a safe and serene environment for the benefit of ancient humanity, to fulfill the thoughts, beliefs, and aspirations of the people of the Lorestan civilization, due to their supernatural significance.

Conclusion

The great ancient goddess, along with her associated symbols, has been revered and worshipped as a dominant belief in many cultures. The goddess in the Lorestan civilization has taken on a local flavor and is associated with the ibex, a mythical and native animal of the region. Following the beliefs, customs, and needs of the ancient people of Lorestan, she has been a powerful deity in their lives. The goddesses, with their magical power, have overcome the demon of drought. By dispelling evil and creating a safe and calm environment enclosed in a circular form, they have aided the ibex, the god of warriors, and the earthly image of the moon in attracting goodness and rain to benefit ancient humanity. The fertility power of women in the role of the goddess, at the center of the round form of the hairpins, as the feminine element of existence and complement to the earth, alongside the ibex with circular horns, the male fertility god and a celestial symbol, in the circle of existence, represents the connection between earth and sky in the round form of the bronze hairpin. Based on the native Datala narrative, another reason for the centrality of the woman's image in the hairpin refers to the central superior power of women in the politics

and society of matriarchal beliefs. Additionally, the mentioned motif in the center of the hairpins has been attributed to the woman-king, woman-hero, or the princess-lady of the ibex hunter as an economic source. Countless images of the ibex, the rain angel in bronzes and on hairpins, in conjunction with goddesses, can be aligned with the tale of the Taral girl, the rain goddess, who serves as a water-seeking deity. Considering the vital role of rain as a decisive force in the lives of the ancestors and the local, narrative, pictorial, and analytical evidence, the coexistence of the ibex with the goddesses as guardians of waters and springs on the round hairpin of Lorestan supports the hypothesis of rain-seeking by these motifs as gods of springs and water, two superior human and animal powers supporting water, which is more confirmed in the ancient beliefs of the people of Lorestan.

Author Contributions

This article is derived from the master's thesis of Author 1 in the field of painting, entitled «Iconology of Goddess Motifs on Bronze Hairins of Lorestan in the Iron Age», supervised by Author 2 at the Isfahan University of Art.

Acknowledgment

This research has no acknowledgments.

Conflict of Interest

The author (s) declare that there are no potential conflicts of interest related to this research, in writing, and publication of this article

Research Funding

The author (s) did not receive any financial support for conducting the research, writing up, and publication of this article.

References

- Afzaltousi, E. S. (2012). Rug the preserver of wild goat figure since the ancient times. *Negareh Journal*, 7(21), 55-67. **[In Persian]**
- Amiet, P. (1972). *Glyptique Susienne, Memoires De La Delegation Archeologique En Iran*. Tome XLIII.
- Amouzgar, Z. (2006). *The mythical history of Iran* (8th ed.). SAMT. **[In Persian]**
- Asgari Alam, A. M. (2012). *Legends and beliefs of western Iran* (1st ed.). Arvan Publishing. **[In Persian]**
- Bahar, M. (1999). *A study of Iranian mythology*. Agah Publishing. **[In Persian]**
- Campbell, J. (1998). *The power of myth* (A. Mokhber, Trans.; 3rd ed.). Nashr Markaz. **[In Persian]**
- Firoozmandi, B., Rezaei, M., & Joudi, K. (2012). A local narrative of the myth of the «fertility goddess» in Lorestan. *Women in Culture and Art*, 4(2), 25-43. **[In Persian]**
- Ghirshman, R. (1992). *Iranian art in the Median and Achaemenid periods* (I. Behnam, Trans). Elmi va Farhangi Publishing. **[In Persian]**
- Gilani, T. A. (2018). *Iconology of the goddess motifs on Lorestan bronze hairpins in the Iron Age* (Master's thesis, Faculty of Visual Arts). University of Art, Isfahan, Iran. **[In Persian]**
- Goddard, A. (1979). *Iranian art* (B. Habibi, Trans.; 1st ed.). National University of Iran Press. **[In Persian]**
- Golan, A. (1991). *Myth and symbol, symbolism in prehistoric religion*. Schoen Books.
- Hakemi, A. (1997). *Archaeological excavations of a Bronze Age center in Iran*. ISNEO-ROME.
- Hatam, G. (1995). Role and symbolism in ancient Iranian pottery. *Honar Quarterly*, (28), 355-378. **[In Persian]**

- Hinnells, J. R. (2009). *Understanding the myths of Iran* (Zh. Amouzegar & A. Tafazzoli, Trans.; 1st ed.). Cheshmeh Publishing. **[In Persian]**
- Jabez, G. (1991). *Symbols (Book One: Animals)* (M. R. Baqapour, Trans.; 1st ed.). Translator Publishing. **[In Persian]**
- Jiran, F. (2003). *Greek myths* (A. Esmailpour, Trans.). Karvan Publishing. **[In Persian]**
- Kouzehgari, Z. (2021). A new approach to the Hasanlu gold bowl: Interpreting its weapons depictions. Figure 3. Drawing of the scenes depicted on the Hasanlu Gold Bowl.
- Lahiji, M. K., & Kar, S. (1998). *Understanding the identity of Iranian women in prehistoric and historical contexts* (1st ed.). Roshangaran and Women's Studies Publishing. **[In Persian]**
- Los Angeles County Museum of Art. (n.d.). Disc-headed pin [Bronze object, Luristan, Iran, ca. 1000–650 BCE]. LACMA Collections. https://collections.lacma.org
- Mahboubian, H. (1997). *Art of ancient Iran (copper and bronze)*. The Hoshang Mahboubian Family Collection, Philip Wilson.
- Mahmoudi, M., & Soudaei, B. (2023). A comparative study of the female motif in Mesopotamian art and Lorestan hairpins based on Jungian archetypes. *Negareh*, 18(67), 43-229. https://doi.org/10.22070/NEGAREH.20200.14814.2826 **[In Persian]**
- Mirzaei Rashnou, M., & Beyranvand, Y. A. (2019). Analysis of fertility symbols on Lorestan bronze hairpins. *Women in Culture and Art*, 11(1), 47-63. https://doi.org/10.22059/jwica.2019.278426.1248 **[In Persian]**
- Moori, P. R. S. (2000). *Ancient bronze relics of Iran* (A. Darabbeigi, Trans.; 1st ed.). Kermanshah Publishing. **[In Persian]**
- Nyberg, H. S. (2004). *Ancient religions of Iran* (S. N. Najmabadi, Trans.). Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman. **[In Persian]**
- Orrelle, E., & Horwitz, L. K. (2016). The pre-iconography, iconography and iconology of sixth to fifth millennium BC Near Eastern incised bone. *Time and Mind*, 9(1), 30-42.
- Panofsky, E. (1972). *Studies in iconology: Humanistic themes in the art of Renaissance*. Routledge.
- Panofsky, E. (2017). *Meaning in visual arts* (N. Akhavan Moghaddam, Trans.). Cheshmeh. **[In Persian]**
- Pourdavood, E. (1977). *Yashts* (Vol. 1). University of Tehran. **[In Persian]**
- Salek Akbari, M. H., Hejabr Nobari, A., & Afhami, R. (2019). Semiotic analysis of the motifs on Iron Age hairpins in Central Zagros. *Iranian Archaeological Studies (Nameh Bastanshenasi)*, 9(23), 71-90. **[In Persian]**
- Talaei, H. (2015). *Prehistoric archaeology of Mesopotamia* (4th ed.). SAMT Publishing. **[In Persian]**
- Toynbee, A. (1983). *History of civilization* (Y. Ajand, Trans.; 1st ed.). Mola Publishing. **[In Persian]**