

Goddess of Fertility in Southern Iran Plateau

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Abstract

Ancient petroglyphs of Dehtal site located in Bastak, Hormozgan province, with a variety of human, animal, and plant motifs and symbols provides an appropriate backdrop to recover the mythological themes and cultural environment of the peoples of southern Iran plateau from pre-historic to historical period. One of the symbols engraved on the stones of this area is the image of water birth; in this motif, two streams of water flow from a woman's womb rather than a baby. Based on the morphological and functional similarities between this motif and those on certain seals representing symbols of fertility discovered in Gyan hill and the Elamite, Mesopotamian and Zoroastrian goddesses of water, a comparison was made between the abovementioned themes. Accordingly, the symbol discovered in Dehtal is possibly the goddess of fertility with local characteristics in southern Iran. The discovery, emphasizing the inter-regional relationships and cultural influences from the last stages of pre-history to history, especially during the second millennium BC, suggests the importance of fertility in the worldview and cultural symbolism of southern Iranian plateau.

Keywords: fertility goddess, petroglyph, Dehtal archaeological site, social history of art.

1. Introduction

Stone motifs, either murals carved into the caves or petroglyphs in the open areas, are among the primitive media for spread of thought. Although petroglyph sites have been recorded and reported almost all over the world (Sadasiba Pradhan, 2001, p. 2), the oldest examples are from southwestern Europe, that is, countries such as France (Lascaux and Font-de-Gaume caves) and Spain (Altamira cave) which are attributed to Paleolithic humans and hunter-gatherers (Brentijes, 1969). In recent decades, countless examples of petroglyph sites were recorded ranging from northern Iran (i.e. Behshahr) to southern Iran (Dehtal petroglyph sites). The present case study furnishes an abstract reproduction of Dehtal site; the image gives a representation of birth image in which two streams of water flow from the mother's womb rather than a baby. To understand the meaning and function of this motif in the social and historical context, the present study makes a comparison between this motif and those on certain seals as a symbol of fertility discovered in Gyan hill and the Elamite, Mesopotamian and Zoroastrian goddesses of water based on the morphological and functional similarities. Finally, it was concluded that the abstract image of Dehtal site can represent the local water goddess and symbol of fertility in the worldview and cultural-religious thought of Bastak and southern Iran around the fourth millennium BC. So, the present study provides a structured and systematic investigation of petroglyphs in the context of the social history of art.

2. Theoretical framework

The meaning of images and signs from a distant past, given the disappearance of their socio-historical context, is understood by comparing historical data and archaeological evidences.

So, to seek the meaning and function of the intended stone motif in Dehtal site, we attempt to study the traditions and cultural narratives associated with the goddess of water in the civilization of the Iranian plateau and Mesopotamia and to avoid any simple interpretation and subjective conclusion based on comparison of the outward features of the motifs.

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3. Chronology of Dehtal site

No (relative or absolute) chronological dating of Dehtal site has yet been carried out in a targeted and coherent manner, and I have simply focused on surface survey and recording of archaeological pieces as well as the style and design of motifs. Among these are recorded examples of stone tools (Pictures 1 and 2) and, considerably, no observation of pieces of ancient pottery and other settlement works in the surface survey of the site. By the same token, it called for a wider survey of Dehtal site to achieve more accurate results. For the same reason, a brief chronology of Godeh area – where Dehtal petroglyphs are located – is carried out. Godeh, located in the basin of Shoor River (one of the two main seasonal rivers in Bastak), is a rich area in archaeological terms, containing prehistoric, historic and Islamic works. One of the prehistoric sites of this area is Eshkaft-e-Ahoo rock shelter in the Gav Bast heights. Followed by introduction and surveys conducted by Khaled Sadeghi (Sadeghi, 2002), Fereydoun Beiglari, in 2010, re-investigated Eshkaft-e-Ahoo site along with three other open sites in the Gav Bast heights, and proposed Paleolithic-Neolithic eras for these sites based on typological study and technology of the stone tools discovered (Beiglari et al., December 2012, p. 98-99). Similarly, in 2008, Ahmad Ali Asadi examined the narrow plains of Mehran and Shoor River basins by surface survey with the aim of studying the pattern of settlement in Bastak plain. According to Asadi's results, a certain site and a possible site of Neolithic era containing pottery and only one Achaemenid site have been surveyed in the north of the village Fatuieh. During the Parthian period, human residence continued in this area and five other settlements were added. In general, the Sassanid settlements in Bastak increase twice as much as that of the Parthian period, including more than 23 sites and castles in the Shoor River basin (Asadi, autumn and winter 2008, p. 10-20). The number of residential areas in Bastak sharply decreases in the Islamic period. Out of 47 Sassanid sites, 24 ones were abandoned and about 12 sites were populated only in mid or late Islamic period. Full residential continuity from the Sassanid era can be seen only in 10 sites of which only two are located in Shoor basin. The low number of settlements in Bastak river basin may be attributed to water salinity compared to more settlements in the piedmont areas with fresh water springs and more clement conditions for living and agriculture (Ibid, 26-28). Lastly, according to archeological findings and historical data derived from Godeh area and Dehtal site, one can date the Dehtal petroglyphs to a time ranging from the Paleolithic Age to the Islamic period.



Pictures 1 and 2. Micro-blades obtained from Dehtal site. Source: personal collection. February 7, 2014.

4. Dehtal petroglyphs and the goddess of fertility motif

Not far from the ancient village of Dehtal is located a petroglyph site of the same name. Dehtal is located in Bastak County within 170 kilometers south of the Persian Gulf and 110 kilometers north of Lar (Movahhed, 1970, p. 8) and is one of the hinterland areas of southern Iran. This area has been stood on ancient land and marine trade routes including South Silk Road (passing from Ray and Isfahan to the Persian Gulf (Reza, Summer 1997, p. 208)) and the Adviyeh Sea Route (connecting East and South Asia through the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean coast (Ibid)) since late fourth millennium BC, according to archaeological and historical evidence in Dehtal site like the picture of two-masted ship and written signs similar to geometrical symbols common in Sumer and Elam civilization in the third millennium BC.

Most of the motifs in Dehtal site have been carved on circle or oval rocks made of limy sandstone with an average diameter of one meter and a height of half meter from the ground level using Petro glyph technique in an abstract style. Due to the climatic conditions of the area (high temperature difference between day and night, and extreme heat during spring and summer), some of the carved stones have been broken and divided into two halves. There has been no research done as to the makers of Dehtal petroglyphs. The petroglyph under the present study is a figurine with dimensions of 30 x 10 cm, which represents the birth of water; while two water streams flows rather than a child from the womb. In addition to this motif, there is an image of an abstract winged man carved in smaller dimensions. The relationship between these two motifs will be addressed as follows (Figure 3 and 4, sketches 1 and 2).



Figures 3 and 4, sketches 1 and 2. Birth of water and motif of winged creature. Source: personal collection. March 26, 2011.

To understand the meaning and social-ritual function of the intended petroglyph makes it necessary to get a glimpse of the remnants of goddesses associated with water and fertility with morphological and probably functional similarities in Dehtal's neighboring civilizations such as Elam, Mesopotamia and the western Iranian plateau and to investigate the function of Zoroastrian goddesses of water. For this purpose, the images are addressed as narratives based on the traditions of a community and the historical, cultural, and intellectual horizon of the maker. Considering the fact that the relationship between female and water, in terms of fertility and growth, was naturalized in many ancient cultures especially since the human dependence on land and agricultural livelihood. The present study addresses one of the naturalized concepts in the human history, as represented in the form of abstract images.

5. Water goddesses in the Elamite civilization

The Elamite civilization is one of the most ancient civilizations of the Middle East establishing political, commercial and cultural relations with neighboring tribes in the late fourth millennium BC. The location of Dehtal petroglyphs at a distance of about a thousand kilometers south-east of the territory of the ancient civilization of Elam justifies the cultural borrowing between the two regions through the communication network of the old world, especially closer sea routes. One such example is the proto-Elamite scripts in Dehtal site (Figure 5). The motif examined in the present article is similar, in terms of the overall scheme and the possible function (abundance and fertility), to the motif of water gods engraved on Elamite seals and relief sculptures since about the second millennium BC (Middle Elamite period).



Figure 5. Symbol of antelope in proto-Elamite script (2300 BC), petroglyphs of Dehtal site. Source: personal collection. March 26, 2011.

"Respect for the female figure" and the female goddesses topping the hierarchy of Elamite gods, especially during the third millennium BC, are among the features of Elamite religion. This made the image of goddesses (more than any Mesopotamian civilizations) sit on Elamite seals in a widespread manner (Majidzadeh, 2007, p. 64). When it comes to water goddesses, it is worth noting that although there are water gods/deities such as Enki (Ea) in Mesopotamian, Elamite and Iranian cultures, the physical features of Dehtal petroglyphs (signs of fertility and birth) are the reasons behind selection of images associated with water goddesses in the present study. By the same token, a number of images associated with the goddess of water engraved on the Elamite seals and relief sculptures will be compared with the intended Dehtal petroglyph.

One of these works is Estelle or the memorial petroglyph Untash-Gal (about 1245-1265 BC), from the rulers of the Middle Elamite period (1100-1500 BC) along with Elamite goddess with the head and upper body of a female human and the tail of a fish of which two streams of water are flowing down. This work was discovered in Susa ziggurat temple and is now kept in the Louvre. The Estelle is divided into four horizontal rows, and two gargantuan serpents frame the relief and may have come together in the crescent on top of the memorial stone. In the front row is standing King Untash-Gal opposite a god and is getting his royal badge (Majidzadeh, 2007, p. 87). In the row second to the King are standing his wife Napir-Asu on the right (according to the inscription written on the right side under her arm) and a female adorer named Utik, which probably suggests a part of a religious scene. The goddess Untash-Napirisha, the Elamite goddess associated with water, with the tail of a fish and two streams of water flowing down, is seen in the center of this Estelle of which the symmetrical figure has disappeared (Figure 6- sketch 3) (Daems, 2001, p. 24, Fig. 93). Only a small fraction of the back rows have remained which are most likely a symmetrical image of a satyr creature (Ibid, p. 103, Fig. 93). As the serpent and antelope are symbols of water and abundance in the ancient world mythology, these two symbols can be interpreted in relation to water goddess.



Figure 6. A part of the Estelle Untash-Gal. Source: [Http://Www.antiquity.blogfa.com](http://www.antiquity.blogfa.com). Kept in the Louvre Museum. Sketch 3. A sketch of Estelle Untash-Gal. Source: Daems, 2001, p103, Fig93.

Another case represents a goddess of water, in connection with the eruption of water, on a cylinder seal obtained from Ziggurat and probably belongs to the first period of Untash-Gal's monarchy. In this image, a kneeling goddess is so enclosed with water flows as if the water erupts from the shoulders, arms or hands (Porada, 1965, p. 50, Fig. 26). Such Middle Elamite seals with simple motifs and thin lines (engraved by a fine drilled) are similar to primitive seals of Babylonian Kassites in the 15th century BC (Ibid, endnote 12). There are also other images suggesting the association of the Elamite goddesses and the water element, in the form of two streams erupting.

Like the rock petroglyph Kurangan which includes images of gods (probably Humban "Great Elamite god") and the goddess (Pinikir or kirirish "Great goddess") on her throne, group of worshipers, water streams, and the Serpent located in Today's north-western Fahljan, on a rock in the Bakhtiari mountains. Considering features such as the motif of an erupting container, which was all the rage like the serpentine seat in the Middle Elamite period, and the god with horned helmet and the goddess engraved in Kurangan also belong to the Middle Elamite period (Figure 7, sketch 4)(Majidzadeh, 2007, p. 97).

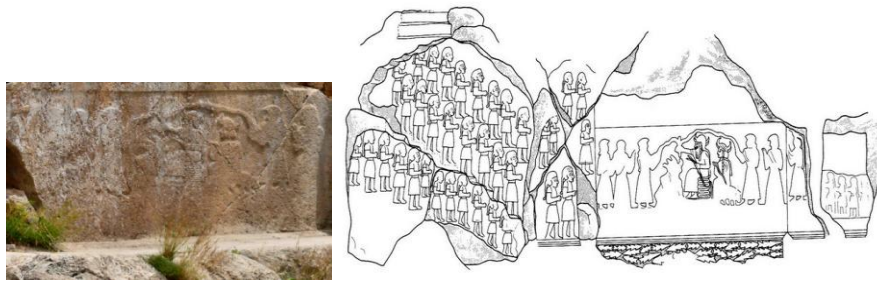


Figure 7 and sketch 4. Rock petroglyph Kurangan in Fahlian of Fars province. Source: [Http://Www.livius.org](http://www.livius.org).

In a cylinder seal from Susa, the bust of a goddess is shown in waves (probably water). The main part of the seal background, destroyed as it is, belongs to a god or goddess based on symbols such as horned animals (as throne) and a stool in the form of goat-fish. On the next side stands a person with raised hands, probably to offer an object to the god or goddess. And finally, in the corner below, the goddess in question with wavy bust is engraved (Figure 8). In another motif on a cylinder seal, a goddess is seen sitting on an animal throne resting her feet on a goat-fish and a worshiper is standing in front of her in side-view. Behind the worshiper stands a half-human-half-fish creature raising his hands in prayer (Figure 9). On a cylinder seal from the ziggurat belonging to the Middle Elamite period, there is the motif of a god or goddess with a half-fish body (with diamonds representing fins or tails) deep in water along accompanied by other fish and in front of him stands an animal with a horned helmet and hooved feet, probably a goat-fish (Fig. 10). Apart from reliefs and cylinder seals, there is also a sitting half-man-half-fish statuette from Susa, which might have been probably stuck to a container handle by rivets (Akbari, 2015, p. 56 - 62). Semi-divine beings, like the legendary man-fish, goat-fish or deer-fish from the proto-Elamite period (coinciding with the Uruk period 3 and 4) seen on the reliefs and seals represent cultural exchanges and primitive concepts of the gods in the Elamite and Mesopotamian civilizations (Majidzadeh, 2007, p. 57).

As follows, two different motifs in the so-far-examined Elamite goddesses associated with water are addressed in terms of overall pattern and composition of images. The images belong to two seals from Susa in the fourth millennium BC (Porada 1965, p.20). In one image, there is a goddess standing next to two fish, while the former is raising two water streams or two serpents in her hands. This pattern, repeated in the other motif as water streams or strings of cloth in the hands of the goddess (Figure 11), can also be seen in the intended abstract man image in Dehtal, who is raising a cloth-like object in his hands. Morphologically speaking, these two Elamite motifs are comparable to those on the seals from Gyan (the fourth millennium BC) attributed to shamans (images 12 and 13) (Wilburn, 2005, p. 65-71).



Figure 8. A goddess with a waving bust (probably water). Engraved on a cylinder seal from Susa. Source: Akbari, 2015, p. 56, Fig. 10.



Figure 9. A goddess sitting on an animal seat and the half-man-half-fish motif. Engraved on a cylinder seal from Susa. Source: Akbari, 2015, p. 61, Figure 12.

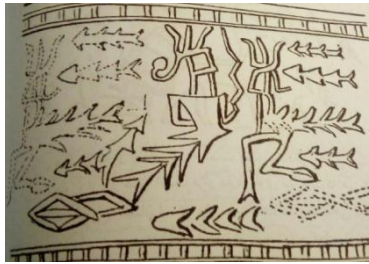


Figure 10. God/goddess with fish tail (diamond shapes) deep in the water. Engraved on a cylinder seal from Susa Zigurats dating back to the Middle Elamite period. Source: Akbari, 2015, p. 62, Figure 13.

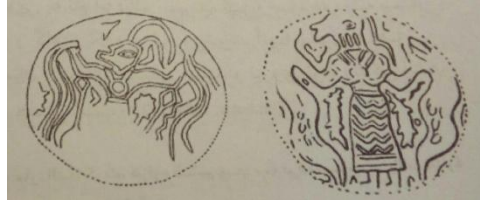


Figure 11. Goddess of water with water flows, serpents or cloth in their hands. Engraved on a seal from Susa in the fourth millennium BC. Source: Akbari, 2015, p. 238, Figure 11.



Figures 12 and 13. Shamans engraved on the seals from the ancient hill Gyan in the fourth millennium BC. Source: Wilburn, 2005, p. 65-71, fig. 6.2. Cat. No. 32 (the left), fig. 6.7. Cat. No. 34 a and b (the right).

6. Goddesses of water in the Mesopotamian civilization

Considering the old bonds between Persia and Mesopotamia as well as cultural exchanges between these two civilizations, especially with respect to ritual and religious concepts, one can pursue the morphological and functional similarities between the intended motif (in the Dehtal petroglyph site) and the goddess of water in Mesopotamia. Namo is the first water goddess in Mesopotamian mythological narratives of creation, which was later called Tiamat in the mythology (Dalley, 1998, p. 228- 234). Two functional roles of the mythical characters Tiamat and other Mesopotamian goddesses associated with water, i.e. fertility and creation, make them a convenient option for comparison with the motif (birth of water) in Dehtal site.

There are images of goddesses associated with water on some works from Mesopotamian sites, including a part of a trough from Telloh belonging to Gudea period (2124-2144 BC) showing king Lagash with two water goddesses. In this scene, the goddesses stand together in a chain while raising an erupting container in each hand. Overhead every two goddesses are winged goddesses with erupting yet smaller containers in hand, from which water flows down into the containers of the standing goddesses (Figure 14) (Majidzadeh, 2001, vol. 3, p. 90 and 100). Similarly, a statue of the Zimmer Lim House was discovered at Mari belonging to the ancient Babylonian period, which is associated to the goddess of water given its features. This goddess is holding in her two hands a container with a hole under and a natural flow of water might have flowed into and erupted out of it. In addition, there are vertical wavy lines in this goddess's dress to show the flow of water and the fish swimming (Ibid, 123). Ishtar (often in the form of a winged goddess (Figure 15)) is one of the most ancient Mesopotamian goddesses associated with fertility, accompanied also with goddesses of water in some scenes. In these scenes, there are also probably water goddesses in attendance, usually holding containers with erupting streams of water.

Like the work discovered from the royal palace at Mari (about 19-20 centuries BC) where Ishtar's attendants hold water-erupting containers in their hands (Hall, 2001, p. 207-208), or the parietal painting showing the royal grant of Marie belonging to the ancient Babylonian period (1530-1894 BC), the king is carved between the two goddesses facing Ishtar. In this scene, the goddesses and Ishtar have raised their hands in homage to the king. In the lower part of the wall painting, in a closed box, two water goddesses are seen holding water-erupting containers in their hand, and streams of water, with some fish swimming in, are flowing out in several directions (Ibid, 118). The presence of water goddesses in Ishtar's attendance reminds us of the presence of the very abstract winged man in the intended image in Dehtal site (water birth scene) (Figures 3 and 4). Are we facing, in Dehtal petroglyphs, a local conception of the Mesopotamian motif that shows the accompaniment of water goddesses with the goddess of love and fertility?

There is also an association of water and creation in mythologies of India, Egypt and other territories; for instance, three major Indian rivers, the Ganges, Yamuna/Jamuna and Sarasvati are equated with the mother-goddesses of life. In ancient Greece, the first water was attributed to a mother-goddess (Eurynome: goddess of everything) (Hall, 2001, p. 196-197 and 208). Undoubtedly, the concept of fertility and productivity allows for the link between the state of being female and water in the worldview of most ancient civilizations, especially since the agricultural era.



Figure 14. Water goddesses engraved on the trough from Telloh belonging to Gudea period. Source: Majidzadeh, 2001, vol. 3 p. 90 and 100, Figure 328.



Figure 15. Symbol of Ishtar (right) naked and (left) dressed for slaughter. Engraved on neo-Assyrian cylinder seals. Source: Hall, 2001, p. 179, Figure 87.

7. Symbol of water and fertility in prehistoric seals of Gyan hill

There are motifs of fertility, productivity, and their respective symbolism in the cultural lifeworld of civilizations belonging to Iranian plateau in the fourth millennium BC, engraved on seals from the ancient hill Gyan, near modern Nahavand located in Western Iran, including the abstract motif of a female figure and the symbol of the land's fertility and abundance of cattle engraved on a square seal (Figure 16) (Cool Root, 2005, p.54-55).

Another female motif can be seen on 6 seals of this collection. In these examples, there is the symbolic image of a woman with v-shaped hands, w-shaped legs, and a small triangular head (Figure 17). Cool Root interprets this image as a symbol of birth stage, which can be seen in many world cultures in the same form or another similar form, with many evidences from the Neolithic period to historical period. Moreover, in his view, this image could be a sign of sexual intercourse that was later visualized in the form of a strong ritual act. No comparable image has ever been discovered on administrative tools such as container or door seals. By the same token, these seals with a female image were probably used as amulets exclusively in religious ceremonies to ensure convenient and safe birth. Similarly, the image of two spikes of grain on both sides of the seals makes the relationship of fertility and productivity with this pattern stronger. There is also a small statuette from Damghan hill similar to the seals described in the Gyan hill dating back to a period between historic and pre-historic eras. This statuette with hands and feet stretched on both sides and a simple triangular head would have probably functioned as an amulet (Ibid, p. 88, 90 - 92).

One similarity between this prehistoric fertility symbol obtained from Gyan hills and the intended image in Dehtal site is raised v-shaped hands. There are certain lines in the hands and head of the abstract figure on Gyanseals which are comparable to the object held in the hands of the Dehtal figure. The same feature can also be seen in some shaman motifs on Gyan seals, including two dots between the shaman's raised hands and his head instead of the lines and the two serpents (symbol of fertility) instead of two spikes of grain on the sides of shaman's body (Figure 18) (Cool Root, 2005, p. 80, 97). The motif of a seal belonging to the Susa period A (3500 BC) is very similar to this shamanistic motif obtained from Gayan hills. In this motif, there are two serpents or, in Porada's view, a monster with antelope horns along shaman's body (Porada 1965, p. 31) (Fig. 19). Interestingly enough, similar images with motifs attributed to shamans engraved on Gyan (Fig. 20) and Susa seals can be also seen in Dehtal petroglyphs (with helmets in the shape of antelope horns) (Fig. 21). Such cultural-ritual exchanges among different regions of Iranian plateau and adjacent territories in the fourth millennium BC can be interpreted with respect to earliest city-states, especially in the geographical area of Zagros as the cradle of some of the earliest historical civilizations and spread of communication-trade systems.



Figure 16. Symbol of a female figure on Gyan seals, in the fourth millennium BC. Source: Cool Root, 2005, p. 54-55, Cat. No. 89Ba, Fig 5.11.



Figure 17. Symbol of a female figure on Gyan seals, in the fourth millennium BC. Source: Cool Root, 2005, p. 88, Cat. No. 90. Fig 8.1.



Figure 18. Motif of a shaman on a Gyan seal in the fourth millennium BC. Source: Cool Root, 2005, p. 80, 97, Cat. No. 30. Fig. 8.14.

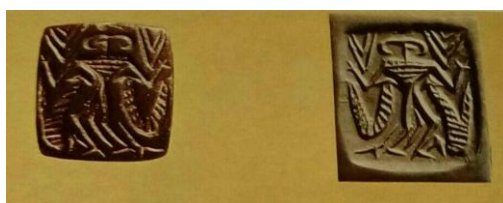


Figure 19. Possible motif of a shaman on a seal from the Susa period A (3500 BC). Porada, 1965, p.31, Plate 5.

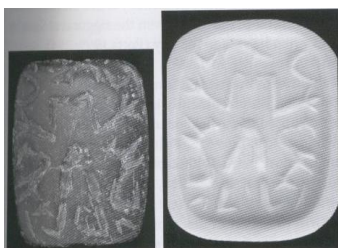


Figure 20. A shaman engraved on a Gyan seal in the fourth millennium BC. Source: Wilburn, 2005, p. 65-71, Cat. No. 32, Fig. 6.2.

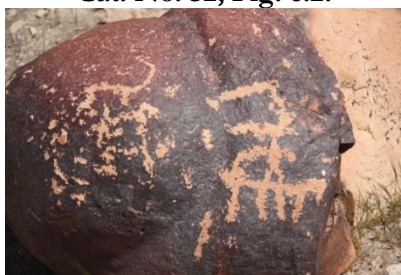


Figure 21. Possible image of shamans in Dehtal petroglyphs. Source: personal collection.

8. Goddess of water in Zoroastrianism

Celebration of water as one of the sacred elements in the Zoroastrian culture and Avesta finds resonance in various forms including FarreKiyani's taking refuge to the sea from Afrasiab of Turan (Amouzegar, 2002, p. 67) and preservation of Zoroaster's semen in Kiyanseh/Kansuyeh Sea (Boyce, 2002, p. 68). In Zoroastrian rituals, the god advocating water is usually a female and takes over tasks such as productivity, fertility and refinement. This female conception of god of water is rooted in the Indo-Iranian culture, including Āpəm-Napāt, the Guardian of Water in Indo-Iranian mythology and Sarasvatī that is synonymous with the largest river in the world and the origin of other rivers. In its Iranian line of mythology, this river was called ArdaviSuraAnāhita, which was, like Sarasvatī, the guardian goddess of water. Gradually, Anahita became one of the greatest goddesses of water and fertility in Iran and Zoroastrian culture. The excellence and function of the goddess of water is reflected in the Trinity Ahura Mazda, Mithra and Anahita, each representing the social classes: Royal and clergy figures, combatants and farmers, respectively (Qarshi, 2010, p. 207).

In ĀBĀN YAŠT ("Hymn to the Waters") (part 1, paragraph 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9; part 4, paragraph 15; part 6, paragraph 21) and Yasna (part 38, paragraphs 3, 5; part 65, paragraph 1, 2, 3, 11; part 67, paragraph 8) address Anahita and her association with fertilization and creation (Pourdavud, 2536, Yasht, Report 1, p. 233-243; Yasna, part II, p. 36-99).

There are also other goddesses of water mentioned in the Avesta. For example, in the "haptanghāiti (Seven Chapters)", the heavenly waters are described as females called Gnaa (Ahura Mazda's wives) and ahuraanii (goddesses of heaven) (Skjaervo, 2011, p. 12); Yasna. Part 68. Paragraph 1: "Now we do this for you. Oh Ahura's [water] because we left you and made you resent. Hope that this clean water mingled [and] the milk offers are accepted, Oh Ahura's [water]" (Pourdavud, 2536, Yasna, Part II, p. 100). SpentaaAarmaiti (meaning holy humility) is another evidence for the association of female figure with land and fertility in Zoroastrian culture. This goddess of whom ArədvīsūraAnahita is a companion, is one of the AmeshaSpenta (seven sacred beings who are, next to Ahura Mazda, the guardians of creatures) and the guardians of the earth, productivity and fertility (Amuzegar, 2002, p. 17).

9. Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to understand the abstract meaning and function of birth of two streams of water flowing rather than a baby from the womb in its socio-historical context as engraved on the Dehtal petroglyphs located in Bastak in the southern Iran. For the same reason, the archaeological evidence and historical/mythological data of these cultures were compared with the motifs of Dehtal petroglyphs by examining the concepts and the symbolism associated with the goddesses of water in traditions and rituals of neighboring civilizations.

According to the cultural narratives of the traditional and ritual context of most ancient civilizations, it was the task of goddesses to guard the water, productivity and fertility. Given the similarity of the petroglyph motifs in Dehtal site with the motifs and function of the gods of water in Elamite culture such as Untash-Napirisha, the Mesopotamian goddesses of water such as Namu/Tiamat, images representing birth and fertility in the seals from Gyan hills as well as the creation and function of the goddess of water in the Zoroastrian culture and civilization, it seems that we are dealing with a local example of goddess of water and the symbol of fertility in Dehtal site. Accordingly, the Dehtal petroglyph motifs are manifestation of mythological and ritual beliefs of southern Iranians in relation with productivity and fertility formed around the fourth millennium BC in the cultural exchanges with neighboring civilizations.

Conflict of Interest

The authors confirm that this article content has no conflict of interest.

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