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## Cognitive Mythological and Iconographical Study on the Motifs of Three Goddesses in Iran (Plant, Fish and Water Goddesses, 3200-1500 BC)

**Bitā Mesbah**, Assistant Professor, Semnan University, School of Art and Architecture, Semnan, Iran

**Alireza Hejabri Nobari**, Professor, Department of Archaeology, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran

**Mahmoud Tavousi**, Professor, Department of Art Researches, School of Art and Architecture, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran

**Abolghasem Esmailpour**, Professor, Department of Linguistics, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran

### Abstract

This research is aimed to study the images representing three kinds of goddesses in ancient Iran. The method used in the research is based on the iconographical study. Iconography mainly concerns with the ways an image is being represented and tries to find the meaning of the image and its function according to its representation. Iconographical typology concerns with three main areas in the study, (1) Phenotypes which concentrates on phenotype classifications of various types regarding regular features that makes the genesis and development of the creature; (2) Typology that is concerned with the descriptive classification of the motifs in defining the visual appearance of the item, i.e., in the case of deities: mainly talking about gestures or physical features and even attributes; and (3) Associations and style which focuses on associations and discusses the relevant relations of the images with (other) deities/demons, humans, or animals as attested by visual sources. The research shows that the fertilization concepts in prehistoric and historic times make the water-goddess, plant-goddess and fish-goddess as the most important goddesses in Iran. This research is studying the figures and pictures of these kinds remained from Elamite era. The main goddess seems to be the plant-goddess and she may influence the union. On the most ancient images, another goddess who can be the water-goddess always accompanies the images of the fish-goddess. The water-gods always appear as female in Iran. The remained statues or the images show wearing a diamond shaped necklace. The diamond (rhombus) shape in Iran and Mesopotamia represents eye, the earth or the female genitals. Therefore, wearing the diamond-shaped necklace is a way to determine the gender of the statue. The plant goddess in Mesopotamia represents the goddess "Shala". According to the archeological reports this goddess had entered the Elamite Empire, and maybe was worshiped in a kind of new character who conveys the Iranian goddess. This means that these two goddesses may represent a kind of association as a couple like the goddess Shala and her husband Adad. Besides, these two goddesses show great combination to the concepts relating to later divine characters Ameretāt and Haurvatāt who are two of the seven divine "Amesha Spentas" ("beneficent immortals"). Ameretāt is the personification of immortality and is the protector of plants. However, this is Haurvatāt who can help her because she is the protector of water and brings prosperity and health. These two show the personification of life and growth altogether. In addition, the water goddess may appear besides the fish-woman, another goddess. These two are connected together. The most important image of these two appears on the stele of Untash-Gal. This research suggests that the fish woman may be another representation of the water-goddess. The concepts of fertility, growth and planting are also assigned to her. In conclusion, as the result of the study it can be said that all three forms of fish-goddess, plant-goddess and water-goddess are associated to each other. They all bring the perfection of life, prosperity and health.

**Keywords:** Goddess, Plant, Fish-woman, Water Goddess, Elam.