

Symbolic and Comparative Study of Griffin in the Works of the Achaemenid Era*

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Abstract: *The griffin is one of the symbolic animals that is deeply rooted in the culture and beliefs of different governments. The motif of this animal is present both in mythology and the history of literature, as well as in the majority of architectural elements, dishes, ornaments, textiles, which manifest the beliefs and opinions of the people of ancient times. The griffin is one of the mythical birds of the ancient world, shaped like an eagle from the front half and a lion from the back half. It can be said that the exact origin of the griffin is not known and many names have been mentioned for this animal in different civilizations and it has appeared in various forms in the art of different nations. Based on this, the present research studies the symbology of this special and rare animal (along with its motif) in numerous works of art in Iran in the Achaemenid era and the comparative study of this image in that era. The research method is descriptive and analytical, and its information is collected through library sources and published images of ancient times. The results of the analysis show that the griffin has concepts and beliefs that among the ancient people suggest greatness, opposition between good and evil, royal power, protector and guardian. At the same time, these motifs are symmetrically created in a static and dynamic state, which is completely abstract. The motif of Griffin in each region has been influenced by the native culture of the people of that region and has various concepts that have been changed at any time according to the ethnic, cultural, artistic conditions and beliefs of the time.*

Keywords: *Griffin, Achaemenid era, mythological concepts, ritual concepts, use of motifs*

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Introduction

In the ancient world, myths as a manifestation of culture had a direct relationship with ethnic creativity and mythological motifs; Arts had the same origin and purpose. Among the elements of the mythological world are imaginary and legendary creatures with a combination of two or more animals that the people of the ancient world believed to have extraordinary power. Among the monuments and works that have an important contribution to introducing the culture and beliefs of the people of the ancient world are these composite animal motifs. Most of these motifs carry important concepts and often rely on people's ideals and beliefs¹. A griffin is a mythical creature with a lion-like body and an eagle's head and horse's ears. In the Persian language, the name Griffin is Dal. *Dal* is native to Iran and is one of the largest birds in the world that belongs to the eagle family². The griffin was used as a guardian in the architecture of the ancient Elam era, which was noticed on the thigh of a griffin found in Susa, which was written in Elamite cuneiform. This statue was made for the god of the gods of Elam (Inshushinak), which is related to the reign of Ontash Gaul³. The griffin was first seen in the art of Egypt and Mesopotamia, but it became more prominent in the mythology of India, Iran, Rome, and Greece. As a matter of fact, the griffin is one of the mythical birds of the ancient world.

This strange creature is shaped like an eagle from the front half and a lion from the back half. It can be said that the exact origin of the griffin is not known and many names have been mentioned for this creature in different civilizations and it has appeared in various forms in the art of various nations. The motifs of mixed animals have been seen a lot in the art of the Achaemenid era. Consequently, many books, theses, and articles have analyzed this motif. In most of the research, these works have been investigated in a comparative way by taking into account the two civilizations of Iran and Mesopotamia with an animal like the Simorgh. Thus, until now, no comprehensive and independent research that examines the symbology and comparative aesthetics of these works in Iran has been done. Therefore, it seems necessary to carry out this research to solve some of the deficiencies and to identify and understand the place of this composite animal in the art of the Achaemenid era as a widely used element. The main goal of this research is to investigate, analyze and match these numerous works left from the Achaemenid era. For this purpose, several works of the Achaemenid era, from museums and archaeological sites, have been studied.

¹ Hamidah Jabransari, *Griffin Symbolism and its Formal Evolution in Pre-Islamic Art*, *MahHanar Magazine*, 2005, p. 98.

² D. N. MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*, published by Oxford University Press, London, 1990, p. 17.

³ Daniel Thomas Potts, *Archeology of Ilam*, 2009, p. 231.

Research questions

1. The motif of the griffin is used in which of the Achaemenid works of art? And how was their implementation?
2. What symbolic concepts did the griffin have in the artworks of the Achaemenid era?
3. What are the commonalities and differences between motifs in terms of aesthetics?

Research background

Investigating the motif of the griffin in a historical era in Iran, especially in the Achaemenid era, we notice that it has been the subject of much research, which can be mentioned as follows: Heide-Marie Koch in the book from the language of Dariush⁴, Roman Girshman in the book *Iranian art during the Median and Achaemenid eras*⁵, Ali Akbar Sarfaraz and Bahman Firouzmandi in the book "Art of Iran in the Historical Era"⁶, John Curtis in "The Forgotten Empire of the Ancient Persian World"⁷, Mehrnaz Karmi in his dissertation entitled "Reviewing the mutual effects of mythical and hybrid creatures in the civilizations of Iran and Mesopotamia on each other with the emphasis on form and meaning"⁸. It should be noted that the works mentioned in the background section of the research are short and brief and sometimes only a reference is made to the motif of Griffin, so the difference between the present research and the investigations carried out is that it independently focuses on the symbology and formal characteristics of the motif of Griffin and its analysis has been done in the context of the Achaemenid Empire. As a result, the necessity of researching the griffin painting and its analysis in the Achaemenid era was felt, and the authors of this article have been greatly encouraged to write in this field.

Method and importance of research

The works left in Iran contain mythological beliefs and religious and cultural ideas. Perhaps it can be said that the most documented documents for the reconstruction of beliefs are the works left over from that era, which have reached us with minimal changes. Symbolic motifs and pictures all convey a special message to the audience, which can be analyzed in a wide range of political, economic, religious, and mythological concepts. Our knowledge

⁴ Heidemarie Koch, *From the language of Dariush*, 2006, p. 139.

⁵ Roman Ghirshman, *Iranian art during the Median and Achaemenid eras*, 1992, p. 147.

⁶ Ali Akbar Sarfaraz and Bahman Firouzmandi, *Archaeology and art of Iran in the historical era*, 2014, p. 110.

⁷ John Curtis, *Ancient Iran according to the British Museum*, 2008, p. 88.

⁸ Mehrnaz Karmi, *Investigating the mutual effects of mythical-hybrid creatures of two ancient Iranian and Mesopotamian civilizations on each other with an emphasis on form and meaning*, 2002, p. 127.

and awareness of past societies are somewhat dependent on the study of the concepts of these works. The research method is descriptive-analytical, and the method of collecting library information includes the study of books and articles, as well as the published images of ancient times. First of all, the research is based on the motif of the griffin in the Achaemenid era; second, the symbology of this motif is examined. These motifs have been discussed here in terms of aesthetics (composition, representation, and dynamics) so that to identify the artistic characteristics in a comparative way.

General information about the Achaemenid government

By defeating Astyages, Cyrus the Great put an end to the ruler of the Medes and established an empire called the Achaemenians in 550 BC⁹. This government was further developed during the time of his successors, especially during the time of Darius I, and included from the Indus Valley in the Indian subcontinent to northern Greece and Egypt¹⁰. Many artists and craftsmen were employed in the Achaemenid court, and art historians or art history specialists praised the skill of the artists of the Achaemenid Empire era¹¹. The Achaemenid art is a kind of earthly classification admired and influenced by cosmic thoughts¹². The works and manifestations of this art and thoughts can be seen among the cultural works found, such as architecture, ornaments, textiles, seals, dishes, pottery, etc. The art of the Achaemenid Empire era is an abstract of all the ages of Iran. One of the characteristics of this civilization is represented by the decorative patterns that include animal, human being, plant, geometric, motifs etc. During this era, some animals were considered sacred and respected, and their symbols were made in different ways according to the iconography in the place of their government. Among these animal pictures was the griffin, which has been repeated many times. In the continuation of the research, the symbology of the motif of animals in the works of the Achaemenid era will be investigated first, as we have already mentioned, and then the symbology of this image of the griffin among the cultural works will be closely discussed.

Introduction to animal motifs

Realistic and symbolic forms of animals are one of the oldest motifs that humans have depicted. In the art of ancient Iran, animal motifs are one of the most abundant subjects; even the pattern of the Iranian flag was derived

⁹Briant, Pierre, *Achaemenid Empire*, translated by Nahid Foroughan, 2002, p. 341; Vahid Azadi et al, *Investigating the representation of the Lydian delegation in the reliefs of the eastern staircase of Apadana (case study: vessels and jewellery)*, 2023.

¹⁰ Yaghoub Azhand, *History of ancient art*, 2011, p. 34.

¹¹ Roman Girshman, *op.cit.*, p. 130.

¹² Karimian, Hassan; Sarafraz, Ali Akbar and Ebrahimi, Nasrallah, (2010), Restoring Achaemenian palaces in Barazjan by relying on archaeological excavations, *Bagh Nazar Magazine*, No. 14, Year 7, p. 46.

from animals¹³. On the other hand, in ancient Iran, the respect and importance of animals were such that we see the names of some animals like boar and horse in the combination of many names of ancient Iranians, the most famous of which is the presence of the name of camel in the combination of the name of the prophet of Iran, Zoroaster¹⁴. It can be said that animal images are one of the oldest motifs that humans have drawn in their works. These motifs in Iran, like other motifs, were not merely decorative, but sometimes they expressed hope, fear or recourse to a force to fight against the dangers of nature and life. Sometimes they expressed religious beliefs and legends. Occasionally these special values and expressions turned motifs into a kind of conventional and symbolic signs that were used throughout history as message transmission¹⁵. These motifs are among those that have been dominantly and repeatedly observed in many ancient civilizations, including Iran. During the Achaemenid Empire, some animals were considered sacred and respected, and artists used them as symbols and showed them in relief on the walls of palaces and temples. These animals were: cow, lion, horse, goat, and eagle. Most of the times they appeared in their natural image and their real design. Having this in view, artists found it easier to graft the head of one body to another and thus create a strange creature of legendary creation. They loved the cow because of its usefulness, the horse because of its inherent nobility and usefulness, the lion due to its strength and the fact of being the ruler of the forest, and the eagle because of its agility and intelligence. Therefore, the artists considered this very aspect in their works.

In this part of the article, we examine the symbology of the motif of the griffin in the works found in the Achaemenid era.

Griffin in history, myth, and literature

According to archaeologists, the Griffin, this legendary and symbolic creature has long been known among ancient civilizations such as Iran, Mesopotamia, India, Egypt, and Greece, and it also had a high place in the art of these nations¹⁶. This bird has been called “Homa” in some historical eras of Iran. “Homa” or “Homai” means *auspicious* and in some dictionaries, including in Moin culture, it is known as an eagle. In Zoroastrian texts, it was considered a symbol of the kingdom. Griffin or Homa can be the legendary Simorgh mentioned in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*. From a psychological point of view, this animal is a symbol of the connection between mental forces and cosmic forces¹⁷. In the dictionary of symbols in Eastern and Western art, the

¹³ Xenfon, *Kuroshnameh*, 2001, p. 194.

¹⁴ Ebrahim Pourdavoud, *Mazdasena and Yashta Literature*, 1980, p. 230.

¹⁵ Mohammad Khazaei, Shial Samavaki, *Investigation of the bird motif on Iranian pottery*, 2002, p. 8.

¹⁶ Hamidah Jabransari, *op.cit.*, p. 99.

¹⁷ Juan Eduardo Serlo, *The Culture of Symbols, translated by Mehrangiz Ohadi*, 2010, p. 539.

description of the griffin indicates an animal whose front half is similar to an eagle, its back half is similar to a lion, and its tail is similar to a snake or a scorpion, which gives a distinguished and outstanding character to this mythological creature¹⁸.

It should be noted that the lion and eagle are both symbols of Mitra (seal), the sun goddess in ancient Iran. The Asian continent is likely the origin of the griffin, which the Greek historian Herodotus named a mountain range called Isidon in the north of the Asian continent. This opinion is a promising hypothesis to consider the griffin as belonging to the Scythian people who lived in the north of the Asian continent, and the ideas and beliefs related to the griffin went to other places such as Iran and Greece by the immigrants of these people (Scythians). But in the meantime, another theory suggests that the origin and root of the griffin are related to the land of India and its ancient civilization, and it gradually entered Iranian art through cultural and social connections¹⁹. The land of Mesopotamia during the Sumerian civilization is one of the other civilizations where the motif of the griffin is evident in its art, one of which is related to the epic of Enzo. In this epic, Enzo, who is depicted similar to a griffin in reliefs, is evil, usurping, and an ambitious bird defeated by Ninurte, who is one of the gods of war²⁰. Some scientists, including Arthur Pope, think that the image of the griffin is a symbol of the sun and should be killed so that the earth does not burn from its heat²¹. One of the most important findings that show the motif of the griffin in art before the Achaemenid era is the golden ring discovered from the Arjan treasure from the New Ilam era, as well as the griffin statue from the ancient site of Chaghazanbil in Khuzestan. These objects dated back to the 6th and 7th centuries BC²². The griffin motif has been seen on the body of the Golden Cup in the Iron Age from Marlik Hill in northern Iran, which has a date of 1500 BC²³. In some of the bronze works discovered in the Lorestan region (now kept in the Museum of Ancient Iran), griffin shapes have been seen on some of them²⁴. The ancient site of Ziviyeh in Saqez city in Kurdistan province, where most of the works discovered in it are related to the Medes era, among these works, the head of an animal in the form of a gold griffin is visible, and in this work, the animal's mouth is open as a sign of anger²⁵. Examples of griffins in the art of the Achaemenid era date back to 500 BC to

¹⁸ James Hall, *Anthologies of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art*, 2001, p. 290.

¹⁹ Hamidah Jabransari, *op. cit.* p. 101.

²⁰ Yusuf Majidzadeh, *History and civilization of Mesopotamia*, 2001, p. 247.

²¹ Hamidreza Mohebi, *Study and analysis of hunting motifs in Iranian art until the end of the Safavid era*, 1998, p. 78.

²² Maitham Rezaei Mehwar, *The golden ring object revealed from Arjan, a discussion on form, meaning, place and time*, 2009, p. 11.

²³ Ezatullah Negheban, *Marlik Excavations*, 2000, p. 309.

²⁴ André Godard, *Iranian Art*, 1998, p. 58.

²⁵ Mehrnaz Karmi, *op.cit.*, p. 94.

330 BC, which include large sizes for capitals and small sizes for ornaments, textiles, dishes, rings, seals, etc. It can be concluded that the griffin's motif was not only a symbol of good and evil but also included opposite meanings and dual nature, which was influenced by the art of Mesopotamia. In fact, the combination of these two animals (eagle and lion) is a symbol of rulership. It is on the sky and the earth, which includes religious, ritual, and religious symbols.

The analysis of the present article continues with several works from the Achaemenid era, including the motif of the griffin.

Griffin on the capitals and reliefs

Takht-eJamshid is one of the important capitals in the Achaemenid era. Some of its capitals have been decorated with griffin motifs (**Fig 1**). In addition to the ritual aspect - protection and guardian of buildings and palaces - they also have a practical aspect; that is to say, they hold the columns. In the capitals of Persepolis, this image of the griffin is a beautiful symbol of the protector and guardian of this region. In the Khwarazm region in the northwest of Uzbekistan (namely the two regions of Kiuzligir and Kalaligir, which are the power base and seat of the Achaemenid satrapy in the 5th century BC), artifacts have been found, one of which is the discovery of a fragment of a griffin-shaped capital in the Kalaligir region, which in terms of artistic style is similar to the capitals of Persepolis palaces and are comparable to each other²⁶. Achaemenid columns and capitals with large-sized griffin decorations and the use of symbols of power show the political goals of the kings. The main scope is to reflect the splendor and majesty of the empire to the audience, and the desire for power and immortality, evident in Achaemenid beliefs and culture.



²⁶ Ali Bahadori and Bahman Firouzmandi, *Khwarazm in the Achaemenid Era from Satrapy to Independence from the Empire*, 2012, p. 151.

Fig. 1 of the pillar head with griffin decorations in Persepolis²⁷

Reliefs are another form of art in which artists have used animal motifs to decorate the walls, including the griffin motif, which can be seen in Sadstun Palace in Persepolis. On the body of one of the walls of this palace, there is a relief of the king fighting a legendary animal in the form of a griffin (**Fig 2**). In this picture, the king plunges his dagger into the animal's body and kills it. In addition to decorating the wall of the palace, this painting includes a kind of symbol that evokes victory over the enemy, evil, and the victory of right over wrong.



Fig. 2 of the relief of the king fighting with the griffin in the Hundredth Century Palace²⁸

Griffin in stamp

Seals express secrets and whispers and mirror the entire culture, civilization, and art of society²⁹. The representation of griffins in Achaemenid seals has many variations, which usually include the battle of two griffins with the king, having a symmetrical composition³⁰. In the battle scenes, the

²⁷ Ali Akbar Sarfaraz and Bahman Firouzmandi, *op.cit.*, p. 132.

²⁸ Farida Dashti, *Lion image in Achaemenid thought and art*, 2002, p. 52.

²⁹ Abulqasem Dadour et al, *The motif of hunting in the New Era era (650 - 1000 BC) with a view on cylinder seals and simultaneous relief motifs in Mesopotamia (Assyria)*, 2014, p. 6.

³⁰ Abulqasem Dadour and Roya Rozbahani, *A comparative study of hybrid animals in Achaemenid and Assyrian art with an emphasis on relief motifs and seals*, 2016, p. 21.

griffin stands on his own two feet in front of the king, against the king's power. The king's battle with mixed animals is the subject of many dramatic scenes in Achaemenid culture and civilization. The griffin pattern on the Achaemenid seals has a ritual and religious symbol (the idea of praying is included). The ritual symbol of the king is in the centre of the image and the combined animals, especially the griffin, symmetrically placed around it, are fighting with the king (**Fig 3**). The images of both griffin animals are displayed on the seal in the form of open mouths on the right and left sides of the seal, begging for forgiveness from the king; the ruler is in the center of the seal.



Fig. 3 Achaemenid era seal with griffin decorations³¹

Griffins in ornaments and utensils

Among the discovered works of art from the Achaemenid era, one relevant example is related to the golden ring with the griffin's head decorations, which is kept in the Victoria Albert Museum in London (**Fig 4**). This ring, discovered in the treasure of Jihun, is empty in some parts, but it is most likely that these empty places were filled with precious stones and then decorated. The mentioned treasure was found by the Jihun or Amu Darya River in the present territory of Tajikistan and most likely from the ancient hill of Tal Qabad (which is a passage on the north bank of the river), between

³¹ Otto Rava, *A Catalogue of Oriental Cylinder Seals and Seal Impressions in the Danish National Museum*, 1960, No. 163.

1877 and 1880 AD in non-scientific exploration³². One of the most important features of the griffin described in his description is his love for gold and his interest in gold, which is related to the iconography of the painting. Gold is a symbol of the sun, and since this animal motif is dedicated to the god of the sun, the relationship between the two (griffin and the sun) seems natural³³. The griffin has the instinct to find gold, emeralds, and other buried treasures, and that is why he is hostile to people who want to steal his treasure, and the egg of this legendary bird is made of opal, and the miraculous use of this animal's feathers in healing Blindness and blindness are attributed to him. The griffin motif is one of the important images of ancient Eastern thought and art, which is abundantly seen in many cultural works. This composite motif sometimes appears as a symbol of royal power and sometimes as a religious symbol. The image of a griffin on the gold ring of the Victoria and Albert Museum is shown as a horn, which is a symbol of respect and holiness in the art of this era of the Achaemenid Empire. The motif of griffins on the gold ring of the Victoria and Albert Museum is shown symmetrically and facing each other. It is a sign of the conflict between the two forces of good and evil and the superiority of good over evil.



Fig. 4 Gold ring of Victoria Albert Museum in London with griffin decorations

In addition to rings, amphorae are also influential in introducing a small part of Achaemenid art, one of which is the silver amphora in Sofia

³² John Curtis, *op.cit.*, p. 102.

³³ S. W. Helms, *Introduction in Khozhaniyazio*, 2006, p. 25.

Museum, Bulgaria (**Fig 5**) which was discovered in Duvanli region³⁴. In the decorations of this work, especially in its handles, the griffin motif is widely used. The griffins are displayed symmetrically and angrily, with their heads back as if they are the guardians and protectors of the container and its contents. It evokes power and greatness in the minds of the audience, and in terms of the type of motif representation, they tend to be abstract. The silver amphora of the Sofia Museum in Bulgaria, which has griffin decorations, shows a great and undeniable similarity with the amphora as carved in the body of the eastern staircase of the Apadana of Persepolis, brought by the Armenian and Lady Trade delegations.



Fig. 5 Sofia Museum silver amphora with griffin decorations³⁵

Griffin in textiles

What is the greatness and elegance of Achaemenid art is the very use of various motifs and the way of harmonizing them. They have a deep impact as well as attractiveness. The motifs of this era include lion, goat, winged goat, cow, fish, snake, scorpion, eagle, griffin, etc. In the Achaemenid era, Iran's weaving industry was especially famous for weaving silk, and soft and delicate woolen fabrics. As a consequence, the kings of this era were known for having beautiful clothes. Gold fabrics, whose thread was drawn from both gold and silver, as well as Iranian velvet, woolen and linen fabrics, were

³⁴ Diana Gergova, *Orphic Thrace and Achaemenid Persia*, 2010, p. 70.

³⁵ Diana Gergova, *op.cit.*, 2010, p. 70.

extremely desirable in the Achaemenid era³⁶. The motifs of the fabrics of this era were divided into three groups of animal, plant and geometric symbols. Animal motifs included birds that not only predicted the weather but also created it in a way and were worshiped as evangelists of the sun and storm. The motifs used in the fabric, which were sometimes woven and sometimes embroidered or stitched with gold and silver, included animal, flower, plant, and human motifs.



Fig. 6 Pazyryk carpet of the Leningrad Hermitage Museum with griffin decorations

Another work studied in Achaemenid textiles is the Pazyryk carpet (**Fig 6**), which is kept in the Hermitage Museum of Leningrad, in Russia, is known as one of the oldest carpets. One of the motifs identified on the edge of the carpet is the griffin motif, which is repeated 123 times in the center, while their heads are turned back³⁷. The griffin is woven in a very simple and abstract manner in the Pazyryk carpet. The repetition of this image is woven inside the square frames of the inner and outer borders of the carpet. The square shape in the Pazyryk carpet is a symbol of peace, stability, and the four corners of the world. Since in the Pazyryk carpet the griffin pattern is repeated alternately in the outer and inner edge of the carpet and the direction of the photo, it can be the symbol of the guardian and protector of the ritual parade. Placing the symbolic motif of the guardian next to the parade of other animals emphasizes the vigilance and power of the griffin in taking care of

³⁶ Nahid Mohammad Ebrahimi et al, *Examining the symbolic motifs of Iranian fabrics from the first century AH to the Mongol invasion in the design of jacquard fabrics*, 2012, p.42.

³⁷ Abdullah Mirzaei, *Symbolic concepts of Pazyryk carpet motifs*, 2018.

the parade against demons and evil spirits³⁸. The griffin pattern (along with the plant, geometric, and animal motifs) is directly related to Achaemenid culture, ritual, thought, and the designer of the carpet tried to depict the conflict between good and evil.

After the Achaemenid era and during the Parthian and Sasanian eras, the griffin pattern was used to decorate walls, metals, especially rhytons, and textiles. In the Islamic era, the griffin pattern gradually gave way to other composite animals, which can be seen in the remains of the Seljuk and Timurid eras.

Conclusion

The griffin consists of a horn and a lion's body, which is rooted in the ancient stories of various nations. Some researchers consider its origin to be in the north of the Asian continent, and others consider it to be a legendary bird belonging to India or Indo-Iranian. In the works of the Achaemenid era, this bird has a completely abstract form, which is not only a symbol of the conflict between good and evil or the two opposing forces of good and evil, but it also has different meanings such as a protector, a guardian and a symbol of power. The works of the Achaemenid era were full of greatness and royal glory. By examining the griffin painting on the works found from the Achaemenid era inside Iran and outside the political borders of Iran, it can be concluded that this motif was a symbol of power, royal majesty, a symbol of the protector and guardian, a religious symbol, as well as a symbol of the kingdom. In terms of representation, this painting tends towards abstraction, symmetry, static and dynamic states.

The examination and analysis of animal motifs in works of art show that each animal has a specific concept and symbol, and they generally speak of the worldview of Iranians during the Achaemenid Empire era. Therefore, among the Achaemenid cultural works, simplicity and order are the most important principles. The artistic feature of the images of this government is that with this simplicity they have created the most important impact on the meaning and concept of the creation of this work. Humans have always used symbols to express their extraterrestrial aspirations to keep them in the turbulent flow of history. On the other hand, when human thought wants to reach a goal, it turns to symbolism to make it smoother. Achaemenid art is a combined art influenced by the arts of neighboring nations and an adaptation of the arts before it. This art can be seen in the construction of tombs, the construction of buildings, and the production of metals, pottery, etc. The motifs of this era included: animal, plant, human, and geometric motifs.

In this research, the motif of the griffin in the Achaemenid era has been closely investigated. The eagle and the lion - each alone had magical

³⁸ Mircea Eliade, *Myth, dream, secret/Myths, Dreams and Mysteries. The Encounter Between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Realities*, 2001, p. 280.

powers and both of them were rulers of their territory, but when they were combined, they acted as protectors and guardians for the buildings, which received a different name in each culture. The combination of these two animals received a supernatural power in terms of religion, politics, culture, etc. The griffin motif has been found in Achaemenid textiles, seals, capitals, reliefs, dishes, and ornaments. At the same time, these motifs are created symmetrically and in both static and dynamic modes, and they are completely abstract. In the Achaemenid era, these animals are a general ritual, a symbolic and self-centered subject that, while being simple, induces a state of power, which is the main criterion for dealing with this image of the griffin in order to indicate a sense of status, dignity, and power. In this motif, they are a symbol of majesty, royal power, protector, and guardian. Finally, it can be said that they have had the greatest impact in generating the image of this animal.

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Fig. 4 gold ring of Victoria Albert Museum in London with griffin decorations

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Fig. 6 Pazyryk carpet of the Leningrad Hermitage Museum with griffin decorations

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