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## **Motifs of Woman which Emphasise on the Fertility Goddesses in Elam Civilization (2700-640 BC)**

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### **Abstract**

Woman, earth, moon, snake and cattle were considered as a symbol of fertility in ancient culture believes and each of these elements' icons is found in the remaining texts from this period. Symbols of women are complex and have usually a twofold role. She is the virgin paradise queen and also rapacious and prostitutes. She has both the characteristics of pure spiritual guidance and also temptation. It is completely apparent that woman has a reproductive role. It is emphasized on reproductive organs of terra-cotta of goddesses that remains from the ancient times. Manufacturing practices, terra-cotta relevant to female and fertility and their comparison with civilization between two rivers were studied by some questions such as the circumstances of process of evolution and development of terra-cotta in the respect of shape and concept. It is tried to consider the aspects and use the primary sources as far as possible. So, ritual applications, method of Elamite thinking about woman and also social status of women in the foundations of Elamite thinking were determined.

**Keywords:** Woman, Fertility goddesses, Porcelain terra-cotta, Elam.

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## Introduction

It seems that the trend toward supernatural factors and Gods in Iran and the ancient world is arising from common look to nature and its available fears. Construction of terra-cottas that are used for overcoming famine and death is one of the cases that we face it in ancient civilizations. Since we have paid less attention to this case from a historical and aesthetic perspective, it is necessary to take a fresh look at it by studying the motifs and terra-cottas. So, there is a meaningful relationship between fertility goddesses in ancient Elam and fertility goddess between two rivers of Ishtar and Inanna. Similarities and differences between Elamite fertility goddesses and fertility terra-cotta in terms of form and aesthetics are the most important subjects in this research. This research studies the role of fertility goddesses in Elam civilization in order to understand the variation process and its relationship with neighboring civilizations' fertility goddesses.

**Figure1: Elamate porcelain terra-cotta**



## Methodology

This research is a descriptive-analytic, historical and comparative research. It is a field and library study in terms of place. Our statistical society comprises of terra-cottas and motifs of Elam civilization fertility goddesses in Iran's current books and museums. Samples are selected from a target society. This research covers the period of 2700-640 BC.

## Different roles of women in Elamate civilization

Advancement of women is based on their role in the earth's fertility in economic grounds. These competencies have strengthened spirit of faith and believe in the Great Mother in the

people of her time and era as well as production. Management of tribal affairs and resolving disputes and conflicts is assigned to women and women are permissible for clerical jobs according to the mixture of affaires and spirituality. Lahiji (1992) has used the following terms for introducing women's jobs:

Amalooop: Job title of working women

Zkeshish: Court lady, princess

Eirti: Wife

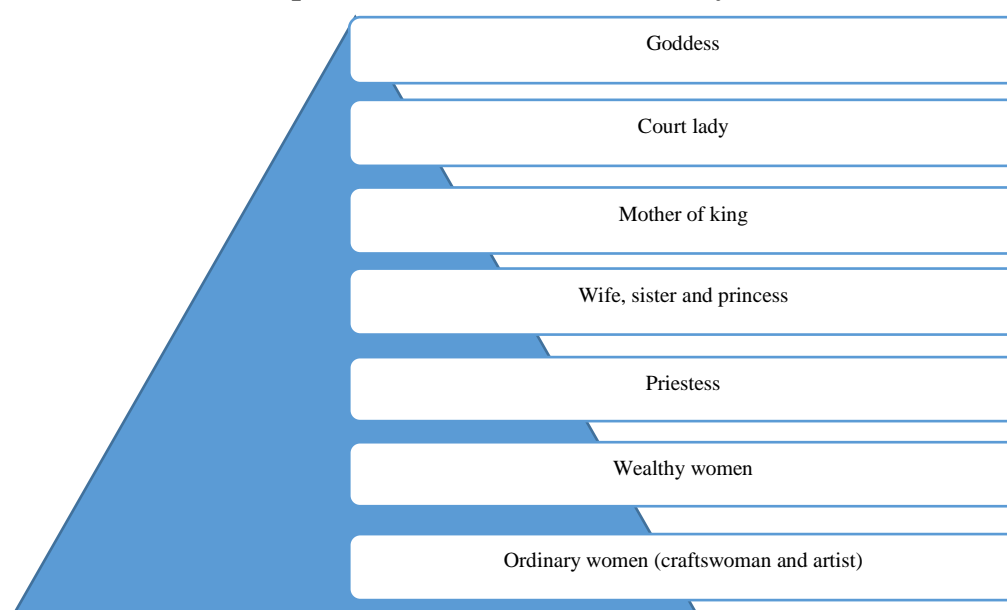
Mounous: Transliteration for the term wife

Moutou: Woman

Pak: Girl

Ommeh: Mother of king

**Graph 1: Elamate women hierarchy**



### **Mother and fertility goddesses in Elam**

Elamite imagined that the premier place belonged to a goddess in this world. This is the characteristic of religion Elamite. This imagination that the premier place belonged to a goddess in this world and this position is apart from other Elamite gods show that followers of this religion emphasized on matriarchy. Hinz, (1964: 32) presents a simulacrum that shows the sources and evidences of a dual or triple goddess during the time. In fact, this represents an Elamate unified governance structure (Federal). At first, each state had its own goddess. The goddesses of Pinikir, Ki ri risah and Parti were dedicated to Susa, land of sea in Southeast and two states of Male Amir and Anshan respectively. It seems that these mother goddesses

are the main governors of Elam that were replaced by male gods gradually during the second millennium BC, but we should not think that they have lost their significance (Majidzadeh, 2006). Respect for each of the mother goddesses was in its own place in Elam and these goddesses were not confused with each other. This marks the country's federal law. It states that each episode of Elam should have its own goddess mother in the oldest times. Susa had Pinikir. It is originated probably from the North Mountains. Ki ri risah was the goddess of the south side of the Persian Gulf and Parti was the goddess of eastern mountain of Anshan. It was interesting that Elamite were not chaos or anxious because of having two or three mother goddesses. Local established mother goddesses had been unrivaled among Elamite. Elamite vow the local and foreign goddesses warily and forethought and allocated a separate gift for each of them (Hinz, 1963:33).

The mother goddesses had an undisputed dominance on religious system of Elam in the third millennium but there was no variation during the second millennium. As, Elamite ancient matriarchy complied with promotion of the position of men gradually, the mother goddesses such as Pinikir and Ki ri risah complied with superiority of male god without any conflict. Goddesses were never deleted from top or superior gods of Elamite groups because they had a permanent place in the hearts of the common people. This claim is proved due to the significant amount of nude terra-cottas.

**Table 1: Various positions of goddesses in the era of various Elamite kings (drawing: authors)**

Names of kings															Name of goddesses
Atahamiti-	Tepti Humban-	Shutruk-	Hutuludush-	Shilhak-	Kutir- Nakhunte	Shutruk-	Ontash gal	Humbar numa	First temp	Shilhaha	tazita II	tazita I	Puzurain	Hita	
*		*		*	*	*	*	*							Kiririsha
	*	*		*			*							*	Pinikir
				*			*							*	Manzat
		*													Parti
							*			*			*		Inanna

### ***Pinikir:***

Pinikir is the first and the most important goddesses of Elamite history that is known by the written document of this kin. This goddess is as the head of the Elamite pantheon. She is known as mother of Gods. Archaeologists named it as Pinikir in comparison with Ishtar which is between two rivers (the goddess of love and war between two rivers) (Hinz1964: 546). One goddess is more important than other goddesses in Hita treaty which shows the world of Elamite deities. This treaty begins with this statement: "O, listen Pinikir and other luminary good gods!" This expression shows the importance of goddesses in Elamite religion and culture (Behzadi, 1990).

The name of this goddess is translated or written in various forms. Some name it as Pinikir and others name it as Binikir. Pinikir is the head of Elamite gods as "Mother of Gods". Any goddesses except Pinikir haven't power and influence especially religious influence in any different epoch. Her power and influence was so that she was the leader of gods of the Elamite era. Some of researchers attribute its religious power to matriarchy governance system. We faced some variations in social, political and religious process of Elam then that led to the replacement of patriarchy rather than matriarchy. It is perhaps because of Huban, the father of gods. Presence of mother goddess, Pinikir, as the head of Elamite goddesses is the marker of high value and importance of mother in Elamite civilization in the late of third millennium BC. It is pointed to Pinikir after Huban (the best Elamite god and his wife, Pinikir). It points to the importance and top rank of goddesses. It shows that Elamite gods and goddesses marry each other and will have children additionally (Saraf, 2004). In fact, the highest god apart from other gods is a goddess in the hierarchy of Elamite gods. Pinikir has been described as the ruler of the sky in more recent times and it is manifested in the form of a personal name among ordinary people in many cases. Elamite thought that she has the power of cursing. Acadians saw the character of the goddess, Ishtar, in the goddess, Pinikir. Name of the most famous girl of Elamite king was Shilhek- in- Shushinak, out-e-Hihi-Pinikir. This goddess was the deserved mother of all of the Elamite goddesses apparently. This fact will gives priority to a goddesses; a goddess that is in the top position and apart from other Elamite gods. It represents a kind of matriarchy among the followers of this religion. All of the evidences showed that she was the great mother goddess of Elam, so some of the scholars know Pinikir as Kiririsha goddess (Majidzadeh, 2006: 51).

**Figure2: A high number of female terra-cottas in Elamite sites that are the goddess, Pinikir or Kiririsha (Hinz, 1963: Figure21)**

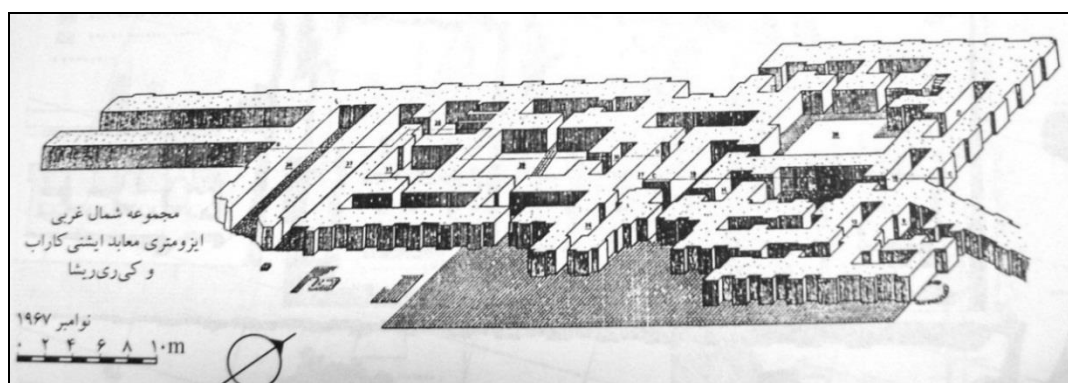


***Kiririsha:***

As it is said, some know the goddess, Pinikir, as the same as the goddess Kiririsha but it is not confirmed easily. Kiririsha isn't a particular noun. It is combined of two words "Ki ri" as goddess and "Risha" as great. It means the great goddess generally. Elamite had another goddess as their own mother of gods. They also worshiped her. For example, Pi nin-kir was the mother god of Susa and Parti was the mother god of Aia pir (current Ize- Mal Amir) (Saraf, 2004: 96). In the text in which trinity of Huban, in Shushinak and Kiririsha has been shown, Kiririsha has been known as "great wife" apparently. It is known that Kiririsha has been known as mother of gods in her position. She is not only the wife of Huban but also the wife of Shushinak. It is possible that these three gods would be a sibling family because such relationships are between Elamite royal families, so two brothers marry their sister but not at a same time. The male god that forced the great goddess to replace her was Huban. He was still in his third place during the third millennium BC but he was at the head of the Elamite gods in the middle of the second millennium BC. Huban was always worshiped all over Elam unlike goddesses that were worshiped in a certain area (Hinz, 1963: 51). The oldest document is related to an Elamite inscription of an anonymous ruler of Lian that is obtained from the temple of this goddess. The so-called ruler said that he is the servant of this goddess. The area of influence of this goddess (Kiririsha) reached Susa gradually. Middle and new Elamite kings built temples in various areas for Kiririsha. This goddess, Kiririsha, is known as the mother of the gods and superior goddess of temple in Susa which protects all of the people (Majidzadeh, 2006). It is apparent that the original home of Kiririsha is in the southeast of Elam and her domicile has been in Lian (Bushehr) of Persian Gulf according to little and scattered documents. This great goddess extended her influence to Susa gradually and middle

and new Elamite kings built temples for Kiririsha in various regions. The proud title of mother of gods and top goddess of temple that protects all of the people was bestowed to her in Susa. Kiririsha should not be known as the same as Pinikir yet. Untasgul has built a temple (Choqazanbil) for the goddess, Pinikir, and another temple for the goddess, Kiririsha, in Dour-Untoush about 1250 BC. Names of these two goddesses and their temples are seen on a bronze inscription since the recent Elamite period in Louvre museum of France. Furthermore, prince, Henni, appealed to these two goddesses, Pinikir and Kiririsha that were named as good mothers of gods in Mal-amir about 710 BC. Kiririsha has been influenced from Lian to northeast gradually because kings and princes of middle and late Elamite dedicated some of the temples to her in Suzian. At first, each state had its own mother goddess: Pinikir, Kiririsha and Parti were dedicated to Susa, Land Sea in southeast and two states of Mal-amir and Anshan respectively (Alizadeh, 1992: 51).

**Figure 3: Aynshy temples of Karab and Kiririsha in Choqazanbil (Saraf, 2004: 176. Figure33)**

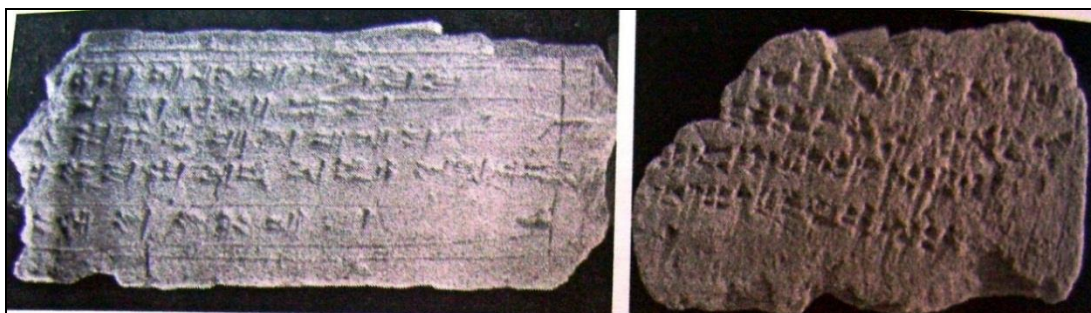


### ***Manzat:***

It was worshiped in Hita reign for the first time as well as worshiped in other reigns. Temple of the goddess, Manzat, was in Elamite city of Hupshen. Someone has named it as Dehno which is 40 kilometers far from southeast of Susa (Saraf, 2004: 36). It seems that the old name of Manzat was Ninali and it was converted to Manzat in an unknown period. Ninali is one of the Babylon gods. It married Shimut in Elam. Meaning of Ninali in Akkadian language is "urban goddess". Discovered inscribed bricks and stone of Susa and Choqazanbil and also Astel and Pashne showed that the goddess of Manzat was worshiped by kings and Sutruk (Saraf, 2004). Two inscribed bricks were discovered from Dehno explorations. One of them was dedicated to Lgi- Halki period in 14<sup>th</sup> century BC and Sutruk- Nahhunte in 12<sup>th</sup> century

BC. The present inscription points to reconstruction of temple of Manzat by the so-called kings (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Inscribed brick of Lgi- Halki period explored from Dehno (Figure5)**



### ***Parti:***

No terra-cotta or relief has been discovered from goddess, Parti, until now but Hinz believes that the goddess that is adjacent god is the goddess, Parti, or good mother of gods and Huban wife in relief of Kurangun. It seems that its influence and sacrament is limited to Aiapir or Izeh region and it was worshiped by Hani local government (Second Sutruk- Nahhunte). Local governor of Hani that is in Aiapir or Izeh region mention the goddess, Parti, and other gods such as Nahhunte and Huban in Eshkaft Salman inscription that is two kilometers far from southwest of Izeh. Title of the goddess, Parti, is "good mother of gods" here (Saraf, 2004: 129).

### **Different motifs of woman in fertility terra-cottas**

Most of porcelain terra-cottas are similar to porcelain terra-cottas of late middle Elam of Khuzestan plain. These porcelain terra-cottas are naked young women that are standing in front and are holding their breast between their thumb and four fingers. These porcelain terra-cottas are decorated with makeup and hair. These decorations are shown in detail. It is even showed in wearing terra-cottas. There is a thick braid turban and lace is on the top of wavy curls which has a caved band on itself. The upper part of this band is relief and covered. The naked porcelain terra-cottas have almost ornament and additional decorations such as bracelet or bangles, anklet, necklaces, belt around ischium and a zigzag design crossing band passing from a central spine between the two breasts. Ornaments and hair had done beautifully, prolific and accurate. It is one of the characteristics of Susa's porcelain terra-cottas and around Susa. These characteristics were not seen in porcelain terra-cottas of other Elamite sites. For example, the discovered terra-cotta of Dr. Howard Mitchell collection in California-



Richmond which is near the city of Ahvaz, in the southeast of Susa has no details about face, haircuts prolific and decorations apparently but the limbs pose, posture, form of tab, back flat, curved head and foot are well preserved. The first Elamite porcelain terra-cottas are interesting because of full covering the shaped mold. The short bumps of these terra-cottas have converted the terra-cottas to a full statue. First type of Susa terra-cottas is long slender female terra-cottas. They have breast strips with canopy and necklace that is made up of several marbles. These details are seen in the next samples more than before. These terra-cottas are increasingly flat in the late of middle Elamite period and their fitness is reshaped remarkably. In fact, head, torso, arms and smoothness of lower legs are according to the initial standard fitness but dimensions of shoulders and hips are increased and exaggerated. It leads to abnormal production of violin shape shoulders and hips in Susa and Haft Tappeh (Azar Pei, 2001: 24).

### **Different states of head**

One of the characteristics of naked female terra-cottas in Susa is body parts and faces Sukkalmah reign and middle of Elamite period. This profile is well done on female terra-cottas so that they seem more realistic and their faces transfer their emotions. When we study hair styles and heads, we see that a part of hair is in a bandanna on her forehead and the rest of hair is dangled on the ears and covers them. It seems that hair is kept firmly under a hat and tips of hair are protruded of the hat (Daems, 2001: 13). It seems that Elamite liked long hair in all of the ages and they brought the hairs to each other in order to form two spools (Hinz, 1964: 42). Eyelids are almost always two-layer and compressed around the nose. Lips are shown more clearly and are pressed together tightly. Some of the terra-cottas had black face and profile in Simaskian period (Figure 5). Some of them have big ears and their hair is as the same as hair of Egyptian goddesses. We face the term of central prominence for the first time. Central prominence is a kind of hair style in which the hair is on forehead and is in the form of a headband that had come forward from the center. The preserved heads are more like a heart. They show smiling faces or women with closed eyes. At first, forms of eyes were according to the technique of breasts and they were in the form of precise pellets. We are seeing the realism of naked women terra-cottas during the middle Elamite. Features of these women were as the same as women of Sukkalmah reign but they were modified more than before. Some details such as fingers, eyebrows, knees and feet were common in this period. They had a headband on their forehead that there was a part of their wavy hair under it and it was decorated with grid, vertical and straight designs. A central prominence is in front of this headband that is like a fan. It is shown as a circle (Figure 5) (Daems, 2001: 13).

**Figure 5: A sample of Simaskian terra-cotta that is characterized by black people  
(Daems, 2001: Figure 41)**



**Figure 6: A sample of terra-cottas which have almond eyes from the Middle Elamite  
period (Daems, 2001: Figure 49)**



**Different hats and headbands in women terra-cottas**

Head showed that people have different headbands according to their rank and position. Another statue is a head of a woman that is made of elephant ivory and is obtained from Susa. There is a turban shaped hat on the wavy hair of this statue. This type of cap has been observed in Elamite objects such as funerary porcelain statue (Carter et al., 1992: 137). We had seen usually headband and gathered hair on the top of head in fertility samples.

**Figure 7: Hat and bandanna**



## Hands states

We see some hand states in molded female terra-cottas which refer to Simaskian period. We see the women with hands open, hands attached firmly to the breast and arms taken against breast. If we ignore some of the certain works, it seems that all of the women have hugged their hands in front of their bodies in Sukkalmah reign. It seems that women, who attached their hands firmly under their breast, are doing a part of religious ritual and reverence rites. This model is not only seen in porcelain Elamite terra-cottas but also it is seen in various Elamite reliefs such as kurangun, kulfarah, eshkeft salman, naqsh-e-rostam and some statues such as the bronze statue of queen napirasu, etc. but we will see that all of the fertility terra-cottas have held their breast in their hands and their venereal triangle is distinguished. What distinguished them from other terra-cottas is the state of keeping the breast. It emphasizes on the characters of fertility and sacrifice (Lahiji, 1992:76)

**Figure 8: States of hands in Elamite terra-cottas**



Elamite ivory female terra-cotta with hands clenched in prayer



Fertility terra-cotta which offers breast with hands



Terra-cotta of queen Napirasu, Untash-Napirisha wife with hands over belly

## Jewelry

Prehistoric humans whether male or female were interested to adorn and embellish themselves. Different kinds of necklaces were common. Tattoo or at least toiletry has been common probably. We see that terra-cottas have necklaces with different disciplines. Some of them have bracelets, anklets or headband. It is true that these terra-cottas are naked but they are full of decoration. Most of terra-cottas have necklace. Wearing and use of this decorative object has been common by goddesses without any time gap since 2250 BC. We have seen different necklaces such as broad, thin, fine-grained, multi row, etc. Necklace was not wearing with a simple dress. Bangles were worn by Elamite men and women as a means of decoration and wearing it was common. This type of decoration was used in animal sacrifices ceremonies for gods and worship very much. Use of necklaces and bracelets has been popular generally because each goddess's neck and hands are adorned with necklaces and bracelets according to the remained works.

**Figure 9: Jewelry**



New Elamite fertility terra-cotta with necklace attached to the neck



Queen Napirasu with ornaments in hand



Fertility terra-cotta with a star shaped necklace

## Conclusion

Vegetative and reproductive growth was always interesting for Stone Age man. Bringing forth a plant through the ground was a miracle for him. He saw this miracle in a woman too. Growing a plant from the soil and getting it life is like the birth of a child of a woman. Keeping this child alive and nurturing it by her breast is not less than a miracle. Woman has always a vital role in the universe without considering the dimensions of place and time; her duty was production or birth, breeding and education. At first, they knew that woman has this gift but men didn't have this feature. Reliefs, motifs, terra-cottas and other works that arose from Elamite thinking about women and men are a testament of the importance of this issue. Construction of terra-cottas has been started from a non-exact time continuously. Woman was the origin of universe and motivation of life since ancient times. Most of the terra-cottas which belonged to the Elamite civilization are found broken and it can't be unreasonable. These terra-cottas were sacrificed as human being in special ceremonies probably and were offered to different gods and deities. As it was mentioned before, these scarification ceremonies of terra-cottas are seen in other civilizations. They wanted to attract gods and deities to themselves and being protected by them by breaking off the terra-cottas and throwing them away. Their nudity was a manifestation of their sacred from the viewpoint of author because we see in other reliefs that most of priests were naked at the time of their religious practices. We can see that element of exaggeration on terra-cottas in the late of Middle Elamite emphasized on muliebrity of these terra-cottas. The hyperbolic mode of keeping breast in hands is also a sign of boasting abundant and supply of life-giving liquid within it. We can infer from the studies that:

1. The first Elamite gods and deities had the form of human and they had the organs and face of women.
2. Discovered designs and images shows the importance of women's social position in Elamite civilization and it indicates the feminine being principle value of Elamite thinking foundations.
3. Since goddesses ruled the underworld in Elamite thought, we conclude that snakes and other reptiles indicate the superior strength of goddesses in Elamite religious thinking.

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