

## Some Comments on the Appearance of Oxus Civilization of Near East Animal Motifs

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**ABSTRACT:** This article discusses the geography of the distribution of animal motifs found in various artifacts found in the Bronze Age monuments of the Oxus civilization, and their appearance in the ancient Near East. The subject is explained on the basis of archeological and written sources.

**KEYWORD:** Elamite images, Chalcolithic art, Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Iranian royal iconography, Bactria-Margiana, Kerman Culture, feline, raptor, snake and hoofed animal, scorpion.

### INTRODUCTION

At the end of the 4th millennium BC and the beginning of the 3rd millennium BC, a strict law of motifs was formed in Iran and Mesopotamia, which included many unique animal motifs[1]. Many of these motifs are ancient forms of Eneolithic Iranian art, found mainly in seals and pottery. Other motifs such as "eagle and snake", "snake attacking a hoofed animal", "man killed by a snake or lion", "woman depicted with a beast" and even "bird man or man sitting on a bird" are the oldest common in Neolithic art. The T-shaped stone stelae of Gobeklitepa in Turkey are a shining example of the long history of many artistic motifs that appeared in the Near East in the early 3rd millennium BC[2]. New excavations in Central Asia show that these ancient motifs have reached the Murgab-Bactrian Bronze Age culture of Turkmenistan and Afghanistan. At a time when many animal motifs flourished here, in Mesopotamia and Iran, they had lost their significance. This article describes and analyzes this development.

In Iran and Mesopotamia, animal motifs can generally be divided into three groups: the first depicts mythological images and their ritual changes, the second is associated with divine images, and the third group depicts the daily lives of animals. The first group includes "battle between a bird of prey and a snake", "cat and snake", "cat and hoofed animal and snake and hoofed animal", as well as "attack of a bird of prey on a hoofed animal", "bird in a tree" and "animal fights such as a snake or a cat kills or eats a man". The image of a ungulate animal or a mixed creature made of ungulates and man also falls into this group. The latter images reflect the secondary semantic meaning of the ungulate as a real animal on the one hand and a mythological being on the other. As a mythological creature, it is a zoomorphic substitute for the male protagonist. This shows that the ungulate acted as a human.

### MAIN PART

The two different meanings of ungulates are especially evident in Proto-Elamite art, where animals often act as humans. Here, ungulates such as the bull, ram, or goat are always the zoomorphic

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appearance of high-ranking men. The images of this ungulate holding a pot or twig, throwing it with a bow and arrow, the image of a pot, temple or worship, sitting on a tree, throne or boat, killed by another animal as a sacrifice with a bow and other ornaments are ancient common in oriental art[3]. The equation of the ungulate and man in Protoelamite images is crucial for understanding many images in Near Eastern art, highlighting many features of royal iconography and mythological perceptions in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Iran. In Mesopotamia, the bull is mainly used to express this ambiguity. It begins with the epithets of the Sumerian kings compared to “wild bulls of extraordinary power,” the same image of a king and a bull meaning dominion and fertility. This is also reflected in the artificial bull’s beards, tails, and horns, which priests wear at the birth ceremonies of kings, and the horned crown of the kings of Mesopotamia. In ancient Egypt, Pharaoh also wore the bull’s tail as an expression of the kingdom. In eastern Mesopotamia, other animals, such as goats, sheep, or zebu, often played this role, but images of ordinary wild bulls are also common[4].

The dual meaning of the ungulate is also reflected in the development of images of ungulate-human mixed creatures that unite man with its zoomorphic substitute. In particular, goat man motifs later appeared in Luristan, Iran, and bull human motifs in Uruk and Elamian art. In Harappan culture, this process resulted in a different way, a mixture of humans and sheep[5].

The second group includes motifs in which animals appear to be attributes of the god; or inanimate images of gods or goddesses in anthropomorphic form (such as a mountain, a tree, or a vessel). Hoofed animals, snakes, cats, scorpions, or eagles are usually located on the side of the center of the object[6]. The distinctive diversity of this pattern is that it consists of the same animals that represent divinity.

The third group includes motifs related to animal husbandry, production animals, or movement and hunting scenes. They are most common in Mesopotamian and Iranian art.

These three groups of animal motifs strongly form the magnificent stone carvings of Late Uruk art in Elam and Mesopotamia, proto-Elam art in Susa and Persia, and “intercultural style” items from the Kerman culture in southeastern Iran. To a lesser extent, they influence Jamdet Nasr and the ancient dynastic Sumerian art. The artifacts of these cultures / periods mark the pinnacle of this motif, which is accompanied by the gradual decline and disappearance of many motifs. Only a few motifs, such as the “tree or ungulate on a hillside” motif, have survived in the Near East since ancient times.

Surprisingly, almost all the mythological motifs belonging to the first and second groups are found in the art of the Bronze Age in southern Turkmenistan, southern Uzbekistan and northern Afghanistan, also known as BMAC - in the Bactria-Margiana-Archaeological Complex. Only third group motives play no role in this art. This Murgab-Bactrian culture dates back to 2400 / 2300-1700 BC and is known only from the 70s of the last century. is a vast civilization with an incredibly rich iconographic repertoire depicted in The first finds were made in the 1970s in the Dashly oasis in Afghanistan and Sapallitepa in Uzbekistan[7]. The largest amount of archeological excavations falls on the research of Victor I. Sarianidi, which has been going on for 40 years on the Gonur hill in the Karakum Desert. Archaeologists have also uncovered many artifacts from illegal excavations in Afghanistan. The Kerman culture of Iran may have served as a kind of bridge for cultural ties between Central Asia and the Near East. The art of Kerman culture is especially famous for its so-called “intercultural style” stoneware of its ancient times, and it fills the geographical gap between Elam and Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, as Iran has been associated with proto-Elamite art since BC. The chronological differences between the cultures of the Bactrian-Margian Bronze Age, which emerged in the second half of the third millennium BC, are almost imperceptible.

Ancient Iranian objects and motifs were the impetus for the emergence of Bactrian-Margiyana art. In many cases, we support the theory that the motifs encountered in Bactria-Margiyana are not direct copies, but modified motifs. We can distinguish different changes and alterations, for example, the animals currently used in motifs, the creation of a new image of an inanimate goddess associated with animals, the creation of new species of mixed beings, the formation of a single motif such as the new location of the feeding animals. One of the most common changes is the replacement of one animal species with another or a related species in the local fauna. If the sex of the animal has the same mythological meaning, it could be. If we turn to Bactria-Margiyana, we will find two modifications. First, the image carrier changes. In glyptic art, the motif rarely takes on significance: it appears in some stamps and split seals, and in single-cylinder seals[8]. Instead, he decorates religious vessels often found in temples and houses in Honor[9]. These giant pots, often made of clay, had three or four tubes in the shape of a bull's head below the edge, which looked like they had been used for livestock[10]. Both the tree and the vessel are inanimate manifestations of divinity, and so in these cult vessels the motif of the animals next to the goddess is expressed twice.

Murgab-Bactrian painters used a tiger or a lion instead of a tiger to depict the "battle between a cat and a snake" on seals. A bird of prey with the motif of "a bird of prey fighting two snakes" has undergone a similar change in Margiyana. This is one of the most important and common motifs of the first Iranian art of the first half of the 3rd millennium BC, and the beast motif has its heyday in the art of Kerman culture. In Margiyana, the bearded vulture in Iranian images has been replaced by an eagle. But the motive changes more than this replacement. This pattern is found mainly on stone vessels and stone weights, rarely on seals and cylindrical seals in Kerman, and on stone seals and fragmented seals in Bactria-Margiyana, the battle between eagles and snakes is the main motif. The canonized Iranian form of the beast, which had previously been raised with wings and the head wrapped in two serpents, is also found in BMAC art, but many variations of this pattern can be found on the Murgab-Bactrian seals[11]. In the next stage of stylization, the eagle is depicted in a typical Iranian canonized way: the wings are raised from the front and the head is turned, but there are no snakes[12]. The reduction of a motif consisting of many pictorial elements into a single motif is a characteristic feature of Murgab-Bactrian art. Many divisions and stamp seals show only one number, which is derived from a more complex, multi-figure pattern. Typically, this is the most characteristic figure of the motif in the canonized state, which allows the original motif to be restored.

## CONCLUSION

The unique pictorial elements discussed above are also used to create a new type of motif in Bactrian art. This applies to the placement of image elements in the form of a circle. Sometimes two animals, such as an eagle and a snake, take turns. The one-step two-faced stone seal also depicts the rotation of busts of men and bird-humans. A distinctive feature of Murgabo-Bactria is the circular arrangement of these full motifs, which is related to the motive of a snake or a serpent dragon eating a goat or a goat-man or an eagle eating a snake or fighting a snake. Snakes, on the other hand, also appear winged, often additionally bearded, and sometimes equipped with horns or two claws. These forms are one of the many species of snake dragons developed in Murgab-Bactrian art. In general, there are three types of dragon-like mixed creatures. Type 1, just described, has the body and head of a snake and can be combined with wings and beard, horns or claws, or all additional elements. The body and paws of a Type 2 cat are combined with elements of other animals, such as wings, beard, and / or horns, a snake head (with or without a snake neck), or a snake tail. Sometimes this mixed creature has a snake skin wrapped around the cat's body. Wall paintings and mosaics recently found in the tombs of kings in Honor reflect this mixed creature in other combinations. Type 3 is more unusual and combines a lion or a lion-dragon with other animals or parts of them. In one seal, the

serpent's dragon wing, horned, bearded, and serpentine skin, is combined with the serpent's head that protrudes from its wings. Another depicts a scorpion tail and a lion with a penis turned into two snakes. Three different types of dragon-like creatures are elements of the same animal: cat, beast, snake, and ungulate, or scorpion. All of these animals are distinctive animal attributes of the Bactrian goddesses from the southeastern part of Iran, where the female goddess appears surrounded by these same animals, or sits on a cat or horned animal, or kneels and comes with other animals.

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