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## A Comparative Study of the Sphinx in Achaemenid Art and Seljuk Art

Mohammadreza Sharifzadeh\*<sup>1</sup>, Elahe Feizimoghaddam<sup>2</sup>

1. Islamic Azad University, Tehran.

2. Ph. D. Condidate in Islamic Azad University, Tehran.

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### Abstract

**Issue statement:** The Sphinx is one of the types of composite creature's motif that the ancient man created it with his own mind and imagination and developed it with different concepts and appearances during different historical periods. This motif had also appeared in Iran and were used in ancient and Islamic times. Despite the use and significance of the Sphinx in Iranian historical periods, this motif has been less studied and is still considered to be ambiguous. Therefore, in this research, the Sphinx has been studied as widely used motif in two historical periods of Iran, the Achaemenid in ancient era and the Seljuk in Islamic era. **Objective:** The purpose of this study is to compare the differences and similarities of the Sphinx in the Achaemenid period and the Seljuk period.

**Research Methodology:** The images of the Sphinx during the Achaemenid period and the Seljuk period and its related concepts were searched and based on descriptive method, the characteristics of each were described in the tables separately and the most important structural features of motifs were identified. Then, with an analytical approach, the possible reasons and sources of their application have been discussed and analyzed. In addition, from a visual perspective, they were examined and finally matched together.

**Conclusion:** The results of this study indicate the similarities and distinctions of the Sphinx in these two historical periods. In general, it can be said that in the most cases, Achaemenid art and Seljuk art, the Sphinx in terms of structural features are different and in terms of concepts and functional role have many similarities. In the visual examination, it was also found that both of them are similar in terms of composition, rhythm, and type of script. The Sphinx in the Achaemenid period symbolizes the sun, the power of the kingdom, the protector of the tree of life and palace guardian, the prayers on both sides of the tree of life. In the Seljuk period, it is the symbol of the sun, blessing, mystical aspects, constellations, magic, palace guardian, the protector of the tree of life, and the prayers on both sides of the tree of life.

**Keywords:** *Sphinx, Symbol, Visual Elements, Achaemenid, Seljuk.*

 \*. Corresponding author: M2\_sharifzadeh1@yahoo.com,  
+989122344217

## Introduction

Research on the history of Iran has always been among researchers' interests, and a lot of research has been done in this regard, but always they have faced to obscure. Meanwhile, one of the most important ways to know people of the past is study of their remnant works and motifs. Composite creatures as mythological beings, including those used in historical periods of Iran, both pre-Islamic and Islamic, have often been used, and for the people of that era had special concepts and meanings and of course the artists were depicted them with a certain intention and purpose. The Sphinx is one of those composite creatures that in the entire history of the world, in addition to Iran, has been depicted in other societies and civilizations. This creature is a combination of human-head, a body of a lion with the wings of an eagle and, like other composite beings, is the manifestation of mankind. The emergence of the Sphinx in the ancient era of Iran and its continuation in Islamic era shows its importance among Iranians. The subject of the present study is a visual examination and analysis of the motif of the Sphinx and the context and the basis for its application in the art of the two historical periods of Iran, the Achaemenid in ancient era, and the Seljuk in the Islamic era. The main hypothesis of this study is that considering the many examples of combined creatures in the pre-Islamic period and the symbolic and mythical notions of this motif at that time and, based on the fact that Islamic art has been influenced by the art of pre-Islamic times, so, it can be said that the Sphinx during the Seljuk period was inspired by this type of motif during the Achaemenid period. However, during the Achaemenid period, most of the Sphinx motifs were used as highlights and seals, and they used this motif in the art of Seljuk on pottery and metalworkers. Therefore, the main purpose of comparing these motifs in these two periods is to achieve common points, similarities and differences between them, so that with analogy, many questions and uncertainties about the sources and motivations of their application can be answered.

## Research Methodology

In this research, data collection was carried out through the library and with the study of books and articles. In this regard, by searching in domestic and foreign museums and collections, the works containing the motifs of the Sphinx of these two eras were selected. After reviewing and using the descriptive method, technical, decorative and conceptual characteristics of each one are described and the most important structural features of motif are determined, and with an analytical approach, the causes and sources of their application are discussed and analyzed and with the adaptive approach, these motifs in these two eras are compared. For more accurate evaluation, each of the Sphinx motif related to each historical period is drawn and they are examined in separate tables, in terms of visual and semantic analysis.

## Theoretical fundamentals and background research

By doing this research, one set of the known and unknown sources and factors can be found that involved in the application of the Sphinx and realized the role of these factors in Achaemenid and Seljuk art. These factors could be derived from politics, government, religion, mysticism, science, culture, etc., and based on them, it can be found the reasons and why use these motifs in comparison to each other. It should be noted that according to available evidence, research history and few existing motifs, so far, no specialized research has compared this motif in these two periods, and it's worth to mention that in most of similar studies, these motifs have been studied during a particular era. In most articles and books related to mythology and composite creatures, there is only a brief mention of the Sphinx, such as, short mention of James Hall in *Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art* and short mention of Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheebrent in *Dictionary of Symbols Culture*. In a paper by Abeddoost and Kazempoor entitled "Continuation of Presence of Ancient Sphinxes and

Harpies in the Art of Islamic Era”, this topic has been discussed in more details. In addition, in an essay by Hashem Hoseyny, entitled “ Reflection and Analyses of composite animals in Islamic pottery of Iran”, references have been made to the Sphinx. Several English articles also have referred to this motif in the Achaemenid and the Seljuk periods.

## Findings

### • Sphinx in historical periods

According to Dehkhoda’s definition: “Sphinx (from the Latin Sphinx and the Greek Sphinges) is the name of a fantasy animal in various Egyptian and Greek antiquities” (Dehkhoda, 1994). The first and oldest Sphinx in Egypt was called Abu al-Hol in the middle of the third millennium BC. The Egyptians depicted the Sphinx as Pharaoh with the body of the bearded man and the lion statue, which was the supreme human symbol (Hall, 2014: 20). This motif always favors giant monastery and opens up to the horizon where the sun rises. According to Jean Yoyotte: “it is a symbol of royal power, an oppressor against insurgents and a supporter of the righteous, Abu al-Hol with a bearded face is the king, or the god of the sun. Even has the traits of a lion, a feline Personality trait, and impatient in war (Chevalier & Gheebant, 2005: 41). Abu al-Hol appeared the first with a woman’s face in Syria and Asia Minor, and Greece (Hall, 2014: 20). In Greek mythology and art, it’s a giant with the figure of half-lion and half-woman. It is “the symbol of vice and destructive domination and destroys that land as divine torment (Chevalier & Gheebant, 2005: 41).” For the first time, the Sphinx are seen in the Middle East on Assyrian cylindrical seals in the 11th-13th centuries BC and more widely seen as statues of temples and palaces from the ninth century BC” (Hall, 2014: 20). The specimen of this motif is also seen in the Luristan antiquities and according to Godard, this motif came from Assyria in Luristan in the 8th and 9th centuries BC, and has been on cups, pins, and so on. The Sphinx had been drawn in the industrial and elegant Assyrian style on the antiques

of the remnants of Luristan. In these motifs, like the Sphinx in the art of the Assyrian, there are two wings, one wing is facing forward and the other wing is on the back, and between them is the Assyrian palm tree (Godard, 1998: 73). This motif was seen on a plaque that discovered from the Ziwiye grave for the first time in Iran. Of course, its appearance is different from the appearance of similar examples of Assyrians (Abeddost & Kazempour, 2010: 83). This motif still remained stable after the arrival of the Aryans to Iran. The Sphinx in the Achaemenid period is often seen on impressive seals and reliefs in Persepolis. This motif is also present on the Nisa site belonging to the Parthian period (Dadvar & Mansouri, 2006: 164). It is also seen on a number of seals left from the Sassanid period in the British Museum. Early in the introduction of Islam to Iran, this motif was not used as much as other human and animal motifs, and it is not exactly possible to say what time and why, the Sphinx was imported into the Islamic world. In the 11th century AD, its image was seen in the Fatimid period. This Egyptian sample is a woolen cloth decorated with pieces of rug depicting birds, Sphinxes and other animals in the back to back, and is known as Saint Anne tent (Hillenbrand, 2007: 83). In the 10th and 11th centuries of Iran, “the Sphinx is the common motif in ceramics with sgraffito known as Garus or Shamloo, which is often seen on the inside of the bowl or the plate” (Hoseyny, 2013: 50). In the enameled stone bowl designed by the seven-color technique found in the 12th and 13th centuries AD in Kashan, the Sphinx has been the symbol of the sun in the middle of the medallion, and eight people are sitting around the bowl, and this particular presence contributes to the pottery of the Middle Ages (Guratola, 2006: 118). In describing the features of this motif, it should be noted that Sphinx is a composed animal, the body of a lion, an eagle’s wings and a human head, and in addition to its own characteristics, it also has the characteristics of its compound beings. The wing as a component of the Sphinx, when placed on the animal’s body, is “the sign of the goddess and

a symbol of the power of protection” (Hall, 2014: 30). “Lion as a solar animal symbol is brilliant, a symbol of strength, wisdom, justice, and monarchy” (Chevalier & Ghebrant, 2005: 111). In addition, a lion symbolizes blessing and fertility (Sidiqian, 2007: 3). Human as another part of this creature, throughout history, “is the subject of numerous designs in astrological works, which shows how each member of the body is influenced by its own planet, or a sign of the constellation” (Hall, 2014: 230).

### **Sphinx during the Achaemenid period**

Among the remains of the Achaemenid period, the Sphinx is further seen on the seals. In Persepolis, this motif is depicted on the relief and brick walls. “In Persepolis, there was a theme for using this creature, worship and praise. While they are in front of each other and there is a winged sun between them. They have the ephemeral royal crown of a Mesopotamia, a long cylinder with three pairs of horns and a row above the top” (Herzfeld, 2002: 259). The design of the Sphinx is on the walls of the Persepolis in Persian royal style, for example, in the Darius’s palace, the Sphinxes are in the form of a bearded man, and guardian (Carstens, 2010: 42). The human head of the Sphinx is inspired from Darius’s head and face, and it can be distinguished from Darius’s image on the walls of Persepolis and Susa. “In the 8th and 9th parables of Naqsh-e Rostam relief, Darius in describing his traits, refers to his physical characteristics and brings them back” (Sharp, 1973: 91). From the text of this inscription, one can well deduce that if the face of the Sphinx is similar to Darius’s face in the reliefs, it would surely have been his own desire. Of course, in the reliefs, the Sphinx has a bull’s ear and the ring is hung on it. The outward appearance of these motifs is naturalistic, and abstraction is not involved in their drawing, and the Achaemenid artist has used the most accurate details in depicting them and this matter is quite obvious in the wings and feathers. The Sphinx on the seals, sometimes like the reliefs of Persepolis, appears on the opposite side of the

other Sphinx, and between it and above, Fravashi is located in the shape of a winged sun. These seals are sometimes individually drawn and sometimes painted with the other designs. Some of the seals are inscribed with Lydian names and they were probably produced and used in Lydia by the Satraps. This means that this motif is not unknown and refers to the Achaemenid rule (Carstens, 2010: 43). Sometimes on the seals, a pair of addorsed Sphinxes are depicted with a symmetrical composition, in which there is no winged sun between them, and often the king, like the superhuman hero, stands on the Sphinxes, and easily, strong and dangerous lions swinging their legs in the air. Such motifs are side by side in order to show the power of the king and his kingdom, and, according to Prada, “to strengthen the political position of the king” (Porada, 2004: 253). In seals, usually on the head of Sphinxes, a crown-shaped cover is associated with vertical lines and grooves and forms the wings (Dusinberre, 2008: 91). Often, their faces are depicted in profile, and in rare cases, the frontal face appears with big nose and eyes, quadrangular beard, similar to the Achaemenid kings, have wide wings and often have a crown or a turban on it. This motif in the Achaemenid art is in the role of the guardian of lotus, and often is in praising and praying on the entrance wall of the palace. In addition, in the seals that the king plays the role of a hero with extraterrestrial power, the Sphinx is often placed under his feet. In these seals, the power of the kingdom will be exhibited. But sometimes it also appears as a demon, and it is a time when the hero-king is fighting him. These motifs are detailed in the following table (Table 1).

### **Sphinx during the Seljuk period**


In the Seljuk period, the Sphinx is mostly found on metal works and ceramics, often it is depicted as a creature with the wings, frontal face, slanted eyes, hair falling on both sides, a Turban, a coronet, and with a crown on the head, a raised tail on background that covered with arabesque motifs. It is sometimes depicted with necklaces and sometimes with spots



on the body. This motif has been engraved on metal and ceramic vessels at the bottom of the bowl or tray and in the middle of the medallion. It must be said that in the Islamic period, the animal motifs were inspired from the pre-Islamic era but the style of their depiction in the Islamic era was more spread than the pre-Islamic era and innovations were created on the design of this motif (Grabar, 2006: 36). “This motif is often seen in Gryphon or Griffin, and it is the symbol of the sun’s journey in the heavens” (Hillenbrand, 2007: 96). These features are more evident when depicting the Sphinx in the middle of the medallion, along with Sharafeh. The Sphinx on the tiles, along with motifs like Harpy and the tree of life, is a dramatic representation of imagery and the world of imagination, and the Sphinxes protect the tree of life or the sacred tree in these designs, which emphasizes the importance of the tree of life. In addition, the Sphinxes on the walls of the palaces protect the palace and the sultan from evil eyes, enemies and illness, and they are symbol of fortune and luck. (Oney, 2016: 138). The figures depicted on these tiles and panels, which are often crowned, feature royal faces and women’s palaces. In other antiques, this face with the crown is similar to Buraq. In these works, Buraq, in contrast to its common appearance, which is half-horse and half-human, has been able to change the nature of the Sphinx and thus the body of the lion has replaced the body of the horse. Of course, during the Islamic era, “Buraq, in terms of the transformation of the shape of the structure, follows the same course of physical progress of the Sphinx, such that wingless species turned into winged instances and emerged

in the form of evolved creatures which apparently have more power“ (Taheri, 2012: 20). During the Seljuk period, the Sphinxes can sometimes have the function of magic spells. On the sample of the pottery of this period, which is made in the style of a barrel in western Iran, the Sphinx contains the allegorical ties of witchery, Paradise and astrology (Hillenbrand, 2007: 96). Sometimes these designs are constellations, for example, behind the bronze mirror remained from this period, the Sphinx is engraved with a scorpion tail and an Inscription. “It wishes for the owner of the mirror for fame, long life, power, prosperity, health, wellness, happiness, glory, Blessing, pride and forgiveness.” (Abeddoost & Kazempour, 2010: 88). This Sphinx has the body of the lion, the scorpion’s tail and the curly hair-head like a combination of Leo, Scorpio, and Virgo (Calmeyer, Trümpelmann & Zick-Nissen, 1972: 156). “In the story of Keyumars, the second three millennia of the ages are without pain and suffering, which was the Millennium of Cancer and Leo and Virgo. This triple combination of constellations belongs to time and fertility and blessing (Abeddoost & Kazempour, 2010: 88). In most antiques of Seljuk, there is a harmony between components of the Sphinx, such as hairs, a crown, the wings, a tail, a body, legs, and the arabesque designs. The Seljuk artist has tried to adapt to the ground and the body of Sphinx with the help of the curved lines, arabesque and vegetal motifs. Paying attention to the delicate details are considered as feature in the most Seljuk motifs. This style is also clearly seen in the antiques that have the Sphinx. The analysis of these motifs will be discussed separately in the table (Table 2).

Table 1. Functional role of the Sphinx and its Specifications during the Achaemenid period. □

Image and linear drawing	Specifications
	<p><b>Golden Plaque, British Museum</b></p> <p>The Sphinx with a female face in a circle shape, with a wing ending in the head of a bird like the griffin. The Sphinx is depicted in profile and wearing a round cap and a necklace. It has a right forehead and its head turned back to contemplate the monster. There is no obvious means of attachment between them.</p>

**Golden Plaque, British Museum**



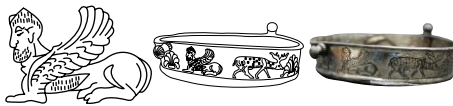
The Sphinx with the face of a man is depicted in a circle shape, a profile face with raised left forepaw and wearing a vertically-tufted tiara. This object shows a praying and praising Sphinx.

**Golden Plaque, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston**



This Sphinx has been shown seated, with a grooved cap on the head and its hair falling at the back of the neck. The Sphinx is probably portrayed on a woman's face since it has a necklace. The grooves created in the feathers of a wing are elegant and have a regular progressive rhythm.

**Silver Pyxis, British Museum**



Pyxis, a cylindrical box, was used for medicine, toilet and other items in ancient Greece and Rome. In this object, the bearded Sphinx is depicted in a sitting position, in profile view, symmetrical position and facing with another Sphinx. There is a lotus flower between them and the Sphinxes play a protective role. In addition, the deer is on the opposite side of another lotus.

**Stamp Seal of Clay, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston**



In this seal, a pair confronted Sphinxes are depicted in a symmetrical composition. The king with supernatural and superhuman strength grabs a pair of lions and hangs them and also stands on the Sphinxes. At the corner, there is a palm tree or the tree of life.

**Cylinder Seal of Jasper, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston**



This Sphinx is symmetrical and facing another Sphinx. The Sphinx is depicted in profile with a textured beard and a feathered crown. Ahura Mazda with the spread wings is hovering overhead and the Sphinxes are praising and praying him.

**Cylinder Seal of Agate, Christie's**



In this seal, a pair of addorsed Sphinxes are in symmetrical position. It has a face in profile, aquiline nose, a crown on the head and is sitting on the bottom of the Achaemenid bearded king. The king in the role of an extraterrestrial hero is grasping a lion in each hand. In the left of the image, one Scorpion-man standing with a human-head, a wing and a tail of scorpion. Here according to the role of the king, the crown and devilish beings, the Sphinx has been depicted to show power and praise the king's dignity.

**Cylinder seal of Chalcedony, British Museum**



In this seal, a pair of addorsed Sphinxes are depicted in symmetrical position. The bearded Sphinx is shown with a face in profile, aquiline nose, crown on the head, lying on the chest and at the same time his tail and wings are raised. In the right side of this seal is depicted the pair of Griffin, the king, Ahura Mazda, and a flower similar to the lotus. On top of the Sphinx, one Egyptian devil demon is grasping two deer. Probably, this seal narrates a mythological story.

**Stamp Seal of Chalcedony, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston**

The bearded Sphinx is sitting in profile view with large nose and lip, a vertically-tufted tiara, and at the same time, his tail and wings raise. There is a plant motif among the two Sphinxes, and the Sphinxes probably will either protect or praise it.



**Pyramidal Seal of Chalcedony, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston**

Seated Sphinx facing left with an additional head of Bes. The body of the Sphinx is in profile and has full-face view, round eyes, large and circular ears, and wearing a tall, vertically fluted, spiky tiara. The wings are realistic and have a progressive rhythm. The second head, a lion head, is lying down and seen from a bird's eye view.



**Pyramidal Seal of Chalcedony, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston**

The Sphinx in this seal is similar to a centaur, in addition to the body and the head of a lion, has an arm and human-head too. It pursues a lion with a bow in the hand. He draws his bow at the lion while running over the body of a dead antelope, which is probably killed by the lion. The human head is breaded and is in profile, and also wears a vertically-tufted tiara, and depicted with the wide wings.



**Pyramidal Seal of Chalcedony, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston**

In this seal, the Sphinx is shown in symmetry and facing another Sphinx. The Sphinx is drawn with beards, ibex horns and the ears like horse or bull, short hands and legs with rounded paws. Both Sphinx have raised one hand and are touching each other with their hands.



**Stamp Seal of Chalcedony, British Museum**

In this seal, a pair of addorsed Sphinxes are in symmetrical position. It has a face in profile, vertical and long forehead with a crown or a tiara on the head and sitting on the bottom of the Achaemenid bearded king. King in the role of a hero and with a Persian robe is grasping a pair of Griffins. The Griffin appears in the role of the demon. According to this design, it is a glimpse of royal power and glory.



**Stamp Seal of Feldspar, The Metropolitan Museum of Art**

The Sphinx is in the middle of the circle and forms the rotating of the seal. On the body of this Sphinx, lines can be seen, as if it is a representation of its spine. These lines represent the self-access of the Abu EL Houli to the absolute truth, and as they look at the sunrise, they filled with the truth (Chevalier, 2006: 41). On top of this motif is the crescent of the moon. In the Aryan civilizations, the moon appeared as a fertility goddess.



**Stamp seal of Lapis Lazuli, British Museum**

The Sphinx appeared on this seal as a devilish symbol. The hero of the story with a textured beard and Persian dress is holding the sickle-sword in his right hand and slaying a winged Sphinx with his other hand. Under their feet, there are wavy lines which show a river. And over their head the moon crescent is visible. Because of the river and moon crescent this stamp is probably about fertility. This Sphinx is similar to Assyrian Sphinxes, which its model is seen in the Luristan antiques.



**Seal of Clay, British Museum**



In this seal, two confronted Sphinxes are in symmetry and fighting with the Achaemenid hero. In this work, the bearded Sphinx is in full-face view, and wearing a tall, vertically fluted, spiky tiara and the hero (probably the king) is taking the tiara from the Sphinxes head and they are intended to prevent. According to the design, the Sphinx has a devilish symbol and the king in the role of the hero represents the peak of his power.

**Square-shaped vase, Louvre Museum**



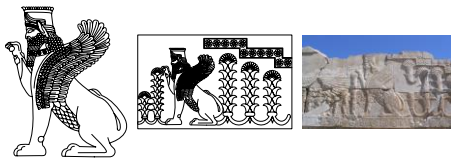
The Sphinxes are drawn on all four sides of the vase. On one side of the vase, the figure of a woman's head is seen. The turban on the Sphinx head is in a different shape and in several rows. Cross-cut engraving has given a special texture to the Sphinx. The lotus flowers are depicted in full and sliced show in the square box.

**Relief of Limestone, British Museum**



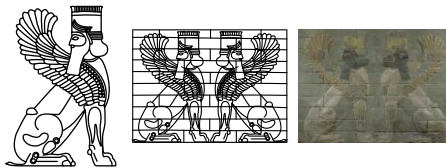
In this relief, the Sphinx is in symmetry and facing other Sphinx and above them, Ahura Mazda is hovering in the form of a winged sun. The Sphinx is depicted in this relief with a quadrangle bear and a bull's ears, with earrings on the ears, and an ornamental, cylindrical head-dress. One of the paws is raised up, which shows the respect to Ahura Mazda. On the back and the row above and below the design, the lotus flower with twelve petals is seen in profile and full-face view.

**Relief on the wall of the Hadish Palace in Persepolis**



The Sphinx is shown in a symmetrical composition, facing another Sphinx, among the lotus flowers and Ahura Mazda is between them. The Sphinx in this relief is portrayed with the ear of the bull, divine horned head-dress with a band of rosettes, which reflects the divine nature of this motif. This motif on the entrance of the palaces reflects the role of the guardian of the Sphinx.

**Mural Mosaic, Louvre Museum**



The Sphinx in this panel has a symmetrical composition and facing the other Sphinx and looking back. On top of them is Ahura Mazda. The Sphinx in this relief has the ear of a bull with a ring, and its cylindrical head-dress is reflected the divine nature of this motif. The iconography of this work is done in a traditional Persian style. The motifs on the entrance of the palaces reflect the role of the guardian of the Sphinx.

**Relief in Perspolis**



In this relief, the Sphinx is in a symmetrical composition and facing with another Sphinx. It has a profile face, bull's ears with a ring in the ear, rectangular textured beard and it is also wearing the divine horned head-dress with a band of rosettes. The wings are decorated with elegant feathers with regular and progressive rhythm.

**Relief on the wall of the Eastern stairs of Apadana Palace**



This Sphinx also has other features of the Sphinxes on the walls of the Persepolis, as previously mentioned. There are only differences in detail. In sum, the face of this Sphinx and its similar motifs are taken from Darius's face, and this can be understood from Darius's designs in Persepolis and Susa.



Table 2. Functional role of the Sphinx and its Specifications during the Seljuk period. Source: authors.

Image and linear drawing	Specifications
	<p><b>Bronze Handled Mirror, British Museum</b></p> <p>A pair of addorsed Sphinxes with a symmetrical composition is depicted in the middle of the medallion on the back of the mirror. On the margin of the mirror, an abstracted motif is repeated with a regular rhythm and symbolizes the sun. The standing Sphinx is shown frontally with tail and hair falling.</p>
	<p><b>Bronze Handled Mirror, British Museum</b></p> <p>In the back of this mirror, the Sphinx is embellished among the hordes of arabesque motifs. The Sphinx face is shown frontally and perhaps a halo around it, which is a symbol of the sun and mystical aspects. The tail is shaped upward and the wing of this Sphinx is also elegant and similar to the arabesque designs. In general, the coordination between the theme and Sphinx is well-established.</p>
	<p><b>Mirror, made of Bronze, British Museum</b></p> <p>In the back of the mirror, a pair of addorsed Sphinxes is shown with a symmetrical composition and plant motifs in the center of the medallion. The Sphinx is tangled with the vine tree. In this design, the Sphinx has hair falling and is in full-face view, and the tail is repeated in the form of a circle, similar to the scorpion's tail, and refers to its constellation's role. This pattern is almost geometric and the shape of the circle is very visible.</p>
	<p><b>Golden Ring, Barakat Gallery</b></p> <p>The Sphinx is depicted on this ring in the form of a rhombus with vegetal motifs. Engraving is not done accurately, and plant designs are not obvious. In this design, the Sphinx face has three-quarter view and with a crown on its head, is a symbol of Buraq, and probably as a protective motif, as it is depicted on the ring.</p>
	<p><b>Silver-gilt horse trapping, Sotheby's</b></p> <p>In this object, the Sphinx is drawn individual and in walking. The raised and curled tail is shown like arabesque motifs. The face is in three-quarter view and the wings are spotty. Since this object was used for the horse, it probably has been protective in addition to its decorative aspect.</p>
	<p><b>Silver Pectoral, Barakat Gallery</b></p> <p>The Sphinx is depicted symmetrically in this work with two bodies and one head. The wings are split-bladed and connected to the center of the object. The crowned Sphinx is in full-face view. Below the legs of this motif, in the center of the image, there is a vegetal motif that Sphinx protects and possibly refers to Tūbā. Since this object is a pectoral, probably it also had a protective aspect.</p>
	<p><b>Incense Burner of Bronze, Silver and Gold Museum of Fine Arts, Boston</b></p> <p>The Sphinx in this object is in the form of a rectangle. The tail is curved up. The face is in full-face view and a crown on the head, that is certainly a symbol of Buraq or has a royal image. On the other side of this object and in line with the motif of the Sphinx, the Griffin has been drawn.</p>
	<p><b>Bronze Ewer inlaid with Silver, Barakat Gallery</b></p> <p>The Sphinx in this work is depicted in a semi-circular niche comparable in shape to Mihrab and among the arabesque and plant motifs. Like the background, the curved lines similar to the arabesque motifs were used to decorate this motif. The crowned Sphinx which probably represents the Buraq, is shown frontally and walking between massive plants.</p>



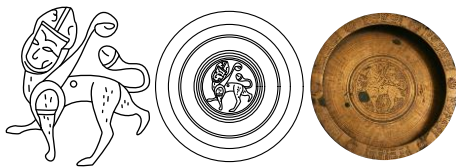
**Brass Ewer, Barakat Gallery**

The Sphinx is depicted in this object is free and non-template. The tail is raised up without decoration. The face is shown frontally with unibrow, slanted eyes and a crown-like cap on head, and the body is spotty.



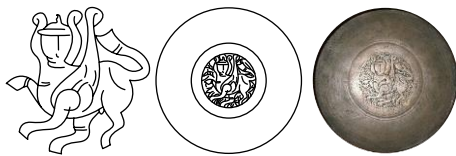
**Bronze Tray, Barakat Gallery**

The Sphinx is depicted on a tray and in the middle of the medallion and is moving. The motif is in full-face view and wear a cap. The Sphinx tail is raised up and has slanted eyes and a unibrow. Sharafeh and floral motifs around the medallion evokes the sun that refer to the representation of the Sphinx in the role of constellations and cosmic.



**Tray of Bronze and Cooper, Barakat Gallery**

The Sphinx is in the center of the medallion, along with floral motifs. The face is in three-quarter view with a unibrow and slanted eyes. The tail raised up and a turban is seen on the Sphinx head. This motif has a spotted body and, unlike the background, is simple and not decorated.



**Bronze Bowl, Barakat Gallery**

The Sphinx in this object is drawn in the middle of the medallion and at the bottom of the bowl and it is similar to arabesque motifs. The face is front and the eyes were not captured. The tail is raised up and has a different cap with two upward edges. Unlike the crowded background, this motif is very simple and not decorated.



**Bronze Bowl, Aspire Auctions**

The Sphinx is drawn at the bottom of the bowl in the middle of the medallion with plant designs. The medallion has Sharafeh as a symbol of the sun. The Sphinx is shown frontally with slanted eyes, raised tail and a distinct cap with two upright edges. Unlike the elaborate pattern of background, it is depicted very simply.



**Jug, made of Stone-paste, The Metropolitan Museum of Art**

In this work, two confronted Sphinxes are depicted symmetrically and along with plant, Harpy and other animals' motifs in color of azure, turquoise and black. There is a Persian ruba'i by Rukn al-Din Da'vidar Qummi in romantic and mystical theme On the rim and lower body. Given the mystical theme of the poem and Harpy motifs, in this jug has been revealed the mystical and imagery aspects.



**Glazed Bowl, made of Fritware, Penn Museum**

The Sphinx in this object is depicted in the center of the medallion, among the masses of the arabesque motifs. The medallion is surrounded by Sharafeh forms which are solar symbol. The face is in profile and has a crown and is probably a symbol of Buraq. The wings, crown, and body is completely decorated, and it has provided a mystical mood along with the arabesque motifs and a radiant halo.



**Bowl with sgraffito decoration, Sackler Gallery**

The Sphinx is depicted at the bottom of the bowl and in the middle of the medallion and comes in azure and turquoise colors. Repetitive lines around the medallion symbolize light and the sun. It has been depicted with spotted body, in full-face view, hair falling from two sides and with a cap on the head. The tail is depicted in arabesque and floral designs. This similar to the neckline around the neck of the Sphinx but is different from the previous designs without wings.



**Glazed Bowl, made of Stone-paste, British Museum**

The Sphinx is depicted in this object with the royal figure, companions, and floral motifs. The royal person, probably the king, seated in the center of the medallion and four Sphinxes are arranged in four corners with a symmetrical composition. This motif is depicted in azure, ochre, and golden colors and without details. The notable point is the tree of life or *Ṭūbā* which is located among the Sphinxes.



**Hexagonal Tile, made of Stone-paste, The Metropolitan Museum of Art**

The Sphinx is placed in the center of the hexagonal tile; in each corner of the geometric shapes, arabesque designs are depicted and used in golden, azure, turquoise and ochre colors. The frontal Sphinx is depicted simply, without details, with slanted eyes, hair falling on both sides, a cap on the head and a golden radial over his head which represents the light halo and the mystical aspect of this motif.



**Luster Tile, Karatay Museum**

The Sphinxes are painted in brown and ochre colors. Plant designs with elegance and details along with the circular forms that make up the fruits have filled the background. The Sphinx is in full-face view, with slanted eyes, a unibrow, the spotted body, and the wings with the tail are raised with a floral and arabesque decoration.



**Clay Stamp, The Metropolitan Museum of Art**

The Sphinx in this object has a halo that refers to its solar, astral, and mystical meanings and may have a protective function. The Sphinx is delicately depicted among plant designs. The face of this creature is shown frontally with slanted eyes and a unibrow, along with spotted body and many decorations.



**Sandstone Panel, Christie's**

The Sphinx in this panel is depicted with griffin, dog, plant designs and flowers such as lotus. The Sphinx is in full-face view, with a crown on the head, a necklace around the neck, a unibrow and a raised tail with arabesque decorations. According to the dog and griffin images, the Sphinx probably plays a protective function here.



**Limestone Panel, Christie's**

The Sphinx is depicted in this object with two bodies and one head symmetrically. The frontal Sphinx is depicted with a unibrow and slanted eyes, hair falling on both sides, and with a crown on the head, is reminiscent of the royal women face. The depiction of the wings is seen from both back and front sides, which is unique in its kind, and the body is decorated with a form similar to V. In the Seljuk period, usually, each motif is used singly on the panels (Oney, 2016: 138).

**Discussion**

The statistics from the 22 Sphinxes in the Achaemenid art indicate that most of these motifs are depicted on seals. According to the statistics, 12 seals include 6 stamp seals, 3 cylinder Seals and 3 pyramidal seals which had been made with clay, Chalcedony and Agate, Jasper, and Lapis Lazuli, and 4 reliefs, 1 mural mosaic, 3 plaques, 1 vase, and 1 Pyxis, have this motif. In the Seljuk period, this motif is often seen on metalworks and ceramics.

According to statistics, 13 metal works including 3 mirrors, 1 ring, 1 horse trapping, 1 pectoral, 1 incense burner, 2 ewers, 4 trays and bowls made of silver, bronze, gold and copper, as well as in the ceramics, 1 jug, 3 bowls, 2 tiles, and 1 stamp and 2 panels, are decorated with the Sphinx adorned. After examining the structural features and the functional role of these motifs are compared with each other and tabulated. (Table 3).



Table 3. Comparison of structural features and functions of 22 Sphinxes in the Achaemenid period and 22 Sphinxes in the Seljuk period. Source: authors.

	Achaemenid		Seljuk	
<b>Objects</b>	Often on reliefs and seals		Often on metal works and ceramics	
<b>Physical States</b>	Big nose	Face is shown in profile	Small nose	Face is shown frontally
	Bearded	Big eyes	Beardless	Slanted eyes
	Raised paw	<b>Curved &amp; raised tails</b>	Unibrow	<b>Curved &amp; raised tails</b>
	In sitting position	<b>The spread wings</b>	In standing position or walking	<b>The spread wings</b>
	Hair pulled back	The feathered <b>crown</b> or tiara	Hair falling on both sides	<b>Crown</b> , headband
<b>Other motifs with the Sphinx</b>	Naturalistic drawing	Similar to Darius's face	Decorative drawing	Similar to Buddha's face
	Showing muscle and body state		Not showing muscle and body state	
	<b>Progressive rhythm in the design of the feathers</b>		<b>Progressive rhythm in the design of the feathers</b>	
<b>Symbolism</b>	<b>King</b> as a hero	The symbol of the winged sun and Ahura Mazda	<b>King</b> or a royal person	The arabesque and vegetal motifs
	Demon	Scorpion man	Palmetto	Sharafeh
	Lotus	<b>The Tree of Life</b>	Ṭübā	<b>The Tree of Life</b>
	<b>Griffin</b>	Lion	<b>Griffin</b>	Harpy
	Ibex or antelope	<b>Deer</b>	Birds	<b>Deer</b>
	Wavy lines	Moon	Dog	Cheetah
	<b>The script</b>		<b>The script</b>	
	Symbol of the <b>sun</b>		Constellations	Symbol of the <b>sun</b> in the sky
	The symbol of the peak of power and the glory of the monarchy		In conjunction with magic and astrology	
	Ahriman, the evil psyche	Divine nature	Symbol of blessing and fertility	Symbol of Buraq
	Benevolent Expression		The Symbol of imaginary and mystical aspects	
	<b>Protecting the Tree of Life</b>		<b>Protecting the Tree of Life</b> and Ṭübā	
	<b>Guardian on palace walls</b>		<b>Guardian on palace walls</b>	
	<b>In the role of the prayer is placed on either side of the tree of life</b>		<b>In the role of the prayer is placed on either side of the tree of life or the sacred tree</b>	

### Structural Analysis and Applied Functional Results

**Objects used:** Most of the Achaemenid motifs can be seen on the seals and reliefs, but contrary to it, in the Seljuk period, these motifs are depicted on metal works and ceramics which represents the difference between them.

**Physical states:** According to the motifs studied, the face of the Sphinx in the Achaemenid period has been often in profile, with the big eyes and nose, the spread wings, often a rectangular beard, a cylindrical head-dress, or a vertically-tufted tiara and a curved tail. Often sitting with a hand raised up as a sign of praise and respect, and also it is depicted with the spread wings, and the feathers have a progressive rhythm. This motif is similar to Darius's face, and Achaemenid artists, using the naturalistic method, tried to display muscles and body states. During the Seljuk period, unlike Achaemenid, the motifs

are depicted in full face view with hair falling on both sides, and with slanted eyes, small nose, it resembles the Buddha's face. The face is depicted without a beard and often in a feminine form. It is depicted with the wide open wings, curved tails with arabesque and plant designs, with crown or cap and headband, and is in most cases in motion. Altogether, with some similarities, it can be said that these two motifs are different in appearance.

**Other motifs with the Sphinx:** Considering the aforementioned motifs, during the Achaemenid period, the Sphinx has been depicted in form of the winged sun, Ahura Mazda, king, demon, lotus, the tree of life, lion, Griffin, deer, scorpion, ibex, moon, wavy lines and script. In the Seljuk period, the Sphinx has been depicted with arabesque, plant, Sharafeh, palmetto, the royal person, the tree of life, Ṭübā, Harpy, Griffin, bird, deer, dog, cheetah motifs and the script. Given this, although in each



period, some motifs were used with the Sphinx but in general, they are more different with each other in terms of numbers.













**Symbolism:** During the Achaemenid period, the Sphinx is a symbol of the sun, it is praising and worshipping, and sometimes in respecting. It symbolizes the peak of the power of Achaemenid civilization. With a ceremonial turban on his head and a ring in his ears, it shows a sacred nature. It protects a lotus, and, of course, the guardian of the palace. During the Seljuk period, this motif is a symbol of the sun in the sky, sometimes appearing in the form of Buraq. In some of the motifs, there is a halo on his head that reveals his mystical and sacred aspect. It is the guardian of the palace, Tūbā and the tree of life, and sometimes it is a symbol of a constellation and is also associated with astrology and magic spells. According to these cases, although these motifs are

not structurally similar in appearance, but in terms of meaning and symbolism, they are similar in many cases (Table 3).

### Visual comparison of the Sphinx in the Achaemenid and Seljuk period

After examining the application of these designs, for a closer examination, in these two historical periods, the Sphinx will be examined visually. The discussed motifs include 22 Sphinxes in the Achaemenid period and 22 Sphinxes in the Seljuk period which are placed in separate tables. In these tables, columns are embedded in which motifs, in addition to the type of function, are examined in terms of subject and gender, its visual features such as the motif frame, the type of line, dominated direction, dominated rhythm, and the type of composition, are to be considered (Table 4) and (Table 5).

Table 4. Visual features of the Sphinx during the Achaemenid period. Source: authors.

Motif and its location	Subject and material	Motif frame	Dominant line	Dominant direction	Dominant rhythm	Composition type
	Golden Plaque	Circle	Curved	There is not one.	Regular Repetition	Asymmetric
	Golden Plaque	Circle	Curved	There is not one.	Progressive rhythm	Asymmetric
	Golden Plaque	Triangle	Curved	Horizontal and Diagonal	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric
	Silver Pyxis	Horizontal Rectangle	Curved	Horizontal	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric
	Stamp seal of Clay	Diamond	Curved	Diagonal	No Rhythm	Asymmetric, Symmetrical with a motif on the object
	Cylinder Seal of Jasper	Vertical Rectangle	Curved	Vertical and Diagonal	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric, Symmetrical with a motif on the object
	Cylinder Seal of Agate	Horizontal Rectangle	Curved	Horizontal	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric, Symmetrical with a motif on the object
	Cylinder seal of Chalcedony	Horizontal Rectangle	Curved	Horizontal and Diagonal	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric, Symmetrical with a motif on the object
	Stamp Seal of Chalcedony	Vertical Rectangle	Curved	Vertical	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric, Symmetrical with a motif on the object
	Pyramidal Seal of Chalcedony	Square	Curved	There is not one.	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric
	Pyramidal Seal of Chalcedony	Diamond	Curved	Diagonal	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric
	Pyramidal Seal of Chalcedony	Triangle	Curved	Vertical and Diagonal	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric, Symmetrical with a motif on the object






















































		Stamp Seal of Chalcedony	Triangle	Curved	Horizontal and Diagonal	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric, Symmetrical with a motif on the object
		Stamp Seal of Feldspar	Circle	Curved	There is not one.	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric
		Stamp seal of Lapis Lazuli	Vertical Rectangle	Curved	Vertical and Diagonal	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric
		Seal of Clay	Vertical Rectangle	Curved	Vertical and Diagonal	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric, Symmetrical with a motif on the object
		Square-shaped Vase	Square	Curved	There is not one.	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric
		Relief of Limestone	Square	Curved	Vertical and Diagonal	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric, Symmetrical with a motif on the object
		Relief	Vertical Rectangle	Curved	Vertical and Diagonal	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric, Symmetrical with a motif on the object
		Mural Mosaic	Vertical Rectangle	Curved	Vertical and Diagonal	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric, Symmetrical with a motif on the object
		Relief	Square	Curved	Vertical and Diagonal	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric, Symmetrical with a motif on the object
		Relief	Square	Curved	Vertical and Diagonal	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric, Symmetrical with a motif on the object

Table 5. Visual examination of the Sphinx during the Seljuk period. Source: authors.

Motif and its location	Subject and material	Motif frame	Dominant line	Dominant direction	Dominant rhythm	Composition type
	Bronze Handled Mirror	Vertical Rectangle	Curved	Vertical	No Rhythm	Asymmetric, Symmetrical with a motif on the object
	Bronze Handled Mirror	Diamond	Curved	Horizontal and Diagonal	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric
	Mirror, made of Bronze	Vertical Rectangle	Curved	Vertical	Regular Repetition	Asymmetric, Symmetrical with a motif on the object
	Golden Ring	Diamond	Curved	Diagonal	No Rhythm	Asymmetric
	Silver-gilt Horse Trapping	Diamond	Curved	Diagonal	Irregular Repetition	Asymmetric
	Silver Pectoral	Horizontal Rectangle	Curved	Horizontal	No Rhythm	Symmetry in the vertical direction
	Incense Burner of Bronze, Gold, Silver	Horizontal Rectangle	Curved	Horizontal	No Rhythm	Asymmetric
	Ewer of Bronze & Silver	Diamond	Curved	Diagonal	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric
	Brass Ewer	Square	Curved	There is not one.	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric
	Bronze Tray	Circle	Curved	There is not one.	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric
	Tray of Bronze and Cooper	Circle	Curved	There is not one.	Irregular Repetition	Asymmetric

		Bronze Bowl	Circle	Curved	There is not one.	No Rhythm	Asymmetric
		Bronze Bowl	Circle	Curved	There is not one.	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric
		Jug, made of Stone-paste	Square	Curved	There is not one.	Irregular Repetition	Asymmetric, Symmetrical with a motif on the object
		Glazed bowl, made of Fritware	Circle	Curved	There is not one.	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric
		Glazed Bowl	Circle	Curved	There is not one.	Regular Repetition	Asymmetric
		Glazed Bowl, made of Stone	Square	Curved	There is not one.	No Rhythm	Asymmetric, Symmetrical with a motif on the object
		Hexagonal Tile, made of Stone-paste	Diamond	Curved	Diagonal	No Rhythm	Asymmetric
		Luster Tile	Square	Curved	There is not one.	Irregular Repetition	Asymmetric
		Clay Stamp	Circle	Curved	There is not one.	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric
		Sandstone Panel	Square	Curved	There is not one.	Progressive Rhythm	Asymmetric
		Limestone Panel	Horizontal Rectangle	Curved	Horizontal	Irregular & Progressive Rhythm	Symmetry in the vertical direction

Intuitive results: After visual examination, the Sphinx in the Achaemenid period and the Seljuk period are compared (see Table 6).

Motif frame : In the definition, we can say that “the frame is a structure that surrounding formation space of visual elements and divides the space into two parts of the inner and outer parts of the work” (Pahlavan, 2011: 19). All of the studied Sphinxes are organically bound, so they vary in terms of geometric shapes. The results obtained from the comparative study of the motif frames in 22 Sphinxes of the Achaemenid period and the 22 Sphinxes of the Seljuk period indicate that the majority of the motif of the Achaemenid period are rectangular and in the Seljuk period a circle showing the difference between the two. During the Achaemenid period, after the vertical rectangle, the square is the most dominant frame. The rectangle from the Jung perspective is the symbol of “material, body, and reality” (Jung, 2010: 379). The impressive domination of the four-

sided frames and the negligible use of the circle in depicting the Sphinx is shown the strength, and power of this motif during the Achaemenid period. During the Seljuk period, most of the Sphinxes lie within the circle. The circle is a symbol of unity and perfection, and as a sacred symbol, it embodies tranquility, comfort, safety, friendship, intimacy, and spirit (Jung, 2010; Debucourt, 1994). The existence of this frame in the Sphinx motifs of this period confirms its mystical and sacred aspects of them. Subsequently, the square and rhombus have the most dominant frame of motifs. Of course, motifs with these two frames are depicted in the center of the circle, or they form the circular shape with the symmetric Sphinx. In other words, the square is the symbol of the earth and the circle symbolizes the sky. “For the square, the circle is the same as the sky for the earth and eternity for time, but because the square is in the circle, then the earth is subordinate to the sky” (Chevalier & Ghebrant, 2005: 191).

Table 6. A Comparative Study of Visual Features of 22 Sphinxes in the Achaemenid Period and 22 Sphinxes in the Seljuk Period. Source: authors.

Visual Elements	Features	Achaemenid Period		Seljuk Period	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Motif frame</b>	Horizontal Rectangle	3	14%	3	14%
	Vertical Rectangle	6	26.5%	2	9%
	Square	5	22.5%	5	22.5%
	Circle	3	14%	7	32%
	Triangle	3	14%	-	-
	Diamond	2	9%	5	22.5%
<b>Dominant line</b>	Curved	22	100%	22	100%
<b>Dominant direction</b>	Horizontal	2	9%	3	14%
	Vertical	1	4%	2	9%
	Diagonal	2	9%	4	18%
	Horizontal and Diagonal	3	14%	1	4%
	Vertical and Diagonal	9	41%	-	-
<b>Dominant rhythm</b>	There is not one.	5	23%	12	55%
	Regular Repetition	1	4%	2	9%
	Irregular Repetition	-	-	4	18%
	Progressive Rhythm	20	92%	9	41%
	No Rhythm	1	4%	7	32%
<b>Composition type</b>	Symmetry in the vertical	-	-	2	9%
	Asymmetric	22	100%	20	91%
	Symmetrical, with a motif on the object	12	54.5%	4	18%
	Asymmetrical, with a motif on the object	10	45.5%	18	82%

Dominated line type: The line, as one of the visual elements, “has important structural task” (Hofmann, 2009: 13) and is the medium for displaying images that are not in the material and real world and only in the artist’s imagination (Dondis, 2010: 74). The statistics obtained from the comparative study of the dominant line in the Sphinx in these two periods indicate that the dominant line either in the Achaemenid or in the Seljuk period is curved. This shows the similarity of these Sphinxes in terms of the dominant line. Usually, beautiful and soothing themes are depicted with curved and soft lines, because the curved line is considered as soft, slippery and flexible one and in an artwork can create a sense of comfort, relaxation and a beautiful sensation at the viewer. Among the Sphinxes of the Seljuk period, the superiority of the curved line appears more than the Achaemenid period. This superiority is due to the repeated use of this line in design of details and

decoration, and in particular the arabesque motifs, which in addition not only motif itself but also it includes the background. The use of the curved line in drawing the Sphinx of the Achaemenid period is more of a focus on naturalistic display and nature loyalty.

Dominant visual direction: In addition to the frame and type of line, the visual direction and path of the line can also indicate the states of the motif. The results obtained from the comparative study of the dominant visual direction in the Sphinx in the Achaemenid and Seljuk periods indicate that the dominant direction in the Achaemenid period is vertical and diagonal, and in the Seljuk period, most of the motifs do not have a dominant direction which indicating the difference between them. . The superiority of vertical direction of the Achaemenid Sphinxes demonstrates the solidity, strength, resistance, and authority of these motifs, and in



some way relates to a sense of trustworthiness. Also, the superiority of the diagonal direction is a sign of life, endurance, movement, and dynamism. In the Seljuk period, most of the Sphinxes do not have the dominant visual direction and this is due to more use of these motifs in the circle, square, and diamond frame.

**Dominant rhythm:** Rhythm has been considered as a visual element from the past to the present. Nature is a typical example of the rhythm that human has been inspired by it in their lives and throughout history. The rhythm is directly related to movements and displayed in repetition, alternation, and growth. The results of the comparative study of the dominant rhythm in the Sphinxes of these two periods indicate that the predominant rhythm in the Achaemenid and Seljuk periods is the progressive rhythm, and this is an indication of the similarity of the Sphinxes in this field. The superiority of this type of rhythm is due to the use of the wings and the showing of the Sphinx feathers. The progressive rhythm in the Achaemenid Sphinxes, drafts accounted for ninety-two percent, all in the form of the feathers of the wings. This shows that the Achaemenid artist was loyal to nature and tried to depict the elegance and details of the wing realistically. During the Seljuk period, despite the fact that the progressive rhythm dominates other rhythms, but , it is much less than the Achaemenid period.

**Composition:** The visual arts can achieve alance with two methods of symmetrical and asymmetrical designs. In the symmetric composition, the axis passes through the center of the compositions, and the elements reciprocally reflect each other (Dondis, 2010: 158). But in the asymmetric composition, the constituent elements of the motif are based on their visual values not based on horizontal, vertical or oblique axes. The statistics obtained from the comparative study of the composition show that most of the Sphinxes of these periods are asymmetric, which reflects the similarity of the Sphinx motifs in terms visual feature during these two periods of time. Of course, the 12 Sphinxes in the Achaemenid

period are symmetrical with another Sphinx on the object. Sometimes motifs in this symmetry are back to behind and sometimes face to face. And in the motifs of the Achaemenid, 4 Sphinxes are as follows.

### Conclusion

The Sphinx or Abu al-Hol is a composite creature that appear in various contexts at entire history and in ancient civilizations. Initially, the Sphinxes had been used as protective function of Egyptian temples and monuments but later and in different civilizations they had different meanings. The frequent use of it during different periods and the continuation of its use since ancient times to Islamic era have confirmed its importance. This motif was used in the Achaemenid art and the Achaemenid artists often used it in seals and reliefs. This motif has also been considered in Islamic art. One of these periods is the Seljuk, which used the Sphinx more on metal works and ceramics. Examination of the structural characteristics and functional role of the Sphinx, and also, its visual features in this historical period represent some similarities and differences between them. . In terms of structural characteristics, these two motifs were often different, but they are similar in terms of symbolism and its functional role. In terms of visual features, these designs are similar in composition, type of line and type of rhythm, and vary in terms of frame and direction. With this in mind, during the historical periods of Iran, although this motif has changed in terms of appearance and structural characteristics, but in terms of meaning, it retains many of the concepts have been more inspired by their historical times in itself and its apparent changes. In general, in shaping these motifs, various factors such as politics, power, religion, science, mysticism, etc., have played fundamental role, so that societies have depicted or modified them according to their needs and beliefs.

### Endnote

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