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## Original Research Article

# The Iconography of “Lady Sun (Khorshid Khanum)” Motif in Iranian Embroideries and its Relationship with the Evil Eye (Case Study: Sahebqaraniyeh Palace’s ladies Sun)

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## Abstract

**Problem statement:** Embroidery with different applications has been common since ancient Iran in decorating fabrics with a wide variety of patterns, colors, and types of sewing according to their production area. The embroideries with the motif of “Lady Sun” (Khorshid Khanum in Persian) are used in some Iran areas to avoid the Evil eye, such as Sahebqaraniyeh Palace’s Embroideries.

**Research objectives:** There are some questions about the reasons why the “Lady Sun” motif has been used in Iranian embroideries, such as why do the sun illustrations have female faces? What are the cultural and functional meanings of this motif in these embroideries, and what is the relationship between this motif and the Evil eye? An iconographic approach was used to answer those questions. The purpose is to identify the iconography of “Lady Sun” motives in embroideries of the Sahebqaraniyeh treasure and its relationship with the Evil eye both descriptively and analytically.

**Research method:** This research is qualitative and descriptive-analytical, and the data was collected in the field and library based on the iconographic approach of the Ervin Panofsky school.

**Conclusion:** In ancient culture, the sun was closely associated with the eye and the Evil eye. A woman’s face in the sun can be considered a symbol of Anahita and the sun as a symbol of Myhr, who both were protectors against the devil. The sun resembles the eye of the sky and is both destructive and protective. In many cases, the sun is described with a female face in literature. In the folklore of some regions of Iran, a beautiful female face was painted on a Sabu (pottery jar), called “Cheshmaro”, to avoid the Evil eye. In some other parts, it is called “Chesh Cheshi” or “Cheshouk” and is used to stay away from the Evil eye, which can be considered the use of Sahebqaraniyeh samples for this purpose.

**Keywords:** *Iconography, Motif, Lady Sun, Evil eye, Sahebqaraniyeh Palace’s embroideries.*

## Introduction and statement of the problem

In Iran, embroideries with a wide variety of motifs,

colors, and types of sewing stitches have been commonly used to decorate fabrics with different uses according to their production areas since

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ancient times. One of the motifs used in the Iranian embroideries is called Khorshid Khanum, which has been used to avoid the Evil Eye in some areas, as seen in the embroideries of Sahebqaraniyeh Palace's treasury. In the present study, it was attempted to investigate whether there is a relationship between the history of the "Lady Sun" motif and the Evil Eye. To this end, the following questions were raised: What has been the position of the "sun" element, which was used in combination with other elements, in different periods? Also, why do the illustrations of the sun have a female face? What are the cultural and functional meanings of this motif in the embroideries? And what is the relationship between this motif and the Evil Eye? To answer these questions, the "lady Sun" motif was interpreted based on the theories of iconography, through iconographic pre-description and analysis.

## Research Background

In some iconography books (De Beaucorps, 1994; Jean & Gheerbrant, 2009; Hall, 1995; Bruce Mitford, 2015) It is also stated that the sun was thought to be of the male gender in most different cultures and ethnic groups around the world. Some researchers (Pourkarim, 1974; Labaf Khaniki, 2009) referred to the use of the "Lady Sun" motif in Iranian handicrafts, especially pottery. However, the concepts relevant to this motif have been not discussed. Labaf Khaniki (2009) investigated the use of this motif in the potteries produced in Mend village, Gonabad, and briefly described the position of the sun in the idea of the Iranians and the dependency of the purity of the ground and water on the sun. Shahparvari & Mirza-Amini (2016), entitled "Manifestation of sun motif in Iranian carpet", briefly described the history of this motif and the positions of the two elements the "sun" and "woman" in Iranian culture, and reported somewhere that this motif was also used in talismans. Regarding the Iranian textiles, especially Iranian embroideries, for example, one can refer to the following references (Godar, 1979; Ferrier, 1995; Ettinghausen, Grabar & Jenkins, 2003; Baker, 2006; Bahnassi, 2008; Irwin, 2010; Bloom et al.,

2010; Brend, 2010). Pope (2010) explained how embroideries have been manufactured, described the motifs used in them, and provided some samples. But it hasn't mentioned the "Lady Sun" motif. About this motif, Gillow (2010) has provided three examples of embroidered pendants with the "Lady Sun" motif, which belong to Isfahan. Pope & Ackerman (2008) (Vol.5) has described an embroidered curtain that dated back to the tenth century AH and its four corners were decorated with the motif of the sun with a female face. Also, Gluck and Gluck (1977) have explained the details of a needlecraft in Isfahan, which displays the "sun" with a female face over the tree of life, and dates back to the 12th century AH, and has provided six samples of the embroidered "Lady Sun" motif as Bakhtiari talismans, which are similar to the samples in Sahebqaraniyeh treasury in appearance.

Due to the use of this motif to avoid the Evil Eye, the present study has reviewed those references on the belief in the evil eye and the use of amulets and talismans to ward off evil (Jean & Gheerbrant, 2009; Irwin, 2010; Rahmanian Hatami, 2012; Bruce Mitford, 2015; Zeilabi, 2016), Jahanshahi & Madahi Moshizi, 2017; Blokbashi, 2019). Several researchers, for example, (Yaghoubzadeh & Khazaie, 2019; Afzaltousi & Sanji, 2015), have investigated the motifs used in the Iranian woven to avoid the evil eye. Also, in some historical travelogues, including Allemagne's (1956), one can see the travelers' mentions of the Iranians' belief in the evil eye and how they have dealt with it. However, except for reference (Gluck & Gluck, 1977) where it was mentioned the use of the "Lady Sun" motif as a talisman for decoration or avoidance of the evil eye, the relationship between the "Lady Sun" motif and the evil eye has been not mentioned in any references. What distinguishes the present study is the iconography of the "Lady Sun" motif used in the embroideries of Sahebqaraniyeh Palace, as well as the study of the relationship between this motif and the evil eye, which has not been addressed so far.

## Theoretical Foundations

Iconography and iconology are among the

approaches to studying visuals. Although they date back to the Renaissance, they, as a developed approach to visual studies, have been applied since the beginning of the twentieth century and eventually completed by Ervin Panofsky. According to Panofsky, iconography is a branch of the history of art that concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form (Panofsky, 2009). The present study has applied Panofsky's theory according to which iconography includes three steps: 1- Pre-iconographic description; 2- Iconographic analysis; and 3- Iconographic/iconological interpretation. This approach identifies and separates three layers of meaning, i.e. primary, secondary, and tertiary, to obtain messages hidden in the tangible elements of a work of art by analyzing and discovering unknown angles of convictions, beliefs, and worldviews hidden in the visual elements (Abdi, 2013, 16).

The pre-iconographic description deals with motifs, i.e. objects and events whose appearances are examined by lines, colors, and volumes, that can be identified through our experience, but are not guaranteed (Panofsky, 2018, 9). This step is limited to the world of structures and motifs, because achieving the primary or natural theme, which itself includes real and expressive issues, is one of the most important goals of this step (Abdi, 2013, 49).

The iconographic analysis step, i.e. symbolic analysis, deals with images, stories, and allegories instead of motifs. This step requires familiarity with specific themes or concepts as conveyed by literary sources, whether acquired by purposeful reading or by oral tradition (Panofsky, 2018, 11). Obviously, this step is achieved with much more than familiarity with objects and events acquired by practical experience, and it includes not only obvious presuppositions and themes, but also images, stories, and allegories that guarantee the implicit implications relevant to the subject matter. Iconographic interpretation (Iconology),

sometimes called intrinsic or content interpretation, as the main principle, includes the previous two steps and is considered the final destination of a careful iconographic study, which ultimately seeks to discover the innermost meaning of a work of art (Abdi, 2013, 62). In this step, in addition to the characteristics of a work of art, there are countless other options such as personality, religion, civilization, etc. to interpret and discover the work of art that is often unknown to the artist and may even be different from what he consciously intended to express (Panofsky, 1955, 31).

## Methodology

The present study is qualitative, descriptive-analytic research where data was collected using the iconography approach introduced by Erwin Panofsky using field and library studies. The statistical population included eighteen embroideries with the "Lady Sun" motif in the treasury of Sahebqaraniyeh Palace. The samples were selected using the purposeful sampling technique and the whole statistical population was included. Fig. 1 displays the analysis process including the primary and secondary levels of Panofsky's iconography approach.

## Data Analysis Based on an Iconographic Approach

### • Pre-iconographic description

Sahebqaraniyeh Palace, located in the Niavaran Complex, includes eighteen hand-embroidered wall hangings (Fig. 2), all of which are round, with a diameter ranging from 11- 32 cm. These wall hangings were all collected before the Iranian revolution, and unfortunately, no information is available on their place and year of production. They are decorated with the "Lady Sun" motif using brocade embroidery, sequins, and colored fabrics. Despite the differences in details, these "Lady Sun" motifs have elements (face form, face components, and decorations around the face) shared by the "Lady Sun" motifs used in other Iranian arts,

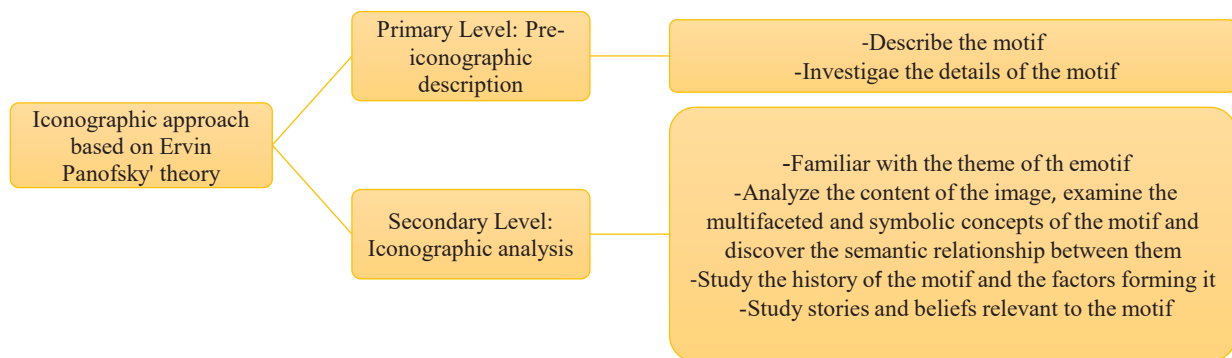


Fig. 1 .Process of iconographic analysis of Lady Sun motif .Source :Authors.

including architectural decorations, pottery, and painting, etc. The following is a description of the components of these wall hangings.

The hair on the forehead is parted down the middle (except for Sample 9), with one or two ringlets (Fig. 2, No. 8 & 10). The eyebrows are depicted as thick and connected (Fig. 2, No. 1-4) and sometimes thin (Fig. 2, No. 6 & 10), which are sometimes straight and sometimes arched (in Fig. 2, No. 9, the eyebrows are in a different form, as if an angry face is depicted). The eyes are large and in oval, arched, or round shapes with pupils, and in some samples, with lashes (Fig. 2, No. 10). The nose is depicted as an isosceles triangle, an oval, or just a straight line (samples 9 and 10) and in most samples, it is connected to the eyebrows (Fig. 2, No. 2-5). The lips are mostly drawn in an oval shape and small size and they are colored in some samples in some samples, the cheeks are decorated and refer to the redness of the Lady Sun's cheeks. In some samples, the chin is decorated with a colored triangle or a plant branch-like motif similar to women's tattoos (such as samples 4, 7, 8, and 10). This motif can also be seen on the eyebrows in some samples (such as Fig. 2, No. 3, 6, 9 & 10). Most of these wall hangings display zigzag-or arched-shaped decorations around the sun's face to show the sun's rays, with gold sequins, gold, and pink threads, or gold braiding with or without colored fabrics. In the samples, the outer edge is decorated with a fuzzy ribbon, plain ribbon, or piece of cloth (Fig. 2, No. 15), and in most specimens, with sequins on it. In all samples, sequins are used, which

are sometimes sewn regularly or irregularly on the whole face or part of it. In the embroideries of this complex, the face was depicted very simply, and from the types of embroidery stitches, one can find that the embroiderers did not seek to create a magnificent work of embroidery. However, in some samples, the motifs were embroidered more accurately and with more details (Fig. 2, No. 1-8), and in others, the embroidered motifs even show the inexperience of the embroiderers (Fig. 2, No. 9, 15 & 16).

#### • Iconographic analysis

Many Iranian handicrafts have two practical (material) and conceptual (semantic) aspects due to the use of symbolic elements in their decorations. No information has been recorded on the use of the embroideries studied (Fig. 2), except that they were embroidered wall hangings. However, according to the similar embroideries found in the eastern and central regions of Isfahan (Fig. 6) and a few samples presented in the book "*Survey of Persian art*" by Gluck & Gluck (Fig. 6, No. 4), in which the "Lady Sun" motif was used as a talisman to decorate or ward off the evil eye from the walls of houses in weddings or children's rooms (Gluck & Gluck, 1977, 235), one can find that in the embroideries in Sahebqaranyeh Palace, the "Lady Sun" motif may be used for decoration and avoidance of the evil eye.

According to the above, the conceptual aspect of this motif can be considered in relation to its uses, which is addressed in the iconographic analysis. The mentioned motif is a combination of the two elements of the sun and the female face, and that is





Fig. 2. Lady Sun wall hangings. Source: Sahebqaraniyeh Palace's treasury.

why it has been called the “Lady Sun” in visual arts or literature. The history of this motif dates back to the pre-Islamic period. Thus, to analyze the motif, the

following includes the iconological study of the sun; the investigations of the place of the sun in Iranian mythology; the history of the motif of the sun with

the human face before and after Islam; the place of this motif in Iranian literature and culture; anecdotes and beliefs related to these sample embroideries; and finally, the concept of the evil eye and its relationship with the sun and woman.

#### - The symbolism of the motif of the sun

The sun has always been respected by Indo-European and Semitic peoples for its light, grandeur, and usefulness, and even in ancient Egypt, the Sun God (Sun temple) was worshiped (Yahaqqi, 2007, 338). The sun provides light and heat and is a symbol of life and the source of the power of man and the universe. The sun has often been depicted with a human face, very long hands, and golden fingers. The roundness of its face makes it happy, as the “smiling” sun is the symbol of being popular for many hotels, etc. (De Beaucorps, 1994, 80-82). It should be noted that in many parts of the world, the sun is a symbol of the male gender, but in certain cultures, such as Japan and some Indian tribes, it is considered female (Bruce Mitford, 2015, 17; Hall, 1995, 109).

#### - Sun and Myhr in Iranian mythology

The sun has always had a special place in the myths of Iran and the world. This motif has changed over time and in accordance with the worldview of the Iranian people and has been represented in various forms. The sun and its associated motifs, such as the cross, have their roots in Mithraism. “Myhr” was considered the angel of love, friendship, covenant, and the manifestation of light. Because it was the symbol of light, it was later used to mean the sun. In addition, Myhr was the representative of war and courage to support peace, friendship, and covenant. Hence, in MyhrYasht, charming poems have been written for it. Other duties such as guarding the vast fields, protecting the people, and giving peace and comfort to the territory of Iran have also been assigned to it in Yashts “(Yahaqqi, 2007, 787-788). The term “Myhr” in late Persian is the changed term “Mitra”. In Avesta and Achaemenid inscriptions, it is referred to as Mithra, and in Sanskrit, Mitra. This term had become Mitr in Pahlavi and today is called

Myhr, meaning the sun, love, and covenant (Dadvar & Mansori, 2006, 139). In the Vedas of Brahmanas, like Avesta, Myhr is the Lord of light and brightness, but in Zoroastrian Iran, following the idea of monotheism, the place of Myhr declined, and among the gods, only Ahuramazda became important and Myhr remained only as a high-ranking angel (Yahaqqi, 2007, 788). According to the Avesta, the sun is other than Myhr (Bokhtourush, 2001, 179). In Avesta, there are two separate Yashts called MyhrYasht and Khorshid Yasht. Bakhtortash spoke about this in his book entitled “*Neshaneh Razmiz* [Mysterious symbol]” and concluded: “Myhr is not the sun god, it is the ray of light at dawn” (ibid., 180). However, the two have long been mistaken and the sun, with its sacred light, was considered eternal (Yahaqqi, 2007, 338). On the importance of the sun for the Iranians, Ctesias wrote: “Iranians often swear by the sun, and in the news on Curtius, it is stated that the sun was the symbol of Iranian authority and kingship, and on the upper part of the king’s tent, the face of the sun made of crystal shone.” (Pourdavoud, 1998, 309). The sun is one of the elements whose former place has been unchanged in the Islamic period and became popular in Islamic culture with high status, as in some Islamic thought, the sun is attributed to the family of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his family (Bahrampour, 2008, 36) and the existence of a Sura called “Shams” in the Holy Quran shows its importance.

#### Background of the Motif of the Sun with a Human Face (Male or Female) in Iranian Works of Art

Regarding the history of the motif of the sun with the human face, it can be said that it is not only related to the Iranian civilization and culture and the people of ancient Egypt; some American Indians and also Europeans have depicted the sun with the human face in some of their paintings (Bokhtourush, 2005, 346). Regarding the historical course of using the motif of the sun with the human face in Iranian art, one can refer to pre-and post-Islamic samples, in which it was seen with both male and female faces.



### • The pre-Islamic

In pre-Islamic Iran, the sun was depicted in many works in naturalistic, geometric, and abstract forms, but here, the motif of the sun with a female face is discussed. In some of the works, the sun was depicted with a human face, but some other works show a motif similar to the sun around the human face. Pottery dating back to the beginning of the first millennium BC has been explored in the Silk region, on which one can see the face of a woman with connected eyebrows connected to her nose and two weaves on the sides of her face, which are enclosed in a circle and drawn on the drain of the pottery. It cannot be certainly said that this motif is the sun with a face within it, as Ghirshman did not mention it (Ghirshman, 1967, 15). However, one cannot deny the similarity of this motif to the famous “Lady Sun” motif (Fig. 3, No.1).

It is also possible to mention a series of hairpins of Lorestan with cosmetic, ritual, and religious uses, the date of construction of which is considered to be the period from the third millennium to the first half of the first millennium BC (Irvani Ghadim, Hessari & Beik Mohammadi, 2012, 37). In the middle of some of them, a woman with her connected eyebrows and two wigs on the sides of her face is depicted (Fig. 3, No. 2), a face similar to the “Lady Sun” motif. There are various theories about the nature and symbolic meanings of these motifs. According to some scholars, such as Moorey<sup>2</sup>, Grishman, and Dussaud<sup>3</sup>, the female faces depicted as the pomegranate and the fish in some cases, represent the Goddess of fertility and water, i.e. Anahita (Salek Akbari, Hojabri Nobari & Afhami, 2020, 76). Others, such as Godard<sup>4</sup> and Pope<sup>5</sup>, considered some of these faces on the hairpins of the sun God (Godar, 1979, 62-65; Pope, 2010, 27). In these samples, it is inferred from the elements of the face, it is inferred that they have a female face, and the presence of flame-like motifs around the faces is quite obvious (Fig. 3, No. 3).

As another significant pre-Islamic work, one can mention the image of a work related to the Achaemenid period in “*Neshaneh Razamiz*

[Mysterious symbol]”, in which the face of a woman with the characteristics of the “Lady Sun” is placed in several circles, and in the outermost circle, motifs such as the sun’s rays are depicted around it (Bokhtourush, 2001, 242) (Fig. 3, No. 4). In the same book and “The Iranian banner from ancient times to today”, there is an image of a gold lattice disc with the motif of the sun with a human face, surrounded by flowers, which is exactly similar to the examples of the “Lady Sun” motif in the “Dam Ab” region, Isfahan (ibid., 243) (Fig. 3, No. 5 & 7). Regarding the motif of the sun with a female face within it and its attribution to a lady, for which there are pre-and post-Islamic samples, one can mention the details of the face in this motif, including the form of hair, eyebrows, eyes, and lips, which display a female face. It is also referred to as the image attributed to Anahita. “AredviSura Anahita” is the Goddess of water, rain, abundance, blessing, fertility, marriage, and victory and has been worshiped since ancient times in ancient Iran. There are many descriptions of Anahita in “AbanYasht” such as it cleans the semen of men and the chorion of women, facilitates the delivery for women, purifies the breast milk, and helps the production of herds (Farahvashi, 2000, 170). Various images of this Goddess can be seen on various works, and the existence of temples in Iran or neighboring countries shows the importance of her position among the people.

Of the images attributed to pre-Islamic Anahita, the motif on the cylindrical seal is thought-provoking. This motif displays the king standing with his hands raised in front of a lady, with a crown on her head and rays of light around her head, sitting on the back of a lion (Figs. 4-1). Some scholars consider this lady to be Anahita (Bokhtourush, 2005, 348; Grenet, 2006, 87). According to Bokhtourush, “considering different images of the motif of Anahita, i.e., a lady with a half-moon on her head and sitting on the back of a lion in some images and a lady with a halo of light on her face and standing on the back of a lion in other images, one can say that it is a strong and remarkable motivation that the statue of this

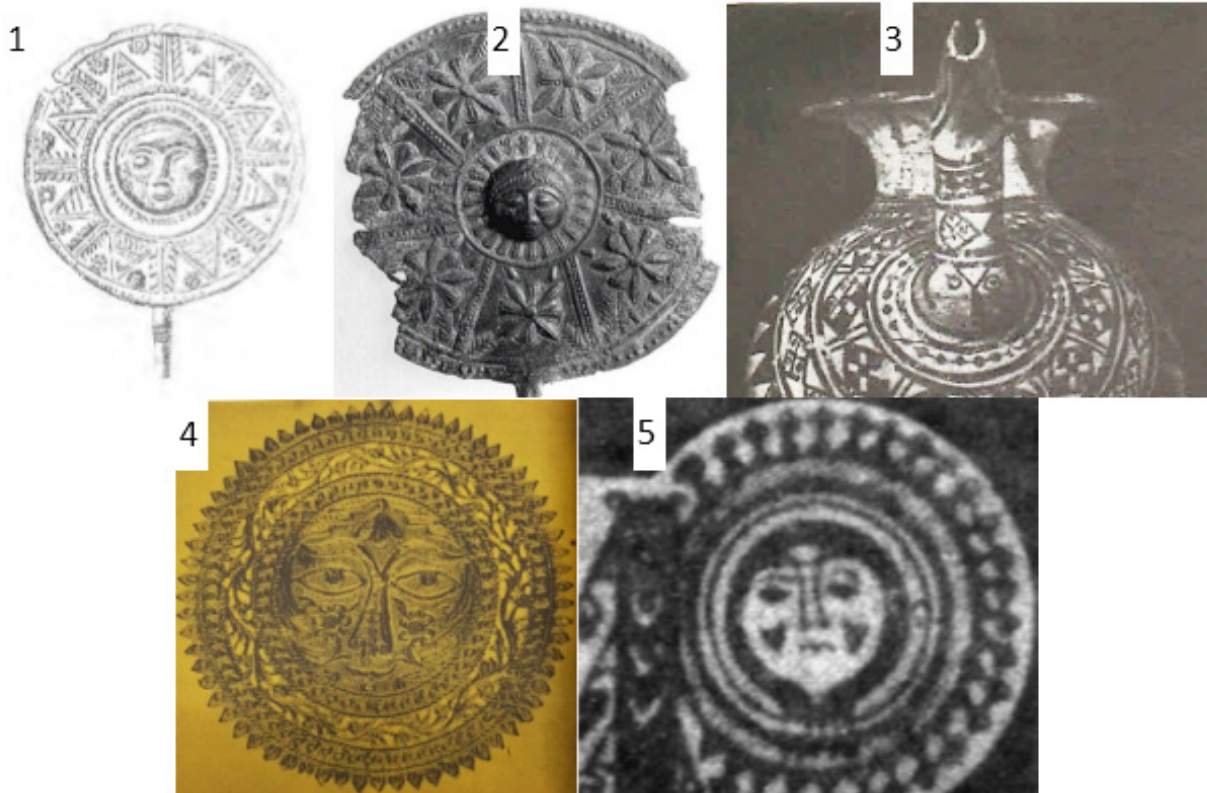


Fig. 3. 1: Pottery with a female face, 15th to 16th century. Source: Ghirshman, 1967, 15; 2: Bronze pin head, Lorestan, first millennium BC Source: [www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org); 3: Bronze pin head, Lorestan, first millennium BC Source: Godar, 1979, 63; 4: Part of an artwork, the motif of a woman's face within several circles, Achaemenid Era. Source: Bokhtourush, 2001, 242; 5: Gold lattice disc, the motif of a woman's face in a circle, discovered from the west of Iran, diameter 11.8 cm, Parthian Era. Source: Ibid., 243.

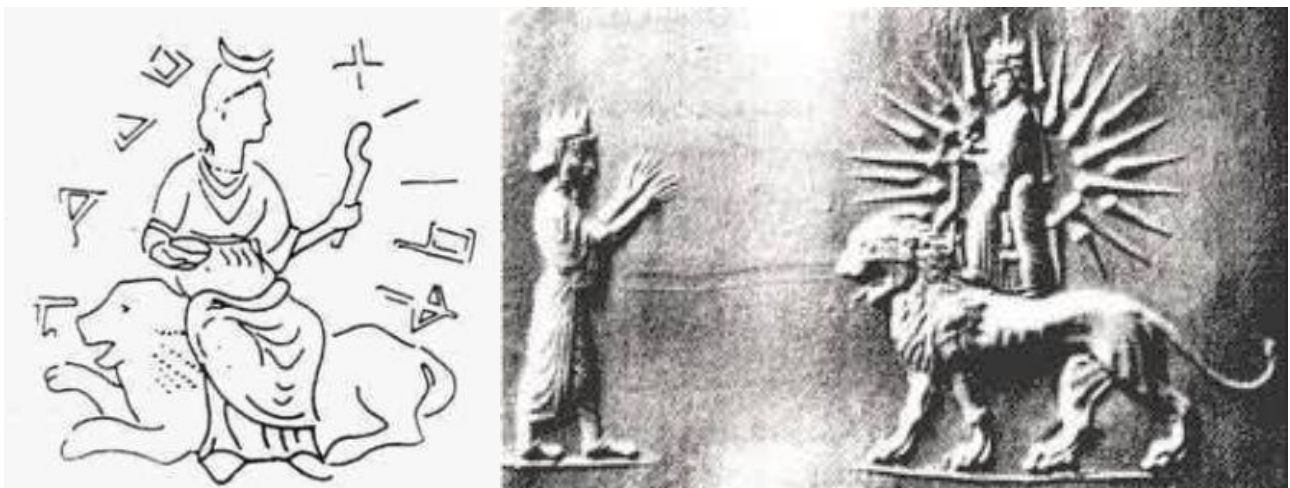


Fig. 4. Anahita standing on the lion. Source: Bokhtourush., 2005, 405.

precious lady has been transformed into the sun, having a human face with a wig and a mole due to a slight change and on the back of a lion" (*ibid.*), (Fig. 4). Bokhtourush's inference can be considered the reason for the use of this motif, that is, depicting







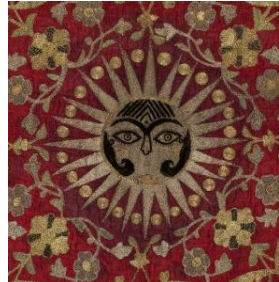









"Myhr" God together with "Anahita" Goddess in a motif called "Khorshid Khanum".

#### • The post-Islamic

In the post-Islamic periods, artists used the sun with a human face to decorate various works such



Table 1. Using the motif of the sun with a human face (male and female) in the Islamic Era. Source: Authors.

The motif of the sun with a male face or a face with no female features			
			
Coin, 13th century (Jamalzadeh, 1966)	The motif of silk cloth, 12th century (Khazae, 2002)	Glazed bowl, 12th century (Bokhtourush, 2005)	Part of a bowl, Late 12th century (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)
The motif of the sun with a female face and characteristics			
			
Painting on a piece of Ikat, 19th century. (Victoria and Albert Museum)	Part of Zoroastrian Needlework on a shirt, probably Qajar (Moghaddam Museum)	Part of Needlework, 19th century (Victoria and Albert Museum)	Part of Needlework, 16th century (Pope & Ackerman, 2008)
			
Earthenware plate, Meybod, contemporary (Authors' Archive)	stucco decoration, Borujerdiha Historical House, Qajar (Authors' Archive)	Part of a painting behind the mirror, Qajar (Moghaddam Museum)	Part of a gold pendant, Qajar (Azizi & Moqareh Abed, 2019)
			
Part of an armor, Isfahan, around the 17th or 19th century (Masterpiece of Persian art from polish collections, 2013)	Part of a four-mirror armor, the first half of the 19th century (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)	Qeysarie Bazaar gate, Isfahan (Mohammadimilasi, 2019)	Aali Qapu Palace gate, Isfahan (Mohammadimilasi, 2019)

as coins, pottery, architectural decorations, textiles, embroideries, ornaments, etc. There are samples of this motif (dating back to the 12th and 13th centuries AD) where the sun was depicted with a male face or a face with no female features. But, in later periods, this face was depicted with female characteristics, including hair parted down in the middle and, in most cases, connected eyebrows and a face very similar to a female face (Table 1). This motif was popular during the Qajar period, and it was sometimes depicted with a lion as a symbol of monarchy. It should be noted that in the Safavid and Qajar periods, the presence of this motif on works such as shields and armor, as well as in architectural decorations at the entrance of buildings such as the gates of “Qeysarie” Bazaar and “AaliQapu” Palace in Isfahan, is considerable because it seems it displays a protector on these works (Table 1).

### The Lady Sun in Iranian Literature and Culture

In Iranian literature, in addition to the sun, there are also cases of referring to the “Lady Sun”, examples of which are also seen in children’s poems:

Rises “Lady Sun”, Melts one “man” (One of the units of Iran’s measurement) of rice

We, wolf children, died of the cold

Rises “Lady Sun”, captivates the night for sleep

Picks up the “majma” (the kind of dish) of light, and melts the ice of the earth (Bokhtourush, 2001)

And sometimes, the beloved’s face was likened to the sun, such as: “The sun sets if you do not cover your face-Says two suns do not be in a country” (Sa’di, 1942, 308). In Iranian folklore, Khorshid Khanum has also been a name for women, such as “Khorshid Kolah Khanum”, “Khorshid Beigom”, “Khorshid Chehr”, “Khorshid Banoo”, or “Khorshid Dokht” (Fig. 5).

#### • The Evil Eye (Chashmarou)

The evil eye is a strong belief all over the world, and in folklore, it refers to a “look” or “stare” that is believed to bring bad luck to the person at whom it is directed for reasons of envy or dislike, which is also mentioned in the Holy Qur’an, and

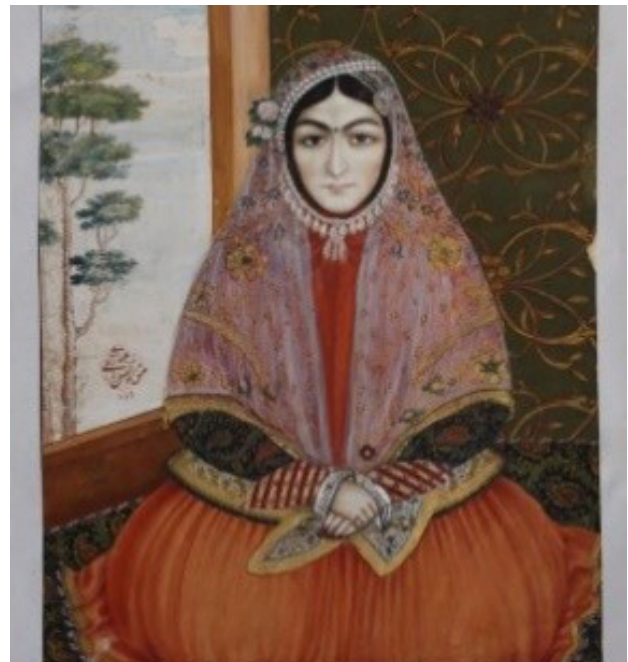


Fig. 5 .Image of Khorshid Khanum ,Sani al Mulk ,facial features similar to the motif of the Ladies Sun of Qajar .Source :www.malekmuseum.org.

numerous narratives have been presented in the commentaries on the verse of Evil Eye (Al-Qalam, 51). To avoid the evil eye, people commonly resort to amulets, prayers, and so on, which are also called “Chashmarou”. In *Dehkhoda Dictionary*, this term is defined as a thing that is made for averting evil and repelling evil eyes from people, animals, gardens, farmlands, houses, and so on. In the book “A Dictionary of Myths and Narrative Symbols in Persian Literature”, Cheshmarou, Cheshmaroui, CheshmArrou, CheshmPanam, and amulet refer to anything that is used to ward off the evil eye, and in this sense, it is used in Persian poetry. According to Attar’s description in “Asrār-Nāma”:

“They decorate beautiful pottery and cover it beautifully with Shar and Diba (Shar and Diba are kinds of Persian traditional textile).”

They designed it with eyes and a face (Cheshmarou) to avoid evil eyes with it (Yahaqqi, 2007, 302).

#### • Stories and beliefs related to the motif of Lady Sun in embroideries

There is no information on the use, place, and year of production of the embroidered tableau with the “Lady Sun” motif in the treasury of



Sahebqaraniyeh Palace. However, based on similar samples in Isfahan and its central and eastern regions ( e.g. “Varzaneh”, “Dam Ab”, and “Zardanj”) (see Fig. 6), as well as the samples belonging to the tribe of Bakhtiari which are presented in the book “*A Survey of Persian Art*” by Gluck & Gluck (1977) (Fig. 6, No. 4), one can find that the samples in the treasury of “Sahebqaraniyeh” Palace (Fig. 2) have a similar use mentioned for the abovementioned areas. In the mentioned book, to describe these pendants, Gluck states: “the Lady Sun motif is often depicted on round or square talismans, which are hung on the walls of houses, in weddings, or children’s rooms for decoration or to ward off the evil eye” (Gluck & Gluck, 1977, 235). The field studies of the embroidered wall hangings in the “Varzaneh”, “Dam Ab”, and “Zardanj” regions also confirm the use of this motif in them. This motif has also been called “Chesh Cheshi”

and “Cheshouk” by the women living in the desert region in East Isfahan since ancient times. It has been embroidered in different sizes and with differences in details, according to the taste of its embroiderer, for swaddling blankets, bridal curtains, and the carpet loom, at the entrance of the house and anything that was thought to be exposed to evil eyes. In the mentioned areas, people believe that the beautiful face of the “Lady Sun” attracts the negative force from the evil eye and does not let the negative energy influence people. Also, because the sun was considered a symbol of Myhr, they thought that it had the power to protect them against evil forces. Samples of this motif in the “Dam Ab” region in Isfahan show that the “Lady Sun” motif, known as “CheshCheshi” in this region, was used in a collection with similar embroidery motifs for the clothes and other objects of the bride and the groom (Fig. 7).



Fig. 6. Lady Sun wall hangings. 1: Isfahan, “Dam Ab” region, Contemporary (Archive of Ms. Masoumeh Mirzaei); 2: Isfahan, Varzaneh region, contemporary (donated by Fath Ali Qashqaei); 3: Isfahan, date of production unknown (Gillow, 2010, 163); 4: Bakhtiari talismans, contemporary (Gluck & Gluck, 1977, 237).





Fig. 7 .Pictures from right :traditional groom dress ;Details of traditional bridal gown ;Bridal bath bag ;Lady Sun tableau” ,Dam Ab “region of Isfahan, contemporary) about 70 years ago .Source :Archive of Ms .Masoumeh Mirzaei.

### The Relationship Between the Symbol of the Sun, the Eye, and the Evil Eye (Chashmarou)

The eye is a bridge between external and internal realities. It is a symbol of the sun, and in some religions, it is a symbol of God. When a person dies, the first action is to close his or her eyes. This is rooted in ancient man's fears of the evil eye. In fact, the ancient man considered the eye as a window to the soul. So he closed the dead's eyes to prevent the soul from returning to the universe. He attempted to establish a link between the mysterious forces of nature and human characteristics and in this regard, he introduced the sun as the eye of the sky and finally God; accordingly, the sky and the sun took on human characteristics and the sun became a visual symbol of God (Fingesten, 1959, 19). In Indian thought, the human eye is likened to the sun, and the sun and Brahma are the eyes of the sky, and the sun resides in the human eye. In Greek mythology, the eye of Zeus is the all-seeing eye, seeing all corners of the world, and according to Ovid<sup>6</sup>, he is equal to the sun (ibid., 20). In Egyptian texts, the eye of Horus also refers to the sun and is a symbol of the protector against the devil (Bruce Mitford, 2015, 195).

In fact, the eye has been used both as the Sun God and as a spell for avoiding negative influences (Ulmer, 2003, 5). In Persian mythology, Mithra represents warmth and life, was the ruler of the sky, and saw everything in the world, and

Roman soldiers worshiped it as the invincible sun. Regarding the importance of the sun's place among the Iranians in ancient times, the eleventh day of each month is called “Khir” or “Khoorroz”. It was mentioned that the body of “Ahuramazda” was thought of as the sun, and the sun was known as the eye of “Ahuramazda”. The removal of impurities is one of the main tasks of the sun. In Islamic jurisprudence, the sun is also considered a purifier (Yahaqqi, 2007, 338). Here, one can find the relationship between the eye and the sun in the civilizations of Egypt, Greece, and Iran, as well as the relationship between the sun and the gods. In fact, the sun as the eye of the sky can both create and despoil life (Fingesten, 1959, 20).

It should be noted that the “cross” motif, which according to some scholars, was originally representative of the sun (Hall, 1995, 6), is used in the weaves by the Lur tribes to ward off the evil eye (Yaghoubzadeh & Khazaie, 2019). Perhaps this is the reason for the use of the “Lady Sun” motif, which is called “Cheshcheshi” or “Cheshouk”, in the east and center of Isfahan. “Cheshmarou” is also used differently in some areas, such as some cities and villages in Khorasan. In these areas, Cheshmaro is a pot or pottery on which a person's eyes and face are beautifully depicted. Then, it is decorated with a colorful cloth to repel the evil eye from family members or properties. To this end, it is filled with coins and thrown down from the roof of

the house to the alley on Fireworks Wednesday 7 to break, and the passers-by will take its coins. When falling pottery, the following expression is used: “the evil eye should be broken like this pottery” (Yahaqqi, 2007, 302). This is mentioned in “Asrār-Nāma” and in more detail in the book “Nevādir al-Amsāl” by Mīrak Muhammed NaqshbendīTāškendī in Uzbek. In this book, he says: “Cheshmarou is one of the motifs that Persian women draw on a pottery jar to repel the evil eye from the bride. This motif is depicted as the bride in yellow, red, and pink and decorated with ornaments. It is shown to everyone who comes to see the bride so that the evil eye does not reach the bride, and then, the pottery jar is thrown down from the roof” (Rajaey, 1966, 341). These two narrations show the relationship between a beautiful face and the evil eye. The relationship between the sun, woman, and eyes can also be understood in literature:

«There is your face under the mask, including the particles in your eyes (Cheshmarou)» (Attar, n.d.)  
 «You too, Khajeh, are the Cheshmarou today like you are the beautiful Cheshmarou today» (Attar, 2007, 157)

## Conclusion

Considering the iconographical study of the sun motifs in the treasury of Sahebqaraniyeh palace, the visual tradition abstractly exists with the subject of the face of a human being surrounded by a circle similar to the motif of the sun and facial features such as hair (being parted down in the middle, the shape of the eyebrows (being connected in most cases), and the shape of the eyes (being very large and the most considered organ), as well as the references called “Khorshid Khanum” in Iranian literature and folklore, one can find that the motif in the sun represents the face of a lady. Furthermore, the existing samples of this motif indicate that this visual tradition has continued from the pre-Islamic period to the present.

To respond to the question, why do the illustrations of the sun have a female face. The reasons for the use of this motif in such a way can be related to its uses. There are two reasons. First, the mentioned motif has only a decorative aspect, and the reason for using the female face for this motif is to pay more attention to the decoration and beauty of these embroideries. The second reason, which is more probable, is the use of this motif in similar sample embroideries with the “Lady Sun” motif, which were called “CheshCheshi” and “Cheshouk” in areas of Isfahan. According to our field studies, they were used to ward off the evil eye. Moreover, considering the presence of this motif on works such as shields and armor, as well as in architectural decorations at the entrance of buildings such as the gates of “Qeysarie” Bazaar and “AaliQapu” Palace in Isfahan, especially in the Qajar period, one can find the use of this motif in the embroideries in Sahebqaraniyeh Palace for avoiding the evil eye, in addition to its decorative use.

To answer the questions of what are the cultural and functional meanings of this motif in the embroideries studied and what the relationship exists between this motif and the evil eye, it should be said that the use of the sun motif has a long history and the relationship between the Sun God and the eye can be seen in ancient thoughts, folk beliefs, poems, and literature. Additionally, according to Bokhtourush who, in his books “Mysterious Symbol” and “History of the Iranian Flag” considered the sun as a symbol of Anahita and the sun as a symbol of Myhr, one can consider the use of this motif to avoid the evil eye because both of these elements were mentioned as a force to protect against evil according to the beliefs in the pre-Islamic era, As it is stated in various references about Myhr and the sun, Myhr is a deity with one thousand eyes, two thousand years, and ten thousand guards. And in the Pahlavi texts, it is stated that these ears and eyes are angels who are appointed as guardians

by Myhr The duties of guarding the vast fields, protecting the people, and giving peace and comfort to the territory of Iran have also been attributed to Myhr in Yashts. The sun is also known as the eye of "Ahuramazda" and the removal of evils is one of its main tasks. It is the eyes of the sky, not only in Iran but also in Egypt and Greece. According to the folklore in some parts of Iran, such as Isfahan and Khorasan, if the negative energy of the eye is attracted to a beautiful motif, it will not affect other people. Also, they believed in "Cheshmarou", which refers to the image of a beautiful female face on a pottery jar used to repel the eyes. If the image of a woman within the sun is not considered a symbol of Anahita, considering these beliefs, one can find that the beautiful female face within the sun was used to attract the negative force of the evil eye so that it does not affect other people, and the reason for the large eyes depicted in these motifs is attributed to the ancient religions in which the eye is the window of the soul.

Although the paintings in the treasury of Sahebqaraniyeh Palace have lost their meanings over time, they still have a special place in the culture and tradition of society. Superstitions, visual symbols, and beliefs relevant to various paintings change from generation to generation, become more complex, and, like other customs of society, become part of indigenous myths and cultures. This is also true for the "Lady Sun" motif, because at present, it is not used to avoid the evil eye in the central and eastern regions of Isfahan, and has a decorative aspect.

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## Endnotes

1. Ghirshman, Roman
2. Moorey, Peter R. S
3. Dussaud, Rene
4. Godar, Andre
5. Pope, Arthur Upham
6. "Ovid", Roman poet
7. A ceremony on the last Wednesday before the New Year in Iran.

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